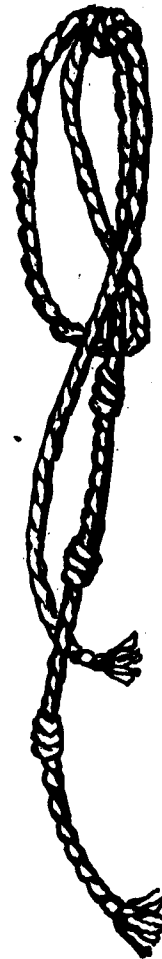


JANUARY, 1987

# The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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## The CORD

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### Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

#### I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions  
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo  
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun  
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony  
EpCler: Letter to Clerics<sup>1</sup>  
EpCust: Letter to Superiors<sup>1</sup>  
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful<sup>1</sup>  
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo  
EpMin: Letter to a Minister  
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order  
EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People  
ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God  
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father  
FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

Fragm. Another Fragment, Rule of 1221  
LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God  
LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours  
OffPass: Office of the Passion  
OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix  
RegB: Rule of 1223  
RegNB: Rule of 1221  
RegEr: Rule for Hermits  
SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady  
SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues  
Test: Testament of St. Francis  
UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare  
VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy  
<sup>1</sup>I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

#### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis  
2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis  
3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles  
CL: Legend of Saint Clare  
CP: Process of Saint Clare  
Flor: Little Flowers of St. Francis

LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis  
LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis  
LP: Legend of Perugia  
L3S: Legend of the Three Companions  
SC: Sacrum Commercium  
SP: Mirror of Perfection

**Omnibus:** Marion A. Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies*. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

**AB:** Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).



## "The Best of Times"

AS THE REALITY of a New Year moves from our calendars to our somewhat reluctant consciousness, I am reminded of Thomas of Celano's striking observation that Francis allowed "nothing of that precious gift of time to escape." (II, 161) This significant characteristic of Francis calls us beyond our ordinary experience of a year's beginning. Franciscan sources constantly remind us in different ways that for Francis all time was the "time of his life" — *kairos*, St. Paul would say. The celebration of a New Year would enable Francis (and us) to grasp this New Testament conviction with fresh dedication.

It was Francis' greatest desire that the entire human family walk with him and his brothers in that fundamental experience of time and place wherein gratitude and praise to God shape one's primary mode of consciousness (RNB 23). Only in this way could time realize its preciousness. And this gratitude and praise were intimately related to that awe-inspiring event wherein God took our time and history as His own in the remarkable gratuity of the incarnation. This Divine encroachment transformed the human experience of time and Francis intuited its preciousness in a way that continues to fire our imagination.

Early Franciscan history reminds us that the hour of a Council is a Franciscan hour of special import. The mystery of Francis cannot be seen apart from the context of the Church's proclamations at the IV Lateran Council. We Franciscans can say of that period what Paul VI said at the closing of the third session of the most recent Council: "Truly we can say that Divine Providence has prepared for us a luminous hour; yesterday slowly maturing, now resplendent, tomorrow it will certainly provide teaching, impulses, and motivations for the life of the Church."



I thank God for the unique privilege of joining a circle of generous people who out of love for Francis, the man of God, have contributed in time and talent, and in various supportive ways so that we might hear in a special way the kairoitic call of the Second Vatican Council for a Spirit-given awakening to the dynamism proper to the Franciscan charism. The quality and content of the articles selected for each number of this periodical give eloquent evidence of the commitment of both the authors and the editors to this joyful summons. In particular, all of us must be grateful to Michael Meilach for devoting so many years of his Franciscan life to the untiring exercise of unusual editorial gifts. The Franciscan reading public will always acknowledge him as the scholarly author of countless articles and books. I am also grateful that Fr. Julian Davies, his assistant, will continue in this same capacity with me.

Within a Church struggling in the Spirit to actualize itself as "the Church of the Poor," "the Servant Church," "the People of God," we subscribe to what Dante said was the God-given charge of the mendicant orders: To remind the Church of the exclusively spiritual character of its mission. My hope is that the Cord will continue to be an instrument in bringing the "luminous hour" to realization in "word and deed." That is, after all, the only criterion Francis accepted for the "homecoming" of Gospel truth.

*Joseph Doria O.F.M.*

## SAINT FRANCIS AND GOD

BONAVENTURE HINWOOD, O.F.M.

### Introduction

We live in a secularized age in which many people have little or no knowledge of God, hazy or crooked notions about Jesus, and live in a crisis of faith, if they have any at all. To talk, then, about God's kingdom, about salvation as entering into the love community of the Trinity, about Jesus' law of love, about sharing in Christ's mission to the world is simply presupposing what is not there, namely, an understanding of God and his action in the world, a true picture of Jesus and what He has accomplished for us, plus appropriate faith and commitment. This may provide an explanation as to why statements on moral issues and social justice from popes and bishops appear to have little influence on many people: they presuppose as their chief motivating power something which is not present, namely, clear ideas about God, surrender to the will of God, and zeal for God's rule over human affairs.

One person for whom God was real and a powerful motivating force, was St. Francis. Since so little has been written specifically about his idea of God, I thought that I would scratch the surface of the question: how did St. Francis express his experience of God in terms of the cumulative experience of the church as he inherited it, and is this likely to resonate with people today?

---

*Father Bonaventure Hinwood, O.F.M. who lives in Pretoria, South Africa is the author of YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED. His last contribution to our pages was "The Franciscan Charism," (March, 1984).*

In the article *The Franciscan Charism* in *The Cord* of March, 1984, I suggested that the Fatherhood of God was St. Francis' basic intuition on which he built his life. So I will not deal here with that important aspect of the topic. In a sense I want to go behind that intuition to the God Whom St. Francis was able to accept as his Father to Whom he could relate as a son.

In trying to get at St. Francis' God concept one is forced to rely largely on his own writings. The other "sources", even Celano, are too coloured by the theology of their authors. They are useful as secondary supplies of incidents, but their theological interpretations of the incidents largely express their own God concepts. Not that there is much need to go beyond St. Francis' writings. Limited though they be, they constitute a rich mine of information on the question of God.

The big problem is: how does one organize this abundance of ad hoc statements into a systematic scheme? The unique characteristic of the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition is that He is both transcendent and immanent in a way not found in other religions. Outside of our tradition the stress tends to be placed either on God's transcendence, as in Islam and African traditional religions, or on the immanence of the absolute, as in Hinduism. Only in the Judeo-Christian tradition are the two aspects held in tension.

This is the tradition in which St. Francis experienced God, and in terms of which he expressed his experience. It is, therefore, the structure in terms of which I shall endeavour to organize his thought. This is not easy, since St. Francis has an incredible capacity to hold them together and often speak of them simultaneously. My separation of the two will, then, be artificial and not complete.

### The Creator

One very evident aspect of St. Francis' understanding of God is as Creator, and several of his favourite terms for God he apparently associated with this. Possibly the most compact expression of his attempts to express the greatness of The Creator as he experienced it is found in the *Canticle of Brother Sun*.<sup>1</sup> It addresses God as "Most High, all-powerful, good Lord". These words run right through St. Francis' talk to and about God with such regularity that it is not necessary to refer to particular instances.

Parallel to these runs the title of "King" which frequently appears in combination with "Father". Instances of these titles, separately and in combination, appear frequently in the *Office of the Passion*. A couple of examples will illustrate the point: "the Lord, the Most High, the awesome, the great King over all the earth,"<sup>2</sup> and "Lord, most holy Father, King of heaven and earth... You are God my Savior."<sup>3</sup>

"God, the King of all" is the author of all blessings, who can do all good to and in people, knows everything about their doings and their sufferings, rewards the just, and is the basis of a christian's sure confidence.<sup>4</sup> No wonder that St. Francis delighted to think of himself as "the herald of the great King."<sup>5</sup>

By names such as these St. Francis wishes to convey the fact that God is the total cause of everything positive in the whole of reality, a thought he sums up in the words: "You, Lord, are the Supreme Good, the Eternal Good, from Whom comes all good, without whom there is no good."<sup>6</sup> This outpoured goodness reaches its pinnacle in human beings, to whom St. Francis says: "Be conscious, O man, of the wondrous state in which the Lord God has placed you, for He created you and formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body, and His likeness according to the spirit."<sup>7</sup>

Not being an academic theologian, St. Francis does not analyse terms in order to convey the wonder of this Creator who is invisible.<sup>8</sup> He rather adopts the technique, frequently found in the Bible, of piling up terms in order to produce an overwhelming impact. The effect is heightened by adding to what we may call descriptive terms about God also terms which express his subjective impact on the human creature who experiences Him as Creator in the depth of his being as well as in the affairs of life. To use modern technical jargon, St. Francis uses a combination of cosmic disclosure situations<sup>9</sup> and positive existential disclosure situations<sup>10</sup> to build up his notion of God as Creator.

There are two principal examples of this which are sufficiently different to justify quoting both of them. On one side of *The parchment given to brother Leo* we read:

Your are holy, Lord, the only God, You do wonders.  
 You are strong, You are great, You are the most high,  
 You are the almighty King.  
 You, Holy Father, the King of heaven and earth.  
 You are Three and One, Lord God of gods;  
 You are good, all good, the highest good,  
 Lord, God, living and true.  
 You are love, charity.  
 You are wisdom, You are humility; You are patience;  
 You are beauty; You are meekness; You are security;  
 You are inner peace; You are joy; You are our hope and joy;  
 You are justice; You are moderation, You are all our riches  
 (You are enough for us).  
 You are beauty, You are meekness;

You are the protector,  
You are our guardian and defender;  
You are strength; You are refreshment.  
You are our hope, You are our faith, You are our charity,  
You are all our sweetness,  
You are our eternal life:  
Great and wonderful Lord,  
God almighty, Merciful Savior.<sup>11</sup>

The second example is in chapter 23 of the 1221 rule:

the one true God,  
Who is the Fullness of God  
    all good, every good, the true and supreme good  
Who alone is Good  
    merciful and gentle  
    delectable and sweet  
Who alone is holy  
    just and true  
    holy and right  
Who alone is kind  
    innocent  
    pure  
from Whom and through Whom and in Whom is  
    all pardon  
    all grace  
    all glory  
The most high and supreme eternal God  
Trinity and Unity  
the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit  
Creator of all  
Savior of all  
Who is  
    without beginning and without end  
    unchangeable, invisible,  
    indescribable, ineffable,  
    blessed, worthy of praise,  
    glorious, exalted on high, sublime,  
    most high, gentle, lovable,  
    delectable and totally desirable above all else  
    forever.<sup>12</sup>

---

*The sense of God alone being totally good and the source of all good to us humans filled St. Francis with a profound reverence in God's presence and for everything connected with God.*

---

## The Trinity

Did you by any chance notice in both these quotations a new element? Briefly in the first St. Francis says to God "You are Three in One", and at greater length in the second "Trinity and Unity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Creator of all". The extent to which St. Francis' thought is overtly trinitarian is noteworthy. Was this the result of his own spiritual experience, or was it due, at least in part, to the teaching of Lateran IV? Probably an unanswerable question. Trinitarian invocations often start a letter, rule, or paragraph, sometimes in the simple form "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", as in the first and last paragraphs of the second version of the *Letter to the faithful*,<sup>13</sup> sometimes in the more elaborate form "In the name of the most high Trinity and the holy Unity: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit", as in the *Letter to the entire order*.<sup>14</sup> At other times the Trinity is invoked in a blessing at the conclusion as in the *Letter to the faithful* already mentioned.<sup>15</sup> The friars who go among non-Christians are encouraged to preach in order that people will "believe in the All-powerful God-Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit – the Creator of all."<sup>16</sup>

The Trinity is furthermore praised with varying degrees of theological expansion, ranging from a simple form in the *Praises to be said at all hours*,<sup>17</sup> through chapter 21 of the 1221 rule,<sup>18</sup> to the elaborate form given in chapter 23 of the same rule, in which the role of the Trinity in creation and redemption is brought out:

All-powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God  
 Holy and just Father  
 Lord, King of heaven and earth  
 we thank you for Yourself  
 for through Your holy will  
 and through your only Son  
 with the Holy spirit  
 You have created all things spiritual and corporal  
 and, having made us in Your own image and likeness,  
 You placed us in paradise.  
 And we thank You  
 for as through Your Son created us  
 and You willed to redeem us captives  
 through His cross and blood and death.  
 we humbly ask that  
 our Lord Jesus Christ  
 Your beloved Son  
 in whom You were well pleased  
 together with the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,  
 give You thanks  
 as it pleases You and Him  
 for everything  
 And through Your love  
 we humbly beg  
 all the saints who were, who will be, and who are  
 to give you thanks for these things as it pleases You,  
 the supreme and true God  
 eternal and living  
 with Your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
 and the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,  
 world without end.<sup>19</sup>

This praise in particular emphasizes what we have already seen, namely,  
 that St. Francis' thoughts about God as the Trinity do not form a separate  
 parallel sequence to those about God as Creator, but simply specify more  
 exactly the nature of the creating and redeeming God, Who is also the  
 triune Revealer, as St. Francis makes clear when writing about

the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of the Father,  
 and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life. Through  
 his angel St. Gabriel, the most high Father in heaven announced  
 the Word of the Father – so worthy, so holy and glorious – in the  
 womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from whom He received  
 the flesh of humanity and our frailty.<sup>20</sup>

Given the standpoint adopted by Lateran IV and much of the th  
 current theology of grace, about all the external works of God being t  
 combined operation of the Trinity, it is noteworthy that St. Francis f  
 quently refers to particular relationships of one or other of the three divi  
 Persons with the graced human subject. Most striking among these ref  
 erences for our present purpose are the instances where he brings all th  
 together in a brief compass. The simplest statement of this is in the *For  
 of life given to St. Clare and her sisters*:

Since by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daught  
 and servants of the most high King, the heavenly Father, and ha  
 taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according  
 the perfection of the holy Gospel that is, after the pattern of t  
 Son incarnate.<sup>21</sup>

This statement receives a more detailed treatment in the famous pass  
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A peculiarity of this statement is that the term "spouse" is applied  
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Holy and just Father  
Lord, King of heaven and earth  
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for through Your holy will  
and through your only Son  
with the Holy spirit  
You have created all things spiritual and corporal  
and, having made us in Your own image and likeness,  
You placed us in paradise.

And we thank You  
for as through Your Son created us  
and You willed to redeem us captives  
through His cross and blood and death.

we humbly ask that  
our Lord Jesus Christ  
Your beloved Son  
in whom You were well pleased  
together with the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,  
give You thanks  
as it pleases You and Him  
for everything

And through Your love  
we humbly beg  
all the saints who were, who will be, and who are  
to give you thanks for these things as it pleases You,  
the supreme and true God  
eternal and living  
with Your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,  
world without end.<sup>19</sup>

This praise in particular emphasizes what we have already seen, namely, that St. Francis' thoughts about God as the Trinity do not form a separate parallel sequence to those about God as Creator, but simply specify more exactly the nature of the creating and redeeming God, Who is also the triune Revealer, as St. Francis makes clear when writing about

the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life. Through his angel St. Gabriel, the most high Father in heaven announced the Word of the Father – so worthy, so holy and glorious – in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from whom He received the flesh of humanity and our frailty.<sup>20</sup>

Given the standpoint adopted by Lateran IV and much of the then current theology of grace, about all the external works of God being the combined operation of the Trinity, it is noteworthy that St. Francis frequently refers to particular relationships of one or other of the three divine Persons with the graced human subject. Most striking among these references for our present purpose are the instances where he brings all three together in a brief compass. The simplest statement of this is in the *Form of life given to St. Clare and her sisters*:

Since by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the most high King, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel that is, after the pattern of the Son incarnate.<sup>21</sup>

This statement receives a more detailed treatment in the famous passage about the relations the faithful christian has to the Persons of the indwelling Trinity in the *Letter to the faithful*.

A peculiarity of this statement is that the term "spouse" is applied to the Son in the first part, the Holy Spirit being the One Who does the espousing, while in the second part the term appears to return to the Holy Spirit, as in quotation just given. This latter usage does seem to be more in keeping with the rest of St. Francis' thought, since it parallels what he says elsewhere about the three Persons in relation to the Blessed Virgin<sup>22</sup>:



They are children of the heavenly Father whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to our Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father Who is in heaven. Mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and we give birth to Him through holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example.

Oh, how glorious it is, how holy and great, to have a Father in heaven! Oh, how holy, consoling, beautiful and wondrous it is to have such a Spouse. Oh, how holy and how loving, pleasing, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable, and desirable above all things to have such a Brother and such a Son: our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>23</sup>

The proper relations to the Father and to the Holy Spirit and their relations in leading the believer into a full share in the life of the love community of the Trinity are further spelt out in the following prayer directed to the Father at the end of the *Letter to the entire Order*:

Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God,  
grant us in our misery (the grace)

to do for You alone

what we know You want us to do,  
and always

to desire what pleases You.

Thus,

inwardly cleansed,

interiorly enlightened,

and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,

may we be able to follow

in the footprints of Your beloved Son,

our Lord Jesus Christ.

And,

by Your grace alone,

may we make our way to You,

Most High,

Who live and rule

in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,

and are glorified

God all powerful

forever and ever.<sup>24</sup>

What such an intimacy with the Trinity in glory involves is spelt out in the *Prayer inspired by the Our Father*:

Your Kingdom Come;

So that You may rule in us through Your grace

and enable us to come to Your kingdom

where there is an unclouded vision of You

a perfect love of You

a blessed companionship with You

an eternal enjoyment of You.<sup>25</sup>

## Indwelling

In mentioning relations with the indwelling Trinity we have already slipped into speaking about God as immanent in his creation, and indeed in the most intensely personal way. Because this theme is so predominant in St. Francis' spirituality, I would like to highlight it by reference to the indwelling rather than the relations to the divine Persons, as in this passage in chapter 22 of the 1221 rule:

In the holy love which is God, I beg all (my) brothers, both the ministers and ther others, as they overcome every obstacle and put aside every care and anxiety, to strive as best they can to serve, love, honor, and adore the Lord God with a clean heart and a pure mind, for this is what He desires above all things.

And let us make a home and dwelling place for Him Who is the Lord God Almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup>

The mutual indwelling of the devout christian in the love community of the Trinity and of the Trinity in the faithful person make the constant divine influence in the personality, of which St. Francis is so conscious, quite understandable. Hence he can be confident that those coming to the Order will be led by the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> His own spirit of humble obedience is grace granted by God's kindness.<sup>28</sup> It is likewise the Lord who gave him faith in churches and in priests.<sup>29</sup> The Holy Spirit, by letting a person share in his own divine vision of the Son, enables him to recognize the incarnate Son in the eucharist.<sup>30</sup> The same Spirit, who make the simple man of desire savor heavenly things,<sup>31</sup> opens up the Scriptures and fills the humble seeker with wisdom and divine understanding.<sup>32</sup>

Characteristic among these divine operations from within are interior revelations by which God reveals good things to his servants,<sup>33</sup> by which,

more specifically, He showed St. Francis that he should live according to the Gospel, as well as his purpose for the brothers,<sup>34</sup> and on a more external level made known to him the blessed Virgin's love for the Portiuncula.<sup>35</sup>

Living in such intimacy with the holy Trinity and aware of the divine Persons at work within himself, it is little wonder that St. Francis was filled with divine sweetness which drew him away from earthly attractions,<sup>36</sup> made unpleasant things palatable,<sup>37</sup> and would often unexpectedly overwhelm him.<sup>38</sup>

No wonder, then that St. Francis considered joy to be the normal condition of a person united to God, to the point that he wrote in the 1221 rule that the brothers "must beware not to appear outwardly sad and like gloomy hypocrites; but let them show that they are joyful in the Lord and cheerful and truly gracious."<sup>39</sup> Nor is it strange that he regarded down-heartedness as a miserable illness which had to be counteracted by allowing the Holy Spirit to keep one's joy fresh and lively. If signs of dejection begin to appear, God's servant must seek the intimate companionship of God in prayer, and remain with Him until he is no longer dispirited.<sup>40</sup>

### Immanence in Creation

Yet St. Francis' experience of God as immanent in his creation was not limited to intimacy with the indwelling Trinity. There were several levels at which he discerned God present and at work exteriorly in the world and in the events of his life. The link between the two facets is succinctly expressed in the *Mirror of perfection*:

Being completely absorbed in love of God, blessed Francis clearly perceived the goodness of God both within his own soul, already endowed with perfect virtue, and in all created things, so he therefore had an especial and profound love of God's creatures, and especially those which he thought of as representing some truth about God or religion.<sup>41</sup>

This love was not simply because they were his works, but because in them St. Francis saw the wisdom, power, goodness of their Creator. Incidents and sayings about creatures in the world of nature around us to illustrate this point are legion and too well-known to need recalling in particular.<sup>42</sup> Interpreting such incidents, Thomas of Celano came up with this lyrical expression of how St. Francis experienced God's presence:

In every work of the artist he praised the Artist; whatever he found in things made he referred to the Maker. He rejoiced in all the works of the hands of the Lord and saw behind things pleasant to behold their life-giving reason and cause. In beautiful things he saw Beauty itself... Through his footprints impressed upon things he followed the Beloved everywhere; he made from all things a ladder by which to come even to his throne.<sup>43</sup>

If this was true of other creatures, it was even more so of those "stamped" with the image of the Creator,<sup>44</sup> especially his brothers because they belonged to the same household of faith and shared the same promise of eternal life. Also particularly dear to St. Francis were poor people, because in the face of the poor and suffering he saw the face of Christ.<sup>45</sup> Hence his saying: "Whoever curses a poor man does an injury to Christ, whose noble image he wears, the image of him who made himself poor for us in this world."<sup>46</sup>

This saying already tells us that St. Francis saw God as immanent in this world where He is in fact supremely immanent, namely in Jesus,<sup>47</sup> especially Jesus in his poverty and helplessness in the crib<sup>48</sup> and on the cross,<sup>49</sup> as well as where He lives on visibly among his people especially in the eucharist.

### Providence

The Father did not spare his own Son, but sacrificed Him for our salvation.<sup>51</sup> In view of this there can be no limit to the wonders of his divine providence. So St. Francis, abandoned by his earthly Father, turned to his heavenly Father in total trust,<sup>52</sup> and in his experience of and meditation on his wise providence opened up another dimension of God which is immanent in this way in his creation. The care exercised by our most provident God has a range as wide as human existence. It starts off obviously with providing for physical need of the body,<sup>53</sup> extends to healing,<sup>54</sup> and even to respect for our dust after death.<sup>55</sup> It brings companions<sup>56</sup> and friends<sup>57</sup> when they are wanted. It initiates every good deed that we humans do,<sup>58</sup> does every good thing for us,<sup>59</sup> and above all and procures our salvation.<sup>60</sup> Consequently those who are faithful can face death with confidence<sup>61</sup> in the God who will reward them with everlasting life,<sup>62</sup> while at the same time He provides the sanction of damnation to discourage those who would refuse his goodness.<sup>63</sup> A particular aspect of God's provident care which played a large role in St. Francis' life was that of guidance. This guidance came to him through a variety of means: prayer,<sup>64</sup> visions,<sup>65</sup> dreams,<sup>66</sup> a call from a crucifix,<sup>67</sup> listening to or opening the Bible,<sup>68</sup> and the counsel of friends.<sup>69</sup>

The obverse of this was St. Francis' experience of God present in the negative existential disclosure situations of suffering.<sup>70</sup> In the early days of his conversion he made sense of the sufferings arising from his father's persecutions by uniting them to the sufferings of Christ.<sup>71</sup> His discovery of God in his own spiritual struggles enabled him in later life to advise one of his brothers that "no one must consider himself a servant of God until he has undergone temptations and tribulations. Temptations overcome... is in a way a ring with which the Lord espouses the soul of his servant to himself."<sup>72</sup> On La Verna God taught him that he was to enter the Kingdom through many tribulations, trials, and struggles, before giving him the experience of union with Christ in the stigmata.<sup>73</sup> This was partly fulfilled in his constant physical illness in many parts of the body.<sup>74</sup> It culminated in the abject misery in which St. Francis came to that ecstatic experience of God which was the inspiration of the *Canticle of brother sun*.<sup>75</sup>

## Friend

What had I done  
If you had not been there?  
His words were clear  
That fell on my unhearing ears.  
This was a time keyed to wonders;  
The man of Galilee had come.  
"Fill the jars with water."  
A common task,  
The daily routine chore.  
My heart,  
That hoped for grace of miracles  
And hours of ecstasy,  
Had not heeded  
Except for you.

And now I am afraid  
God grant that you be near  
When He who changes  
Watery essences into heady wines of  
Infinite loves  
Bids me carry to the Chief Steward.

Sr. Emeran Foley, O.S.F.

## Response

St. Francis' lived response to the God whom he experienced and conceived in the way which I have outlined obviously gives concrete form to this verbal expression. Much of this lived response I have sketched in the article on *The Franciscan charism* already mentioned. There are just four aspects which I wish to emphasize by brief mention.

The first of these is praise: "This man, filled with the Spirit of God, never ceased to glorify, praise, and bless the Creator and Ruler of all things in all the elements and creatures,"<sup>76</sup> and in all the circumstances and events of life, right up to the transition into the fulness of life through death itself.<sup>77</sup> Praise was the dominant tonality of St. Francis' whole graced personality. It both influenced the way he looked at nature and his reaction to what he saw. As an example take this exhortation to the birds:

My brothers, birds, you should praise your Creator very much and always love him; he gave you feathers to clothe you, wings so that you can fly, and whatever else was necessary for you. God made you noble among his creatures, and he gave you a home in the purity of the air; though you neither sow nor reap, he nevertheless protects and governs you without any solicitude on your part.<sup>78</sup>

Hence hymns of praise and passages of praise in other documents form a substantial part of St. Francis' writings. Perhaps one of the most characteristic of these because of the broad sweep of its contents is the *Praises to be said at all the hours*.<sup>79</sup> Hand in hand with the praise in St. Francis' reaction to God went thanksgiving. He thanks God for all his gifts,<sup>80</sup> for the favourable workings of his providence,<sup>81</sup> for insults and injuries,<sup>82</sup> for rejection and refusal of alms,<sup>83</sup> for sickness as well as for health.<sup>84</sup> He instructed civil rulers to institute a public signal to be given each evening so that "praise and thanks may be given by all people to all-powerful Lord God".<sup>85</sup> And his praises are not infrequently largely exclamations of thanksgiving, as we can see from this exhortation:

And let us refer all good  
to the most high and supreme Lord God,  
and acknowledge that every good is His,  
and thank Him for everything,  
(He) from Whom all good things come.

And may He,  
the Highest and Supreme,  
Who alone is true God,  
have and be given and receive  
every honor and reverence  
every praise and blessing,  
every thanks and glory,  
for every good is His,  
He Who alone is good.<sup>86</sup>

The sense of God alone being totally good and the source of all good to us humans filled St. Francis with a profound reverence in God's presence and for everything connected with God. Because at times of prayer it is the great King to whom we speak, we should do all we can to ensure that He has our undivided attention, whatever may have to be sacrificed to this cause.<sup>87</sup> Although we cannot avoid doing so if we are to relate to Him at all, we should be conscious of the fact that we are not worthy even to mention his holy name.<sup>88</sup> Because his name and everything associated with God is to be treated with devotion and respect, his written words are to be cherished and rescued from being profaned wherever this is likely.<sup>89</sup> Priests,<sup>90</sup> the blessed eucharist,<sup>91</sup> and even the liturgical vessels and appointments<sup>92</sup> are to be revered to acknowledge the greatness of our Creator.

Finally there was St. Francis' life of prayer. About this I do not need to say anything beyond the brief reminder that being in communion with, in the presence of, listening to and conversing with the divine Persons was for St. Francis what life is primarily about. Everything else, however beneficial and virtuous, is only a temporary digression.<sup>92</sup> Because God is the sort of God He is, He must necessarily be Number One in life, with no rivals for the primacy.

### Modern application

Has all this got anything to say to modern secularized man? In my opinion a great deal.

I have over the last few years taken to preaching and talking about what it means to be a creature, how one is to understand the Creator, and what is implied in the Creator-creature relationship. I have done this to ordinary people, with the more sophisticated, and over the media. The response has been consistently favourable to enthusiastic, not infrequently accompanied by remarks like "How refreshing it is to get back to basics," "Thank you for clearing away the trappings and reminding us of what life's really all about," "I now understand the meaning of my life." For this reason I accept St. Francis' insistence on the Creator as still being valid.

True enough his own lyrical approach may not be possible with people who live in the concrete jungle or tarmac desert, any more than for those who live among the hazards of the tangled jungle and the sandy deserts. Yet there are jumping off points in all these situations. There are enough people in the world still living in sufficient contact with the earth and plants and animals to make St. Francis' own approach useful in working with them. For those with whom the beauty and fruitfulness and symbolism of nature no longer resonate we do have the panorama of the wonders of nature opened up to us on a different level by the natural sciences.

Whatever people's relation to the world of nature, they themselves as human beings remain a constant factor. They are there with their questions about the whence, why, and whither of life, with their longing to make sense out of existence, with their fears and anxieties about the unknown. So it remains a worthwhile task to help each person uncover the Ground of his being, the Support of his personality, the Source of his energy, the Love filtering up through his affections. This sort of language may appear abstract at first sight, but it is no more so than St. Francis' "Most High" or "All-powerful". Our words can be made just as powerfully personal and appealing as he made his terms by the living conviction of the person who uses them and shares his experience of what life is all about.

St. Francis was fortunate in having words like "King" and "Lord", which had an elevated meaning in ordinary language, with which to talk about God's absolute and sovereign existence which does not depend on his creatures, but is the source of all good for them. Today we lack such language. Kings in as far as they exist are mostly toothless constitutional monarchs; lords are by and large a quaint social anachronism. We cannot substitute presidents or prime-ministers, who are only temporary office-bearers voted in by the people and dependent on their approval if they are to stay put. We really do have a serious language problem in suggesting a personal reality which is elevated, sacred, permanent, and independent. The democratic mentality has left us without words to talk about God with the ease with which St. Francis could. Even "father" in many places no longer has any patriarchal resonances. Not that we are, therefore, condemned to silence. The lack of handy single words which immediately resonate with people in general simply means that we have to search for images and phrases which will speak to different groups of people in their particular situations.

St. Francis' fascination with the Trinity suggests one possible way out. Personality and interpersonal relations form the web of contemporary thought, not only in the West, but also in Africa and elsewhere. In the

divine Trinity we find the perfect society: the three divine Persons so totally given to each other in their divine richness, so utterly open to receive each other in their divine infinity that they only form one single life unit, the love community of the Godhead. The fact that they are three excludes the possibility that it is a conspiracy of two elements clinging to each other in selfish possessiveness in an attempt to overcome their mutual poverty and inadequacy. It is out of the overflowing abundance of this divine life of love that the Trinity creates and enters by self-giving to elevate created persons enabling them to be drawn into the interpersonal relations structure which is the life of grace, a structure of which St. Francis was so lyrically aware.

So if words referring to individuals no longer provide us with adequate means of expressing the Creator's excellence, perhaps the wonder of the all-perfect love community can.

At the same time people will hopefully be able to understand how their inherent longing for satisfying non-exploiting interpersonal relationships can be met in a grace response to the Trinity's initiative in the process of salvation. It is the only adequate answer to the loneliness of so many people today.

Not that loneliness is the only experience of people in the area of interpersonal relations. Many people today still have profound and stimulating experiences of love in friendships and in marriage and family life. I have pointed out that St. Francis found God immanently present in his brothers, with whom we know that he had a relationship of great tenderness.<sup>94</sup> One of the fundamental dynamics of love is the lover's tendency to give himself for the beloved, even to give himself completely to the point of sacrificing his life. Parents in relation to their children and comrades in war provide many examples of this. If the other person is no more than a complicated animal, this tendency does not make sense. The self-sacrificing tendency towards a total giving of oneself to and for the person one loves only makes sense if it expresses an intention, albeit not clearly articulated, that in and behind that person is the Creator God Who is love, to whom total devotion belongs by right.

Another experience of God's love in St. Francis' life, which I have highlighted, is the awareness of being guided. This is not an experience unique to St. Francis. Many people are already aware, or can be helped to become aware, of being led along a course, often a course which they would not have initially chosen for themselves. It is possible often to discern in one life a pattern which one did not invent or impose, and yet which one is invited to accept and makes one's own. This can lead to the intuition of the loving presence of a provident Guide at the center of one being.

These and similar disclosure situations, in which St. Francis encountered his triune Creator, raise the pastoral problem of trying to help people break through the surface of their own life to the triune Creator who supports it from within, despite the noise of the technological civilization and the corruption of the permissive society.

St. Francis' recipe for finding God and remaining in vital, joyous contact consisted of a pure heart<sup>95</sup> seeking Him in spirit and in truth,<sup>96</sup> abstaining from vices and the indulgence of bodily appetites,<sup>97</sup> service of others,<sup>98</sup> humility, patience under trials and love of persecutors.<sup>99</sup> Does that sound like an accurate description of the life style presented and encouraged by the mass media?

Our primary problem is to persuade people to withdraw from the noise and pollution of the mass media sufficiently to enable the divine Trinity dwelling in the unconscious core of their being to be able to break through into the area of internal silence created by this withdrawal. In many instances it is the very mass media themselves we have to use in order to achieve this. Again I know from personal experience that one can achieve a measure of success by this means.

The media present a regular diet of fictional violence and viciousness, and actual reported disaster, depravity, death and destruction, with not much for one's comfort and uplift. Yet franciscan spirituality is characterized by joy, praise and thanksgiving.

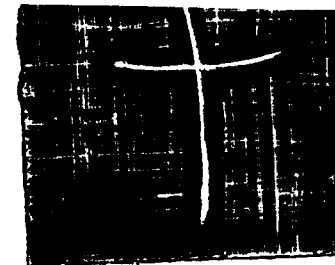
St. Francis' own times were no peaceful paradise. The feudal system was collapsing, and engaged in a life of death struggle with the emerging commercial society. There were class conflicts, inequalities, poverty, and social misery. Popes were at war with emperors, and city against city. Heresy was rife and religion to a degree in disrepute. Not a bright nor encouraging picture. Yet praise and thanksgiving could be the dominant characteristics of St. Francis and his brothers.

Amid all the chaos they remained secure in their intensely personal union with the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit; and, because love is always exhilarating and vitalizing, they brought fresh life to the world grown tired and cold. It seems to me our task in our own upheaved and depressed age is to do the same again; help people break through the surface of the world of things and bodies to the interpersonal world of the triune Creator and the exhilaration of "a life of intimacy with the Father through union with the Son in the love communicated by the Holy Spirit"<sup>100</sup>.

## Footnotes

1. Cant Sol, AB, 38.
2. OFF PASS, Ps 7, AB, 88.
3. OFF PASS, Ps 14, AB, 95.
4. IC 2, 7, 108 Omnibus, 322.
5. IC 1, 7, 17, O, 243.
6. POF 2 Prayer of Francis, AB, 104.
7. Adm 5, 1, AB, 29.
8. Adm 1, 6, AB, 26.
9. A "disclosure situation" is an experience on one level of reality which gives an intuition or insight on a deeper level of reality and provides a means of expressing this deeper insight. It is sometimes called a "more-than-the object" situation, eg. a child seeing its mother day by day doing all the manual tasks involved in caring for it, such as cooking, washing clothes, cleaning and sewing, reaches an insight into the reality of love expressed through service.  
A "cosmic disclosure situation" is one in which a limited situation opens up an insight into ultimate reality with the corresponding call to commitment, e.g. "Yahweh is still my citadel, my God is a rock where I shelter" (Ps 94, 22), or "Yahweh is my Shepherd, I lack nothing" (Ps 23, 1).
10. An "Existential disclosure situation" is a personal human experience which gives an intuition or insight into the ultimate reality on which the person's existence depends and a commitment to that reality. It is "positive" when it flows from a certain fullness of being experienced, e.g. faithfulness or love. It is "negative" when it happens through a lack of being or a threat to personal existence, in what Karl Jaspers calls "limit situations", as in the case of serious illness or guilt.
11. AB, 99-100.
12. AB, 133-34.
13. AB, 67, 73.
14. AB, 55.
15. AB, 73.
16. ER 16, 7 AB, 121.
17. AB, 102.
18. AB, 126.
19. Reg Non B 130-32.
20. Ep Fid, II, 3-4, AB, 67.
21. AB, 44-45.
22. Antiphon AB 82, OFF PASS, Ps 1.
23. 6-13 AB, 63.
24. 50-52 AB, 61.
25. 4 AB, 105.
26. 26-27 AB, 128.
27. 2C 2, 116, 157 O, 489.
28. 2C 2, 111, 151, O, 484.
29. Test 4.6 AB, 154.
30. Adm 1, 9-12 AB, 26.
31. 2C 2, 144, 191-92 O, 516-17.
32. 2C 2, 68, 102-70, O, 446-48.
33. Adm 21, 2; 28, 2 AB, 34.36.
34. Test 14 AB, 154; IC 1, 12, 30 O, 253.
35. 2C 1, 12, 19 O, 379.
36. 2C 1, 3, 7, 9, O, 367. 369.
37. 2C 1, 9, 14, O, 374.
38. 2C 2, 61, 94-95, O, 440-41.
39. 7, 16, AB, 115-116.
40. 2C 2, 88, 125, O, 293-97.
41. 113, O, 1232.
42. For example see IC 1, 28, 77-29, 81, O, 293-97.
43. 2C 2, 124, 165, O, 494-95.
44. 2C 2, 131, 172, O 500.
45. 2C 2, 52, 85, O, 433.
46. IC 1, 28, 76, O, 293.
47. Adm 1, 3, 25; IILF 4-15 AB, 67-68.
48. IC 1, 30, 86, O, 301.
49. IC 1, 17, 45, O, 267.
50. Ep Cler, 1-6, AB, 49-50.
51. OFF PASS Ps 9, 2-3, AB, 90.
52. 2C 1, 7, 12, O, 372.
53. IC 1, 14, 34; 1, 20, 55 O, 257-274.
54. IC 1, 22, 62-23, 69 O, 280-86.
55. 2C 2, 153, 202 O, 524.
56. IC 1, 12, 30, O, 253.
57. 2C 2, 5, 34-6, 38, O, 548-50.
58. Adm 8, 3 AB, 30.
59. Reg Non B, 23, 8, AB, 132.
60. Reg Non B, 23, 3, AB, 130.
61. IC 2, 7, 108-8, 109 O, 322-23.
62. Adm 6, 3 AB, 29.
63. IILF 16-17 AB, 68; ER 23, 4 AB, 131.

64. IC 1, 11, 26, O, 250; 2C 2, 117, 158 O, 489-90.
65. 2C 1, 2, 6; 2, 159, 209, O, 365-66. 529.
66. IC 1, 2, 5; 1, 13, 33 O, 232-33; 256.
67. 2C 1, 6. 10. O. 370.
68. IC 1, 9, 22; 2, 2, 92-93 O, 246-47. 307-08; 2C 10, 15 O, 375.
69. LM 12, 2, O, 722; LP 82 O, 1057-58.
70. For the meaning of this term see note 10 above.
71. IC 1, 5, 12-13 O, 239-40.
72. 2C 2, 83, 118, O, 460.
73. IC 2, 2, 93 O, 308.
74. IC 2, 4, 97-98; 2, 7, 105-07 O, 311-12. 319-20.
75. LP 43 O, 1021.
76. IC 1, 29, 80 O, 296.
77. IC 2, 8, O, 323.
78. IC 1, 21, 58 O, 278.
79. AB, 101-02.
80. IC 1, 11, 28 O, 251.
81. IC 1, 12, 30; 1, 14, 34 O, 253.256.
82. IC 1, 5, 11 O, 238.
83. Reg Non B 9, 6, AB, 117.
84. Reg Non B 10, 3, AB, 118.
85. Reg Non B 7, AB, 78.
86. Reg Non B 17, 17-18, AB, 123.
87. 2C 2, 53, 97 O, 442.
88. Cant Sol 2 AB, 38; Reg Non B 23, 3, AB, 131.
89. Ep Cus 5 AB, 53; Ep Ord 35 AB, 59; IC 1, 14, 82 O, 297.
90. Test 6-10 AB, 154.
91. Test 11 AB, 154; Ep Ord 17-20 AB, 57.
92. Ep Ord 34 AB, 59.
93. IC 1, 27, 71 O, 288; 2C 2, 61, 94-95 O, 439-41.
94. Adm 25 AB, 35; ER 9.10-11 AB, 117; 2C 2, 20, 49-21, 50; 2, 46, 76; 2, 144, 191 O, 406-07, 426, 515.
95. Adm 6, 2 AB, 32.
96. Ep Fid, II 19, AB, 68.
97. Ep Fid, II 32, AB, 69.
98. Ep Fid, II 40, AB, 70.
99. Reg B, 11, 9-10, AB, 144.
100. Hinwood, Bonaventure, O.F.M. "The Franciscan Charism," in *The Cord* 34:3 (March 1984) 92.



# Hermitage and the Active Life

BROTHER WALT HUND, T.O.R.

PERHAPS THE FIRST thing that I should explain is that the following thoughts are not the result of years (or even months!) of research on the subject of Franciscan Hermitage. I am grateful to those who have done that, for they have re-discovered one of the greatest treasures of St. Francis and Franciscan spirituality.

This is, instead, a reflection on the experience of hermitage as it has been integrated into the life of our friary. Of course, this is not offered as *the* way to live the hermitage experience, but we found this way to be a great source of spiritual nourishment for us.

I should also mention that, by nature, I'm not a "hermitage type" person. On the contrary, I'm one of those "B" type personalities. I'm sure you've heard the description of us "B"s: we hate to wait (for anything), love to argue (I discuss), think that all traffic lights should be replaced by "Yield" signs and, when the drawbridge is up to let a boat go by, would rather swim the river than wait for the boat to pass. My point is that I'm not the type of person that you'd expect to want to go off for two days of silence and solitude. But the fruitfulness of the hermitage experience has overcome the tendencies of the "go-getter" in me. Besides, we "B" personalities are also opportunists... we know a good thing when we see it.

The original idea to make hermitage a part of our life came from Giles, a brother in our house. He is, in the truest sense of the word, a visionary... a dreamer. As you may know, this type of person is not very common in the Franciscan life today. Their insight and vision call us to change, a proposition we usually find quite uncomfortable. But if we can walk down that difficult path with them, we are often rewarded with new and deeper experiences of God and His people. Every house should have at least one dreamer. Anyway, we took the original idea, prayed about it, talked about it, got some valuable insight from a good friend, Fr. Andre Cerino, O.F.M., and then decided to do it (for some "valuable insight and explanation" of your own, see Andre's article "Hermitage in the City," *The Cord*, March 1985.)

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*Br. Walt Hund, T.O.R., is a member of the Hermitage Community of San Damiano Friary, 1168 Franklin Ave., Bronx, N.Y. 10456.*

When you hear the word "hermitage," do you picture... a mountaintop ... a forest ... a babbling brook? Well, that's not exactly our setting. The South Bronx is one of the poorest and most violent sections of New York City. Scattered throughout the day and night, you can hear alarms, sirens, loud radios and the sounds of the children at play in the streets. Got the picture? Doesn't sound like the ideal spot for quiet contemplation, does it? But it is. With only occasional exception, we've all found the time spent in the hermitage to be basically quiet and peaceful.

It seems inconceivable that our experience can be "quiet and peaceful" in the midst of a lot of street noise. But is it the outside noise that really distracts us, or the noise that's inside us? It seems to me that it's the noise that's inside that can do the most damage. I have felt God's Presence very deeply and peacefully in some of the most chaotic and fast-moving situations imaginable. Conversely, I have prayed in monastic enclosures "far from the maddening crowd," and have been unable to hear the gentle voice of the Lord because the "hustle and bustle" inside me was drowning Him out!

Not all is quiet and peaceful in the hermitage, however. There are times of real testing and temptation. When we slow down and leave our distractions behind, we often find that the devil, as well as the Lord, is waiting to speak to us. Should this alarm us? Should it surprise us? I think not. Rather, it should excite us. Excite us? Yes. As followers of Jesus and Francis, we seek to be like them and to experience the things that they experienced. What happened to Jesus when He went off into the desert to fast and pray? He was tempted by the devil. What did Francis experience as he sought God through fasting and prayer? Temptation... at times so strong, that, to fight it, he hurled himself into thorny rose bushes and snowbanks. Now, I don't know about you, but rose bushes and snowbanks are not my idea of a good time. That's not what should excite us. What *should* excite us is having the same experience that Jesus and Francis had... temptation in prayer and solitude. Francis goes as far as to say, "Do not be afraid because you are tempted. The more you are beset by temptation, the greater servant and friend of God do I consider you. I tell you that nobody in fact ought to consider himself a perfect friend of God except insofar as he passes through many trials and temptations." We should rejoice at being called friends of God!

Of course, there's also the lighter side of temptation. Like the time that a friend of mine found out that I was about to be "cooped up in the little house for two days." He offered to secretly bring me a pizza at midnight, under cover of darkness. I declined, noting that the time would give me its own "food." To which he inquired, "But is it as good as pizza?" I assured him that it was better.

Our hermitage is an eight foot by ten foot pre-fabricated wooden building. Most people probably use them for tool sheds or pool cabanas. It sits in our front yard, in a space that we enclosed to give the hermit a little space outdoors in nice weather. Inside, it's pretty basic: oil lamps for light, a woodstove for heat and mattress for a bed. We go into the hermitage every five to seven weeks, depending on the number of the people in the house. It usually takes a half of a day to relax and slow down. Then you can begin to move more deeply into the experience of Jesus in solitude. We don't realize all of the things that occupy (and preoccupy) us until we pull back from them and "go off to a quiet place."

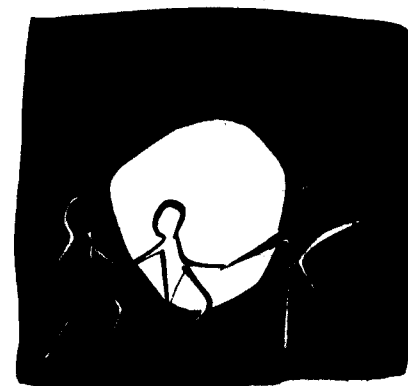
Speaking of going off to a quiet place, we thought about trying the hermitage experience within the house itself. Again, it was our "resident dreamer" who suggested that it would be beneficial, psychologically speaking, to "go away" from the friary. From my experience in the hermitage, I think that he is right. Just as going for a drive can allow you to "get away from it all" for awhile, so also can walking away from your house and going to a small hermitage outside. Also, you're away from all those familiar distractions: phones and doorbells ringing, doors slamming, water running, food cooking (or burning,) etc.

From listening to my brothers share their experiences in the hermitage, I think that I can safely say that we have found it to be of great spiritual assistance to us, both individually and communally. It is, for us, a "pearl of great price." But like the "pearl," the hermitage also has its price. We have to slow down, and that is something that, often, we don't enjoy doing. Running around distracts us from things we'd rather not think about (our unfaithfulness to God, our selfishness to our sisters and brothers, etc.). Theoretically, we don't question the value of it at all, but we can find all kinds of important reasons for not making the time. After reflecting on the time that I've been in hermitage, I must say that it was the times that I least desired to "go apart" for two days that were actually the most beneficial for me. And imagine my surprise when, lo and behold, God had managed to run the world for two days without me! And the Youth Group, guidance counselling, problems, successes, etc. were all still there, too. But there was a difference. I felt rejuvenated, renewed, better able to look at all those things in proper perspective. I also felt that I had more energy, more of myself to give to them. I have heard others in the house express the same sentiments. I have also heard them speak of feeling consoled by the Lord, of "having the burden lifted," of being renewed, of feeling loved, and also of feeling convicted and called to "turn from your sins and believe in the Good News." Indeed, the Lord speaks in solitude, and His Word is to return, once again, to Him... to move into deeper union with Him. But, as I listen to us share our experi-

ences in the hermitages, I realize that what excites us is not so much *what* the Lord says, but that He *does* speak to us. It is His tender voice, His gentle touch which causes us to know and feel His love.

Many times we find ourselves moving so fast and concerned about so many things that we rarely hear His voice. Our dialogue with God becomes a monologue. We're not asking Him to show us the Way; it's more like we're sending Him memos, informing Him of what we've decided to do and would He mind blessing our efforts? Many times we're talking to ourselves! And we can get used to it! Then, when we take the time to listen and hear the Lord speak, His Presence overwhelms us. We feel His voice. It is the experience of His Presence that we long for. That His message is one of congratulations, correction or consolation is secondary compared to the statement that his Presence makes: Our God is real!

It is this experience of God in the hermitage that has convinced me of its importance in the Franciscan life. Francis' Rule for Hermitages is beautiful, as are all of the lectures, writings, etc. about it. But we can find so many reasons for not doing it ourselves, for enshrining it as something that St. Francis could do but that is beyond us. After allowing the hermitage to slow you down so that you can hear His voice, you no longer seek to avoid it. Instead, you run toward it; you seek to protect it; you cherish it as you would a "pearl of great price." You seek to hear the Lord's voice, and feel His gentle touch. As St. Augustine says, "You have touched me, O Lord and I have tasted your sweetness. Now I burn with Your Love, and I hunger and thirst after You."



# Motivation of St. Francis

SISTER FRANCES ANN THOM, O.S.C.

HAVE YOU EVER noticed that when we want to do something or we are highly motivated by the outcome or the pleasure of something, that we do it with great enthusiasm (God withinness)? If we are not interested, i.e., highly motivated, then we can find all kinds of excuses as to why we can't do it or can't do it well. We can actually make ourselves ill even over the anticipation of being asked to do something for which we have no desire. These happenings, however, are not usually of any great proportion in our lives. They are usually just little day by day chores or interferences in what we would rather do.

The saints, on the other hand, seem to be highly motivated in many directions. Once again, did you ever notice in the lives of saints that they seem to be very prayerful and often very deeply contemplative persons while being able to accomplish many tasks, write volumes of books, visit many areas of the world. Some of the most contemplative have amazed the world at the active accomplishments for humankind. They often spent very little time at rest while spending much time in prayer which seems to have fed the motivation for the very quick and multitude of active tasks.

Since the greatest motivation that we can have is to serve the Lord in every way possible, then, to spend time in prayer; conversing with Him who is both activity and contemplation at the same time, one should and indeed, must become very aware of the multitude of tasks to be performed, simply by this conversation. It would seem that the more intense the conversation (contemplation) the more intense the ability and motivation to accomplish whatever it is that the Lord has inspired the contemplator to do for Him. It will surely be done quickly and with great motivation.

The primary example of this is, of course, Christ Himself. He was most certainly highly motivated, and this motivation was contagious. Once the apostles valued what Christ had given them, they no longer needed anyone to motivate them as to what or how they should work for the kingdom. We, however, have not had the good fortune to walk side by side with Christ nor to be in the upper room after seeing the resurrected and feeling the movement of the Spirit within us. Neither, however, do we expect to be persecuted and nailed to a cross in the same manner as the apostles.

---

*Sister Frances Ann Thom, O.S.C., a Consulting Editor of this Review is a member of the Poor Clare Community in Lowell, Massachusetts.*

What then is the way to become so highly motivated for the Lord and His works that we can forget all else and knowingly and at all times, work for His glory alone? We have to look at those who lived more closely to our own times. We should look particularly at those whose charism we have embraced. In the case of Franciscans it is, of course, Francis of Assisi.

Did you ever ask yourself how he was able to do what he did? When we are aware that his life span was so short, approximately 46 years and only 20 of these as a converted sinner and when we read his life after he had gained a few followers, he still seemed to be stumbling around wondering exactly what he was supposed to do. He tells us himself that he had only the guidance of the Lord to help him and that he lived day by day studying interiorly the manner in which Christ lived, since this was his example for his way of life. He was not given a daily agenda by God, but was allowed to make some mistakes along the way. It is surely amazing how God allows man to open himself to the spirit and try to follow the spirit within himself as well. One thing we can be sure of, if the motivation is strong and rightly directed, God accepts all kinds of things from us. I feel sorry for God at times, when I realize what a mess I have made of a perfectly good day.

When Francis went to see the Pope about getting his blessing on this new motley group who wished to serve the Lord after the example of Christ, the Pope must have wondered at their motivation. There were already so many ways in the established Church by which to serve the Lord and all of these ways could surely have used such men as these. But, the Pope did not turn them away. He prayed, probably, and hoped that their motivation would continue and their loyalty to the Church would prove valuable for other Christians—and he was not disappointed.

Francis could have ended up, as so many small groups of his day, by being excommunicated; by falling into heresy and just doing his own thing rather than obeying the voice and authority of the Church. But, as we all know one of the trademarks of Franciscans is loyalty to the Roman Church. At the present time, when there are so many opinions and so many theologians with opinions, which contradict Church authority, it is difficult to find the straight path which Francis followed—or is it? Have times really changed that much—is there something new under the sun? Perhaps the same motivation which caused Francis and his followers to remain loyal followers of the Church was the downfall for those who went aside from its teachings. Sadly enough, some of the heretics were very strong on the teachings of the Church but were asked not to teach it dogmatically and because they could not be content with that they disobeyed—their enthusiasm led them to be wrongly motivated, but just as intensely

What motivated Francis to give up his patrimony? He deeply loved his parents and they returned that love in many ways, but, perhaps Francis saw that his father's motivation for what he did was not correct. Francis wanted to improve on Pietro's motives for advancement and wanted to conform his own motives to those of Christ—these would not mix and so he had to make a choice.

We cannot condemn Pietro since we know that children learn their motivation from their parents first. Pietro had certainly motivated Francis to be a good business man, generous toward others (he never prevented him from giving parties and giving to others) even though Pietro's motivation for allowing this may not have been too clear. He inspired his son to be brave and spared nothing when Francis wanted to go off to become a knight. Pietro, like any normal parent, wanted to be proud of his son. The only problem seemed to be that Pietro could not understand how selfless giving and poor living could reap any benefits since he was totally a materialistic minded person. How different the story could have been had Pietro valued religion other than the money he made on selling fine cloth for vestments for church use.

What motivated Francis to try to become a knight? As a young man he saw the dream of the knight riding home victorious as a valiant and commendable thing. That he would wind up in prison and become ill had never entered his mind, but it was in that confinement that his true spirit developed. He tried to keep up the spirits of the other prisoners as he was aware that they had done a brave thing to do battle for something and someone they loved. In that sense they had not failed. Again, if one is rightly motivated how can one ever fail! Circumstances might not always bring about the desired results. Francis will see this repeated several times in his life and he will rise above the circumstances through his faith and trust that God sees the heart.

Francis' many gifts surely helped him but they could also have been a hindrance. Had his eyes swerved from the path set for him and his pride and desire for power taken control, he would still have become great in the world, but not in the eyes of God. He had the potential to greatness for whatever he would do. There was probably a thin line between the potential of being the materialistic man and the spiritual man Francis became, as he sallied forth on that first campaign. The gap widened when he was forcibly held prisoner. It may have been the first time in his life that he had time to think about what he was actually doing. Had he been motivated to go to war to make his parents proud of him, he would never have thought about the serious aspects of life. He may have come to the realization of another father who also deserved respect of him. All the intensity which had gone into parties, bargain-



ing for goods, being popular, now shifted, gradually from the exterior performance which was seen by others, to the interior study of all he had never noticed before. He emerged from prison as one who was a stranger to all about him. He allowed nothing to escape his notice and he drew it in as one draws breath to live. The real world was upon him now and he would be equal to it and just. He would be a knight; he would be a troubadour, of all created things but most especially of the great King!

Now he became as silent as he had been boisterous. He enjoyed the acts of creation as much as he had enjoyed being the center of entertainment. He was as giving as ever, but not careless and he sought out the least more than he had sought out the noble. The earth, the sea and the sky were new teachers for him for the Truth was upon him and he allowed it to set him free.

All of this, of course, was in the very beginning of his conversion and while he was enchanted by his new found dream, his new found life and his new found Father, it was not hard to be highly motivated. How did he continue this motivation when he became disenchanted? When life became hum-drum again and daily problems harrassed him?

He was not truly a saint at this point, but only one in the making and as such had quite a way to go. True his personality was such that he could see each new day as a new adventure. He could talk to the creatures about him as easily as he could to any person; he could cry over the passion of our Lord and not be embarrassed by the approach of a visitor; instead he would tell him of his great compassion and soon have the other joining him in tears; he daily investigated the meaning of the Gospels in order to live more perfectly the life he wished to imitate. He saw both emotions of joy and sorrow at the birth of Christ; joy, for a child was born and what a child!; sorrow, that he had to be born in such a poor place, away from home and under such circumstances. He again, saw these mixed emotions when Jesus was twelve and remained in the temple; joy, for Jesus was openly teaching the doctors of the law and beginning to manifest himself to the world; sorrow, for the doctors did not truly understand who he was and, sorrow, for Mary and Joseph whose human hearts were breaking for fear they had not cared for him properly. But for them a great joy returned with them to Nazareth. There was joy and sorrow in the public ministry of Jesus. Surely Mary missed his presence. Surely she must have felt lonely at times. Jesus, himself, felt emotions of joy and sorrow; joy, at the repentance of so many souls; sorrow, at the betrayal by a friend. But, it was on the cross that Francis was most intensely aware of these twin emotions. Jesus was sorrowful unto death as he physically, emotionally and psychologically suffered, but he was joyful in the full knowledge of the glorious outcome for so many souls. This scene Francis was most familiar with as it was these emotions he, himself, experienced at La Verna when the Lord appeared to him and embraced him with the stigmata.

The embrace of that stigmatization has been felt all over the world. What headlines would be written today: A LOWLY MERCHANT FROM ASSISI RECEIVES THE STIGMATA OF CHRIST! But that was only the final engraving of his likeness to Christ.

Had Francis not greeted brother sun by the day and sister moon by night; had he not sung God's praises as he wandered about the hillsides; had he not recognized the mark of God on each tiny creature; had he not wrestled with his own darkness and come to terms with it; had he not journeyed to Rome to pledge his undying allegiance to the Pope; had he not listened to the voice at Spoleto and the inspiration of the crucifix; had he not publicly proclaimed God as his father; had he not had intense devotion to the Eucharistic Lord; had he not totally emptied himself of self and embraced Lady Poverty, he would not have had the motivation needed to live each day. He would not have had the motivation to go forward and live in perfect joy which reward was the final approval by Christ.

In all of this, it seems to me, Francis says, look forward to each precious moment of each day for it shall never come again. Dream great dreams and expect them to come true; as if it were always your last moment and rejoice in it as if you were about to step over the threshold of heaven.



## **Incarnations (Merton)**

Their Incarnation is their holiness,  
Their sanctity must come from God;  
This clumsy pup, who runs my lawn;  
This ever-changing beauty-laden dawn;  
The stars that dot the midnight sky;  
Birds singing in their flight on high.

I cannot cause the latent power  
New-born of recent springtime love;  
But needs must stand in humble prayer  
And climb toward God on faith-lit stair.

Fr. Joyce Finnigan, O.F.M.

## **Vocation**

"I AM WHO I AM."  
Say this to the People,  
'I AM' has sent me to you.' "  
"I am" a franciscan penitent,  
and "i am" who "i am"  
since "I AM" sent me.  
Who "i am" is who  
"I AM" has sent.

Onceforward wherever "i am"  
or whatever "i am" doing,  
who "i am" will  
communicate itself: a franciscan  
penitent  
whom "I AM" has sent.

Michael M. Pattee, T.O.R.

## **'Araphel**

sitting for the universe  
wrapped and still  
dancing stellar particles  
quark's quadrille  
receptive sensitivity  
attuned to cosmic band  
gleaning starsongs globally  
strains of light and sand  
tracing dark divinity  
a silhouetted face  
in nebular Incarnation  
haloed time/ a hallowed space

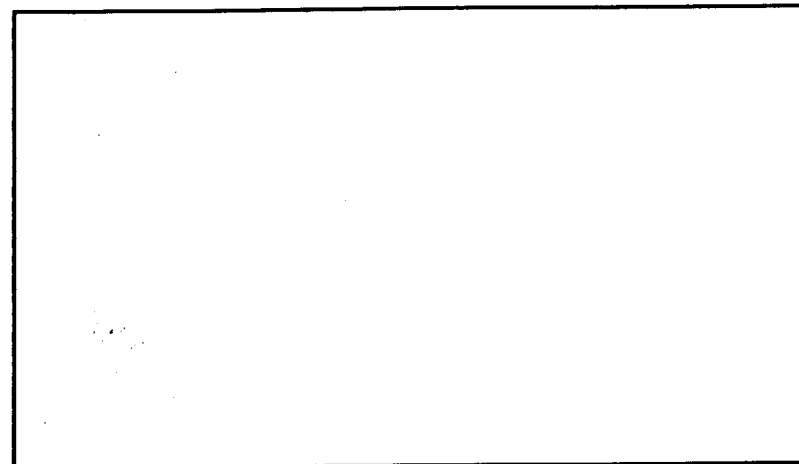
Sr. M. Felicity Dorsett, OSF

## **Books Received**

Cody, Susan, Ronan Marian, and Taussig Hal. *Sophia. The Future of Feminist Spirituality*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. Pp. 103. Cloth. \$14.95.

Leech, Kenneth. *True Prayer. An Invitation to Christian Spirituality*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. Pp. 202, including Bibliography and Index. Paper, \$7.95.

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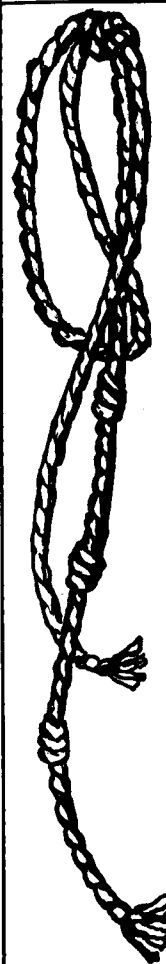
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FEBRUARY, 1987

# The CORD

## A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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## Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

### I. Writings of Saint Francis

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Adm: Admonitions                               | Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221                  |
| BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo               | LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God                  |
| CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun               | LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours                      |
| EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony                   | OffPass: Office of the Passion                         |
| EpCler: Letter to Clerics <sup>1</sup>         | OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix                     |
| EpCust: Letter to Superiors <sup>1</sup>       | RegB: Rule of 1223                                     |
| EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful <sup>1</sup> | RegNB: Rule of 1221                                    |
| EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo                   | RegEr: Rule for Hermits                                |
| EpMin: Letter to a Minister                    | SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady                         |
| EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order              | SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues                     |
| EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People         | Test: Testament of St. Francis                         |
| ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God        | UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare                    |
| ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father           | VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy               |
| FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare            | <sup>1</sup> I, II refer to First and Second Editions. |

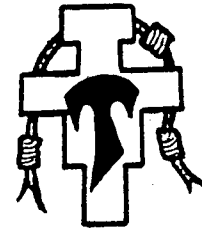
### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis  | LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis   |
| 2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis | LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis |
| 3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles   | LP: Legend of Perugia                    |
| CL: Legend of Saint Clare            | L3S: Legend of the Three Companions      |
| CP: Process of Saint Clare           | SC: Sacrum commercium                    |
| Flor: Little Flowers of St. Francis  | SP: Mirror of Perfection                 |

**Omnibus:** Marion A. Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

**AB:** Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

## EDITORIAL



**"We, the People...."**

SAINT FRANCIS was not unaware of the terrible distortion that occurs if our Christian lives contradict the powerful language of our tradition. He was quite sensitive to the fact that we can, in the words of the late Bernard Lonergan, "devalue, distort, water down, corrupt that language." The phrase "word and deed" comes from his lips with force and frequency. Francis strongly intuited how we can betray our images and as well as our language. We can fail to live out our images, we can merely keep repeating the language of our tradition, we can even misinterpret what our images truly mean.

An example of this latter point is the all too frequent application of the biblical and conciliar image "People of God" to the non-ordained alone, especially to the laity. Many preachers, perhaps unconsciously but certainly uncritically, will speak directly or indirectly of "You, the People of God." This is an outright misinterpretation and betrayal of the intended meaning of the image. In distorting the meaning of the image, life itself runs the risk of being distorted. With biblical fidelity the Second Vatican Council states that "all that has been said of the People of God is addressed equally to laity, religious and clergy." It certainly must acknowledge that "the People of God is constituted by various ranks." The primary emphasis is, however, that all of us—Pope, bishops, priests, laity, and religious—are to understand, live and proclaim this image as that which empowers us to be a "community of life, of love, and of truth." The Church knows of no such language or image as "You, the People of God."

Francis fires our imagination. He summons us to "word and deed," especially as it fleshes out the meaning of Church, of eucharist. He could not and would not use the word "eucharist" without living it out in fact. He pleaded with his brothers for that fellowship

(koinonia), service (diakonia), and witness (marturion) which alone give substantial credibility to the New Testament community of faith. Our Franciscan memory will always delight in recalling that in the beginning was this experience—there was Francis, there was brotherhood, there was Gospel life. The Rule came later and it came as "Rule and Life." It was not so much prescription as it was description. It showed what it is and what it is not to live as followers of Christ in ordinary and extraordinary situations of life. It breathed and generated life, communion, fellowship with all—saint and sinner, sick and healthy, Christian and non-Christian. It expresses the dynamism and power of the image "People of God."

The re-collection and re-membering of our own Franciscan lives in accordance with the remarkable image of early Franciscanism would provide now as it did then a remarkable impetus for the entire Church. Franciscan life and preaching can heighten the consciousness of all believers to our most essential unity in faith and discipleship. A certain daring of word and action could enable us to speak and to live authentically the "We" of the People of God. We can rectify the religious imagination and, therefore, the lives of those who mistakenly accept "You, the People of God." Francis has christified our imagination and thus energized us for a life that does justice to our Christian images and language.

Bishop Jacques de Vitry was so moved by what he saw in Francis and his followers that he wrote letters describing their impact on the total life of the Church. Have we in any way fired the imagination of our bishops in preparation for the Extraordinary Synod on the Laity? Do our Franciscan lives truly preach the image "People of God"?

*Joseph T. Lorno O.F.M.*

## The Place of Manual Labor in the Spirituality of St. Francis

JOHN F. GIRARD, O.F.M.

WORK, as seen in the development of the various forms of apostolic life in the Middle Ages, has come to be traditionally understood as "manual labor." Participation in manual labor was a requirement for the religious person from the earliest traces of the eremitical life. Although the work of the monks of the desert was mostly out of necessity for survival,<sup>1</sup> it nonetheless was considered part of the whole of the spiritual life. Francis of Assisi, no doubt, shared the same conviction concerning the necessity of manual labor:

And I used to work with my hands, and I [still] desire to work; and I firmly wish that all my brothers give themselves to honest work. Let those who do not know how to work... learn.<sup>2</sup>

Those words capsulize the import and impact of the role which manual labor played in the mind of Francis; his Testament gives light to Chapter V of the Later Rule which appears to be an edited version of Chapter VII of the Earlier Rule. To come to a fuller understanding of the foundation out of which Francis formulated the way in which manual labor was to be a part of the life of friars, the following must be explored: the historical development of the notion of work from its beginning in the eremitical form of Apostolic Life through the Benedictine form of monastic life, and the reform at Cluny and Cîteaux. Secondly, to come to appreciate the notion of work in the writings and early biographies of Francis, the medieval conception of *devotio*, along with Francis' understanding of the "Spirit of the Lord" and "His holy manner of working" require due consideration. Finally, by an inspection of the related texts in the writings and early biographies of Francis, Francis' understanding of the form, manner and purpose of "manual labor" will be elucidated.

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*John F. Girard, O.F.M., is a student at the Chicago Theological Union. He is a member of the Sacred Heart Province.*

The understanding of the Fathers of the Church included an insistence on the nobility of work. Present as an act of the human person before the Fall, work cannot be considered as a punishment for sin. On the contrary, work has dignity and is "capable of enriching men spiritually as an ascetic discipline."<sup>3</sup> The notions of manual labor began to develop with the inception of monasticism lead by St. Anthony, St. Pachomius, St. Basil and St. Benedict.

The security of the monastery provided for the monks of St. Benedict a lessening of the threat to survival experienced by the hermits of the desert. Nonetheless, work was perceived as a means of subsistence for the monks—it was considered an essential part of life in the monastery. Work began to take on more and more the character of an ascetical discipline in harmony with the rest of the monks' life. Further, and more so as time passed, as the monasteries began to grow in size and number, work was seen to provide a surplus for almsgiving to the poor. There is no sense that any work was for apostolic ends, nor was there any academic or cultural purpose. The primary concern of monastic activity centered on the "supernatural welfare" of the monks so that "[their] souls may be saved."<sup>4</sup>

Chapter 48 of the Rule of St. Benedict, "The Daily Manual Labor," sheds light on the intrinsic role manual labor played in the life of the monk. Later, it will become clear how Francis' writings and early biographies reflect a similar structure particularly when it comes to describing the encounter of a brother who is idle.

Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brothers should have specified periods for manual labor as well as for prayerful reading.

We believe that the times for both may be arranged as follows: from Easter to the first of October, they will spend their mornings after Prime till about the fourth hour at whatever work needs to be done. From the fourth hour ... about midway through the eighth hour, and then until Vespers they are to return to whatever work is necessary. They must not become distressed if local conditions or their poverty should force them to do the harvesting themselves. When they live by the labor of their hands, as our fathers and the apostles did, then they are really monks. ...

At all, one or two seniors must surely be deputed to make the rounds of the monastery while the brothers are reading. Their duty is to see that no brother is so apathetic as to waste time or engage in idle talk to the detriment of his reading, and so not only harm himself but also distract others. If a monk is found—God forbid—he should be reproved a first and second time. If he does not amend, he must be subjected to the punishment of the rule as a warning to others. ...

If anyone is so remiss and indolent that he is unwilling or unable to study or read, he is to be given work in order that he may not be idle.

Brothers who are sick or weak should be given a type of work or craft that will keep them busy without overwhelming them or driving them away.<sup>5</sup>

A significant change was brought about in the life of the monastery with the reform that took place at Cluny in the tenth century. Where once manual labor was equated with agricultural labor and required a good part of the monks' time during the course of the day, the ancient balance between *opus dei* and manual labor was changed. The singing of psalms and the saying of prayers became the primary labor of the monks. Lay persons were employed for the agricultural tasks. The work required by life within the monastery: the mending and washing of clothes, the cleaning of shoes, the baking of bread and the cooking of food, were all included in the list of manual labors for the monk as well as was the work done in the scriptorium.<sup>6</sup> In the life of the monk at Cluny, agricultural labor which had once served as a means of subsistence now served only as a symbolic remedy against idleness. Such manual labor was considered a distraction from contemplation.<sup>7</sup>

The interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict at Cluny, though it had a profound impact on the understanding of the role of manual labor, cannot be seen as paradigmatic for monastic life in its time. Monastic reform at Cîteaux in the eleventh century saw a genuine restoration of manual labor. A hallmark for Cistercian spirituality was the predominance of manual labor. In fact, the emphasis on manual labor became that which distinguished the reform at Cîteaux from other contemporary reform movements.<sup>8</sup> The reform at Cîteaux initiated a return to living the Rule of Benedict more faithfully and authentically and thus urged the monks to live by the labor of their hands.

The burden of manual labor was largely seasonal; heavier in the summer and lighter in the winter. Routine chores at the grangers were the duties of the lay brothers, but at times of plowing and harvesting all able-bodied monks took part in the field work for as long as it was necessary. On such days, the morning mass was said at an early hour and the whole community marched out carrying various tools to the fields, where they spent the rest of the day, praying and taking their meals where they happened to work.<sup>10</sup>

The function which work played in the life of the monk at Cîteaux was only an attempt to return to the spirit of the Rule of Benedict but was also in response to a move by the Church to reform the abuses of the monastic life. Cîteaux was not the salvation of this form of Apostolic life;

rather, it served to meet the needs of the time—to return to the life of the Gospel. Much reform had to do with the consideration of poverty which stood in contrast to the latifundia and wealth accumulated by the monasteries. There was never again a complete reform of the Benedictine form of life as it existed in its original form. Nonetheless, the reforms did contribute to the development of a theology of work which included the following: a concept of the earthly good, the affirmation of order and purpose, the assertion of the spiritual over the temporal, and the view that all thought and action is oriented in synthesis to a supernatural final end. The development of the notion of work brought to the medieval mind a sense of the quality manifest in the order of creation and its relationship to redemption. It brought about a new sense of justice and charity. Work was a manner of the sanctification of material reality of which the human person was a part because material reality was part of the world redeemed.<sup>11</sup>

The contributions evolved from St. Benedict's notion of prayer and work, *ora et labora*, were the fundamental principles which, to a greater or lesser degree, grounded the significance of work in the forms of Apostolic Life until the time of Francis. Francis' perception of how these principles he intended for the Friars applied to everyday life evolved through his life. Frequently, Francis' understanding concretely reflects the Benedictine influence both in its original form and in its reform. We shall look now to his writings to understand how Francis developed, explored and challenged these principles.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Francis was aware from the first that he was founding a true religious order, but a very different one from previous monastic institutions.<sup>12</sup>

Work was an essential element to life in accordance with the Gospel, and therefore, to religious life. Francis built on this monastic notion of working as he emphasized its efficacious role in personal spiritual development. Francis' understanding of the function of work in the itinerant preaching form of Apostolic Life (based on Mt. 10, 7-10) focuses closely on one of his predecessors: St. Benedict of Nursia. Benedict, who gave concrete form to the cenobitic form of monasticism, could have perceived work in three ways: 1) as a job to be done (consisting mainly of chores to be done about the monastery); 2) as a means of passing time to avoid boredom or idleness; or 3) as a "sacred thing, as the dedication of hand and brain to a lofty purpose."<sup>13</sup> It is not probable that Benedict originally perceived work in the third sense, but with the solemnization of liturgy, the distinction of God's work, *opus dei*, and man's work, manual labor,

became less a disparity.<sup>14</sup> The writing and copying of manuscripts and the general, pertinent work of the liturgical "factory" led the monks to perceive this clerical labor in the manner which they had previously perceived manual labor. Thus, the status of manual work was elevated. Manual labor concerned itself with a "lofty purpose."

Perhaps Francis' perception of this monastic notion of work influenced him as far back as his experience before the crucifix at San Damiano.<sup>15</sup> From Francis' familiarity with the Benedictine form of life,<sup>16</sup> he could have perceived the rebuilding of depreciated churches as the practical enfleshment of the command he had received from the image on the crucifix; he had come to know manual labor as doing the work of God.

He did not try to build one anew, but he repaired an old one, restored an ancient one. He did not tear out the foundation, but he built on it, ever reserving to Christ his prerogative, though he was not aware of it, but that which had been laid, which is Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup>

In Francis' understanding of the holy manner of working, "sancta operatio," the Spirit is seen as the dynamic principle of the spiritual life operative in the life of every Christian.<sup>20</sup> Francis stresses in the Later Rule X: 8: "let them [the brothers] pursue what they desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working." This "sancta operatio" is intrinsic to Francis' understanding of work. The relationship between the "Spirit of the Lord" and "His holy manner of working" is inseparable, for it is when the Spirit is active in the life of a person, that work, all things in word and deed, lead to union with God in the spirit of prayer. It is the Spirit who prays within a person insofar as that person cooperates with the grace of prayer and thus participates in His holy manner of working. This dynamic of prayer is captured in what was understood as *devotio* by the mind of the medieval person. Francis, consciously or unconsciously, lives with this notion deeply imbedded in the fabric of his spirituality.

In order to understand this medieval notion of *devotio*, we must look to the monastic world which concerned itself primarily with liturgical prayer; *devotio* is that which characterizes the particular monastic understanding of the soul's movement toward God. *Devotio* characterizes the end or purpose of liturgical prayer and consists of *contemplatio*, *oratio*, *meditatio*, *lectio*, *psalmodia*, and *sacrorum mysteriorum actio*, all of which brings one to a knowledge and love of God. *Devotio*, as grace, strengthens and develops in the heart by reflection on earthly existence and a desire for the eternal life; thus, it mirrors the attitude of one before God, identifies with charity and responds to the command, "love God with all your heart."

Therefore, everything one does in desire for God, is done with *devotio* elevating the mind to God.<sup>21</sup> Francis makes this clear in his letter to the Entire Order, 41-42:

[The minister General should insist] that the clerics say the Office with devotion before God, not concentrating on the melody of voice but on the harmony of the mind, so that the voice may blend with the mind, and the mind be in harmony with God. [Let them do this] in such a way that they may please God through purity of heart and not charm the ears of people with sweetness of voice. ...

Bonaventure develops this notion of *devotio* in his *Sermon on the Rule of the Friars Minor*. His understanding of *devotio* consists in Francis' address to the clerics and laics concerning their manner of prayer: clerics must say the Divine Office and must do so with *devotio*, that stance toward God which harmonizes the words of the soul and leads the soul to God. Insofar as the cleric has a desire for the Spirit of the Lord, so much so will his prayer be efficacious. The same applies to the laics who recite the Pater noster.<sup>22</sup>

*Devotio* has a threefold characterization: it is distinct, flowing and permanent. It is distinct in the desire to have the Spirit of the Lord above all for whoever has the Spirit of the Lord is in God and God in that person. *Devotio* is flowing in as much as when the Spirit of the Lord enters the soul, its holy manner of working is manifested by exterior actions. *Devotio* is permanent in that one prays always with a pure heart and is not interrupted.<sup>23</sup>

It is with this attitude that Francis writes about the role of manual labor to the friars and is that by which we can understand the purpose that manual labor serves.

Concerned with the holy manner of working, Francis says: I have asked the Lord, brothers, to deign to show me when I am his servant. And the most kind Lord just now deigned to give me this reply: "know that you are truly my servant when you think, speak and do holy things." Therefore, I have called you, brothers, because I wish to be filled with shame before you if at any time I do nothing of these three things.<sup>24</sup>

And Francis also writes: "Therefore, the servants of God must always give themselves to prayer or some good work." Evidence of a wholly dedicated and spiritual approach to everyday life is seen in Francis' manner of working: day was spent by the brothers working in the city and the evening was spent in prayer in the hermitage outside the city.<sup>25</sup>

This holy manner of working includes three "graces" which Francis

mentions in the Earlier Rule: the grace of working, the grace of preaching and the grace of prayer,<sup>27</sup> all cooperating with the "spirit of the Lord"<sup>28</sup> and emerging from "His holy manner of working." "Those brothers to whom the Lord has given the grace of working should do their work faithfully and *devotedly*;"<sup>29</sup> those brothers who are lukewarm, lacking zeal and display an unwillingness toward work will be "quickly vomited forth from the mouth of the Lord."<sup>30</sup> The brother need not worry about the form which his labor takes as long as it is empowered by the "Spirit of the Lord" in his yearning to be a humble servant of God. His work, then, becomes the work of God and contributes to the movement of his soul to God.

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Francis was not overly concerned with the specific character of the work each brother was to perform but was more conscious that the brother's work would enhance his spiritual life. Nonetheless, Francis does offer some guidelines: "they [the brothers] were not to be administrators or managers in whatever places they are staying, nor are they to be superiors in houses or find themselves in any office which might generate scandal."<sup>31</sup> The friars are to be the lesser ones subject to all in the same house.<sup>32</sup> Their attitude should be that of Christ's:

'I did not come to serve but to serve' (cf. Mt. 10.29), says the Lord. Those who are placed over others should glory in such an office only as much as they would were they assigned to washing the feet of the brothers,<sup>33</sup> and, 'Blessed is the servant who is found to be as humble among his subjects as he would be among his masters.'<sup>34</sup>

The humility which characterizes Francis' manner of working as a servant of God is clear in Admonition XIX: "Blessed is the servant who esteems himself no better... for what a man is before God, that he is and nothing more."<sup>35</sup>

Francis' understanding of the form which work takes can be more specifically defined when we look to the critical texts of his Earlier Rule: "*Et Fratres, qui sciunt laborare, laborent et eandem artem exerceant.*"<sup>36</sup>

In the medieval understanding the word, *ars*, refers to a person's occupation, skill or knowledge and may also be understood as "craft" or something done with the hands. *Laborare* is defined as "exerting oneself;" *exercere* is defined in the sense of "applying oneself" or simply, "exercising" or "plying."<sup>37</sup> This text is elaborated upon in II Celano 161: "I want all my brothers to work and be employed, and those who do not know how should learn some crafts." Although once again Francis does not list the *artes* in which the brothers may employ themselves, Francis says: "everyone should remain in that skill and office in which he has been called (I Cor 7,24)."<sup>38</sup> This lack of clarity seems to be accounted for by Francis' understanding of the holy manner of working discussed above and by the work of the Spirit active and dynamic in each of the brothers' lives. Lazaro Iriarte in *Franciscan History: The Three Orders of St. Francis of Assisi*, notes:

On entering the fraternity the brothers did not give up their former profession or craft, but continued to practice it as a means of earning their bread and giving service as Minors. For this purpose, they were allowed to keep the tools or instruments of their trade.<sup>39</sup>

Iriarte thus lends to the understanding of the form of work the brothers did; it is important to note that they did not change their profession or craft, they were only to continue their work, work with their hands,<sup>40</sup> be kept busy, and to perform good and honest works.<sup>41</sup> The brothers were to do their work faithfully and devotedly, not detracting from the good of others; "they are to work... as an example [to others]."<sup>42</sup>

Francis emphasizes the begging of alms throughout his writings and frequently alternates the focus of his statements; he makes it clear, though, that begging is a work, a labor. "The favorite occupation [of the brothers], however, was caring for the lepers, with whom they shared whatever they obtained (alms) either by working or by begging."<sup>43</sup> In the Earlier Rule IX: 9, Francis equates the acquisition of alms with a specific form of labor: "and the brothers who labor to acquire them [alms]." In the Earlier Rule VIII: 8, Francis says that the brothers may beg alms for the necessity of the lepers; Francis also equates begging with service when he is speaking of meeting the needs of the brothers.<sup>44</sup> Francis, here, clearly departs from the monastic and canonical norm which forbids the seeking of alms.<sup>45</sup> Francis understands that begging is not only a form of work and service, but also a way to identify with the humility of Jesus.<sup>46</sup>



The seeking of alms of which Francis writes recalls again the grace of working. Francis understands the results of working to be happiness and prosperity: 'You shall eat the fruit of your labors; and it will be well for you (Ps 127.2).' In contrast to this, Francis records in the Earlier Rule VIII: 5, the exhortation of the Apostle: 'whoever does not wish to work, should not eat (cf. Thes 3.10).' This command which Francis cites is enfleshed in two accounts of the story of "Brother Fly." Bonaventure explains that the grace of working is destroyed by the brother who waited to be fed by the labor of others because it detracted from the good the brothers were doing.<sup>47</sup>

An analysis of the Later Rule in light of the Testament<sup>48</sup> reveals three fundamental and essential functions of work: 1) to give good example; 2) to practice the ideal of working without profit; and 3) to void idleness. The first function is closely related to the second; Francis wanted the friars to practice the ideal of working without profit to be an example to the society of the time which was caught up in the rising merchant class of which he had been a part and which he had known well. Further, the reference in the Later Rule to compensation for work is interpreted as material not monetary;<sup>49</sup> Francis makes it perfectly clear that compensation was only enough for alimentary sustenance. He writes in the Earlier Rule VIII: 3:

Therefore, none of the brothers, wherever he may be or wherever he goes, should in any way carry, receive or have received [by another] either money or coins, whether for clothing or books or payment for any work—indeed, for no reason—unless it is for the evident need of the sick brothers; for we must not suppose that money or coins have any greater value than stones.

The attitude which leads one from profit seeking goals destroys the Spirit alive in the grace of working; "running around the world for filthy gain"<sup>50</sup> is a distraction from the creative work of the Spirit contributing to the spirit of holy prayer and devotion and the good of the soul. Work for the friars is essentially not for profit and makes no claims for just compensation. Francis wished the friars to be an example to the people who were avoiding the "kingdom at hand" by their eager pursuit of monetary gain. This pursuit of profitable gain was working contrary to the Christian notion of work.<sup>51</sup>

Clearly connected with compensation for work or the lack thereof is the directive of Francis concerning the seeking of alms: "and when we are not paid for our work, let us have recourse to the table of the Lord, seeking alms from door to door."<sup>52</sup> The begging of alms is not only a form of work then but an identification with the Lord in the poor. Such is Francis convinced of this that he is known to have said that a true friar minor should not be long without going out begging alms.<sup>53</sup> Francis recognizes this identification with the poor in begging alms and formulated a spiritual directive for the friars while practically providing for their alimentary needs; participation in the banquet at the table of the Lord is eschatological in character for it echoes the fruit of salvation without personal justification<sup>54</sup> by the reception of alms without laboring for them.

The third function of work, to avoid idleness, returns us to the creative role of the Spirit, back to God's creative act. Through manual labor the human person participates in God's creative act. "By working the human person administers the dominion of God in creation and thus, as God's image and likeness, renders visible the hidden Creator."<sup>55</sup> It is through work that the human person comes to be what he ought to be rendering the likeness of the Creator in whom he was made.

The biographical sources surrounding these words against idleness give evidence that Francis' attitude toward work and his desire that all the brothers work with their hands was well known by the friars:

Another time, at St. Mary of the Portiuncula, the man of God, considering how much profit from prayer flows away because of idle words after prayer, ordained this remedy against the fault of idle words saying: "If any of the brothers utters an idle or useless word, he shall be bound immediately to admit his guilt and to say a Pater Noster for each idle word. But thus I want it, that if he himself is the first to admit the guilt of his fault, he shall say a Pater Noster for his own soul; if he is accused of his fault first by another, he shall offer the prayer for the soul of that other."<sup>56</sup>

No one could appear idle before him without being corrected by him with a sharp rebuke. For he himself worked and labored with his hands as an

example of all perfection, allowing nothing of the greatest gift of time to escape. But once he said: "I want all my brothers to work and be employed, and those who do not know how to work should learn some crafts." And he gave this reason: "That we may be less burdensome to men and women," he said, "and that the heart and tongue may not wander to unlawful things in idleness."<sup>57</sup>

It was Francis' daily custom after the meal, to devote himself together with his brothers to some manual work to combat laziness. He, in fact, considered it harmful for himself and the brothers to lose the benefit of prayer, which had been obtained through grace, by indulging in useless conversation after praying. In order to avoid this, he made the following regulation which all the brothers were to observe:

"If a brother whether while travelling or working with others engages in some useless talk, he will be obliged to recite the Our Father together with the praises of God at the beginning and end of prayer. If the guilty one accuses himself of it, as soon as he becomes aware of his lapse, he will say the our Father and Praises of God for himself; if he is chided by a brother before he accuses himself, he will say the our Father in the way indicated for this brother. If he is reproved by a brother, is refractory, and does not want to recite the Our Father, he will say two for the one who admonishes him, provided another brother joins the first to testify that the idle word was indeed spoken. He shall recite these Praises of the Lord at the beginning and at the end of prayer, loud enough and clear enough for all the brothers present to hear and understand; during that time, they must be quiet and listen. A brother who is present at idle talk without stopping will be obliged to recite the Our Father and the Praises of God for the guilty one. Every brother who meets one or more brothers in a cell, house or elsewhere will always be solicitous to praise and bless God."<sup>58</sup>

Thus do we see the intensity with which Francis feels the necessity to avoid idleness; not only did he offer at times a strong reprimand to the idle friar, but by designating the Praises of God and the Our Father to be said, he prompted the friar to return to the spirit of prayer and devotion so intrinsically associated with the holy manner of working.

The development of Francis' understanding of the work leads one to see a greater clarity in his intention and thoughts. It appears as though from 1221 - 1226 Francis' own perception of work became strikingly clear to himself in the kind of life that he wanted his brothers to live. The words of the Testament are few and concise compared to the Earlier rule VII. Brother Giles writes of the relationship between the later Rule and the Testament:

"Because thou shalt eat the labors of thine hands: O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be." Thus St. Francis taught the brothers at first and caused it to be written in the Rule and towards his death, confirmed it in his Testament.<sup>59</sup>

It appears from these words of Giles that he was well aware of Francis' intention; he points to the heart of Francis' thoughts and desires, i.e., his Testament. Therefore, we are able to identify the primary elements of Francis' concern: work is to be an example to others and a means by which one avoids idleness. Although we need to be aware of what appears in Francis' other writings for a fuller understanding of the meaning and significance of his Testament, we do so in order to come to an understanding of the principal functions of work.

For Francis, the result of work is happiness. From that which we have seen and have come to understand thus far, it follows that happiness lies in the fulfillment of the desire to possess the "Spirit of the Lord" and "His holy manner of working," i.e., to live in harmony with the activity of the Spirit and joining the soul to God. Work is a spiritually enriching discipline which keeps the mind in tune with God and which bears fruit not only for oneself but for others, too, in the example it provides. This example serves to edify those who perceive it and encourages them to do the same. The avoidance of idleness, then, becomes a concrete sign of the presence of the Spirit of the Lord, and a means by which one can witness to the kingdom of God at hand.

<sup>1</sup>*The Living of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Norman Russel (U.S.A.: Cistercian Press, 1980) 25-26.

<sup>2</sup>The following abbreviations will be used through the pages of this work:

Opus: *Opuscula sancti patris Francisci Assisiensis*, ed. Cajetan Esser, O.F.M., Bibliotheca Franciscana Ascetica Medii Aevi, vol. 12 (Grottaferrata (Roma): Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1978), trans. *Writings of Francis and Clare: the Complete Works*, trans. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap. and Ignatius C. Brady, O.F.M. (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), cited henceforth as W.S.F. Adm: *Admonitiones*, ed. Opus, 55-82, trans. *Admonitions*, W.S.F., 25-36; ER: *Regula non bullata*, ed. Opus, 241-294, trans. *Earlier Rule*, W.S.F., 135-150; LORd: *Epistola toti ordini missa*, ed. Opus, 135-150, trans. *Letter to the entire Order*, W.S.F., 55-61; LR: *Regula Bullata*, ed. Opus, 226-238, trans. *Later Rule*, W.S.F., 136-145; Test: *Testamentum*, ed. Opus, 307-317, trans. *Testament*, W.S.F., 154-156. This reference is Test 21.

<sup>3</sup>Edwin G. Kaiser, C.P.P.S., "Work, Theology of," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

<sup>4</sup>*The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*, ed. Timothy Fry, O.S.B. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1980) 96.

## Miriam

Miriam—humble maiden:

Chosen, from all eternity, to be the spouse of the Most High.

Miriam—perfect flower, delicate and without blemish:

Touched by the Paraclete . . .

as the morning dew tenderly envelops the blossom.

Miriam—earthen vessel, perfect in form and substance:

A total fiat transformed you into the Ark of the Word Incarnate.

Miriam—trusting servant:

Living your life in perfect contemplation.

Accepting all beyond your comprehension . . .

stored in the recesses of your heart.

Miriam—mirror of Light:

Reflecting the Father's unconditional love . . .

irresistibly drawing us to eternal union with Him

William J. Boylan, O.F.M.Conv.

<sup>5</sup>*The Rule of St. Benedict* 249-253.

<sup>6</sup>Joan Evans, *Monastic Life at Cluny: 910 - 1157* (Archer Books, 1968) 87.

<sup>7</sup>Bede Lackner, *Eleventh Century Background of Cîteaux* (Washington, D.C.: Cistercian Publications Consortium Press, 1972) 63-64.

<sup>8</sup>Lackner, *Eleventh Century* 130.

<sup>9</sup>*The Cistercian Spirit: A Symposium*, ed. M. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O. (Spencer, Massachusetts: Cistercian Publications Consortium Press, 1970) 23.

<sup>10</sup>L. J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (The Kent State University Press, 1977) 367.

<sup>11</sup>Kaiser.

<sup>12</sup>Fr. Lazaro Iriarte de Aspuri, O.F.M. Cap., *Franciscan History: The Three Orders of St. Francis of Assisi* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982) 11-12.

<sup>13</sup>Christopher Brooke, *The Monastic World: 1000-1300* (New York: Random House, 1974) 61-62.

<sup>14</sup>Brooke 61-62.

<sup>15</sup>The following abbreviations will be used for the biographical texts used throughout the contents of this work: AP: *Anonymous Perusinus*, ed. Lorenzo DiFonco, *Miscellanea Franciscana*, cited henceforth as MF, 72 (1972) 435-465, trans. Eric Kahn, O.F.M., *Workbook for Franciscan Studies*, ed. Damien Isabell, O.F.M., 2nd ed. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1979) 94-115; I Cel.: Thomas of Celano, *Vita prima S. Francisci*, ed. *Analecta Franciscana*, vol. X (Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi): Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1941), cited henceforth as AF,

1-117, trans. Celano, *First Life*, ed. t. Francis of Assisi: *Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of Sources of the Life of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), cited henceforth as *Omni*, 227-355; II Cel: *Vita secunda S. Francisci*, ed. AF, 127-268, trans. Celano, *Second Life*, *Omni*, 357-543; LM: *Bonaventure, Legenda Maior S. Francisci*, ed. AF, 557-562, trans. Bonaventura, *Major Life*, ed. *Omni*, 635-787; LP: *Legenda Perusina*, ed. La "Legenda Antiqua S.F." *Texte du-MS. 1046 de Perouse*, ed. F. Dolorme, O.F.M. *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, vol. XV (Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi): Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1922), cited henceforth as AFH, 23-70, 278-382, trans. *Legend of Perugia*, ed. *Omni*, 977-1091; SP: *Speculum Perfectionis seu S. F. Assinis Legenda Antiquissima, auctore fratre Leone*, Nunc primum editit Paul Sabatier (Paris: Librairie Fishbacher, 1898), ccxiv, 376, trans. *Mirror of Perfection*, ed. *Omni*, 1185 - 1265. This reference is II Cel 10-11, LM 2:7.

<sup>16</sup>Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad, 1961) 17.

<sup>17</sup>I Cel 18.

<sup>18</sup>ER VII: 10.

<sup>19</sup>Cajetan Esser, O.F.M., *Rule and Testament of Francis: Conferences to the Modern Followers of Francis*, trans. Sr. Audrey Marie Rothweirl, O.S.F. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977) 140.

<sup>20</sup>Armstrong, W.S.F. 63.

<sup>21</sup>Jean Chantellon, "Devotio Medievale," *Directionnaire de Spiritualite Asctique et Mystique Doctrine et Histoire*.

<sup>22</sup>Bonaventure, *Doctoris Seraphici Bonaventurae S.R.E. Episcopi Cardinalis Opera Omnia*, 10 vols. (Ad Claras Aquas: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1848), cited as OpOm. This reference is *Sermo Super Regulam Fratrum Minorum*, OpOm, VIII, 439-440.

<sup>23</sup>Bonaventure, *Sermo* 439-440.

<sup>24</sup>I Cel 59.

<sup>25</sup>ER VII: 12.

<sup>26</sup>Iriarte 12.

<sup>27</sup>Armstrong, W.S.F. 140.

<sup>28</sup>The "grace of preaching" is new to the forms of Apostolic life in the Middle Ages. Francis emphasizes that the brothers should preach by their deeds rather than by many words. See: ER XVII, LR IX.

<sup>29</sup>LR V: 1, cf. *Rule of S. Clare* VII: 2 which relates nearly the exact text. See: Armstrong, W.S.F. 219.

<sup>30</sup>II Cel 161: SP 75.

<sup>31</sup>ER VII: 1; I Cel 39d.

<sup>32</sup>ER VII: 2

<sup>33</sup>Adm IV: 1.

<sup>34</sup>Adm XXIII:1.

<sup>35</sup>Armstrong, W.S.F. 33.

<sup>36</sup>Esser, *Opuscula* ER VII: 3.

<sup>37</sup>Oxford Latin Dictionary.

<sup>38</sup>ER VII: 6 (Francis quotes this passage of Scripture outside Paul's context of the celibate/virginal state of which he is writing and Francis uses it metaphorically.)

<sup>39</sup>Iriarte 11-12.

<sup>40</sup>LM 5:67.

<sup>41</sup>Test 20.

<sup>42</sup>ER X: 10.

<sup>43</sup>LM 5: 6.

<sup>44</sup>Iriarte 12.

<sup>45</sup>Armstrong, W.S.F. 117.

<sup>46</sup>ER IX: 4-5.

<sup>47</sup>LM 5: 6; II Cel 75.

<sup>48</sup>Esser, *Rule and Testament* 141.

<sup>49</sup>ER VIII: 12, See: Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978) 19-41. To gain insight into the problems experienced concerning the words of Francis in the above texts by the Friars, see: Bonaventura, *Epistola de tribus quaestionibus*, ed. OpOm, XII, 331-336, trans. "A Letter on Three Questions to an Anonymous Teacher," trans. Leonard D. Perotti, unpublished, 1948, Friedsam Library, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, New York.

<sup>50</sup>ER VIII: 12.

<sup>51</sup>Esser, *Rule and Testament* 141.

<sup>52</sup>Test 22.

<sup>53</sup>II Cel 75.

<sup>54</sup>Esser, *Rule and Testament* 140.

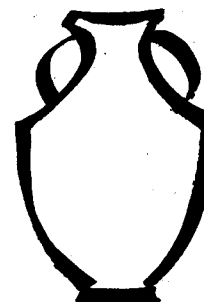
<sup>55</sup>Esser, *Rule and Testament* 140

<sup>56</sup>II Cel 160.

<sup>57</sup>II Cel 161.

<sup>58</sup>LP 78.

<sup>59</sup>*Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli Sociorum S. Francisci*, ed. and trans. Rosalind B. Brooke (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970) 327.



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## Called and Chosen

Lured by the love of the Lord—  
What a lovely lilt to the words!  
But the fact—how to say it?  
Was I drawn? Attracted?  
Called? Or chosen? All of these,  
And helped and aided, too, at every step,  
And lifted up and carried far beyond  
my own ability to follow after Him.

His love gives wings,  
His grace calls on—  
He calls, He does not force the will;  
And I—foolish, stubborn, proud—  
Pull free of sheltering arms  
To try it on my own once more—  
And trip and fall again.

O saving Lord, may I accept the joy  
of being loved by you;  
then, nurtured by the love once more,  
I'll come to know I love You, too.

Sr. Marie Regina Leis, OSF

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# Pope Innocent's Dream

DOMINICK AGOSTO, T.O.R.

AT LAST MY HOUSE stood finished. A consumming project, years in the making, I began it from the scratch. I planned it. I designed it. I hired the best architects, artists, draftsmen and engineers in all of Europe.

For years we immersed ourselves in even the smallest of details, for this house of mine was to be perfect, flawless in every way.

And I built it. With my own hands I built it. I supervised the entire operation, making sure it progressed perfectly according to plan, no longer merely a project, but rather, a passion.

And slowly, bit by bit and piece by piece it rose up in flawless beauty. The domes, the towers, the arches, the lines and angles all blending together in perfect symmetry until, a harmonious, balanced whole, it seemed to burst forth from the Earth like the Easter lily.

And it was perfect, I noted with great delight. It had to be! For my house was to be a home, a haven, a refuge for all the people.

All the people! That was the dream—rich and poor, young and old, wise one and fool, noble and serf, warrior and leper—all could come to my house and call it their home, for in those dark and troubled days the people needed a home.

But nobody came. No one at all. Oh yes, all stood in awe, marvelling at such beauty, such perfection. But that, they said, was the problem. My house seemed too perfect, too flawless, and they could not feel at home in my house.

Yes perfect, they insisted, but still a piece is missing—something very subtle but so vital. It seemed as though all the right parts were there, but the one element needed to bring the place alive, to give meaning and purpose to the structure had somehow failed to show itself.

Again I summoned the draftsmen, the artists, the architects, the designers and engineers. Again we poured over every detail in search of the missing piece, but all our efforts seemed wasted.

Finally, lying, they concurred: "Nothing is missing, all is in order! Unblemished it stands and nothing shall bring it down!"

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*Dominic Agosto, T.O.R., St. Francis College, Loretto, PA.*

"But my people —" said I.

"Fear not! they smiled, "perhaps something so new and different puts them ill at ease. Perhaps they shall come in time."

"Yes, perhaps," I sighed, waiting for the day I feared would never come.

And then one night it happened. I was standing off in the distance watching my house glitter and sparkle like a jewel in the evening sun, its shadows casting fanciful designs across the troubled earth, while all seemed still and strangely silent, so much like the hushed, silent, tensed up atmosphere that precedes a sudden bolt of lightening on a warm summer's evening.

And then, very quietly, it began. It was very faint at first, almost imperceptible, but oh, I heard it and I moaned.

There came a low rumbling like that of a wild animal crouched low and poised, ready for the strike. And then louder and louder it grew, becoming more and more menacing, the sound now seeming to come from all directions, a continual, deafening crescendo which threatened never to end!

The earth began to quiver and shake—and how the panic consumed me! For now I felt it, oh yes, my house was certain to fall! My precious pearl, my haven for the people—what had gone wrong? So many years, so many tears; now all seemed wasted.

It was happening. The foundation, so carefully lain, now began to buckle and slide. The towers, which had soared, it seemed, almost to heaven, now began to totter and convulse. And across the solid, sturdy walls, fissures began rapidly spreading like purple veins across old and sickly skin.

"Save it! Save it!" I heard myself cry, but no one was there to hear me. And my house, ah, that glorious and perfect fortress, now appeared so brittle and fragile.

And then, out of nowhere, there he was. He appeared such a slight and insignificant little man, this beggar. (Where had I seen him before?) Such a ragged and dirty man who seemed so weak and ill, he wore a torn and shredded tunic and his hands (oh, his poor hands!) were so beaten and battered.

But what a smile! How it seemed so in tune with all the joy and all the sadness the world has ever known! And how it seared right through me—bringing order and calm to the chaos within me!

Now I watched him approach my house. I shouted to him, telling him that he would be crushed by the now certain collapse. But again he smiled and now even the walls seemed to respond.

No! Could it be that the rumbling grew just a touch quieter? Could it be that the fissures drew themselves a bit narrower?

I rubbed my eyes and looked again. The beggar now stood flush against

the main wall, his feet close together and his arms full extended so vulnerably. It seemed such an odd position (how dangerous and foolish!) from which to give support to a building. How could he expect to push while in such a perilous stance?

But wait —

No, he wasn't pushing it. Indeed, I was no sign of a struggle. Instead, he exerted no force at all, but seemed to hand there limply.

I looked closer and saw.

He was kissing the building, fondling and caressing it. Yes, ever so tenderly, over so gently, he was loving my house.

And yes, it was happening! The rumble softened and faded away. The fissures drew closed, the towers straightened up and the foundation solidified.

In a moment it was over. And there came a calm so soothing, and a new gracefulness and peace surging from somewhere deep within the building, making it seem more perfect than before.

He smiled again — and I knew. In an instant I understood that life was pouring out from my house. Finally! my house was now a home.

And they came. Oh, how the people came! Thousands upon thousands upon thousands, a steady, never ending stream from every direction they kept coming, pouring into my house and making it their home.

I awoke with a smile and stretched slowly and comfortably, relishing the newfound strength and vitality within me.

"How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, God of Hosts," I heard myself say, and with a fervor that seemed so long ago lost, I blessed the new day.



## exodus

all men who hide  
inside hollow eyes,  
instinct drives the dumpster flies,  
buzzing low, bass 'n treble souls  
that jigsaw fit  
manhattan holes,  
bastard men  
seek bowery dues  
as green-belly flies  
suck up sugared booze.  
and my heart,  
in their hands,  
i watch it twitch 'n beat  
as they dribble it down a basketball street.  
and the eyes of my soul,  
o father, the sockets in my head  
are siren hollowed and flashlight red.

we men who hide  
inside religious rooms,  
safety suckles liturgical tombs,  
with filtered milk boiled,  
bacteria free,  
i warm my belly instinctively.  
from bloat i choose  
to forsake this room,  
unhide into the spirit's womb,  
where flies and men  
dribble for space,  
unhide into the human race.  
and my prayer  
to the father  
from the basketball street  
is not that there be enough bread to eat.  
and my heart,  
still in their hands,  
matters less to me  
if the father help me give it unreservedly.

br. john c. grimes, o.f.m., cap.

## The Potter's Home

Creation's yearning stood still—

The Father bent, reached into the earth,  
scooped up the natural clay—  
common clay, humble in its origin—  
touched only by the glory of His hand.

Clay reclaimed, soaked in His love—

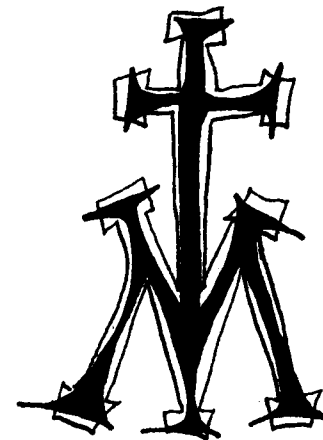
beautiful in its human genuineness—  
sliced, kneaded, pounded in life's experience—  
unbreakable in the warmth of the Potter's hand—  
His design took form.

With strength, the Potter placed

His thumb into the cupped clay's center—

Fingers around His creation  
firmly formed the surface—  
rubbed, stretched

— UNTIL —



The Father's will permeated the clay—  
and Life vibrated within.

The clay responded to the press—the squeeze—  
grasped the Creator's hand:

YES FATHER!

The sculpting continued—

Only ordinary clay but  
crushed, pressed, rolled,  
burnished and fired into

His palace  
His tabernacle  
His home  
His robe  
His handmaid  
His mother

The glory of His design  
and the response of the clay's soul  
became ONE.

Generations later—

Reclaimed clay of another moment in history  
Stands celebrating the touch of the Potter within—  
Bearing the mark of Divinity's value—  
Responding in humility to the Glory within.

The soul sings out:

Yes, I am—  
I AM HIS HOME!

*Sr. Christa Marie Thompson, O.S.F.*

# Book Reviews

**The Spiritual Journey of the Blessed Angela of Foligno According To The Memorial of Frater A.** By Paul Lachance, O.F.M. Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1984. Pp. x-416. Paper, \$10.00

*Reviewed by Father Thomas Bourque, T.O.R., Chairperson of the Philosophical and Religious Studies Department of Saint Francis College of Pennsylvania.*

The up-to-date renewal of the religious life comprises both a constant return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes; and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time. This renewal is to be under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and with the guidance of the Church. "Renewal of Religious Life" #2.

Since the call for renewal and reform which came from the Second Vatican Council, there have been many fine programs, studies and books to aid Franciscans in their attempt to trace their roots. These programs, studies and books invited individuals to recapture the spirit of Francis of Assisi and the rich tradition of the Franciscan movement.

Throughout the history of the Franciscan movement, there have been many women and men who have embraced the cross of Jesus and followed

in the spirit of Francis of Assisi. All of these individuals have been called by God to transform their lives according to the Gospel and to conform to the life of Christ. The diversity of their responses, ministries and lives make for an interesting study of Franciscan history.

The research on the life and spirit of Francis of Assisi has been greatly advanced by the work of Helen Moak in her translation of Fortini's *Francis of Assisi*. To add to this important piece of research, Franciscans have been given the research of Paul Lachance on the life of Blessed Angela of Foligno. This published research has brought more attention to a great mystic of the late thirteenth century. Lachance not only captures the personality and spirit of Angela of Foligno within his book, but he provides the reader with the historical background of this period. The research on the historical background adds to the scholarship and brilliance of Fortini's work to give us a deeper understanding of the spiritual and penitential movement of the entire thirteenth century.

*The Spiritual Journey of the Blessed Angela of Foligno According to the Memorial of Frater A.* provides the reader with a wealth of knowledge and a vast amount of spiritual material for personal study, prayer and reflection. This book is a must for individuals interested in the Franciscan movement and, in particular, the Third Order. The charisms and fundamental values of

conversion, contemplation, minority and poverty are truly captured by Father Paul Lachance in a unique and personal manner. Lachance has given the members of the Third Order a fascinating biography of a great mystic of the Church and has developed a fine treatise on the development of the Franciscan penitential movement during the latter half of the thirteenth century.

Lachance states, "... Mystics serve as social surrogates in whose passionate and apparently solitary search for truth and meaning, the most profound concepts and values of a culture are incorporated, radically criticized and transcended. And they emerge from their adventure into the absolute as beacons for their times and for ages to come—pioneers and reformers of history, the great simplifiers of the world." This statement is easily applied to the life of Francis of Assisi, but also just as easily to the life of Angela of Foligno.

Before receiving a copy of this book, I personally knew relatively very little about Angela of Foligno. As a T.O.R. Franciscan, I knew that we celebrate the memorial of Blessed Angela of Foligno on the seventh of February. The only other facts I had seen about her were brief biographic items. After reading Lachance's book, *The Spiritual Journey of Blessed Angela of Foligno*, I have found a new interest and enthusiasm for my roots, traditions and heritage as a member of the Third Order.

Angela's life of holiness and penance was not a part of her early life. At the age of thirty-seven, she experienced a radical conversion which called her to the life of penance and led her to become a member of the Third Order.

Her commitment to the life of penance and the Gospel grew gradually under the direction of her Franciscan confessor. Her confessor brought Angela to a deeper understanding of God's mercy, forgiveness and embracing love.

Angela's conversion was a continuous process within her life. After the death of her husband and children, she embraced the life of a semi-cloistered penitent. It was during this period that Angela opened herself up to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and began to realize the gifts she had been freely given by God.

Throughout Lachance's biographical profile of Angela, he develops the theme of conformity and how Angela embraced a life of conformity to God's will after her conversion. She truly experienced the exultation and the triumph of the crucified Christ. For Angela, the cross was a source of power, beauty and life. She was fully aware of the suffering and pain, but she was also aware of the joy which the crucified Christ brought into her life. By embracing the cross of Christ she found total union and intimacy with Christ.

*The Spiritual Journey of the Blessed Angela of Foligno* also offers the reader an introduction to Angela's writings. The writings themselves, along with the commentaries, provide one with a picture and feeling of Angela's prayer and intimate relationship with Jesus. It is the intensity and intimacy of Angela's prayer which Lachance captures throughout his reflection on her life and writings. The author invites all to be caught up in the desire to love God as Angela so freely did after her conversion.

Her writings have been scarce, but Father Lachance has introduced Angela and her writings to the world in a new

and creative manner. Now it is our turn to respond to the gifts of his research and the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Angela could be a "saint" for many twentieth-century individuals today. Her ideal in life was once focused upon wealth, possessions, fame and individualism. It was only after her conversion experience and periods of reflection that she realized that all those ideals were futile without the love and intimacy of God. She teaches us about sacrifice, conversion, self-emptying and conformity to the will of God. Angela's life teaches us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and Francis of Assisi in order for us to cultivate renewal, reform and sacrifice within our own lives.

As men and women of our day begin to discover the beauty and power of the lives of some of the great mystics — Teresa of Avila, Elizabeth of the Trinity, Clare of Assisi and Catherine of Siena — it is hoped that all will have the opportunity to be captured by the beauty and power of Angela of Foligno.

Paul Lachance has given the followers of Jesus and Francis a wonderful source of research, history, tradition and reflection. His work demonstrates how Angela of Foligno gives us the courage today to turn away from the wealth and materials of our lives, and invites us to turn to the virtue of poverty within the Gospel. May our Lord continue to bless the work of women and men studying our Franciscan heritage in order to provide all with the wealth of the spiritual lives of the many prayerful followers of Our Lord. Paul Lachance has done such a study and the merits of his work and his openness to the fruits of the Holy Spirit are truly evident within *The Spiritual Journey of the Blessed Angela of Foligno According to the Memorial of Frater A. Amen!*

**Vatican II Revisited By Those Who Were There.** Edited by Dom Alberic Stacpoole, O.S.B. Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1986. Pp. 365. Cloth, \$24.50.

*Reviewed by Francis Berna, O.F.M., Ph.D. (Fordham University), Assistant Professor of Theology, St. Bonaventure University.*

"Who will turn the Church back? Who will set it forward?" (p. 182). Albert Outler, the noted Methodist observer at Vatican II frames the question as that of the Council and that of the contemporary Church. In the context of asking such a question one would do well to review this collection of articles. When it appears that a new "winter-time" has come upon the Church, an expression of Rahner, it is good to recall the fresh spring breezes and pentecostal fire of a meeting held almost twenty-five years ago.

While this extraordinary meeting of the Roman Church may be ready to mark its silver anniversary the participants in that meeting who offer their recollections agree that the Church remains at the starting point of carrying out its decrees. The historical perspective offered by the authors assures the questioning Catholic of today that the Church continues to trudge the path of renewal, sometimes at a painfully slow pace, and gives reason to hope that there is no turning back.

Frs. Chenu and Congar are particularly good at detailing the dramatic shift in the Church's self-understanding which occurred at the Council. Fr. Chenu, "A Council For All Peoples," notes the observation of Paul VI that

the Council devoted so much of its attention to the concerns of the human person, the real human person living in the world. He further notes that the same sentiment can be found in Pope John Paul II's first encyclical: "Man, actual man, is the way of the Church." The thought of a century has been turned around (p. 23).

"Moving Toward A Pilgrim Church," Yves Congar, highlights the significance of the change from the original schema for the Council proposed to the Theological Commission. "Something happened at the Council and the dominant values in our way of looking at the Church were changed at the Council" (p. 129). The image of Church as "communion" emerged forcefully as the new self-understanding. One can be excited as the Canadian Bishops have decided to emphasize this theme in Rome at next year's Synod of the Laity. Congar is excited because he believes a "church of the People" is being reborn and it promises to be lasting because of its martyrs (p. 148).

The initial eight articles on the Council and its prelude are rich in personal memories. One can feel the participants come alive in some of the authors' descriptions. The intricacies of coordinating such an event are laid clear and the papal maneuverings around the curia convince one that holding a council is far beyond a meager accomplishment. Tom Stransky's reflections on the foundation of the Secretariat for promoting Christian Unity are particularly rich in readable detail and colorful personality. It also brings to the fore the aspirations of the Council for Christian Unity, an aspiration which for many at present seems to be in winter's hibernation.

Anglican Bishop John Moorman and Albert Outler offer contrasting views of the ecumenical drive. Moorman highlights the positive impact of the Council while Outler observes a reinterpretation of decrees in succeeding generations. Both men do appreciate, however, that a genuine development in Roman Catholic thought took place at the Council.

The particulars of this development can be appreciated in a thorough study of the articles on the individual decrees and constitutions. The works of Cardinal König and John Tracy Ellis on religious freedom are most worthwhile.

As implied in the introduction the quality of the articles varies. Loris Capovilla offers sound insights into the hopes of the Sixties but tends to lose the reader before the end of his comments. One would expect that Hans Küng could have provided something more than a revision of an older article. While one can respect those who declined participation in the project because of age, one ought to be disappointed that Cardinals Hamer and Ratzinger also declined. Given the overall quality of the text the absence would seem to reflect more about their own confidence in the Council.

*Vatican II Revisited* proves to be a valuable resource for academics and a helpful text for those who would like to reflect on the dynamism of the Council in a more spiritual manner. Both projects could be worthwhile with the approaching anniversary. The book accomplishes one of its main tasks. While some of the unbounded hope stirred up during the Council may have faded, while the grayness of winter may be upon the Church, the text offers a renewal of hope.

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**The Sacraments: Encountering the Risen Lord.** By Rev. Paul A. Fiedler. Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1986. 128 pages. Paper, \$95.

*Reviewed by Michael Taylor, O.F.M. Conv. (M. Div.), Associate Pastor at Assumption Parish, Syracuse, NY.*

This is a fine new book on the sacraments that is written in a very concise and easy-to-read fashion. The author must be commended on "really doing his homework" on each presentation of the sacraments, and strictly adheres to a pattern of tracing the historical and Scriptural roots of each sacrament, while interspersing his own personal reflections and experiences throughout the text. Each chapter deals with one particular sacrament, with the exception of Chapter I (a general introduction) and Chapter II (pertaining to Baptism and Confirmation). The author also makes good use of diagrams and scriptural listings at the beginning of each chapter which gives the reader an overview of the sacrament to be discussed.

Fr. Fiedler does a fine job on each one of the sacraments but the one chapter which struck this reviewer was Chapter IV: "Laying Sins to Rest-Reconciliation" (pp. 46-69). Fr. Fiedler made a great effort in this chapter to point out the ministry of Jesus as reconciler and healer and, in a way, describes the sacrament of Reconciliation as something which is freeing, rather than burdensome — an attitude that continually surfaces in day-to-day pastoral ministry.

I would strongly recommend this book for use by adult Religious Educa-

tion groups, Campus Ministers, and RCIA groups and even for the veteran minister of the Gospel who might be seeking out some new and refreshing resources for teaching/preaching about the sacraments. It is also worthy to note that the author has donated all royalties earned by the sale of this book to Mother Theresa of Calcutta and the Missionaries of Charity.

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**Laity's Mission in the Local Church.** By Leonard Doohan, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986. Pp. 146. Paper, \$8.95.

*Reviewed by Robert Donovan, Ph.D. (Fordham University), Associate Professor of Theology at St. Bonaventure University.*

With the approach of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Laity and the present controversy over the pre-eminence of the hierarchical model of the Church versus the more democratic People of God model, it is interesting to investigate the new direction set for the Laity in Leonard Doohan's new book. It is meant as a sequel to Doohan's earlier work, *The Lay Centered Church*. Not having read the latter puts one only at a slight disadvantage in re-doing this work. For in this present work Doohan attempts to catch the reader up on his presuppositions, visions for, and theologizing about a "lay-centered-church" and then set him/her on a course for implementing such a vision.

I found the first part of the book, a sort of reshaping of the presuppositions, vision, and theologizing, the most interesting and the most disturbing. At

first I was reminded of all the talk, about ten or more years ago, of the child-centered classroom. It seems to have disappeared. I wondered then, as I do now, how it could have been otherwise. If there were no children, there would be no need for teachers. I forgot that for some the children could be just a necessary evil to be put up with in order to try out new and different methods and approaches. Had anyone asked the children? At least in Doohan's case he had asked the Laity; he is one of them himself. And he is clear from the start that he is not talking of all the Laity, and especially not the Passive Laity (a large percentage, I fear) but of the active Laity.

Yes, for the active Laity there is a need for a lay-centered Church for the present structure is irrelevant. But one must add for the more "liberal leaning active Laity," and not for the more conservative leaning Laity. No, they like it the way it is. In fact they don't want any bishops rocking the boat (dare I say the bark of Peter). Thus the Hunt-hausen affair. It was the Laity that exercised their power there, a power that Doohan would not recognize. Alas!

Yes, the theoretical underpinning worked out by Doohan is very exhaustive, researched (i. e. backed up with quotes from Papal, Conciliar, Episcopal, and Theological documents). In sum he states that it is "... inevitable that the Church, to remain alive and lifegiving, will need to do again what it did in the past: further decentralize and grant sacramental and jurisdictional powers to others who previously did not exercise them." (p. 3231). I agree, I see it happening already in Lay Deacons, Parish Councils, Music Ministers, Youth Ministers, DREs, the National Catholic Reporter. But Doohan

wants to go farther to basic communities, family churches the smaller groups that make up the larger parishes where the hierarchical style of leadership doesn't work. There are some who are and have been doing just that. For them, this is a great theoretical shot in the arm. For the whole Church, however, it won't cause even a wave. Not now, when all the hierarchical church is concerned about is authority. And the only way one can exercise authority is if he and not someone else is at the center.

Yes, for many of the Laity the present structures are irrelevant. And they will continue to work to change them to a more lay-centered-Church once you get over the authority—sacramental minister hurdle (...effective power remains linked to ordination...). (p. 11). Once again Doohan offers some interesting theoretical ideas not necessarily new but concise and well organized to encourage the Laity who wants to change. One does this by focusing on the baptismal vocation, the position of the Laity vis-a-vis the world and vis-a-vis the Church. The big word is participation. It is here that Doohan strikes paydirt. This is a time for participation especially on the corporate level. The Cursillo movement is one prime example of small communities springing up that are truly lay-centered and participatory. They are also spiritual. Alas, they are not for everyone. Certainly not for the Laity who want and dare I say, love the hierarchical model of Church and not for the too, too numerous passive Laity.

But here in this type of movement and in other places forced to be without ordained minister the Laity are developing other structures and most importantly a spirituality for this time. To fill the vacuum caused by the lack of

priests and irrelevancies of the old structures.

Doohan looks to the "domestic" Church. It is crucial that married laity fill this vacuum with a new spirituality that comes out of their faith and conditions." (p. 73) I can't but think that that is what Francis had in mind when he started the Third Order.

It is in the development of this new type of spirituality for the Church and for the World that Doohan shines his brightest light helping the Laity to find those new directions. For this new spirituality can only be shaped by the Laity. They must lead and the hierarchy "participate." It should prove interesting.

☆

## Design of Surrender

Seemingly simplistic beauty  
Then,  
This pattern intricate  
Of life for God.

Youth plied the needle  
Daringly,  
Yet with care,  
Knowing that faith and trust  
Were there  
To keep in place  
The threads of love,  
The cords of law.

Now,  
Tired mind and lonely heart  
Endeavor  
To untangle  
A spidered web  
Of cord and thread.

O God,  
Help us,  
As we venture to unsnarl,  
To keep the many stranded cord  
From fraying:  
To keep from breaking  
The fragile thread.

Sr. Emeran Foley, O.S.F.

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# The CORD

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## Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

### I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions

BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo

CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun

EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony

EpCler: Letter to Clerics<sup>1</sup>

EpCust: Letter to Superiors<sup>1</sup>

EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful<sup>1</sup>

EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo

EpMin: Letter to a Minister

EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order

EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People

ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God

ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father

FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221

LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God

LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours

OffPass: Office of the Passion

OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix

RegB: Rule of 1223

RegNB: Rule of 1221

RegEr: Rule for Hermits

SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady

SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues

Test: Testament of St. Francis

UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare

VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy

<sup>1</sup>I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis

2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis

3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles

CL: Legend of Saint Clare

CP: Process of Saint Clare

Flor: Little Flowers of St. Francis

LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis

LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis

LP: Legend of Perugia

L3S: Legend of the Three Companions

SC: Sacrum commercium

SP: Mirror of Perfection

**Omnibus:** Marion A. Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

**AB:** Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

## EDITORIAL



## Vocations

MARCH is Vocation month. I remember that because it was thirty-five years ago this month that in response to a suggestion made by our Newman chaplain I started praying about a vocation. Before lent was finished I was writing letters of inquiry and by July getting ready to go to the Seminary run by the Franciscans.

As you read this I am in my closing days of a semester at the Franciscan House of Studies in Livingstone, Zambia, a post-novitiate Formation House, where African friars of the three jurisdictions study Philosophy and Franciscanism. The students come from Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, and Kenya, and already plans are in the works for a whole new and larger facility in another location. Young men are coming to the friars here in Africa in increasing numbers — over a 1000 applications were received by one group. Human and sociological factors may account for some of the fascination of Franciscan life, but the finger of God is there.

The vocation picture is not as bright in the U.S.A., though it is far from total darkness. What bothers me is that no one in the Church or Order seems to think the situation will improve, that religious life will blossom. And so we meet and plan what I call worst-case scenarios for the future of our ministries. Four years ago I had a pessimistic optimism. The Franciscan life of joyous service of God and man is intrinsically attractive. Moreover, people are praying for vocations.

personally and in community — and God does answer prayers. Third, it is about time that the Liturgical reforms of Vatican II bear fruit. A vernacular liturgy and fuller participation has had to deepen the prayer life, and thus the vocation potential of many. (It seems to me some priests have assigned so much of parish work to the laity, that a visibility problem is hindering vocations.) Fourth, shortages in numbers make us stretch ourselves and give more. That life of giving has to attract others.

Optimism alone, of course, won't fill our novitiates again. But clouds of pessimism obscure the beauty of our life. As individuals we have to fight the gloom that actuarial tables and statistics can cause, and also the exaggerated fears that sometimes keep us from wholeheartedly endorsing our way of life to interested men and women. After all, religious life in general, and Franciscan life in particular is a gift from God. Jesus quieted Francis' worries by telling him the Order was HIS order, and would never disappear. May he quiet our anxieties and may we pray fervently this March — and throughout the year — for more Franciscans, more priests, brothers, and sisters in our native land.

*In Jesum Davas ofm*



## The Meaning of Seraphic: Bonaventure and Francis

LYNN MARIE COLGAN

JOSEPH MARY Plunkett, the Irish writer who was executed after the Easter Week Rebellion in 1916, composed a poem entitled "I See His Blood Upon The Rose":<sup>1</sup>

*I see His blood upon the rose,  
And in the stars the glory of His eyes,  
His body gleams amid eternal snows,  
His tears fall from the skies.*

*I see His face in every flower:  
The thunder and the singing of the birds  
Are but His voice — and carved by His power,  
Rocks are His written words.*

*All pathways by His feet are worn,  
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,  
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,  
His cross is every tree.*

This is a Franciscan melody. It could have been written by either St. Francis or St. Bonaventure, between whom (as G. Bougerol has said) there is a "total communion of souls." The heart of this communion of spirits is a profound and sublime love of the crucified Christ, the Exemplar of all creation.

---

Lynn Marie Colgan, Secular Franciscan, is a graduate of the Franciscan Institute

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Mary Plunkett, "I See His Blood Upon the Rose," in *1,000 Years of Irish Poetry*, ed. Kathleen Hoagland (Old Greenwich, Conn.: The Devlin Adair Co., 1975), p. 693.

In October of 1259, two years after his election as minister general of the Friars Minor, St. Bonaventure journeyed to Mt. LaVerna to follow the footprints of his beloved Seraphic Father St. Francis of Assisi: "At the example of our most blessed Father Francis, I too was seeking peace with a longing spirit — I, a sinner in all ways...walked up Mt. LaVerna, longing to find some peace of soul at that place of peace...." (*Itin.* Prol. 2.)

It was during this pilgrimage to Mt. LaVerna that St. Bonaventure, like St. Francis before him, experienced the most profound event of his life. Bonaventure tells us "While I was there, meditating on the different ways of the mind's ascent to God, there came to me along with other thoughts the memory of the miracle which had occurred in this very place to blessed Francis himself: the vision of the six-winged Seraph in the likeness of the Crucified." Bonaventure continues, saying that "it was at once clear to me that this vision represented, not only the contemplative rapture of our father, but also the road by which this rapture is attained." (*Itin.* Prol. 2).

Like St. Francis before him, St. Bonaventure understood life on earth as a pilgrimage. While staying at Mt. LaVerna he wrote the great mystical classic the *Itinerarium Mentis In Deum*. The *Itinerarium* describes the mystical journey of the soul, the climax of which is a transformation into the crucified Christ, which St. Bonaventure sees as the supreme destination of Franciscan life. Philotheus Boehner, O.F.M. called the *Itinerarium* "nothing else than an adaptation or interpretation of the great miracle of stigmatization wrought in the body of St. Francis." (Intro., *Itin.*).

Although the *Itinerarium* has its model and inspiration in St. Francis, St. Bonaventure borrows from the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius and St. Augustine.

The "journey" of the soul is undertaken in seven steps, commencing with an appreciation of God in His creatures through the senses, and a consideration of His reflections in the world by the imagination. The spiritual pilgrim now progresses to the consideration of God present within himself as God's image and likeness. The next two steps concern an appreciation of God in His transcendental aspects, or in His essential and personal attributes. The first six steps then concern purification of the senses and attaining the proper disposition of mind so that God can be seen outside the soul in creation, within the soul; itself as the *Imago* and *Similitudo Dei*, and above the soul in His transcendence.

#### The meaning of Seraphic

The question of the meaning of "Seraphic" concerns primarily the crucial

seventh step of the *Itinerarium*, for after the soul has travelled the first six steps of the journey, it must still "pass over" beyond the realm of creation and beyond its own capacities into perfect contemplation. The bridge to this passing over is none other than the crucified Christ: "Christ is the way and the door; Christ is the ladder and the vehicle..." (*Itin.* Ch. 7).

This "passing over" was granted to St. Francis. St. Bonaventure tells us, "... when in a transport of contemplation on the mountain height — where I pondered over the matter that is here written — there appeared to him the six-winged Seraph fastened to a cross.... Here he passed over to God in a transport of contemplation." (*Itin.*, Ch. 7).

St. Bonaventure bequeathed to us in his writings a system of themes which taken as a whole could be likened to a gem, in which the colors of these various ideas reflect one another. One of Bonaventure's favorite themes is the Neoplatonic economy of exemplarism, which Leonard J. Bowman called "... an integrated and dynamic process of a world coming to be from God, existing as God's expression, and returning to God." ("The Cosmic Exemplarism of St. Bonaventure," *Journal of Religion* 55: 189). The entire created world participates in cosmic reel of emanation, exemplarity and return. Everything that exists is in some way a reflection of God, a sign of Him which can be read along the path of the journey. The entire world becomes a book wherein the story of God can be read. This grand multiplicity of creatures is circumscribed by the Creator, from Whom they derive their existence and meaning. There is unity and multiplicity in creation mirroring the unity and multiplicity within the Holy Trinity. Because of this, St. Bonaventure is fond of finding triads everywhere (much of his work is infused with them). These are simply reflections of the Trinity in the mirror of creation.

Along the "itinerarium," the soul, following the signposts of the creatures, is led into itself, the image and likeness of the Creator. At this point it must cross the barrier of its own finite boundary, but the soul cannot do so of its own power. The leap from the creature to God is achieved through Jesus Christ, the Mediator Who bridges the separation between mankind and God. Christ is the plane which intersects the finite world of man and the infinitude of God. He is the Exemplar and model of all creation, and the Center of all existence. Christ is "... at once Image and Exemplar, since he sums up in himself the world as a sign of God, and reveals in himself the Trinity to the World...." (Bowman, p. 188). He is, in the words of Eric Doyle, O.F.M. (*The Disciple and the Master*, p. 2) "the One Who gives intelligibility to everything."

Because of this, Doyle writes:

"St. Francis can be understood only in terms of his relationship to Jesus Christ. Christ was at the center of his person, life and mission. He strove after Gospel perfection which demanded above all the constant practice of poverty and humility. By this he reached total conformity with Christ in whose image he was created and by whose grace he was recreated. Total conformity of the inner man appeared at last visibly on his body in the marks of the sacred stigmata."

Thus we can see that not only is Christ the Mediator and Center, but He is also the destination of the "itinerarium." He is the object of longing of the soul in contemplation. The crucified Jesus Christ was the ultimate goal of St. Francis pilgrimage of love.

In the hierarchy of beings, therefore, Christ is the pinnacle. Following Pseudo-Dionysius, St. Bonaventure sees the entirety of reality as a hierarchical order proceeding from the Holy Trinity, with Christ as the center of the whole. Because all things come from and reflect the Trinity there can be seen trinitarian "repercussions" throughout the cosmos, in triadic groups which are found at every level of existence.

Following and participating in the "troika" of the Divinity, the creatures are ordered in an ascending/descending hierarchy, with every single creature from the most distant to the closest to God having Christ as its Exemplar. Nearest to God is the celestial hierarchy (cf. Pseudo Dionysius), and this angelic hierarchy shares most closely and directly in the heavenly beatitude. The overall angelic hierarchy is further divided by St. Bonaventure into three distinct sub-hierarchies, each comprising three choirs of angels.

As sunlight shines through the various layers of atmosphere, the light of the Divinity is filtered through each successive hierarchy of angelic spirits, and through the beatified souls, coming to rest upon the Church Militant. "It is fitting, then," St. Bonaventure tells us, "that the Church Militant have orders corresponding to the model (celestial) hierarchy." (*Hexaameron*, Coll 2:2). Basing his scheme on the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, Bonaventure creates parallels between the hierarchies of heaven and their reflections on earth, both in the ordering of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Church Militant, and in the interior "hierarchization" of the individual soul.

The action of hierarchization of the soul, St. Bonaventure says, has three functions: "... to cleanse, to enlighten, and perfect...." (*Hexaameron*, Coll. 21). This is the "triplici via," through which the soul is gradually raised to perfection and unity with God.

The orders or choirs of the celestial hierarchy are given specific attri-

butes, capacities and ministries by S. Bonaventure, according to their place in the hierarchy. The functions of "cleansing," "enlightening," and "perfecting" he attributes to the lowest hierarchy, the Angels, Archangels, and Principalities, respectively. As reflections of the Holy Trinity (to which Bonaventure also assigns "appropriations" specific to the Persons), the angelic hierarchies are placed in a certain correspondence.

St. Bonaventure's elaborate design of relationships, attributes, and appropriations, is complicated and not always logical. Nevertheless, it is the magnificent and harmonious system of a mystical theologian for whom everything in the universe has a special value and meaning as a unique reflection of God.

In his discussion of the Church Militant, Bonaventure quotes Apocalypse 12:1: "And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." He interprets this passage as follows:

"... As the moon is the daughter of the sun and receives light from it, likewise the Church Militant [receives hers] from 'that Jerusalem which is above.' Wherefore the Apostle [St. Paul] calls her 'our mother,' for she is the mother of those influences by which we are made to be the sons of God. The heavenly hierarchy is a model of the Church Militant." (*Hexaameron*, Coll. 22).

The Church on earth, therefore, following the heavenly hierarchy, has three sets of orders, "... the fundamental which correspond to the highest hierarchy, the promoting which correspond to the intermediate, and the consummating, which correspond to the lowest." (*Hexaameron*, Coll. 22). Just as each of the three celestial hierarchies is comprised by three orders (or choirs) of angels, each of the three ecclesiastical hierarchies contains three orders. St. Bonaventure discusses this in the 22nd Collation of the *Hexaameron*. (Bonaventure borrows heavily from the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.)

We are especially concerned in this paper with the first angelic hierarchy: the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones, and in particular, with the Seraphim, which Bonaventure aligns with the apostles "... because the apostolic order is conformed to Christ...." The Cherubim and Thrones correspond to the prophets and patriarchs, respectively.

The complexity of St. Bonaventure's scheme is such that we must simplify it, since a full discussion of the hierarchies is beyond the scope of this paper. The most important division of hierarchical orders is that "related to practice." These are three, relating to the active, the contemp-

lative, and the "mixed" life. "The active order," St. Bonaventure says, "corresponds to the Father, the order of prelates, to the Son, and the order of contemplatives to the Holy Spirit." (*Hexaemeron*, Coll. 22). This division of orders is comprised of the monastic, the lay, and the clerical states. Bonaventure further complicates the matter by dividing these three groups each into another three:

Monastic: Elevative, Speculative, Supplicative (contemplative)  
 Clerical: Pontifical, Sacerdotal, Ministerial (mixed)  
 Lay: Holy Leaders, Holy Masters, Holy People (active)

(St. Bonaventure notes that in terms of "highness" the priestly order is at the top, but it is placed in the middle here because it is a mixed active/contemplative life.)

This division corresponds to the angelic hierarchy as such:

|                      |                   |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Seraphim .....       | Elevation         |                   |
| Cherubim .....       | Speculation       | (contemplation)   |
| Thrones .....        | Supplication      |                   |
|                      |                   |                   |
| Dominations .....    | Pontifical Order  |                   |
| Virtues .....        | Sacerdotal Order  | (contempl/action) |
| Powers .....         | Ministerial order |                   |
|                      |                   |                   |
| Principalities ..... | Holy Order        |                   |
| Archangels .....     | Holy Masters      | (action)          |
| Angels .....         | Holy People       |                   |

The hierarchization of the heavenly realm is also reflected in the individual soul, which follows the trinitarian scheme in a threefold "hierarchizing" process through purgation, illumination, and perfection (or union with God). Each of these three ways corresponds to a spiritual exercise: purgation to meditation (and by this Bonaventure means spiritual reading), illumination to prayer, and perfection to contemplation. Here contemplation refers not to the usual sense of the mystical state of union with God, but to an intellectual appreciation of God. "Mystical union proper begins where this contemplation ends: it is opened by the 'synderesis scintilla,' the 'spark of discernment,' which for Bonaventure is the highest possible state of natural wisdom." (De Vinck — *De Triplici Via*, introductory note.) These spiritual exercises lead the soul to spiritual wisdom in the three facets of "the repose of peace, the splendor of truth, [and] the sweetness



of love." Each of these corresponds to a choir of the superior celestial hierarchy: "Peace to the Thrones, Truth to the Cherubim, [and] Love to the Seraphim" (De Vinck). Faithful to his fascination for division, St. Bonaventure tells us that each of the fruits of peace, truth, and love, are achieved in seven steps.

The "triplici via" describes not three successive *steps* in the spiritual growth of the soul, but are a dynamic ternary in which one or another of the purgative, illuminative, or perfective aspects is foremost within the soul at any given time. Likewise, the spiritual exercises: meditation, prayer, and contemplation, contain one another but are emphasized differentially according to the growth of the soul in the likeness of God. Whereas St. Bonaventure borrowed the language of Pseudo-Dionysius in the use of the terms purgation, illumination, and perfection, unlike Pseudo-Dionysius Bonaventure envisions this aspect of Plotinus' Neoplatonic scheme as a dynamic process wherein the three elements interpenetrate one another.

## "Seraphic" in Terms of St. Francis

Now that we have laid some groundwork by climbing through the reticulum of certain aspects of St. Bonaventure's thought, we can begin to explore the meaning of "Seraphic" and its application to the life of St. Francis and the Franciscan order.

The angelology accepted by the Church writers is based largely on a work usually traced to Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*. The work is responsible for the usual division of the angels into nine choirs. Scriptural references to angels of particular choirs, however, are few. The only mention of the Seraphim in Holy Scripture is found in Isaiah 6: 2-7, in which the prophet Isaiah tells of his special vision of the Seraphim at the throne of God chanting the trisagion: "Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord of Hosts, all the earth is full of His glory." One of the six-winged Seraphim purged Isaiah's lips with a coal from the altar, which prepared him for his commission as prophet. The name Seraphim means "the burning ones," and "the inflaming ones." As was pointed out above, the Seraphim are the highest choir in the first, or highest, hierarchy. Because of this, they, of all the creatures, reflect and resemble God most closely, and are therefore the most excellent of all the creatures. Pseudo-Dionysius wrote of the Seraphim:

"The name Seraphim clearly indicates their ceaseless and eternal revolution about the Divine Principles; their heat and their keenness, the exuberance of their intense, perpetual, tireless activity, and their elevative and energetic assimilation of those below, kindling them and firing them to their own heat, and wholly purifying them by a burning and all consuming flame, and by hidden, unquenchable, changeless, radiant, and enlightening power, dispelling and destroying the shadows of darkness." (*The Celestial Hierarchy*.)

The term "Seraphic" in general refers to those qualities used by Pseudo-Dionysius to describe the Seraphim: the qualities of a purifying, intense fire. Many of the writings about St. Francis employ the imagery of light, fire, intensity, etc., in terms of his great love of God, and in particular, of the crucified Christ.

The heart of the Franciscan association with the idea of "Seraphic" is the experience of St. Francis on Mt. LaVerna two years before his death, when, as Thomas of Celano tells us in his *Vita Prima* 2-3, Francis saw

... a man standing above him, like a seraph with six wings, his hands extended and his feet joined together and fixed to a cross. Two of the wings

were extended above his head, two were extended as if for flight, and two were wrapped around the whole body...."

St. Bonaventure borrowed liberally from Celano in his *Legenda Major*, but he relates this same incident in a different way. Bonaventure tells us that while St. Francis was on Mt. LaVerna making his annual fast and retreat in honor of St. Michael the Archangel,

"... one morning about the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, while he was praying on the mountainside, Francis saw a Seraph with six fiery wings coming down from the highest point in the heavens. The vision descended swiftly and came to rest in the air near him. Then he saw the image of a man crucified in the midst of the wings, with his hands and feet stretched out and nailed to a cross. Two of the wings raised above his head and two were stretched out in flight, while the remaining two shielded his body." (*Legenda Major*, (13-3))

Bonaventure and Celano differ significantly in their descriptions of St. Francis' reaction to this vision. Celano writes that Francis was "filled with the greatest wondor, but he could not understand what this vision could mean." (*Vita Prima* 94.) Bonaventure, on the other hand, elaborates on this considerably, telling us that, while Francis was "lost in wonder at the sight of this mysterious vision," he "knew that the agony of Christ's passion was not in keeping with the state of a seraphic spirit which is immortal. Eventually he realized by divine inspiration that God had shown him this vision in his providence, in order to let him see that, as Christ's lover, he would resemble Christ crucified perfectly not by physical martyrdom, but by the fervor of his spirit." (*Legenda Major*, 13-3.) Both biographers relate that Francis was filled with both joy and sorrow at the vision. Celano says that Francis was "Filled with happiness... because of the kind and gracious look with which he saw himself regarded by the seraph... but the fact that the seraph was fixed to a cross and the sharpness of his suffering filled Francis with fear... joy and grief were in him alternately... he thought what this vision could mean, and his soul was in great anxiety to find its meaning..." (*Vita Prima* 94.) St. Bonaventure, on the other hand, relates that Francis' "heart was flooded with a mixture of joy and sorrow. He was overjoyed at the way Christ regarded him so graciously under the appearance of a Seraph, but the fact that he was nailed to a cross pierced his soul with a sword of compassionate sorrow." (*Legenda Major*, 13-3.) (Author's emphases.)

Here we see that the authors give two interpretations. Celano says that

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The angelology accepted by the Church writers is based largely on a work usually traced to Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*. The work is responsible for the usual division of the angels into nine choirs. Scriptural references to angels of particular choirs, however, are few. The only mention of the Seraphim in Holy Scripture is found in Isaiah 6: 2-7, in which the prophet Isaiah tells of his special vision of the Seraphim at the throne of God chanting the trisagion: "Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord of Hosts, all the earth is full of His glory." One of the six-winged Seraphim purged Isaiah's lips with a coal from the altar, which prepared him for his commission as prophet. The name Seraphim means "the burning ones," and "the inflaming ones." As was pointed out above, the Seraphim are the highest choir in the first, or highest, hierarchy. Because of this, they, of all the creatures, reflect and resemble God most closely, and are therefore the most excellent of all the creatures. Pseudo-Dionysius wrote of the Seraphim:

"The name Seraphim clearly indicates their ceaseless and eternal revolution about the Divine Principles; their heat and their keenness, the exuberance of their intense, perpetual, tireless activity, and their elevative and energetic assimilation of those below, kindling them and firing them to their own heat, and wholly purifying them by a burning and all consuming flame, and by hidden, unquenchable, changeless, radiant, and enlightening power, dispelling and destroying the shadows of darkness." (*The Celestial Hierarchy*.)

The term "Seraphic" in general refers to those qualities used by Pseudo-Dionysius to describe the Seraphim: the qualities of a purifying, intense fire. Many of the writings about St. Francis employ the imagery of light, fire, intensity, etc., in terms of his great love of God, and in particular, of the crucified Christ.

The heart of the Franciscan association with the idea of "Seraphic" is the experience of St. Francis on Mt. LaVerna two years before his death, where, as Thomas of Celano tells us in his *Vita Prima* 2-3, Francis saw

"... a man standing above him, like a seraph with six wings, his hands extended and his feet joined together and fixed to a cross. Two of the wings

were extended above his head, two were extended as if for flight, and two were wrapped around the whole body...."

St. Bonaventure borrowed liberally from Celano in his *Legenda Major*, but he relates this same incident in a different way. Bonaventure tells us that while St. Francis was on Mt. LaVerna making his annual fast and retreat in honor of St. Michael the Archangel,

"... one morning about the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, while he was praying on the mountainside, Francis saw a Seraph with six fiery wings coming down from the highest point in the heavens. The vision descended swiftly and came to rest in the air near him. Then he saw the image of a man crucified in the midst of the wings, with his hands and feet stretched out and nailed to a cross. Two of the wings raised above his head and two were stretched out in flight, while the remaining two shielded his body." (*Legenda Major*, (13-3)

Bonaventure and Celano differ significantly in their descriptions of St. Francis' reaction to this vision. Celano writes that Francis was "filled with the greatest wondor, but he could not understand what this vision could mean." (*Vita Prima* 94.) Bonaventure, on the other hand, elaborates on this considerably, telling us that, while Francis was "lost in wonder at the sight of this mysterious vision," he "knew that the agony of Christ's passion was not in keeping with the state of a seraphic spirit which is immortal. Eventually he realized by divine inspiration that God had shown him this vision in his providence, in order to let him see that, as Christ's lover, he would resemble Christ crucified perfectly not by physical martyrdom, but by the fervor of his spirit." (*Legenda Major*, 13-3.) Both biographers relate that Francis was filled with both joy and sorrow at the vision. Celano says that Francis was "Filled with happiness... because of the kind and gracious look with which he saw himself *regarded by the seraph... but the fact that the seraph was fixed to a cross* and the sharpness of his suffering filled Francis with fear... joy and grief were in him alternately... he thought what this vision could mean, and his soul was in great anxiety to find its meaning..." (*Vita Prima* 94.) St. Bonaventure, on the other hand, relates that Francis' "heart was flooded with a mixture of joy and sorrow. He was overjoyed at the way *Christ regarded him so graciously under the appearance of a Seraph*, but the fact that he was nailed to a cross pierced his soul with a sword of compassionate sorrow." (*Legenda Major*, 13-3.) (Author's emphases.)

Here we see that the authors give two interpretations. Celano says that

the messenger was a "seraph fixed to a cross," while Bonaventure tells that it was "Christ... under the appearance of a seraph." In other works St. Bonaventure deals with the question of how a seraph could be sent as an envoy by God. The angels, he says in the *Breviloquium*, "since they see God 'face to face' [cf. 1 Cor. 13:12], they move in God wherever they are sent." (8-2). The Seraphim, however, "never recede from the intimate" [Heb. 1:14], meaning that they remain in perfect union with God and are not sent on missions. St. Bonaventure is recorded in the *Collationes in Hexaemeron* (Coll. 21) as having said: "Dionysius [the Pseudo-Areopagite] raises the question of the Seraph sent to Isaias, but he does not solve it. But it seems better to be of the opinion that it was another angel, receiving his fire from an angel of that particular order (i. e., a seraph), and thus named after him...."

Thus, while Thomas of Celano's account of St. Francis' vision of the Seraph seems equivocal concerning the nature of the celestial emissary, St. Bonaventure seems quite certain that it was indeed the countenance of Christ himself that gazed upon St. Francis from the cross.

At this point we must return to a consideration of the "itinerarium" of the soul, the mystical journey which is, according to St. Bonaventure, a pilgrimage of transformation into the crucified Christ. In the *Itinerarium* (Prol. 2), Bonaventure speaks of St. Francis' vision at Mt. LaVerna: "In my meditation, it was at once clear to me that this vision represented, not only the contemplative rapture [of St. Francis], but also the road by which this rapture is attained." The six wings of the Seraph, he says, "can rightly be taken to symbolize the six levels of illumination by which, as if by steps or stages, the soul can pass over to peace through ecstatic elevations of Christian wisdom. There is no other path but through the burning love of the Crucified...." (Prol. 3.)

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**Bonaventure instructed his brothers, leading them along the pilgrim's road to the foot of the Cross, where the true meaning of "Seraphic" may be found.**

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## St. Francis as the Model of Seraphic Love

St. Bonaventure's *Legenda Major* is really less of a biography of the Seraphic Father and more of a discourse on the spiritual life. Bonaventure was convinced that the life of St. Francis of Assisi was intended by God for the spiritual edification of others (and who would disagree with this?). He tells of seven instances concerning the cross. Addressing this passage to St. Francis himself, he writes:

"Seven visions of Christ's Cross were miraculously seen in you or concerning you, and these appeared like so many portents at different stages in your life. The first six led like so many steps to the seventh which you have now attained and in which all is finally consummated." (*Legenda Major*, 13-10).

These six crosses—or visions concerning the crosses—mark the "steps or stages" in St. Francis' life to the point where he "passed over" to ecstatic peace in the consummation of his love for the crucified Christ, for as the vision of the Seraph disappeared, "it left his heart ablaze with eagerness and impressed upon his body a miraculous likeness...." (13-10.)

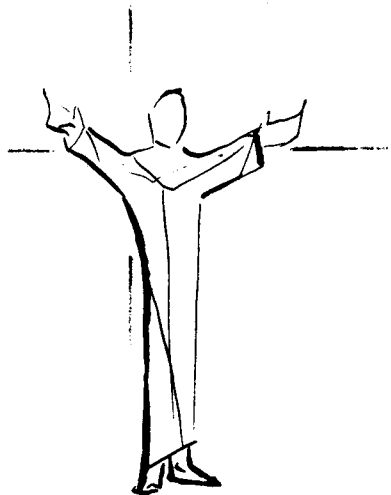
St. Francis embodied a love which "inflamed" his heart, says Bonaventure, transforming him into his beloved Christ. This was the love which "so transformed Paul into Christ," he writes in the *Itinerarium*, leading St. Paul to say: "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20.) St. Bonaventure says in this treatise on the mystical ascent to God that this same love "... also so absorbed the soul of Francis that his spirit shone through his flesh when for two years before his death he carried in his body the sacred stigmata of the passion." (*Itinerarium*, Prol. 3.) The six wings of the Seraph, Bonaventure concludes, "symbolize the six steps of illumination that begin from creatures and lead up to God, whom no one rightly enters except through the Crucified." If anyone tries to enter by another way, Bonaventure says, he is a "thief and a robber" [cf. Jn 10:1-9]. The gates of the "heavenly Jerusalem" must be entered "through the blood of the Lamb as through a door" [cf. Apoc 22-14].

In his sermon "Christ, the One Teacher of All," St. Bonaventure describes the road to Christian wisdom: "we begin with the firmness of faith, and proceed through the serenity of reason so as to arrive at the sweetness of contemplation. This is the order implied by Christ when he said 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life' [Jn. 14:6]." Christ is the "Alpha" and the "Omega," the beginning, the middle, and the end of the *itinerarium mentis*.

Through a burning love of Christ St. Francis achieved the highest

possible level of the "sweetness of contemplation." In this life of contemplation, "Prayer was [Francis'] chief comfort," and through this prayer Francis became "a fellow citizen of the angels, as he penetrated the dwelling places of heaven." (*Legenda Major*, 10-1). St. Francis' heart was entirely inflamed with the love of Christ, and so it became transformed into a rare instrument of divine love:

"Just as iron when heated to the point where it becomes molten can take the imprint of any mark or sign, so a heart burning fervently with love of Christ crucified can receive the imprint of the Crucified Lord Himself or His cross. Such a loving heart is carried over to the Crucified Lord or transformed into Him. That is what happened to St. Francis." (Bonaventure's *Second Sermon on St. Francis*.)



## The "Seraphic Order"

The Franciscan Order is commonly referred to as the "Seraphic order," as St. Francis is called the "Seraphic Father." St. Bonaventure (the "Seraphic Doctor"), however, in his scheme places the Franciscan Order in the "Cherubic Order," whose proper characteristic is "speculatio," comprising both the Franciscans and the Dominicans of his day. (See Joseph Ratzinger's *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, p. 49). While the monastic orders (the Cistercians, Premonstratensians, and Canons Regular) Bonaventure associated with the Thrones in the angelic choir because of their occupation of "prayer, devotion [and] divine praise," the Franciscans and the Dominicans are placed together as the "Cherubic Order." This Order

"...strives by means of speculation, that is, the speculative way, as do those who engage in examination of Scripture, which is understood only by clean minds. For you cannot grasp the words of Paul unless you have the spirit of Paul.... to these the Cherubim correspond. These are the Preachers and the Minors." (*Hexameron*, Coll. 22.)

It is clear then, that as far as St. Bonaventure was concerned, the Franciscan Order of his time was not the Seraphic, but co-members of the Cherubic Order, which was given to "speculation." As Ratzinger has written: "In his own person, Francis anticipates the eschatological form of life which will be the general form of life in the future." (*The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*.)

St. Bonaventure tells us that in order to "pass over," or transcend oneself in contemplative rapture in God, "speculatio" must be left behind. In order to celebrate the "Pasch," or "Passover" with Christ, "all intellectual activities ought to be relinquished and the most profound affection transported to God, and transformed into Him." This mystical transport is "most secret," Bonaventure says, and "no one knows except him who receives it, no one receives it except him who desires it, and no one desires except him who is penetrated to the marrow by the fire of the Holy Spirit." (*Itinerarium*, 7-4.) One who achieves this ecstatic transport rests "with Christ in the tomb, as if dead to the outer world, but experiencing, nevertheless, as far as possible in this present state as wayfarer, what was said on the Cross to the thief who was hanging there with Christ: This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." (*Itinerarium*, 7-2.)

And so St. Bonaventure, in his *Legenda Major*, describes how his Seraphic Father Francis, after having passed over into a transport of

seraphic love in which he was marked with the "seal of the Living God" [Apoc. 7:2], now "hung body and soul, upon the Cross with Christ; he burned with love for God worthy of a Seraph...." (*Legenda Major*, 14-1.). By divine grace St. Francis was "filled with the spirit of prophesy and charged with the ministry of Angels, as he burned with love worthy of the Seraphim. Like a man who has joined the ranks of the Angels, he was taken up in a chariot of fire, so that there can be no doubt whatever that he came 'in the power of Elias'.... [Lk. 1:17]. Preface, *Legenda Major*.) Because of the sublimity of his contemplation, St. Francis "expounded the secrets of divine wisdom so clearly" that a theologian was compelled to exclaim: "His theology soars aloft on the wings of purity and contemplation, like an eagle in full flight, while our learning crawls along the ground." (*Legenda Major*, 11-2).

The sacred wounds of St. Francis' stigmata worked miracles, Bonaventure says, which echoed the "triplici via", since they "... purified animals of disease [purgation], and granted clear skies [illumination], as well as physical warmth [perfection/union — the fire of love]...." (*Legenda Major*, 13-7.) Like the prophet Isaias, whose lips were purged by a Seraph with a burning coal from the altar, Francis spoke words which were "like a blazing fire which penetrated the depths of the heart and filled the minds of his hearers with wonder...." (*Legenda Major*, 12-7). These and many other statements made concerning St. Francis by St. Bonaventure attest to both the seraphic love of St. Francis, and the profound insight with which St. Bonaventure understood and loved him.

St. Bonaventure is known as a mystical theologian, rather than as a "mystic" in the usual sense of the term. He speaks little about himself—he is not the type to betray the "secrets" of God. Even though he would likely place himself in the "Cherubic order" out of humility, Bonaventure well deserves the title "Doctor Seraphicus," for as the late Eric Doyle, O.F.M. has said:

"If I may be permitted to speak of a 'spiritual sigmatization,' that is, a configuration of a soul to Christ, then it would not be fanciful to maintain, that as St. Francis came down from Mount LaVerna marked visibly with the stigmata of Christ's passion, so on evidence of the *Journey of the Soul to God*, St. Bonaventure came down from LaVerna signed interiorly with those same marks." (*The Disciple and the Master*.)

Likewise, St. Francis de Sales expressed his appreciation of St. Bonaventure in these exquisite words:

"As for you, O very holy and seraphic doctor Bonaventure, who in composing your divine works seem to have had no paper but the cross, no pen but the spear, no ink but the blood of my Savior, great is your power to move when you cry out: 'How good it is to live with the Crucifix!'"<sup>2</sup>

St. Bonaventure carried the love of Christ crucified "in the depths of his heart like a bundle of myrrh" (*Legenda Major*, 9-2), as did his beloved Father Francis. As the seventh Minister General of the Friars Minor, Bonaventure instructed his brothers, leading them along the pilgrim's road to the foot of the Cross, where the true meaning of "Seraphic" may be found:

"If you wish to know how these things may come about, ask grace, not learning; desire, not the understanding; the groaning of prayer, not diligence in reading; the Bridegroom, not the teacher; God, not man, darkness, not clarity; not light, but the fire that wholly inflames and carries one into God through transporting unctions and consumming affections. God Himself is this fire, and 'His furnace is in Jerusalem' [Isaiah 31:9]; And it is Christ Who enkindles it in the white flame of His most burning Passion...." (*Itinerarium*, 7-6.)

Like the Seraphim, who exist solely for the unceasing praise of God Who is their only and entire source of happiness, St. Francis of Assisi spent his entire life in a Eucharistic immolation for his most high glorious God. By the end of his life, like the "burning ones," the "inflaming ones," Francis was completely consumed like a holocaust in the furnace of the Cross, and was carried up to the heights of heaven to be with the others of his kind, who burn eternally before the Throne of the King of Kings.

"Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
Through whom you light the night...."

<sup>2</sup>"Sermon pour 'invitation de la sainte Croix,'" Oeuvres, ed., Talon, Paris, 1647, II, 105 b. (see G. Bougerol, *Introduction to the Works of St. Bonaventure*, tr. Jose de Vinck, Patterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1964, n. Pg. 9).

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## TRANSITUS

As light brims westerly from mottled clouds  
Above gray hills folding darkness into hollows,  
The countenance of the wind is upon the shortened day.

The countenance of the wind is upon the shortened day.  
Seeping through stone walls, it turns  
Toward the withered man taut with holiness.

Toward the withered man taut with holiness.  
(His breath sweetened with the delicacies of youth)  
Time approaches and stalks each labored breath.

Time approached and stalks each labored breath;  
Each exhalation consigns to blessedness  
The expiration of a well-formed soul.

Each exhalation consigns to blessedness  
His breath, sweetened with the delicacies of youth  
Seeping through stone walls, it turns  
Above gray hills folding darkness into hollows  
As light brims westerly from mottled clouds;

The expiration of a well-formed soul.

Justin Carisio

## Saint Francis and the Missions

JUNIPER CUMMINGS, O.F.M.

WE KNOW FRANCIS was the first founder to write in his Rule a chapter about missions and non-Christians. He, himself, after a couple of unsuccessful attempts actually went among the Saracens. We know he considered as true Friars Minor the first martyred missionary Friars. He was, after all, the mirror of the missioned Jesus and our Order was a revival of the apostolic; that is, of the missionary life of the Apostles and early Church.

What I propose to do is analyze the life and spirit of Francis in view of the developments of current missiology.

We could say there are at least five views of what is "mission" today. 1) The first mission is evangelization; that is, preaching the Gospel and catechizing non-Christians, and second—evangelization is reaching out to the fallen away, the alienated, the unchurched. 2) Others see mission as liberation; that is, working for justice, peace, and human rights. 3) Still others see it as helping local churches, whether they be new ones being formed, or old ones who lack clergy and other ministries.<sup>1</sup> [16% of the world's priests are in the United States and Canada serving 7.8% of the world's Catholics.] 4) The fourth view of mission based on Scripture, Vatican II, and subsequent writings is that the Church is mission, and mission is the Church. Every generation needs evangelizing so there is mission activity everywhere always. With this view, we must affirm that only the evangelized can evangelize and all the evangelized must evangelize. In this view, Liturgy and contemplation are important mission thrusts. 5) The last view is that the function of mission is to mid-wife the good that is in other cultures and non-Christians religions, as well as to Christianize those cultures. In this sense, mission is to bring to fulfillment our Christian religion by finding and accepting these truths and helping these individuals and religious find the fullness that is Christ.

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Father Juniper Cummings is Provincial of Our Lady of Consolation Province, President of the Conventual Franciscan Conference of North American and Director of the Conventual Franciscan Mission Association. He originally presented this paper at an Inter-Province Conference in Santa Barbara, California in July, 1984.

In the document, "Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Missions—The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions," we have a summary of what missiology and mission is.

13. "Mission is thus presented in the consciousness of the Church as a single but complex and articulated reality. Its principal elements can be mentioned. Mission is already constituted by the simple presence and living witness of the Christian life (cf. EN 21), although it must be recognized that 'we bear this treasure in earthen vessels' (2 Cor. 4:7). Thus the difference between the way the Christian existentially appears and that which he declares himself to be is never fully overcome. There is also the concrete commitment to the service of mankind and all forms of activity for social development and for the struggle against poverty and the structures which produce it. Also, there is liturgical life and that of prayer and contemplation, eloquent testimonies to a living and liberating relationship with the active and true God who calls us to his Kingdom and to his glory (cf. Acts 2:42). There is as well the dialogue in which Christians meet the followers of other religious traditions in order to walk together in projects of common concern. Finally, there is announcement and catechesis in which the good news of the Gospel is proclaimed and its consequences for life and culture are analyzed. The totality of Christian mission embraces all these elements."
14. "Every local Church is responsible for the totality of mission. However, every Christian, by virtue of his faith and baptism, is called to carry out to some degree the whole mission of the Church. The needs of the situation, the particular position of the People of God, and an individual's personal charism dispose the Christian to direct his efforts principally to one or another aspect of that mission."<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note that this document cites Saint Francis in his 'Regula non Bullata'.

17. "Among the many examples which could be drawn from the history of Christian mission, the norms given by Saint Francis of Assisi, in the 'Regula non Bullata' of 1221, are significant. The friars, who through divine inspiration would desire to go among the Muslims...can establish spiritual contact with them (Muslims) in two ways: a way which does not raise arguments and disputes, but rather they would be subject to every human creature for the love of God and confess themselves to be Christians. The other way is that when they see that it would be pleasing to the Lord, they should announce the word of God'.<sup>3</sup>

It would seem then that Francis anticipated contemporary missiology. He saw missions as witnessing to Christianity—living the Gospel, and as evangelizing. He didn't use the word, but by the idea of living among non-believers, being subject to them, and by not arguing or disputing, he implicitly called for dialogue.

Arnulf Camps, O.F.M. in his Mattli Paper, published in "Build Up My Church" has an article, "Franciscan Dialogue with Other Religions," in which he says there are three views of dialogue.<sup>4</sup> the first is that it is a missionary method; the second is that we are in the age of Dialogue and the time of mission is extinct. The third view which Camps sees as Francis' is dialogical missiology. This view starts from accepting cosmic revelation and the human response to it, which is religion. World religions do indeed lead to God, but since we are sinners, even religion has its dark side, and can never be praised uncritically.<sup>5</sup>

Then there is a historical revelation that is Judaism. Subsequent revelation does not destroy the former, but continues manifesting God's care and love for all. Thus, the personal revelation of God in Jesus fulfills, continues historical revelation. The social answer to this manifestation is Christianity. In Jesus, God unites Himself with us and prepares for the final manifestation of God in the eschatological time. Thus, Camps says that we have a progressive revelation. We bring along all the good answers already given in God's previous revelations. However, we must remember a conversion is needed because we bring along the bad things with the good things of religion.

In and through this revelation, God calls us to fulfillment; that is, salvation, integral salvation. Mission is a call to work for the betterment of our total human condition. This dialogical mission is maieutic. This is a socratic mid-wifing another's spiritual and developmental values. It means going ever deeper into answers given by other faiths and ever more deeply into one's own answer to Jesus Christ.

While in the spirit of Francis we accept a progression in revelation. I don't think that we accept a missiology that evolves "from ecclesiocentrism to Christocentrism and most recently to Theocentrism."<sup>6</sup> We believe that Christ as first born is central and center. To find God is in some real way to find Christ. To find Christ is to find God. A Theocentrism in missiology would render Christ as non-essential, if not irrelevant.

Francis did not start polemics and he repeatedly urged his brothers not to quarrel among themselves or with others. The missionary method of his day was by conquest as the crusades, or by polemics (somewhat the OE method), or by expecting the miraculous introduction to the last age as the Joachimites. Francis and Franciscans directed to all, Christians

and unchristians, the example of Christ and the Apostles. He missionized more by example than proclamation, although he certainly provided for proclamation when the Friars were so moved by the Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

One aspect of Francis' missionary thrust I did not find among the mentioned approaches nor was it very explicit in the Mattli Papers, but I felt it must be mentioned; that is, his desire for martyrdom.<sup>8</sup> To desire martyrdom might be expecting too much, but to accept suffering is the call that every Franciscan has. Francis' singular grace, the Stigmata, was a sealing of his suffering as a precious instrument of evangelization. Pope John Paul II in his message for the 1984 World Mission Day exhorts all of the faithful to use this precious instrument of evangelization. "I would energetically exhort all the faithful to make full use of suffering in its myriad forms, uniting it to the sacrifice of the Cross for evangelization; that is, for the redemption of those who do not yet know Christ. There are yet millions of our brothers and sisters who do not know the Gospel and who do not enjoy the immense treasures of the Heart of the Redeemer. For them there is no adequate explanation for suffering; it is the most oppressing and inexplicable absurdity which contrasts tragically with the aspirations of man for complete happiness. Only the cross of Christ casts a ray of light on this mystery; only in the cross can man find a valid response to the anguishing question that rises from the experience of suffering. The saints have deeply understood it and accepted it, and at times have even ardently desired to be associated with the passion of the Lord, making their own the words of the Apostle: 'I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body; that is, the Church' (Col. 1:24)."<sup>9</sup>

We have an example of our own confrer, Casimir Cypher, who in his Franciscan simplicity went to work for, live with and as the poor, and who was killed giving simple witness in Honduras in 1975.<sup>10</sup>

The model and indispensable aid in evangelization, our sainted missionary and martyred saint for our times, Saint Maximilian, displayed was Mary. The Korean Poor Clare, Sister Mary F. Kwon, pointed out at Mattli that Mary had a vital role in Francis' life and mission. "It was as if Francis were in fact no longer alone, but in everything and every way, he benefited through the woman, holy Mary and her prayers." Then she cites Bonaventure's reference to Francis being impregnated "through the merits of the Mother of Mercy." Then, "Francis and his Friars", she continues, "were to conceive the Word in the power of the Spirit of love and thus bear the poor Jesus crucified."<sup>11</sup>

We'll miss the mission boat without Mary. The real signs of our times

are intimately involved with Mary. We're not in the Franciscan tradition unless there is an explicit Mariological coloration to our dialogical missiology. Friars find joy in their evangelization, in life, in Mary who remains "Causa Laetitiae nostrae" — the Cause-Source of our Joy.

I'll conclude by citing the Franciscan inspiration for and from the Third World since even if "Missions have come to an end, mission continues."<sup>12</sup> There is a special need to help and be helped by the Third World. So Francis, who identified with and would have us be true *minores*, would have us heed the call of our brothers and sisters in and from the Third World. They call us first to be in favor of the poor-against poverty. Second, to be for women-against discrimination. Third, to see the rights of the poor as the rights of God. Fourth, to be striving for justice and peace. Fifth, to be instruments of reconciliation. Sixth, to be building a liberating solidarity. Seventh, to be in dialogue with other religions. Eighth, to be helping the Word become flesh-inculturation. Ninth, to be overcoming clericalism through fraternity. Tenth, to learn by living and doing in formation. Eleventh, to be reaching out to the Transcendent by prayer and contemplation.<sup>13</sup>

We pray daily the Magnificat, we are called to live it and thus spread the Kingdom as Francis did.

<sup>1</sup>"There are no more Franciscan missions. There is now the local Church into which we must inculturate and integrate ourselves." Andreas Miller, O.F.M., Director of Missionzentrale.

Father Stephen Oottenbrect, O.F.M., Provincial of Brasil, speaks of "non-colonial" approach to the missions and repeated a current South American slogan "Less sponsorship, more partnership," published in "This Week" Vol. 18, No. 38, September 22, 1986. Holy Name Province Newsletter.

<sup>2</sup>Secretariat for Non-Christians. Bulletin-Vatican City-56 (1984), XIX, a.

<sup>3</sup>cf. supra no. 17 and Omnibus "Regula non Bullata," Chap. 16, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>Arnulf Camps, O.F.M., "Franciscan Dialogue with other Religions" in *Build Up My Church*, 1984. I've summarized pp. 132-135. The English Translation prepared under the direction of the Interprovincial Secretariat for the Missions of the English-speaking Conference of the Order of Friars Minor, 1434 W. 51st St., Chicago, IL 60609. (Hereafter referred to as BUMC). The Mattli Conference was a Conference of Third World Franciscans held in Mattli, Switzerland.

<sup>5</sup>It would seem that the Swiss Bishops might subscribe to this second or third view. Message from Swiss Bishops on the Missions task of the Catholic Church in Switzerland: "As Christians we do not have to bring salvation from outside to any region or religions. The action of God is already at work." "We should above all submit ourselves to the action of God. This is at work in all men, in all cultures,



in all religions. Through our birth we are members of the human race and we have a share in its cultures and religions; thus we enter in the sphere of the action of God and also of Jesus Christ in His Spirit. Consequently our missionary task does not consist in taking possession of men and taking them over from the religious point of view," "but rather opening them to its mystery which has always been constituted by their own life." Pp. 33, *Pro Mundi Vita* Dossiers, 1982/4; the Catholic Church in Switzerland.

<sup>6</sup>The view of Vatican II and Rahner is certainly Christocentric but a more recent view is that many religions are partners in God and while some give a special role to Christ, they maintain that Christ is not normative. "One detects a certain evolution from ecclesiocentrism to Christocentrism and most recently to theocentrism." This seems to me to be a regression instead of a development and alien to Francis and Franciscan Theology whether we theologize from the top down or the bottom up. Cf. *International Bulletin*, Vol. 9, No. 4, October, 1985 entire issue. "Mission Since Vatican Council II."

<sup>7</sup>Camps, o.c. pp. 137-138.

<sup>8</sup>I Celano, 55-57 and Omnibus pp. 274-277.

<sup>9</sup>L'Osservatore Romano, June, 1984, pg. 8 (English edition).

<sup>10</sup>Cf. *Man of Peace—Casimir Michael Cypher, OFM Conv.* "His Meaning in Life was Found in Death" by Fr. Anselm Romb, OFM Conv., Franciscan Marytown Press, Libertyville, IL, 1985.

<sup>11</sup>Sr. Mary Francis Kwon, "The Franciscan Woman in the World" in BUMC, p. 179. cf. (5).

<sup>12</sup>Walbert Buhlmann, OFM Cap. "The Metamorphosis of Mission" in BUMC, pg. 53 sq.

<sup>13</sup>The Inter-Franciscan Message, Mattli, Switzerland, 1983 in BUMC, pp. 215-223.

It is interesting to note and compare Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology with the Franciscan and contemporary approach. The three principles of Orthodox Mission Theology are the centrality of the Incarnation, the liturgical witness and the local community. The three elements of mission practice are the use of the vernacular, indigenous clergy, and the selfhood of the Church. Cf. Jarnes Stamoolis, "Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology" *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2, April, 1984, pp. 55-62.

## The Last Embrace

*This is the day,  
This is the hour,  
This is the moment,  
of agony!*

I see  
my Son laboring  
up the hill  
burdened with  
the Cross-beam!

He bears  
the marks  
of brutal torture:  
blows struck with  
malice and forethought!

Him, they mocked;  
crowned with thorns.  
My gentle Son,  
compassionate One!

My heart burst  
in a cry of pain:  
My Son, my Son—  
O Mother, My Mother!

A clasp, an embrace;  
torn from my arms!  
My Love, my Life!  
I struggle after—  
after—  
after—

To Golgotha!

*there they crucified Him!*  
My innocent One,  
My forgiving Son.

*Sister M. Colette Logue, O.S.F.*

# REDISCOVER THE LITTLE POOR MAN OF ASSISI

SISTER M. SHEILA MORTONSON, OSF

IS IT POSSIBLE, in this age of high technology, computerization, complex telecommunications systems, a time of social upheaval and religious controversy, for a religious group to make a return to the radical observance of a Gospel life of simplicity as observed by St. Francis and as outlined in his original rule?

A group of Capuchin Friars attached to a convent in Monreale, Sicily, thought it was not only possible, but practical as well. They set out therefore, to follow their dream by applying in 1972 to Bishop Corrado Mingo, of the Diocese of Monreale, for permission to make this attempt. The original inspiration for this drastic undertaking resulted from a study of the directives of Vatican II, which encouraged religious institutes to re-evaluate their origins, especially with regard to the spirituality of the founder.

The six original Friars, who included priests, clerics and professed members of the Capuchin Friars Minor of St. Francis, requested a dispensation through the Sacred Congregation for Religious in Rome, to leave their original Order, giving as their reason their desire to re-establish the primitive form of life as instituted by St. Francis. They wanted, they explained, to follow to the letter the Rule of 1223 as approved by Pope Honorius III. They wished to rediscover Francis, return to their Franciscan origins, and attempt to remove the accretions which had accumulated over the centuries in the long Franciscan tradition. Bishop Mingo acceded to the proposals of these friars, and thus was erected the Association or Pius Union of the Friars Minor of the Renewal. The decree was issued December 24, 1972. Very shortly, others among the Capuchins requested to be united to this new fraternity, as also members of the Friars Minor, and members among the laity. In September, 1977, the Constitutions of the Friars Minor of the Renewal were officially approved, and the Bishop of Monreale declared that if the Friars observed these Constitutions, together with the Rule of the Friars Minor and the Testament of St.

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*Sr. Sheila Mortonson of Little Falls, Minn., studied theology at the Angelicum in Rome. She has published in THE CORD and in SISTERS TODAY.*

Francis, this observance would be to the greater glory of God and to the good of the Church.

Now, nearly fifteen years later, there are more than one-hundred-fifty members in this little fraternity. They are established in five houses located in southern Italy, together with a mission in Columbia, S. A. The novitiate is located in Corleone, a small town near Palermo in Sicily. In addition to an increase in the number of applicants to the novitiate, several of the young members are currently studying theology.

Perhaps one of the most unusual of the houses of this new Franciscan family is that established in Naples, Italy, in the hills near the palace of the Capodimonte. Surrounded by rows of luxuriant vines, vegetables and fragrant flowers, there stands a prefabricated metal building, adjacent to which are some old railroad coaches. The boundary of the garden is marked only by a heap of stones forming a make-shift wall with a rudimentary gate as an entrance. Above the gate are the letters FMR. When the visitor rings the primitive door bell, a bearded, barefoot Friar appears and extends the greeting of St. Francis, "Pace e bene" (Peace and goodness).

The appearance of these Franciscan men of God is striking. Their habit, as prescribed in their constitutions, is of the coarsest kind of woven material, ash grey in color, and having a small hood attached. Around the waist is tied a white rope with the traditional three knots, symbolizing the three vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience. Suspended from this rope is the seven-decade rosary of the Blessed Virgin, also referred to as the "Franciscan Crown." For winter the Friars wear a sort of cape or mantle over the habit, made of the same material as the habit. This cape extends only to the knees, but is long enough from the shoulders to cover the hands completely. Normally the Friars go barefooted, but if a covering is required to protect the feet, the friars may wear either sandals or open wooden clogs. At night the Friars sleep fully clothed in their habits.

The living quarters of these Friars provide only the most rudimentary shelter. The chapel, located in one half of the prefab structure, is simplicity itself, providing kneeling benches sufficient comfortably to accommodate no more than twenty five or thirty Friars. Around its simple wooden walls are carved plain wooden crosses marking the "Way of the Cross." A rustic table serves as the altar, over which hangs a modest copy of the Crucifix which spoke to St. Francis. A small tabernacle stands on the altar and there is a stand to hold the book of the Scriptures. These complete the chapel furnishings. In the other half of the same prefab building is the

kitchen, a wash room, and a refectory, in addition to two other little rooms — a tiny library and a small closet.

The railroad coaches have been transformed into living accommodations for the Friars, each compartment, marked by its small windows, providing a tiny cell. In each of these is a plank bed, which may have on it a few covers. In addition there is a tiny table and a chair.

The mimeographed Constitutions of these Franciscan Friars of the Renewal (FMR) specify as main precept that the Friars may not accept property for themselves, nor may they use money offered for services in their ministry, for Masses celebrated, or from any other source. Monies which may come to them in the form of pensions, annuities or inheritance must be distributed to the very poor. Their own sustenance depends on the generous charity of others received as alms, in addition to their own garden produce. They possess no means of transportation, and even their housing is not only nominally, but is, in very fact, property of others. These Constitutions make clear that outside of the possession of goods and the use of money which are prohibited absolutely, the Friars may have for their use only those things that are necessary to maintain life, and even these are to be "poor."

The rationale underlying such a radical life style is to be found in the original understanding of St. Francis, who wrote in his rule, "So excellent is this most high poverty that it makes us heirs and rulers of the kingdom of heaven. It makes us materially poor, but rich in virtue." (Rule of 1221, 23:7).

The community is essentially contemplative in its orientation, even though at the same time the Friars are engaged in apostolic services. In addition to poverty, a second value, that of prayer, superseded every other one in the eyes of St. Francis. To recover this contemplative spirit of Francis, then, is the goal of these Friars Minor of the Renewal, who, aiming to be like their Founder, are "not only men who pray, but are themselves a prayer." On the little gate which designates a part of the cloister as the "cloister," is a Gospel phrase recalling to mind that Jesus, after retiring into solitude to pray.

This prayer is the very breath or rhythm of the little fraternity. The Friars rise at one o'clock in the morning for the Office of Readings (originally Matins) following which they spend some time in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. They return to sleep then until six o'clock in the morning, when they again assemble in the chapel to pray the Office of Lauds. This is followed by the Eucharistic celebration, together with a lengthy period of meditation. During the course of the day they pray the

other hours of the Divine Office, which nearly always are sung. Concerning prayer, their Constitutions specify that neither the Guardians (Superiors) nor the Friars are ever to excuse themselves from at least two hours (one-hundred-twenty minutes!) of mental prayer daily. The method of the meditation is left to the individual preference, but the prayer itself is to be made in a common place, preferably in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The only devotional prayer specified is the recitation of the Rosary.

The intense apostolic life in which these Friars engage is not confined to any one area. However, their preference is for service to the very poorest of the poor, in which southern Italy abounds. They seek out the most abandoned, and those with the least spiritual assistance. Since among the members are not only priests, but others with many areas of competency, they are able to adapt themselves to a variety of needs in the apostolate, especially with services to families and to groups of young people. But they are also open to other forms of service to which they may be asked. The one thing, however, which these Friars will not do is to accept any form of apostolate which is remunerated, as for example, taking on a religious school; nor will they accept any kind of service where management of money would be involved, as for instance, in the running of a church or parish. Their reason for refusing such works arises from their concern for remaining insecure, and totally dependent on the Providence of God.

This drastic, current, literal Franciscan renewal project can best be understood when seen against the backdrop of the Franciscan movement, especially where that concerns the practice of poverty. Even before the death of Francis and certainly for centuries later, it was principally the concern over the interpretation of poverty and the living of the Gospel life that caused dissension and eventually a split in the Order. It seems particularly significant that this modern reform program originating in the seventies and flowering in the eighties is itself an outgrowth of a reform movement originating in the early sixteenth century — that of the Capuchins. Those Capuchins, too, were a splinter from another reform group, the Friars Minor of the Observance (the Observants) whose reform arose as opposition to the decline of religious life and discipline in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But even these Observants (today the Friars Minor) later were seen by many as requiring reform, which resulted then in the Capuchin break-away, the approval for which was given by Pope Clement VII in 1528.

A comparison of the present aims of the Friars Minor of the Renewal

with those of the original Capuchin reformers offers a striking similarity. Most notable is the relationship with the original Capuchin desire to follow a literal interpretation of the Rule of St. Francis, especially in its concern for poverty and a life of prayer and contemplation. The original Capuchin emphasis on simplicity, austerity, and concern for the corporal works of mercy must be seen also as a parallel in this new renewal movement. The Friars Minor of the Renewal also echo the original Capuchin life style in their austere manner of dress by requiring that the habit be made of the poorest cloth available, discouraging even the wearing of sandals, while requiring the wearing of the beard seeing this as a means to imitate Christ and Francis. Again also the likeness must be noted in the Friars' determination to obtain what is needed for daily life by begging "in kind." As the earliest Friars of Francis practiced whatever trade they knew, and served the most abandoned, poor and neglected, so also is this the direction being taken once again by the Friars of the Renewal. The same attraction which drew many others into the original Capuchin reform, including members of the Observants, is seen repeating itself again. And the original Capuchin preference for an alternation between an intense active apostolate with an equally intense period of prayer, is being reflected anew among the members of this new fraternity.

Apparently today, among those asking admittance among the Friars, is a similar motivation to that of earlier times: the radical way in which the friars search out how to live the Gospel message; their desire to return to the original ideal of Francis as expressed in his Testament; their determination to despoil themselves of what is not necessary; their solidarity in living a closely knit community life; and their total surrender to the goal of being united to Christ according to the understanding of a Francis of Assisi.

Newcomers to the community are under no illusions even in their idealism. They realize fully that it is easy to come to visit for a week, and to rise at night to pray and to live among people whom they would not choose, and to experience radical deprivations. They fully understand that to live this life style for all of their days, to accept everything as it is, certainly is in opposition to natural inclinations, and that only Divine assistance can support one in perseverance and fidelity. Yet those Friars, who are so convinced of the need to live out their existence circumscribed by textual fidelity to the Rule, sincerely and firmly believe that their manner of attempting to live the essence of the Gospel constitutes a way of extraordinary fruitfulness and benefit for the vitality of the entire Church, and that through them others may see today the true beauty of the Rule of St. Francis in its full integrity.

In these last years of the twentieth century which are seeing multifarious proposals for adaptations in the modes and structures of religious life, together with new and varied solutions for the growing social ills and problems, the development of new theologies and philosophies springing up in different parts of the world, it comes as a decided surprise that still another program for religious renewal is challenging the many other diverse modern forms, but a program not only not new, but having its origins over seven centuries ago! This certainly raises a question. What, in light of all these new developments geared to the on-going changes in Church and society, is the validity for such a movement as that of the Friars Minor of the Renewal? Can such a movement, which is certainly attracting followers, succeed in opposing the *status quo* in its search for a Franciscan Utopia, where it is possible to observe the Gospel to the letter, "without gloss" as St. Francis had envisioned? Ten years from now, will this radical group of Franciscan enthusiasts have affected values and attitudes within the Order, within the Church, and spread their influence outside of Italy to the far corners of the globe after the manner of Francis of Assisi? Or will their movement remain only a sterile experiment? Will the powerful influences of society, both civil and ecclesiastical, pressure them to abandon their dreams, and cause them to do as many in the Franciscan reform movement in earlier centuries, to return to their more traditionally adapted and modernized communities?

God alone has the answer.



## Books Received

- Berry, Karen, O.S.F. *Signs Along Our Way*. Biblical Reflections for Charting Life's Journeys. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1986. Pp. 76. Paper, \$4.95.
- Clark, W. Joseph. *The Holy Land. A Guide*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1986. Pp. 204. Paper, \$7.95.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. Pp. xiv-212, including end notes and indices. Cloth, \$24.95.
- Moore, Sebastian. *Let This Mind Be In You. The Quest for Identity Through Oedipus to Christ*. San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1985. Pp. xv-174. Paper, \$8.95. This is a paperback edition of a work reviewed in the May, 1986 edition of **THE CORD**, pp. 159-160.
- O'Donoghue, Noel Dermot, ODC. *Aristocracy of Soul: Patrick of Ireland*. Vol. 1. The Way of the Christian Mystics series. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1986. Pp. 131, including Index. Paper, \$7.95.
- Pennington, M. Basil, O.S.C. *Breaking Bread. The Table Talk of Jesus*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. Pp. xiii-110. Cloth, \$10.95.
- Sherry, Gerard E. *The Catholic Shrines of Europe*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1986. Pp. 119. Paper, \$5.95.

### FRANCISCAN ONGOING FORMATION DIRECTORS SEMINAR:

April 29, 1987, 10:00 a. m. — April 30, 1987, 4:00 p. m., Aston, Pennsylvania. Directed by Anthony Carrozzo, OFM, and Kathleen Moffatt, OSF. A gathering of sisters and brothers called to enliven an enthusiasm for the Franciscan charism in today's times. Open to Franciscans who serve in Governance as well as Renewal ministries, this seminar is intended as a networking session. Topics include: "The Manner of Franciscan Ongoing Formation," "Evangelical Life Considerations," "Franciscan Wellness Center: Should There Be One?"

Registration:

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| FS 504 | Life of St. Francis   | 3   | M-F*  | 8:30-9:45           | Conrad Harkins, OFM, Ph.D.         |
| FS 506 | Survey of Franciscan History  | 3   | M-F   | 9:55-11:10          | Dominic Monti, OFM, Ph.D.          |
| FS 508 | History of Franciscan Thought   | 3   | M-F   | 9:55-11:10          | Julian Davies, OFM, Ph.D.          |
| FS 520 | Writings of St. Francis & St. Clare   | 2   | M-Th  | 11:20-12:25         | Michael Hart, OFM Cap., S.T.L.     |
| FS 540 | Franciscan Spirituality   | 2   | M-Th* | 11:20-12:25         | Joseph Doino, OFM, Th.D.           |
| FS 518 | Script. Foundations of Franciscanism  | 2   | M-F   | 1:00-2:05           | Leslie Hoppe, OFM, Ph.D.           |
| FS 561 | Developm. of the Franciscan Person  | 2   | M-Th  | 1:00-2:05           | Edward Coughlin, OFM, Ph.D.        |
| FS 500 | Method and Bibliography   | 2   | M-Th* | 2:20-3:15           | Paul Spaeth, M.L.S.                |
| FS 517 | Introduction to Paleography   | 2   | M-Th  | 2:20-3:15           | Girard Etkorn, Ph.D.               |
| FS 532 | The Secular Franciscan Movement   | 2   | M-Th  | 2:20-3:15           | Donna Marie Kaminsky, SFO, M.A.    |
| FS 552 | The Franciscan Contribution to Justice and Peace  | 2   | M-Th  | 7:00-8:00 (evening) | Daniel McLellan, OFM, Ph.D.        |
| FS 650 | Seminar — "The Future Order of Things: on Franciscans, Apocalypticism, and Medieval Prophecy" | 2   | M-F*  | 7:00-8:00 (evening) | E. Randolph Daniel, Ph.D.          |

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APRIL, 1987

# The CORD

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Volume 37, No. 4

# The CORD

## A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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## Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

### I. Writings of Saint Francis

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Adm: Admonitions                               | Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221                  |
| BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo               | LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God                  |
| CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun               | LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours                      |
| EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony                   | OffPass: Office of the Passion                         |
| EpCler: Letter to Clerics <sup>1</sup>         | OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix                     |
| EpCust: Letter to Superiors <sup>1</sup>       | RegB: Rule of 1223                                     |
| EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful <sup>1</sup> | RegNB: Rule of 1221                                    |
| EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo                   | RegEr: Rule for Hermits                                |
| EpMin: Letter to a Minister                    | SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady                         |
| EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order              | SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues                     |
| EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People         | Test: Testament of St. Francis                         |
| ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God        | UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare                    |
| ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father           | VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy               |
| FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare            | <sup>1</sup> I, II refer to First and Second Editions. |

### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis  | LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis   |
| 2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis | LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis |
| 3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles   | LP: Legend of Perugia                    |
| CL: Legend of Saint Clare            | L3S: Legend of the Three Companions      |
| CP: Process of Saint Clare           | SC: Sacrum Commernium                    |
| Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis  | SP: Mirror of Perfection                 |

**Quotations:** Marion A. Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies*. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

**AB:** Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1962).

GUEST EDITORIAL



## The Franciscan's Call To Conversion

ALL OF US have been called by God. God ordinarily manifests this by attracting us to Christian life, usually due to the example of another. We respond to God's call by rejecting whatever could separate us from God and by turning to God by doing good to our neighbor. This is so because Jesus combined the laws of love for God and for neighbor into the one great commandment (Mt. 22:34-40). St. Francis too reminds us of this in the prologue to both the Secular Franciscan Order and the Third Order Regular Rules.

That we have been touched by God is something vitally important to our spiritual lives. The Testament of St. Francis brings this out. In his last illness he vigorously proclaimed to all who would follow his example that "God inspired me." God had called him. He was God's work as we are. Why did he persevere? What impelled him to go on despite difficulties even in bringing the message of the Gospel of peace to others? It was faith in the call of God. This faith put hope in Francis' life, an active hope that manifested itself in deeds of love for God and for the People of God.

St. Francis' steadfastness in living the Gospel was the result of his awareness of God's call. Unless we are aware that we are God's work, our concern to become more and more a gospel people could weaken. Humanly what sustains us is the gift of memory. It enables us to reflect prayerfully and gratefully on those moments of grace and inspiration when we experienced God's call.

Franciscans are people who seek to turn continuously to God throughout life by following Christ after the example of St. Francis.

*Fr. Thaddeus Horgan, an Atonement Franciscan, is a member of the Life and Life Committee of the Franciscan Federation, member of the editorial board of THE CORD, and managing editor of Ecumenical Institute of the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute.*



Like Francis our first task is to set about renovating our own lives. By doing that first the Lord led Francis to embrace the apostolic mission: "rebuild my Church." His own life made that mission credible. Today franciscans, secular and religious, can be a force for the renewal of the Church, the objective of the II Vatican Council and of the efforts of Pope John Paul II, only if their commitment to personal renewal and the renewal of their fraternities is fully alive.

Francis always viewed conversion joyfully because he knew he was called by God. He was of value to God. This awareness is the human ground for spiritual joy. Unfortunately Francis is often depicted as an idealist which makes it easy for some not to take him seriously. But he was a realist because he was grounded in the Gospel which proclaims that Christ redeemed all humanity and that redemption is available to all. At the same time the Gospel tells us that we are weak, faltering, dependent, and sinful. Consequently Francis called himself the most despicable and unworthy of God's creatures. But this never depressed him. He never lost his joyousness because he knew himself to be a redeemed sinner, loved by God. God's love for all is manifest in the gift of the only Son sent into the world (John 3:16). God offers us life in the Son through the power of God's Spirit. Francis had this balanced view of himself and others. Sometimes we get discouraged. Conflict and violence seem to be such a large part of the human experience. But by faith we know that they can not defeat God's people. The good news of Jesus Christ is that all inhumanity can be overcome. All peoples in Christ do have the capacity to be instruments for peace.

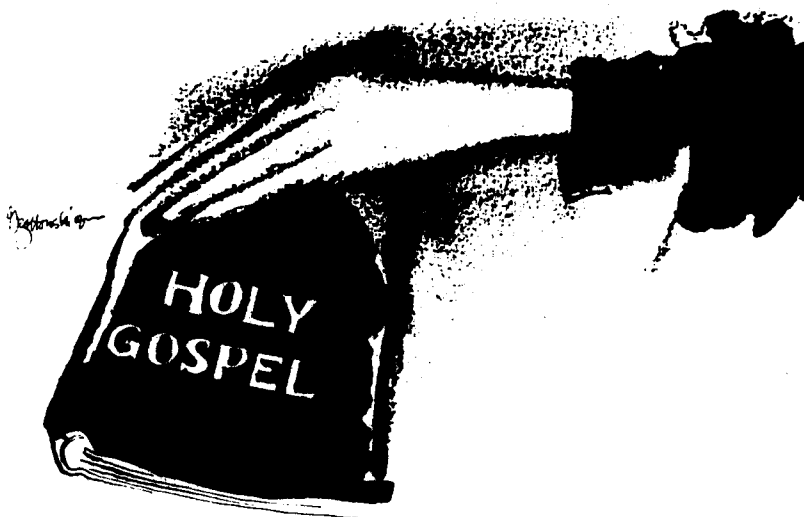
The distinct charism of Secular Franciscans and Third Order Regular Franciscans within the larger franciscan family is biblical repentance. In essence it is acknowledging our call to turn to God, to believe in Jesus as the Messianic Lord of life, and to live our Gospel belief by "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ." To accomplish these goals we have to see ourselves in a larger context than our self-perception dictates. That context is to see ourselves as people called by God. God does not call us to what we can not do. In this three year conversion experience Francis questioned whether he could be more than a merchant's son destined to be a merchant. The Gospel challenged him. God led him first to put on Christ. Then Francis understood that God intends people to live as Jesus did. And they can.

All of us can recall moments in our lives when we experienced something that opened us up to new horizons. Francis thought he

could not stand lepers only to find that he could embrace them. He discovered that God could open him up so much more than he had perceived. To use Francis' own words, by changing one's values the spirit of the world can be replaced by the Spirit of the Lord! This was done by grace, and by cooperation with grace, that is, by assimilating and interiorizing the values manifested by Christ in the gospels. These values generally are associated with the Sermon on the Mount, especially the Beatitudes. Christ for Francis and franciscans is the only way, the truth and the life. Evangelical or gospel life, then, describes that style of living Francis projects to his followers.

Putting on the Lord is not play-acting or merely imitating Christ; it is literally making part of ourselves the values and motives of the Lord. This is the lifetime task. Francis faltered, was tempted, and prayed for strength even after his conversion. Like him we too may become tired of trying. At times it seems we are getting nowhere. We may even doubt our call especially when we feel frustrated. We want to be truly turned to God, but we slip up and feel we lack God's grace. This is time for deep faith and hope. Perseverance is essential. Think of the Christ in Gethsemane. Despite his feeling of loneliness and sense of abandonment he persevered and became humanity's redeemer. Francis discovered Christ's perseverance in the Gospels. In this he found assurance, motivation, and inspiration. So do we.

*Thaddeus Morgan, S.A.*



# The Earth, A Companion on the Spiritual Journey

WAYNE SIMSIC

IS IT POSSIBLE to explore a deeper relation with the earth, and, in doing so, uncover a spirituality that includes the earth in the soul's journey to God? Those who identify with the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi would say, "Yes." They are not being romantic or sentimental, however, they realize, like the people of Israel realized, that a spiritual journey involves not only the human community but the land as well.

In his classic work, "Leisure: The Basis of Culture," Josef Pieper defines the human spirit as the capacity for relationship and adds that this capacity is not limited but includes all reality.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on the tradition of Western philosophy, he explains that the words "spirit" and "world" are not only related but "their correspondance complete."<sup>2</sup> Human experience, then, is not self-contained. We interact dynamically and intimately not only with the lives of others but with our environments. "Our relationships with our environments are not something we have but something through which we come to be," writes John Shea.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear, though, that a spirituality of the earth is quite difficult today. We no longer feel the intimate participation with the world that past ages have felt. Our souls are not so easily changed by the creatures and things of this planet.

For example, we could never recapture the immediacy that characterized the primordial experience of the planet nor would we want to recapture it. Our participation today, after the resurrection of Christ, has a different character. It begins at the center of a heart that is alive with Christ. In other words, if the inwardness of our lives is grounded in Christ's love we will have the power to give life to the earth and participate in its mystery. From a Christian perspective the earth need not remain empty of power and sacredness; it can become dynamic and holy, a companion on the spiritual journey.

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Mr. Wayne Simsic teaches Religion at Lake Catholic High School, Mentor, Ohio. His article "Spirituality of the Earth in Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*" appeared in *THE CORD*, December, 1984.

## Toward a Spiritual Relationship with the Earth

Our interrelationship with the earth on a physical plane is well known but our interrelationship with it on a spiritual one is less familiar. Mircea Eliade writes that primordial cultures felt the very existence of the earth had an impact on their consciousness.<sup>4</sup> The earth was considered a home for sacred forces and the origin of all forms of life. The early Greeks were aware that the earth had a power (physis) which encompassed land and sky. This power transcended space and time and was the ultimate ground of reality, unfolding like a flower giving birth to the world. The medieval person was more interested in the quality of the earth than its quantity. The earth was perceived more as an organism than a machine and was understood to be the intersection of cosmic purposes and forces. The medieval person participated in a world that was a microcosm with a macrocosm, an embryo in a womb.

This perception of a spiritual earth is strange to the modern mind which is more familiar with a scientific and objective outlook that excludes feelings for the planet. The earth is not so much a home as an island reeling in a vast and enigmatic universe.

However, in the last few decades there have been developments which have heightened our sensitivity to the earth even though we not have been fully aware of them.

One example is the ecological issue. We are more than ever before aware of the threat to the well being of the earth: pollution of land, water, air; malfunction of nuclear plants; destruction of rain forests; extinction of species. It has become more and more apparent that there is no temporary solution to these problems but that it will be necessary to deepen our spiritual relationship with the planet if we are to save it.

Another example is the increasing awareness of the feminine principle. In myth the Earth is a primordial mother who brings forth life and is the origin of all nurturing, physical, intellectual and spiritual. The modern experience of the earth has lost this mythical dimension. The planet has become one-dimensional. However, this image of Mother Earth which has lain dormant in our psyches for so long is now emerging in our sensitivity to feminine religious values. There is much work being done today in defining feminine values and it is becoming evident that the earth is strongly linked to this research. For example, in a book by Carol Christ, "Diving Deep and Surfacing," a woman's sensitivity to the influence of nature and its rhythms emerges as a significant theme.<sup>5</sup>

The archetypal image of Mother Earth puts us in relationship with a mystery that sustains and nourishes life. Within this womb of unity a

person discovers individual integration and harmony with all of life. Without a relationship with Mother Earth our souls may very well remain hidden from us and we may lose participation in the wholeness and holiness of being. Intimacy with the earth on the level of myth is in harmony with our spiritual destiny. Eloi Leclerc describes the spiritual journey of St. Francis as one that passes through Mother Earth and into communion with Christ.<sup>6</sup>

Our need to regain the spiritual dimension of the earth has become increasingly important today. We find ourselves yearning for a deeper relationship with the world, one that is not just physical but one that is relevant to the whole of human existence. We may be realizing, more than ever before, that the soul itself corresponds to the deepest meaning of the universe.

### Christ the Center

Jesus Christ is the center of any relationship with the Earth. Christ's historical presence influenced the structure of the universe: it energized both creation and history. Through his death and resurrection Christ transformed the universe and directed history toward a final culmination. Just as the earth flows out of the Trinity through Christ, it returns to the Trinity through him. The spiritual journey of the earth is related to our own journey back to the Father.

*He is the image of the unseen God  
and the first-born of all creation,  
for in him were created  
all things in heaven and on earth...*

Colossians 1:15,16

The Christ that St. Paul describes is the ground of all reality, the beginning and the end of creation. The Word holds the world together and in doing so gives it meaning. The presence of the "word" in each creature and thing gives all creation a fundamental harmony and interrelationship that unites it toward God's purpose. The Word actively binds creation and draws it back to God. St. Paul's message is that the earth is incomplete as we are incomplete, and both the earth and us yearn for home.

Our deepest faith believes that the Word is present in all things of creation and is always speaking to us telling us of God's nearness and immanence. In our technological world it is not so much the transcendent Word that speaks to us but the God who is immanent. The colors, sounds and expressions of nature all have the potential to reveal the performance

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## *Reconciliation with the earth takes place through Christ with whom all creation exists.*

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of the Word at the heart of things. The light that fills the eye, the molecules that make up matter, all overflow with divinity. When nature causes us to stand and wonder perhaps it is asking us to discover a new perspective, one that would lead us to its ontological core.

### The Earth as Symbol

If we deeply believe that Christ is the center of all creation and is present to us in the world then we have an entrance into the spiritual depths of the earth. If the earth is truly an expression of the Word then it cannot be limited to its physical dimensions; it must possess a depth that opens into mystery.

This is an amazing insight because our outlook toward the earth has been conditioned by science and a factual interpretation of history. As a result, we tend to see the earth from a literal or one dimensional perspective. However, if the earth is ontologically grounded in Christ then it is primarily a symbol and only secondarily literal.

In his study of creation spirituality, "Original Blessings," Matthew Fox asks us to imagine that creation itself is a book, a scripture, "a source of truth and revelation."<sup>7</sup> This metaphor of the book was used by spiritual writers and theologians to demonstrate that the world was an expression of God. According to St. Bonaventure, one of the Medieval theologians who developed the metaphor of the book, nature will reveal the Word, Jesus Christ, when it is properly read.<sup>8</sup>

The Word is expressed in a variety of ways because each creature and thing reflects the Word and can be considered a "word" in its own special way. In order to understand the meaning of "word," though, we need to recover the meaning of the Hebrew term "Dabhar" which refers not to our present limited meaning of word but to the creative energy of God which has the power to give birth to all creation.

Ultimately, there is one translation of the universe, Jesus Christ. Christ, in the Medieval view, is the ultimate Book of Life. Christ is the fullest expression of God in creation.

This metaphor of the book of nature may seem outmoded today. Most of us are like the scientist who takes a literal, factual reading of the earth and, as a result, has no experience of the inner unity and depth of physical reality. Yet, by using the metaphor we are able to see how myopic we have become in our vision of the earth and the immediate reality of Christ. Also, when we hear Teilhard de Chardin call us to participate in a Christocentric universe, a universe overflowing with divine creativity, are we not hearing a call to re-discover the earth as a sacred text which is intimately related to the soul's journey to the Father?

### The Language of the Soul

When the earth is perceived as symbol it has the potential of weaving into the spiritual life by becoming the language of the soul. In one of his sermons Meister Eckhart calls creation a "language," a symbolic echoing of the inner life.<sup>9</sup> The broad sky, lush foliage and fertile earth penetrate the psyche so deeply that they become part of our lives. The sun, moon, wind, water and earth are entrances into the forces that work in the human soul. Power to communicate is inherent in all creation. Eckhart proclaims that, "All created things are God's speech and manifest the same as does my mouth about God."<sup>10</sup> The wind washing through the boughs, the rain splashing on the leaves, the stillness at the center of nature — all of these have the potential to communicate the heart's deepest desire.

An example of the power of natural images can be found in St. Francis' poem, "The Canticle to Brother Sun." When the images of earth, sun and moon which are found in the poem are experienced in a primordial way, that is without the usual reflexive awareness, they become symbols of the imagination and take on a language all their own. We are influenced by these primary images whether we are conscious of it or not. They are archetypes rooted in the history of human consciousness. "These great images," writes Eloi Leclerc, "have the power to draw consciousness out of its isolation and put it in contact with a transcendent fullness of life."<sup>11</sup> If we can learn to address the world as Francis did we will awaken in ourselves the unconscious depths of our being and greet creation as a source of love. In his biography of Francis St. Bonaventure explains:

When he considered the primordial source of all things, he was filled with even more abundant piety, calling creatures, no matter how small, by the

name of brother or sister, because he knew that they had the same source as himself.<sup>12</sup>

The power that the images of the earth can have is also evident in the parables of Jesus. Jesus calls on common everyday realities to add a dimension to his message. Images like field, treasure, seed, light and tree reveal a hidden dimension that somehow affects our spirituality. Jesus, explains C. H. Dodd, experienced a relationship between the natural order and the spiritual order so his images are not just embellishments to make a story more powerful: the natural order immediately illuminates the spiritual.<sup>13</sup> The seed that falls on the ground is, at the same time, a natural event and a religious event. The experience of growth and decay is intimately related to the growth and decay of the human spirit. To use the language of the gospels, the openness to divinity on a natural level is, at the same time, an invitation to enter the kingdom of God.

### Conversion

"The man who is filled with an impassioned love of Jesus hidden in the forces which bring increase to the earth, him the earth will lift up, like a mother, in the immensity of her arms, and will enable him to contemplate the face of God," writes Teilhard de Chardin in his poetic and powerful essay, "The Mass on the World."<sup>14</sup>

Can we really find Christ in the world if we have not already begun to find him in our hearts? Seeing Christ's presence in the earth, according to Teilhard, is only possible through our turning to him in his person and love as the central value in our lives. The indwelling Christ energizes our lives and allows us to witness the creative presence of love everywhere and in everything.

An extraordinary example of conversion which led to a realization of Christ's presence in all things can be found in the life of St. Francis of Assisi. G. K. Chesterton describes the time when the saint entered a dark place, a cave, and underwent a radical transformation.<sup>15</sup> Chesterton says that Francis entered the cave with one view of the world and left with another: he went in seeing as an ordinary person would see and came out with the eye of a fool.

Francis' foolish perspective was due to his unique vision of the world as completely dependent on God. This was a perspective that he shared with few others, perhaps only the saints of the day. For most people the visible was the primary basis for seeing; for Francis the invisible was the funding reality. The focus of Francis' eye was a world immersed in and flowing from the mystery of God's presence.

Even at the time of conversion natural images did not disappear but took on a creative power and helped to rearrange the consciousness in ways that could not be imagined. Eloi Leclerc gives the following interpretation of St. Francis' conversion experience:

The remarkable thing about Francis is that his spiritual conversion does not require a break from the images and themes that have inspired until now, but rather a reinterpretation of these same images and themes and thus a continuation, in a new form, of their dynamic power over him. The new supernatural inspiration of his life purifies and renews these great images, but in turn it receives from them an astonishing vitality, youthfulness, and creative power.<sup>16</sup>



## New Heaven, New Earth

The importance of the earth in the culmination of our spiritual journey can be seen when we take a close look at the journey of the people of Israel to the promised land. The journey from the beginning of time to the fulfillment of time is like the journey that the Israelites took to a land of rest and promise. The Israelites had a deep sense of connection with the land; it was intimately related to the journey. The land represented more than the geography of Canaan; it was the foundation upon which the Israelites could form a relationship with the entire world order. Ultimately, the land was a land of promise representing not only the completion of the human destiny but the destiny of all creation. W. Brueggemann summarizes the importance of the land for the people of Israel:

As Yaweh is Lord of events so he is also fructifier of the land. As he comes 'in that day,' so also he watched over the land. He not only intrudes to do saving deeds but he also governs in ways to assure abiding blessings... He is Lord of places as well as times.<sup>17</sup>

In the New Testament the terms "new heaven" and "new earth" refer to a state of completion where the entire cosmic reality is no longer bound by space and time and is fulfilled in divine life: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth..." (Revelation: 21:1). This is not an apocalyptic state: it is not the result of dissolution and catastrophe. Rather, it is a state in which God's act of creation is completed. According to Zachary Hayes, Christian eschatology "speaks of the fulfillment of what is initiated by God in creation."<sup>18</sup>

St. Paul explains how this fulfillment is realized in Christ:

He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, the hidden plan he so kindly made in Christ from the beginning to act upon when the times had run their course to the end: that he would bring everything together under Christ, as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth.

(Ephesians 1:9.10)

## Concluding Reflections

Reconciliation with the earth takes place through Christ with whom all creation exists. By reconciling ourselves with Christ we reconcile ourselves with the earth. Our spiritual journey should not be imagined separate from the earth.

Also, the entire universe, because it participates in this journey, can become a spiritual guide. This is a humbling but illuminating thought.

The purpose and hope of the earth is found, just as it is for all humanity, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In its fulfillment the earth will take on the radiance of Christ and ourselves in Christ. The form is the body of Christ transfigured by the resurrection. In this final culmination the earth will not disappear but will remain unique as earth and humanity as humanity: both earth and humanity will discover a true identity in Christ. This is a vision of the Promised Land in which we settle and rest in unity with all things in Christ.

<sup>1</sup>Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (New York: New American Library, 1963), p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>John Shea, *Stories of God: An Unauthorized Biography* (Chicago: Thomas Moore Press, 1978), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Carol Christ, *Diving Deep and Surfacing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980).

<sup>6</sup>Eloi Leclerc, O.F.M., *The Canticle of Creatures: Symbols of Union* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966), p. 155.

<sup>7</sup>Matthew Fox, *A Primer in Creation Spirituality* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Bear and Company, 1983), p. 38.

<sup>8</sup>Ewert H. Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978), pp. 97-101.

<sup>9</sup>Meister Eckhart: *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, trans. Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 205.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>*The Canticle of Creatures*, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>12</sup>*Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 254.

<sup>13</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1935), p. 21.

<sup>14</sup>Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., *Hymn of the Universe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 30.

<sup>15</sup>G. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1957), p. 70.

<sup>16</sup>*The Canticle of Creatures*, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>17</sup>W. Bruegemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 185.

## Franciscan Journey

Shades of brown, earth tones, mark our passing  
sandal shod, no cap, no staff  
no purse for needs long forgotten  
a wilderness ahead, we are led through  
paths unknown, we are  
companions on the journey, spirits pledged to  
One Most High  
we have handed over our hearts  
for the victory that awaits us  
in the Cross.

Sr. Edmund Marie Stets, CSB

## Easter, 33 A.D.

As night shades fell on Juda's hills,  
Fearful men their doors did lock;  
To mourn, to hide, to weep their lot:  
Their hopes all smashed on Calvary's rock.

The women babbled of seeing Him  
And the tomb no longer held their Brother.  
Their boggled minds now sought surcease  
In locks and bolts and one another.

Into the gloom, a ray of light!  
The Lord has come to heal their doubt;  
His wounds aglow, His eyes alight;  
Nor lock nor bolt could keep Him out.

"Peace," He breathed; their fears all fled.  
"My Peace I give," The Master said;  
And breathless in their ecstasy,  
They watched Him eat their fish and bread.  
Sr. Dorothy M. Kopetsky, O.S.C.

## ST. FRANCIS ANTHONY FASANI, O.F.M. Conv.

### *A Biographical Reflection*

FR. DONALD GRZYMSKI, O.F.M. Conv.

ON APRIL 13, 1986 Pope John Paul II canonized St. Francis Anthony Fasani, a Conventual Franciscan Friar who had lived his religious life and died in the eighteenth century. In his homily on that occasion Pope John Paul praised Fasani as a confessor of the faith and for his work in the ministry of reconciliation. However, Franciscans (and others) might profitably look to Fasani, to his life and work, for inspiration, for there are numerous parallels between his time and the present, between his ministry and the apostolates of today. This is especially true where there is a consciousness of and option for the poor and outcasts in modern society.

Francis Anthony was born in the town of Lucera, in southeastern Italy, on August 6, 1681, and it was in this town that he lived most of his life, served in his ministry as a Franciscan priest, departed from this life, and was buried. He remained a sincere friend of the people of the town, even while becoming their teacher. The townspeople called him "Padre Maestro," the term "Padre" being used for a religious order priest, and "maestro" because of his doctorate in theology. He is known by that title even today. Francis Anthony becomes a fine example of how the routine of life can be channeled to give moments of growth, and how love of God will be so intimately linked with love of neighbor. As he helped his town of Lucera grow in holiness, Francis Anthony showed how those who are close to us can be the most influential in our lives. It was in this town that he also came to know the Friars who became his teachers and led him to the religious life, and where he began a devotion to the Blessed Mother, for the townspeople credited her intercession for driving out the Moors in the year 1300.

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*Fr. Donald Grzymiski served on the Conventuals' National Committee to prepare for Fasani's canonization. Currently he is the Assistant Principal at Archbishop Curley High School in Baltimore. The original design of Fasani was done by Sister Marian Charlene Honors, L.S.J. of the Albany Province of The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.*



St. Francis Anthony Fasani, OFM Conv.

The names of Francis Anthony's parents were Joseph Fasani and Isabella Della Monaca, and he was baptized John. As his father died when he was about ten years old, he and his mother knew the struggles of a poor and single parent household. Eventually, with the help of a caring step-father, he was entrusted to the Conventual Friars of the city for an education. Tradition tells that Francis Anthony was never ashamed of his poor origins nor his poor family. Even among aristocrats he introduced himself as the peasant son of "poor Isabella." When he would meet his poorly dressed mother or sister in town he would always greet them and praise them, no matter who was in his company. One senses that Fasani knew that gifts of life and love, of faith and intelligence, come first from one's family, and these are the most important gifts a family can share.

The Friars' example nurtured Fasani's vocation, and in a few years he entered the Franciscan novitiate. On August 23, 1696 Francis Anthony professed his vows, and continued his studies for the priesthood in Assisi. He was fortunate during these years of formation to come into contact with a number of saintly Friars whose lives and example encouraged him. After hesitancy at his unworthiness, but with the encouragement of his spiritual director, Francis Anthony was ordained a priest in Assisi on September 19, 1705, and celebrated his first Mass the next day at the tomb of St. Francis. For two more years he remained in Assisi, nourishing himself on the spirit of the Poverello, and, more formally, obtaining a doctorate in sacred theology.

Twelve years after leaving Lucera Fasani returned, and there he would spend his remaining 35 years of life. His duties included preaching, hearing confessions, giving spiritual direction, and teaching philosophy to the professed seminarians. Eventually he would serve as regent of the school of philosophy at Lucera, guardian of the friary, Master of Novices, and Minister Provincial of his province.

In a task where many grow tepid, or lose zeal and let monotony take over, Francis Anthony persevered with diligence and enthusiasm. He used the routine to grow spiritually, and found value in the discipline of daily life. The mundane, the tedious, the trivial and the trying remained unique opportunities to serve God. Where one might be likely to make allowances in discipline as years pass by rationalizing "that's for formation," he increased his ascetic practices, as Francis had done, in order to grow in likeness to the Crucified.

As St. Francis had discovered in the vicinity of Assisi, Francis Anthony found the church building in Lucera in poor condition. He received permission and worked at the restoration and beautification of the structure. He also insisted upon its cleanliness, and of the cleanliness of all

things associated with worship, and the saint often swept and did the other cleaning himself. Biographers have referred to him as a "watchdog of the temple", but it was because Francis Anthony believed that a church was the house of God and a place of encounter between God and His people. Furthermore, he was strict in seeing that proper respect, devotion and decorum were present in God's temple. He corrected those who talked in church, especially during services, for disturbing the silence which made it easier for God to be heard. He feared a casualness which would detract from the sacred, and preferred to use the aids available to him to point to the beyond.

Francis Anthony was concerned with the decorum of sacred functions, the devout praying of the Divine Office, the instruction of the people and the frequent preaching of the Word of God. He was faithful to the daily schedule as an assured way to praise God, and spent frequent hours in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Friars came to remark, "It seems as though Father Francis measured our spirit with his own — he wants us all to become saints like himself."<sup>1</sup>

Since St. Francis had dedicated a chapter of the Rule to preaching, Francis Anthony believed it to be an important duty of a priest and Friar, and he preached extensively. He devoted countless hours to preparation, and then delivered plain and simple sermons, replete with Scriptural references and his own personal insights. He wanted to make sure he was understood by all, and that his hearers were moved to a change of heart.

Linked to his preaching was service in the confessional. Exercising what he saw as Christ's mercy, Francis Anthony was charitable, sympathetic and patient. He was criticized on occasion for being too merciful, but believed it was better to fail on the side of mercy than to risk harsh treatment of a penitent. He was also brief in his confessional advice, believing that a few words, virtually maxims, would better sink into the heart of the hearer. His penitents found that as his words moved them to contrition, so his demeanor in administering the sacraments fostered a peaceful encounter with Christ. He encouraged a healthy devotion and frequent reception of the Eucharist so that Christ could be ever more present as a nourishing force in life. In Mary he found a woman who deserved special praise as God's Mother. The devotion he encouraged was genuine for it captured Mary's role in salvation history and as an intercessor for all in their Christian lives.

Francis Anthony countered both Jansenism and a complacent attitude toward religious life with explanations and a solid spirituality. This could only come from a conviction nurtured by prayer and reflection. It was

the complement to his very active apostolic life, giving a balance, meaning and perspective to all he did.

Francis Anthony lived a life of great discipline and devotion. It was said that he never missed daily Mass, and that all his other activities had to be scheduled around the Liturgy. In the Franciscan tradition his devotional life centered around the crib of Christ, Calvary and the Tabernacle. As a Friar he also had a devotion to the Immaculate Conception, even in these years prior to the definition of the dogma, and he gave the utmost to preparations for this novena.

Francis Anthony followed a very rigorous discipline of eating little food, and of making that virtually tasteless. He gave his body little rest, and continued his tasks even when ill. He serves as a model for the importance of discipline even if not performed to the same extent. He knew that this testing would help his body to perform when he needed it to, to worship as he was able, and to resist temptation when he faced it. It would set a pattern for his Christian existence. It was a discipline of body which would flow over into a discipline of every thought, word, or action.

At the bishop's request, the already busy Francis Anthony became chaplain to the prisoners of the city's jails. He not only visited those incarcerated, but he sought to console them and to encourage them to repentance. He willingly accepted their anger and animosity when it was directed toward him. So frequently did he accompany prisoners to their execution that he was called the "Friar of the Gallows," and it became his practice to invite the onlookers, after the execution, to pray for the prisoner's soul. Those who were the social outcasts and feared by many could still be loved. Like St. Francis' lepers, Francis Anthony found that those who first tried his will power and tested his love were really special brothers to him. He also showed faith in God's grace to bring even the most hardened sinner to conversion.

Knowing his origins, and the background of Christ himself, Francis Anthony not only loved the poor and sought to help them in general ways, but he also got directly involved in personal contacts with the brothers and sisters of little social status. He talked with them, saw that their physical needs were met whenever he could, and thus enhanced their dignity as God's children and truly his brothers and sisters. He never forgot the healthiness of good, honest labor, and the need for gifts to be shared, whether a gift of time or a gift of material things. He also made sure food was available from the church every day, and that it was properly distributed to the poor of the city. He also found it possible to thus assist his poor mother until her death in 1729. As Christians become so aware today of the problem of hunger on local, national and international levels, Francis Anthony becomes a model of Christian involvement.

During an illness that approached rather quickly, Francis Anthony's condition worsened and he received the sacraments for the last time. His confreres said he approached "Sister Death" with great joy, and his happiness increased as death drew nearer. His last statement to the Friars was: "Fathers and Brothers, love one another in fraternal charity. Keep the Rule and the Commandments of God. Obey your superiors and become saints."<sup>2</sup> He died November 29, 1742, the day on which the novena of the Immaculate Conception would begin, the date on which the Rule had been approved in 1223, and the feast of All Saints of the Franciscan Order.

The information process for his cause for sainthood began a few years later in 1746, but was then delayed by the Napoleonic Wars and the departure of the Conventual Friars from Lucera (they only returned in 1932). On June 21, 1891 Pope Leo XIII declared Francis Anthony to be Venerable. In the 1940s two miracles were credited to his intercession, the instantaneous cure of a boy wounded in World War II and of an elderly laborer with a blood disease. On April 15, 1951 Pope Pius XII beatified Francis Anthony Fasani in ceremonies at St. Peter's Basilica. On April 13, 1986 Pope John Paul II canonized him.

Many saints have been founders of religious communities or major movements in the Church. They have been famous missionaries, or martyrs for the Faith. One might conclude that only the dramatic leads to sanctity, or that saints always accomplish the spectacular. Francis Anthony can be a real model for the "normal" religious life. He was normal in faithfulness to the Rule, Constitutions and customs of his Order. He was normal in what his apostolate asked of him, with duties added to an already heavy schedule. His was a life where he could have done much less personally, communally, and apostolically and he would have still been a good religious. But he was not satisfied with that. His way was a true blending of the contemplative and active life as Francis of Assisi had planned it.

Francis Anthony used the everyday opportunity of meeting the sick, the confused, the poor, the celebrating, the joyful, in order to imitate Christ's everyday dealings in the Gospel. He used the Rule of St. Francis with the precepts of the Order's Constitutions as a liberating guide to the evangelical life he had professed. He found a way to enhance the moments of living so they could be daily opportunities for growth. He did what all religious are called and challenged to do, but he kept his enthusiasm alive from youth through old age. Tasks routine for him were encounters unique for the one he met, and so extremely important and calling for patience

and sensitivity. He taught not so much by word as by example, for he valued his vocation and cooperated with God's grace.

St. Francis Anthony Fasani is a model of the apostolic life lived in such a way that the ministry is served and personal growth takes place. Perhaps the Church's ministers need a model and patron as their lives seem work-dominated and their ministry fatiguing. In a busy pastoral schedule he found time for the prayer which made his efforts fruitful. Francis Anthony is a model for the perfectly normal religious routine, lived in an exemplary way.

<sup>1</sup>Stano, P. Gaetano M., O.F.M. Conv. *Blessed Francis Anthony Fasani, O.F.M. Conv.* (translated by Fr. Raphael M. Huber, O.F.M. Conv.) Kenosha, WI: Marytown Press, 1951, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* p. 53.



## The Cosmopolitan Christ

Galilee is north  
of Samaria,  
and Samaritans  
are Samaritans,  
you know.  
Roman garrison  
in Capernaum;  
horses, not donkeys,  
there.  
Jerusalem builds  
the World Trade  
Center  
next to the  
temple.  
Caesarea Philippi;  
named after Caesar  
and Philip.  
No wonder  
John The Baptist  
seeks the trickle  
of the Jordan,  
and eats bugs.  
Herod argues  
over Caesar's  
picture on  
the nickel,  
and Christ  
says His  
Kingdom is  
nowhere around  
here.

*Fr. Patrick Leary, O.F.M.*

## An African Hymn of Praise: Lord of The Universe

Hear, yes, hear! O hear people of Africa. The Lord, the Lord, our God, Maker of the Universe with gardens and trees; with animals and people are for His glory and honour and praise. Yes, the drums beat it out, and men and women sing about it. They dance with holy joy that You are the Lord, the Lord of the Universe.

You have moulded this glorious, sun-drenched Africa with Zambia as its navel, and our brothers and sisters into many families and tribes. You have pulled the other Continents out of the sea too for the primacy of man and "created him a little less than the angels."

What a wonderful family you have formed out of red clay, and what beautiful African children in Your "image" amid all the other races and clans. Leaping gazelles they are with "Brother Sun" and "Sister Moon" ever watching day and night.

The sky above is a mauve flowing chitenge cloth, and Your many spiritual sons and daughters its weavers and painters. We drink in Your works with spacious cups, and Your gracious symphonies enchant us so. You envelop us with sensuous "mother earth's" perfumes, while that which is touches and caresses us.

In doing this we forget the evil we have done. Lord, we cry out to You. We grieve. Tear us away from our wrongs, fights, selfishness, tribalism and wars, all sins of brother against brother and sister against sister. We do not realize that these silver and gold idols will melt away, as one day unto dust our eyes will close forever.

We are slaves to these hand-carved images, highly polished demons, statues, even, if we are not redeemed and loved by You. In chains we are. Unliberated. Yes, Mammon's sons and daughters. Help us, we pray.



Teach us true wisdom and faith that we may love the designs of Your hands and as You do all our brothers and sisters.

Hear, yes, hear! O hear people of Africa. The Lord, the Lord, our God, maker of the Universe with gardens and trees; with animals and people are for His glory and honour and praise. Yes, the drums beat it out, and men and women sing about it. They dance with holy joy that You are the Lord, the Lord of the Universe.

Fr. Jude M. Rochford, O.F.M. Conv.

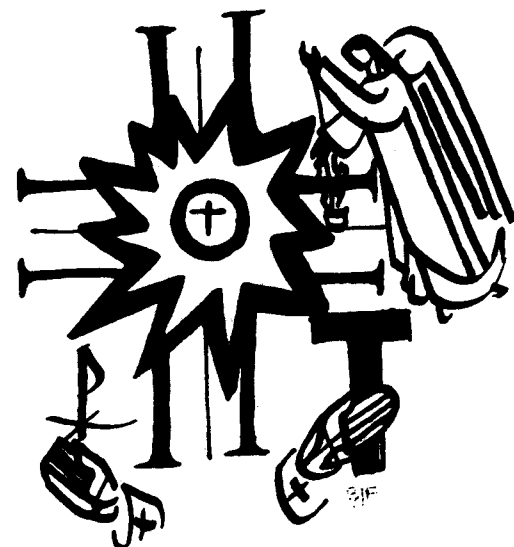
## The Response

There was silence—a stillness in the vast deep.  
And God said: Let there be light!

And the Heavens burst open—  
The sun exploded  
    sending forth prisms of light  
    radiating outward—  
Fragments of the spectrum  
    circling over the mass of muted clay  
Swirling breezes of life filled the vastness  
    and the hushed silence  
    began to pulse with the light of life.

In that second CREATION BEHELD THE GLORY OF GOD  
    Light shining forth—  
    WISDOM, BEAUTY, TRUTH, POWER, GENTLENESS—  
    mirroring the likeness of Divinity  
    on fragments of crushed clay.

Clay rising and building  
    springs pouring forth the waters of life.  
    trees and plants bending and twisting.  
    flowers blossoming  
    birds circling  
All caught in the magnetism of Light.



Sisters and brothers standing in awe,  
Hands stretching up,  
    grasping for the touch of life.  
Hearts beginning to beat with His life—  
Lips quivering  
    stammering for a response...  
    struggling for the sound, the syllable—  
Stuttering until the word burst forth in joy:  
    AL - LE - LU - IA  
Alleluia! Glory and Praise Be Yours!  
The sound echoes, builds, magnifies  
    until all creation is touched—  
    responds in unison—  
Mind, Body, and Heart singing and praying  
Alleluia! Praise and Thanksgiving!  
Blessing and Glory be to Him most High  
    Giver of Love,  
    Giver of Life,  
    Giver of gifts.

Sr. Christa Marie Thompson, O.S.F.

## Book Reviews

**The Woman Who Couldn't Be Stopped.** By Sister Delphine Wedmore, SCC. Wilmette, IL: Sisters of Christian Charity, 1985. Pp. 400. Paper, \$10.50.

*Reviewed by Elsa Hurschler, S.F.O., Switzerland.*

This is a love story, the love story of a baby born in 1817 at Minden, Germany, to a Lutheran father and Catholic mother.

It is not easy for a Lutheran in a Government position in the Germany of the early 19th Century to promise his wife that children born of their marriage would be brought up Catholic, and keep true to his word, but the father of Pauline von Mallinckrodt did just that. He left to his wife the religious instruction of all their children and the results were good.

The book tells how a little girl loved and wished to help the poor, while still at school; how she sensed tensions that could arise between parents of different religions. But she was fortunate in having a sensible teacher to turn to, and excellent instruction from priests, one a Franciscan from a noble Prussian family — a Father Gossler from the friary at Paderborn. He was known for his love of prayer and penance:

"Pray, Pauline," he urged. "Take the leap and throw yourself... on God... Pray stubbornly, day by day, at least for nine days before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament...". He brought her to her Lover, Christ in the Blessed Eucharist.

Pauline carried out her family duties

caring for her younger brothers and sisters when their mother died, but managed even when acting as hostess for her father, despite her many activities, to attend daily mass at 5 a.m. She even obtained permission to receive Communion each day, during that period an unusual occurrence. She was making her way, eventually to use up her not inconsiderable fortune, towards founding an Order of the Sisters of Christian Charity to care for and educate the poor and blind, particularly children.

Mother Pauline undertook two enormous journeys to the Americas which would deter the bravest among us, but when she died in 1881 she had the satisfaction of knowing there were 27 houses established in the United States, eleven in Chile, and nine in Europe, served by Sisters of Christian Charity.

Excitingly readable, although the book is naturally a history of the Order, it is also a wonderful illustration of how by sheer grit and determination and a sense of humor, a brave woman turned down marriage and the easy life, and gave every difficulty and every debt to the Lord in faith. He would find the solution. It is the story of the woman with a great loving heart who can even now by her example bring about a renewal of one's own faith; who achieved everything through prayer and trust in God.

In April 1985 Pope John Paul II declared Mother Pauline von Mallinckrodt and Mother Catherine Troliani Blessed. But read for yourselves about the woman who never gave up,

could not be stopped, and whose spirituality and love lives on in the hearts of the Sisters who follow her.

**Soul of My Soul: Reflections From A Life of Prayer.** By Catherine de Hueck Doherty. Notre Dame, IN. Ave Maria Press, 1985. Pp. 128. Paper, \$4.95.

**Availability: The Problem and The Gift.** By Robert J. Wicks. New York: Paulist Press, 1986. Pp. 112. Paper, \$5.95.

*Reviewed by Father Thomas Burque, T.O.R., Chairperson of the Philosophical and religious Studies Department of Saint Francis College of Pennsylvania.*

### PRAYER: I PRAYED

*I prayed to God for songs and laughter. He gave me tears instead. I prayed for life in valley green, full of harvest rich. He led me through deserts arid and heights where snow alone could feel at home.*

*I prayed for sun, lots of dancing and sparkling rivers to sail upon. He gave me night, quite dark, starless, and thirst to guide me through its wastes.*

*But I know that I was foolish, for I have more than I prayed for.*

*I have the Son for bridegroom. The music of his voice is a valley green, and river sparkling on which I sail. My soul is dancing with endless joy in the dark night he shares with me.*

— Catherine de Hueck Doherty

Catherine de Hueck Doherty shares her insights and thoughts on prayer within this small reflective book on her

prayer journey with God. Any follower or admirer of Doherty's will truly appreciate her openness and honesty on the topic of prayer.

*Soul Of My Soul* allows one to enter into the world we live in with new insights and perspectives. Today, we live in a society which expects instant answers and instant results. Just look at the emphasis we place upon instant food, technology, communication, information and travel. Our demand for results and action says a great deal about us as a people.

Though I myself enjoy this modern technology and the instant results it produces, there does seem to be something missing. The void centers around encounter. In reflection, I wonder if the personal aspect of our lives is being done away with and replaced by recordings and results. We may receive instant service, answers or results, but do we receive personal fulfillment and satisfaction?

Do we not bring this same attitude into religion and faith as well? We too often want to receive the instant knowledge and answers about our faith and relationship with Jesus. The knowledge we find will be impersonal, cold and meaningless if our entire relationship with Jesus depends upon instant answers and results.

Catherine de Hueck Doherty wrestles with this problem and tells us that prayer is to be lived out. It is in the living out of our prayer that we become prayer ourselves. When asked by others how to pray, Doherty usually says, "It is difficult to answer — we must hunger for prayer and become prayer ourselves."

Prayer is living in the presence of

God and yearning to continue to live in that presence. *Soul Of My Soul* is a testimony to the prayer which Doherty became in her own life. Her insights challenge the reader to not just read about prayer, but to become prayer. She writes:

*Thousands of books have been written on prayer. I don't suppose that God minds the books, but I think he wants you and me to be the book... It is as simple as that. How do we do it? We pray!*

Doherty does challenge her readers to pray and this is the fruit of *Soul Of My Soul*. She invites us into many different meditations and reflections on the ordinary events of life. In reflecting upon the ordinary events we find God's presence in the simplicity of our own lives.

Prayer is a simple gift to respond to, we are the ones that make it so difficult to understand. Too often we expect too much and too many instant results. It is only through total surrender to God that we become one with Him and open ourselves up to become prayer.

*Soul of My Soul* is a fine book for individuals searching for insights and examples of becoming prayer. However, if the individual is not familiar with Doherty's other books and her distinctive spirituality, I would advise them to read her other works first. Two of her other books one might find helpful are: *Poustinia* and *Fragments of My Life*. Otherwise, this book will be just another book on prayer rather than a challenge to become prayer! For admirers of Doherty, this book will only deepen your love and admiration for a great woman of prayer.

If one aspect of Francis' life has been highlighted over the centuries, it is certainly that of poverty. The discussions and debates over the issue of poverty are numerous. Over the past twenty years the followers of Jesus and Francis have begun to look at and approach the issue of poverty in a new manner. Poverty not only involves one's material goods or possessions, but also involves one's attitudes, dispositions and relationships with others.

Francis dealt with poverty throughout his conversion experience. His understanding of this virtue encompassed all things, feelings, attitudes and dispositions. In his striving to conform himself to Jesus, Francis rid himself of self-control, jealousy, envy, pride, ambition and appropriation. He goes as far as emphasizing the importance of this virtue within his admonitions. In admonition number four, Francis reminds his followers, "Let no one appropriate to himself the role of being over others. 'I did not come to be served but to serve,' says the Lord." As followers of Jesus and Francis we are challenged to do the same. The vices mentioned above truly hinder our relationship with God, others and ourselves.

*Availability: The Problem and the Gift*, by Dr. Robert J. Wicks, although not a book written on the vow of a life of poverty, is a book which clarifies and challenges the reader in the understanding of the virtue of poverty. This book is an excellent source for questioning and reflecting upon one's view of poverty and one's attempt to respond to the Gospel.

Wicks studies the availability of individuals to themselves, others and God. His book highlights a person's role within relationships and challenges the individual to the gift of the relationship

itself. *Availability: The Problem and the Gift* confronts the problems of relationships one enters into as well. The need to control one's life and one's relationships with others and God is a violation of inner poverty. Wicks aids the individual in overcoming these violations and problems.

As one finds him/herself reading *Availability: The Problem and the Gift*, one begins to enter into a reflective process which calls the individual to a deeper awareness of self, others and God. This process allows the reader to focus in upon some of themes which Wicks develops throughout his book. These themes include: uniqueness, failure and forgiveness, self-awareness, relationships, pain, fears and anxieties.

Dr. Wicks catches the attention of the reader in a personal and dynamic manner. He openly shares his own journey with the Lord as well as his struggles with being available to himself, others and God. The problem and the gift of availability has been lived out by Dr. Wicks and he shares his life as pastoral counselor, husband, father and follower of Jesus. Wicks embraces the gift of availability in the true sense.

This book is excellent for all individuals who are called to live out the virtue of availability. Although all Christians are called to live out this virtue, each will respond to it differently. What is important is that everyone cultivates the virtue of availability to the best of his/her ability. *Availability: The Problem and the Gift* is much more than a "helping skills" book. It is truly a spiritual exercise which will challenge all individuals to respond more fully to God, others and themselves.

After reading and reviewing this book, I believe all will be empowered

to embrace the words of Saint Paul: "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect." (Romans 12:2).

**The Word and the Spirit.** By Yves Congar. Trans. David Smith. London: Geoffrey Chapman. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. Pp. xii - 133. Cloth, \$15.95.

*Reviewed by Father Kevin M. Tortorelli, O.F.M., M.A. (Theology, Washington Theological Union), Instructor in Religious Studies at Siena College.*

"If I were to draw one conclusion from the whole of my work on the Holy Spirit, I would express it in these words: no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology." (Introduction) The first consequence Fr. Congar draws from this foundational point has to do with the place and function in theological method of analogy, symbol and metaphor. To wit, that an article of faith is a glimpse of divine truth tending towards that truth. This view, to be found in St. Thomas, sets itself against any narrow or conceptualist definition of the theological project undertaken in this book. It seems that the place of the Spirit appears in the intelligent activities of 'glimpsing' and 'tending towards.' For while the Biblical theology retains its spiritual, intellectual and incarnational dimensions, it is the Spirit who offers faith in that word, who receives that Word as true. Indeed, Fr. Congar details the numerous Biblical examples of the intimate link between the Word and the Spirit. This activity

of glimpsing and tending towards, linked with the Word, is next associated by Fr. Congar with the Church as the principle of her unity with Christ and of her mission of prayer, listening, teaching and witnessing before the world. For the Spirit is the seal of the truth of Christ glimpsed and tended toward.

In a lengthy middle chapter, Fr. Congar develops the implications of the Spirit for the author's assessment of historical reform movements (as instances of Prophetism), the founding of Religious Orders, the relationship of charism and institution and present Pastoral challenges. His guiding image is the 'two hands of God' which he borrows from St. Irenaeus and with which he suggests the working relationship between the Son and the Spirit as one of unity and distinction but not of hostility or at cross-purposes.

He devotes chapter six to a fine, thoughtful reflection on the relevance of the theology of the Holy Spirit to Christology. The temperamental differences between ontological and biblical forms of Christology are related in the observation that Jesus is Son in different ways — Son by eternal begetting; Son by virtue of baptism; Son by virtue of resurrection and exaltation. The Spirit is also at work in these events. "These are all moments when Jesus was not simply proclaimed the 'Son of God', but when he in fact became that Son in a new way. He became the Son of God not from the point of view of his hypostatic quality or from that of his ontology as the incarnate Word, but from that of God's offer of grace and the successive moments in the history of salvation." (p. 92). In a discussion perhaps too condensed Fr. Congar applies this insight to an understanding of pre-existence

and to the significance of Mary. "The eternal begetting of the Word, the Son, has, as its end, the Word, the Son, assuming the humanity of Jesus, which, in our own time or history, was brought about in the Annunciation. Mary... is therefore also eternally chosen and destined together with the Word." (p. 95).

Throughout the book, Fr. Congar exhibits a precise and familiar grasp of historical data with its implications for ecumenical theology. He confers dextrously with the Cappadocians, Thomas Aquinas, Luther and Calvin. But surely his attention to Orthodox theology and the *Filioque* in Chapter seven is the book's tour de force. His subtle, perspicuous assessment of the *filioque*, the correspondence of Pope John Paul II and the Oecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I, and the Orthodox reproach that Western theology is too much Christomonism make this chapter the most intriguing and challenging of them all. And Fr. Congar's survey of the relevant literature and his exposition of the issues offer the reader a view of considerable historical and doctrinal acumen.

Translated texts can be rough on the ear. David Smith has let Fr. Congar's elegance of thought and simple style find fine expression in our tongue. The book is a sturdy contribution to the rebirth Trinitarian theology currently enjoys.

**Builders of Catholic America.** By Albert J. Nevins. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 1985. Pp. 285. Paper, \$7.95

*Reviewed by Thomas O. Kelly, II, Professor of History and of American Studies, Siena College, Loudonville, N.Y. 12211.*

This is a book designed to edify; to provide the reader with pious examples of lives devoted to Christ and the Roman Catholic Church within the boundaries of the United States.

Sixteen lives are presented; men and women, sacred and secular, native born and immigrant, famous and anonymous. They range chronologically from the mid-17th to the mid-20th century; geographically from Maryland and New York to Montana and New Mexico and philosophically from New York's Archbishop "Dagger John" Hughes to Dorothy Day. Each life is a chapter, designed to stand independently. The author has attempted to offset the necessarily episodic effect of such a presentation by preserving a rough chronological order and by grouping the subjects into five categories; Blackrobes, Pioneers, Emigrees, The Irish Brigade and Women.

The strongest chapters, marked by a high degree of enthusiasm, are the selections dealing with Junipero Serra, Bishop John England, James Cardinal Gibbons and Dorothy Day. In these, Nevins' somewhat florid style seems more effective than elsewhere. In general, the work is probably most appropriate for the young and for those with a limited knowledge of the role of Catholics and Catholicism in the United States. Some selections will certainly be informative at some level for most readers whose knowledge of Father Joseph Machebeuf and Mother Rose Phippine Duchesne is likely to be limited at best.

There are, regrettably, a significant number of errors of historical facts which tend to jar the reader. The old "Birth of a Nation" school of Reconstruction interpretation is particularly jarring in the light of the last two or

three decades of research and interpretation. While these errors do not detract from the purpose of the book, which is to edify, they tend to weaken the reader's faith in the author and thereby render the work less edifying than he would wish. A more sophisticated editing of the manuscript would have had substantial benefit.

**The People of the Faith: The Story Behind the Church of the Middle Ages.**

By Anthony E. Gilles. Cincinnati: St. Anthony's Messenger Press, 1986. Pp. xiii-177. Paper, \$6.95.

*Reviewed by Edward Charles Metzger, O.F.M., Ph.D., lecturer at Canisius College, Buffalo, New York.*

*The People of the Faith*, part of series *People of God*, is an attempt to present a broad history of Judeo-Christian thought "from Abraham to us." The author endeavors, as he tells us, to steer a middle course between what he terms the extremes in Protestant and Catholic interpretations of the Middle Ages (600 - 1450), between degeneration and idealization resulting in a "caricature of the truth." Adjudging people and events as the externals of the Age, the author holds that what was of true and real significance for the Church of the Middle Ages was "the evolution of the meaning of the word Faith." This was for the Church a continual process of searching for knowledge not simply *about* God but *of* God — the quest of an intimate relationship *with* God.

The author compares this period of the Church's life to the state of human adolescence — a period of conflict both internal and external, of searching for identity. A time when the Church tried to bring her behavior, intellect, emo-

tions and faith into the ideal wholeness of an integrated personality. Admirably related in this scholarly yet readable volume are the triumphs and failures of the Church. Noteworthy is the spiritual growth (contemplative, monastic, mystical traditions) as well as the failures (Crusades, Avignon Papacy, Great Western Schism) when the Church refused to recognize the evils of greed and misused power very much at work in her midst. Thus the Church failed to achieve a state of wholeness on the eve of the Reformation and appeared in chaos. But the Church survived its adolescence.

This work is intended for the average reader, but it is not simply a popular history of the Middle Ages. It is also an invitation to further reading and study — as the author states in his preface. Although the work is a brief and comprehensive survey with a rather limited bibliography (the author admits he is not a professional scholar), it is valuable reading for anyone who truly desires to understand and appreciate and not just know about the Church of the Middle Ages.

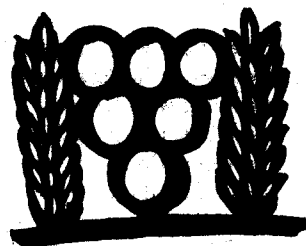
The work is published in paperback with a good index, readable type, maps, and a time table. The chapters are arranged in chronological order and within each chapter the structural focus is upon the three elements of event, thought and faith, which, the author tells us, constitute the life of the Church in its grandest epoch when the Faith came near to winning the minds and hearts of the entire Medieval Civilization.

## Shorter Notices

### St. Paul: The Apostle and His Letters.

By Norman Madsen. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1986. Pp. 198, including Index. Paper, \$6.95.

The paperback is a valuable book. It begins by describing the life and personality of Paul, and then proceeds to highlight, letter by letter, the historical context and the contents of each of his epistles (Hebrews excluded). After the background and contents, selections from each epistle are given, and also reflections of the author. A subject index adds to the value of this book. Clergy, religious, and laity can profit from this work which is designed not only for information, but for inspiration.



### The Spiritual Journey of the Blessed Angela of Foligno according to the Memorial of Frater A.

By Paul Lachance, O.F.M., reviewed in the February 1987 issue of *The Cord*, is obtainable from: St. Francis Retreat House, 1717 31st Street, Oak Brook, Ill. 60521. Cost: \$10.00 - plus \$2.00 mailing.

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Volume 37, No. 5



# The CORD

## A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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## Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

### I. Writings of Saint Francis

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Adm: Admonitions                               | Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221                  |
| BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo               | LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God                  |
| CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun               | LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours                      |
| EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony                   | OffPass: Office of the Passion                         |
| EpCler: Letter to Clerics <sup>1</sup>         | OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix                     |
| EpCust: Letter to Superiors <sup>1</sup>       | RegB: Rule of 1223                                     |
| EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful <sup>1</sup> | RegNB: Rule of 1221                                    |
| EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo                   | RegEr: Rule for Hermits                                |
| EpMin: Letter to a Minister                    | SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady                         |
| EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order              | SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues                     |
| EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People         | Test: Testament of St. Francis                         |
| ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God        | UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare                    |
| ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father           | VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy               |
| FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare            | <sup>1</sup> I, II refer to First and Second Editions. |

### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis  | LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis   |
| 2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis | LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis |
| 3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles   | LP: Legend of Perugia                    |
| CL: Legend of Saint Clare            | L3S: Legend of the Three Companions      |
| CP: Process of Saint Clare           | SC: Sacrum commercium                    |
| Flor: Little Flowers of St. Francis  | SP: Mirror of Perfection                 |

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munications of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

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# Motherhood As Incarnation

## A Reflection

Barbara Ann Campbell, S.F.O.

Gertrude Anne Heiser, S.F.O.

It is aptly said, that "grace is not grace until it is incarnated in us." What is grace but a sharing in the very life of God — a gift given — undeserved, unearned, coming from the bountiful Heart of God to His beloved creature, Man. And to incarnate means to put flesh on something, to make real and tangible.

When we celebrate the Annunciation on March 25, we celebrate the unspeakable and magnificent mystery of The Word of God becoming Flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The conception of the Son of God to likewise become the Son of Man. It is awesome to consider the grandness of Almighty God choosing to invite a creature, a woman, to share in the mystery of the Incarnation of God and the Redemption of Man, after man had willfully rejected God's Plan (Luke 1: 26-38).

The Incarnate God is born a man (Luke 2: 1-20; Gal. 4: 4).

Oh, it is far easier for us to believe in a totally transcendent, distant, and invisible God or Supreme Being than to grasp this God of ABSOLUTE HUMILITY AND TOTAL POVERTY. This God who abandoning this Supremacy and Glory undertakes the mission to become one with us in our creaturehood, in our humanity, and who sanctified the womb of womankind by His humble Presence there.

With what reverence we should regard our womanly body that was the first Tabernacle on earth for the Incarnate Son of God. What a privilege is ours to be the chosen vessel of life and love to a child of God and child of Man that we have borne within our own wombs, hallowed by God Himself. How repentant of heart we should be for our often-times in-

Barbara Ann Campbell is the mother of six children, including one fostered special child. Gertrude Ann Heiser, mother and grandmother, also has six children. Both women, with their husbands and a diocesan priest, are founders of a secular Franciscan covenanted community in Huntington Station on Long Island, N.Y.



gratitude or vanity that selfishly resented the loss of youth through the advent of the greater fullness of life called motherhood.

How humiliated we should be that in our day the womb is so readily violated and defiled because selfishness and materialism have crept into and taken root in the heart of our society, into our own heart as woman, and we have become blinded by the dazzling empty promises of the world. How we must repent of our own sins that have contributed to this sad state of womanhood and motherhood and beg God's grace of conversion in our heart as mother.

When we consider being mother and conceiving our own child, we are fully aware of the physical, psychological, and emotional development of our child and of the limitations of human life. We forget that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, incarnated in the womb of Mary likewise deliberately takes on the finite, physical world with all its limitations as well as its developmental processes. Jesus Christ developed as all men develop except that it was the Eternal Father who by the power of the Holy Spirit "overshadowed" and impregnated the grace-filled womb of the Virgin Mary.

Jesus felt the cold and heat, hunger and fatigue, weariness and joy and suffering that comes with the human condition of Fallen Man. He even had a "borrowed death" as man and was laid in a "borrowed tomb" for three days.

He chose to enter the world in its sinfulness, in its brokenness, its very imperfect state subjecting himself to total oneness with it to show us the lengths He would go to reveal God's boundless Love and mercy to man's vagabond heart.

The majesty of the Incarnation is God's Love and Humility, His Poverty and Mercy, and Infinite Thirst for the heart of man to respond to His own Heart in love.

The Incarnation means God Himself enters the world, becoming personally and humanly enfleshed in it forever. He is faithful and Present. His Presence is continued by the Holy Spirit in the Church and through the outrageous gift of His Risen Self alive, the most precious of all treasures, the Eucharist. This is a startling reality if we pause to ponder the meaning.

Then to take the Incarnation to its fuller definition, is to recognize it as **THE** act of intercession; **THE** act of reconciling man to his Creator. Jesus **places** Himself at the cross-section between God and man being totally one, in loving obedience, with the Father and totally one with man, **being** Forgiveness. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to be the same — totally one, in loving obedience, with our Father and totally one with all of humanity, being Forgiveness.

In following Jesus, we must live our own motherhood in the special way of incarnation — taking into ourselves the Word and bringing forth new life and love into our own families. We are called to make our heart and home into an Inn of Prayer and Charity, with graciousness and simplicity, kindness and humility, a place where every man could find Shelter, where Jesus could be at home in our midst.

To see our motherhood as Incarnation is to be aware that this is a vocation from God, to bring the Living Jesus to husband and children and others whom God puts before us. The office of motherhood is not simply a function of nature, but rather a privilege in the order of grace.

Jesus Christ should dwell so fully in our hearts that He is Incarnated there and then we can be the instrument of His Presence in our own family, in society, and our world.

We have spoken of being the heart of our marriage and of the family — and the heart being a muscle, has the spiritual power (which is love) to determine in a great way the course of the family's direction towards God or away from Him. We incarnate Jesus in our hearts and in our family and society when we do not say words but put into action the attributes that Our Lord displayed so clearly in the Gospels, His Love and Mercy, forgiveness and healing, kindness and humility, His trust and fidelity to the Father, His preaching and teaching, His selflessness towards others and steadfastness in prayer and in the Will of His Father.

We make room for God's Presence in us by choosing to allow God in our circumstances and through imitation of Him to purify our hearts and cleanse our souls of the enormous burdens of self-concern that we carry.

And to make room for Him, is to begin to see differently and to think differently and to become painfully aware of those in need, whether our own child, the poor of the Third World, the refugees of Asia, the oppressed of Latin America, the bag ladies of the city, or the invisible poor with whom we rub shoulders daily and do not "see."

To make room for Him is to be seared and vulnerable that we might weep with the Crucified Christ at the self-centeredness that often infringes on the human rights of others.

Making room for Him is to seek out ways to bring justice to the poor whether in food, clothing or shelter, legal aid, letters to Congress, or visiting the sick and imprisoned, physically or spiritually. It is to incorporate Christ into our lives so that we are one in Christ.

The haunting words of the Gospel still ring softly through the centuries and how often one must repent that the words are still too true in one's heart today: "... and there was no room for them at the inn" (Lk. 2: 8).

## Desire

I would be a violet  
in the Garden of my Lord!  
A sweet-smelling violet  
breathing at His Word!

Small, tiny, cumberless;  
tucked away in cosiness,  
yet royal in my purple dress —  
Pleasing to my Lord!

He would seek my scented bow'er;  
stay with me to rest an hour!  
I would breathe my sweetest pow'r  
till He named me — Precious Flow'r!

I would spend my heaven on earth  
spreading perfumed thoughts of worth;  
drawing hearts to gather mirth  
close beside the family hearth.

I would be a violet  
in the arbor of my Lord!  
A sweet-scented violet  
sowing unction and accord!

*Sr. M. Colette Logue, O.S.F.*

## Young Franciscan Candidates And Liturgical Formation

GREGORY SHANAHAN, O.F.M.

THE LITURGICAL initiation and formation of Franciscans is treated neither evenly nor exhaustively by the sketch.\* What follows is merely a reflexion on the subject with some suggestions which make no great claim to originality nor to up-to-dateness. It may be easily shown that the Franciscan movement was highly instrumental in the transition of worship from the realm of the *esoteric* to that of the *exoteric*. Legislation and literature also show that there was from the beginning a Franciscan stance on the liturgy of the Church. Neither the transition nor the stance derived, probably, from any haphazard and facile efforts by Franciscans; they were due instead to a fundamental attitude to the church and her prayer and sacraments. Notwithstanding the young Order's "homeless itinerancy" the Rule of the friars, even in its earlier form, is unequivocal on what their basic prayer should be, viz., the sequence of the Church's Hours of praise. Clearly, this did not mean a flirting with the liturgy of a cathedral or an abbey; its *raison d'être* lay deeper. Saying the prayer of the Church was a sign of catholicity; it was motivated by the Gospel and by the life of the Apostles. Even the brotherhood's paraliturgical and semi-personal praying was to be modelled, evidently, on Scripture prayers and the liturgy of the Church (See RegNB III,3-6; OffPass; LaudHor; LaudDei; ExpPat; ExhLD). Similarly, the Rule of St. Clare prescribes the Divine Office, not simply because it was the custom and obligation of nunneries, but because it marked the interior evangelical journey; it was the praise of

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*The author, a member of the editorial board of The Cord and a frequent contributor, is on temporary duty in his native Ireland. He hopes to assume teaching duties at the Franciscan House of Studies in Malawi, Africa in the near future.*

the poor in the mystical Body of Christ, lacking grandeur and glitter, though not without beauty (See Rule of St. Clare III,; 1-6).

Today, therefore, even while the whole Order seeks, at least, to return to a simpleness of style in living and to an unsophistication of form in worship, there ought to be no facile presumptions and haphazard approaches in regard to the training of candidates. Fundamental attitudes should be instilled, not really as something novel, but as part and parcel of education in a veritable tradition of service of God.

When the young person joins us, there arises a problem from the absence of a good liturgical base, a solid foundation in the ways of worship. This has nothing to do with the person's good intentions or devout spirit, but is connected rather with the conditions necessary for a dedicated cultic life. (Perhaps most of us were forced with this on joining; *we were* other people's problems! Only gradually did we imbibe the real spirit of the Liturgy). The young candidate is handed a breviary — admittedly much less confusing and daunting than breviaries of the past — and attends Mass, takes part in its celebration in more intimate surroundings, and before long is attending choir practices, and the like. What is really more important than being introduced to the mysteries of rubrics, to different feasts and celebrations (this *has* to be done and often straightaway) is an introduction to a sense of worship — that *sens liturgique* the French spoke of — or the spirit of the Liturgy, the underlying attitudes a worshipper must acquire, the fundamental approach to the whole thing. This is not necessarily present in the newcomer who has been exposed to floating liturgical ideas in his or her parish, to recurrent scriptural reading in church, or who has been involved in multiple forms of external participation. A contemplative awareness of the mystery of worship "in Christ" (and indeed of the mystery of "Church") may be totally undeveloped, even if it is at an embryonic stage. (Educationists in Europe used to lead small children to an appreciation of things like silence, attending to color and details, simple gesture, touching objects, in order to ready them for attention to mystery. A chaplain went through a mimed Mass, rather than a real Mass, in the classroom; no words, no noise, just silent movement, lights were soft, not hard and strong: an atmosphere was being created).

It is easy to see how things like silence and wonder are closely allied to certain key elements in a Franciscan spirituality, such as poverty and "unprotectedness." So that liturgical education and Franciscan education can often be intertwined happily. The general conspiracy against silence has invaded our liturgy; there is an invasion of words, an outreckoning of movement, a falsely felt need to "explain" everything. Signs are prevented from *being* signs, and consequently many people have lost out on

translucence and missed the overture to mystery. It is up to the Franciscan formator to devise some sort of course through which this may be countered by showing that silence is the surrender of power and control and is the appropriate language of reply to certain great experiences. When things are truly majestic there ought to be silence — after the high moments of liturgical word and action, in a forest of tall trees, among lofty mountains, in deep valleys — anything else, if not in whispers, is garish and obtrusive. We ought to speak only when we can improve on silence.

People who enter our religious life, even as it is lived in small communities, experience a rather full *liturgical* programme — at least as much as concerns the Eucharist, the Office and the liturgical cycle — in which the sense of sign and symbol, and much else is heightened for them. A course ought to highlight the very special sacramental signs: water and the notion of regeneration; laying on of hands and the channeling of various unseen charisms through touch; the word/action dialogue in Reconciliation, etc. Some of these signs can be illustrated by references to St. Francis, e. g. his celebrating the *value* of water: we ought to have a 'sisterly' relationship with this creature, so "very useful and humble and precious and pure." The bread and wine for Eucharist are connected with the earth itself in the *Canticle* (as they are in the Offertory prayers): "Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Mother Earth,/ who sustains and guides us,/ and produces diverse fruits..."

Our bodies participate in the rhythmic praise of the cosmos. Thus, the sign of the Cross, bowing low, genuflecting reverently, being seated in repose for listening, kneeling in humble penitence, rising and standing to attend to the Lord who is "still speaking to us in his Gospel"; all these are ways in which the whole person, 'the mind in the body', worships God. Our bodies link us with the earth, and our soul reminds the body of *their* common and true homeland which is in heaven. For Francis, a few friars gathered in a wood, praying the Hours, was enough to forge the link with the cosmos praising the Creator. For Clare, the community in the single monastery of San Damiano, hidden and poor, in sickness and in health, was closely in touch with the splendid liturgy of the mystic Body of Christ in every place. It is not pomp and circumstance that make Franciscan worship rich and fulfilling, but rather a penetrating sense of universal brother-and sisterhood in an adoring relationship with that Originating and Loving Mystery which we, with Jesus, address as *Abba*. Openness toward this awareness is attained by submission to the fiery touch of the Holy Spirit, through poverty and simplicity and that purity of intention and vision, so dear to Francis and Clare.

Reverence is among the basic prerequisites of the worshipper; reverence is, arguably, one of the chief congenital virtues of the Franciscan spirit. The characteristic reverence of our holy founders should be presented to candidates at an early stage in a liturgical education program. The *Canticle of Brother Sun* is allied to the Church's thanks and praise and to her use of earthly elements in the sacramental system. St. Francis' respect for words, especially *the Word*, is a most valuable inspiration for the ministry of reading and the role of listening. The Saint's veneration of the divine words in writing — "And if ever I find them in unfit places I wish to gather them up" — inculcates in us courteous regard for liturgical things. The same spirit of reverence is taught us by St. Clare's caring attitude and work for the churches around Assisi in making altar linens and other liturgical requisites. The spirit of worship, like respect for things created, springs from poverty; for when one attributes all good to the Creator and regards Him as sole Lord and Owner of all that is, one retains nothing for oneself, but offers everything, including oneself, to God thankfully and joyfully. The poverty needed for true prayer and worship is well expressed by Francis in his *Letter to the Entire Order*: "Keep back, then, nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that he who hands over his whole self to you, may recover your whole selves" (EpOrd 239. Cf Adm XII). In this little injunction is summed up that *marvellous exchange* that takes place in eucharist: Christ's sacrifice re-enacted, our self-offering taken up.

Romano Guardini (*Sacred Signs*, 77-78) tells of coming across a beautiful chalice in the monastery of Beuron; it was shown him by the monk in charge of the sacred vessels. From looking at this sacred cup he "caught a glimpse of the meaning of the sacrament." The disciplined "ingathered strength blossoming into a cup, open but enclosed, could signify but one thing: to receive and retain." The vessel was for holding in its depths the divine blood, sheer love. To Guardini the chalice also represented the created universe. Humankind with its restless heart was the meaning of the universe. Yet, in St. Augustine's words, "that which makes a human being to be what he is is his capacity to receive God and hold Him fast." Awareness of this nature can be stimulated by the signs and symbols by which the sacred is rendered available in liturgy. In our technological age, however, we tend to be overly pragmatic and are in danger of reducing to the banal the many-splendored thing. We ought to be 'elevating' rather than 'reducing', and engaged mentally in the transfiguration of the ordinary, till we come to the recognition that ordinary and human things (as the Incarnation reminds us) can be very holy and full of God. Whereas high-minded speculation about the nature of God and the sacred need not be holy at all; not as helpful to our spirits as appreciation, welcome,

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*It is not so much a guided tour of the sacristy that is needed as rather a gentle education in "holistic" worship which involves body gesture, seeing, looking, hearing and listening.*

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wonder, — virtues of the poor in heart who alone know instinctively how to *celebrate*.

It is not so much a guided tour of the sacristy that is needed as rather a gentle education in "holistic" worship which involves body gesture, seeing, looking, hearing and listening. The chalice, for example, we *see* in the sacristy, but we *look at* the elevation. We *hear* the words of lessons in the preparation of reading, but in the Office and at Mass we *listen* to the Word. The ability to listen does not come easily to the modern person. But once its importance is grasped and it becomes habitual, it helps us perceive spiritual presence and makes of communal worship a genuine experience. An inward listening is something the newcomer has to learn in regard to the Psalms which, in their constant and varied use throughout the entire liturgy, are typical of the great classical forms of worship. They have to be allowed to grow on the one who prays (how St. Francis loved them!); or perhaps it is that one is to grow *into them*... to grow accustomed to their rhythms, their inflections, their recurring themes, their poetic refrains, their sometimes startling imagery, their ways of talking to God, their *waiting* for God and *listening* to Him. It might take a long time for the young Franciscan to 'get inside the skin' of the ancient psalmist. But an indication of the colossal prayerful work the Little Poor man put into his composition of the *Office of the Passion*, for instance, might help (even if a concentrated study of that work might prove too daunting to the uninitiated in other *franciscana*). It might be useful to point out that the rhythms of contemplative praying are utilized every day in the Responsorial Psalms at Mass (and in responsories in the Office of Readings), so that we gain maximum benefit from the read Word. Here contemplation and liturgy dovetail, as personal and private praying draws from the liturgical font. The assembly's response can become our personal *mantra* upon which we may then and later focus the attention of our soul, as though upon a key that opens a door behind which is the vision of the face of God.

In explaining the contemplative dimension of Franciscan life the Psalms should be shown as *leading to* contemplation. They do not *produce*

contemplation. The psalms are not even ready-made prayers (in one sense), but sacred poems in which we steep ourselves. Their effect is not exactly psychological (working on our minds), but theological (working on our souls). They place us in front of the self-revealing God. If we go on chanting and praying them, one day even their images will fade or fall away altogether, but God will show Himself to us, in response to our "intuitive gaze": and that is contemplation. (St. Bonaventure would have explained it to us like that).

It was only after a lifetime of meditating and applying Scripture to life and suffering that Francis himself was able to say he knew the essence of the word of God: "I have already made so much of Scripture my own that I have more than enough to meditate on and revolve in my mind. I need no more, son; I know Christ, the poor crucified One" (2Cel 105). He 'made the word his own'... and ... he 'revolved the sacred words' in his mind: he had personalized the Scriptures. This does not come easily, and to a beginner it may be mystifying; but we must somehow introduce the newcomer to the notion, to the challenge.

Likewise, it must have taken Clare a long time and much deep pondering over Scripture, especially as prayed in the Offices of the Church, before she could make its phrases, rhythms and imagery very much her own. Over twenty years after her conversion we find her writing those great spiritual letters to Agnes of Prague. In them is revealed the fruit of so much meditation, so much lived participation in the prayer of the Church: "I speak of that Son of the Most High, Whom the Virgin brought forth; and she remained a virgin after bearing Him (*Letter III*. Cf. AB p. 201). (A young Poor Clare postulant or novice might be expected to find St. Clare's letters a little unattractive, too florid perhaps, and expressed in an ornate language that appeals little to modern people. Only with time and increasing devotion, with a growing admiration and love for the holy foundress, will a certain curiosity also grow in which the Poor Clare seeks to understand the kind of person Clare was, and particularly to observe the way her prayer life developed, strongly nourished as it was by the Liturgy of the Church. All that the newcomer can be expected to know about the Letters and other writings is that they exist and to hear them occasionally in the company of her sisters).

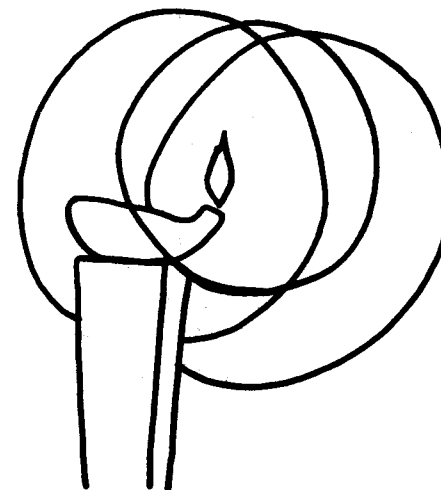
In the final analysis, a contemplative awareness of 'what is going on' in liturgy is much more important than any amount of general activity and external involvement without this substratum. It goes without saying that in any 'course' such basic documents as the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours, and the Introduction to the Lectionary (to mention but a few) should form substantial material. These documents must not be thought of as containing

only rubrical directives; they contain key concepts and are a condensation of the best theology of worship. From the point of view of Franciscan formation, it would be important to lay stress on the virtue of reverence, reverence for the Creator and all created things; on the spirit of praise and thanks which springs from this; on fraternal communion, which is at the core of Christian liturgy and Franciscan life; on a life which is *ecclesial* as much as it is gospel-based; and, above all, on Franciscan life as one of relationship with God in Unity and Trinity, to the ceaseless adoration of Whom the 'servant of God' is consecrated. For, the extant writings of our holy founders reveal that their life and prayer were truly trinitarian: a finding of the Father, *fontal plenitude* (St. Bonaventure) of life and love, in the energizing fire and breath of "the Spirit of the Lord," and *through* Jesus Christ, Lord and Brother. And this is precisely the trinitarian dynamic of all liturgical prayer and action.

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\* The basis of the article is a paper I read to a meeting of Poor Clare abbesses and directresses of formation held at Galway, Ireland, in 1980. It was a "working paper", intended as introductory to more coherent discussion at that seminar.



## The Streets

A bird tracks its way across the sky  
calling out a name:  
is everything the same,  
unchanged as times flies by?

The cobbled streets of Asisi  
clack to the sound of my heels  
is what my faint heart feels  
merely pilgrimed ecstasy?

Santa Chiara and San Rufino  
have passed from my myopic view  
and Santa Maria degli Angeli  
sprawls the peaceful plain below:

I am here where he walked,  
I am here where he talked  
to the birds that tracked  
their way across the same sky:  
where he worshipped You  
where he knew  
the voice that called  
to him outside the walled  
warring city.

As I walk the slumbering  
streets of his Assisi  
my slow, awkward lumbering  
heart senses You are close to me.

*Seamus Mulholland, O.F.M.*



## Francis and Mary Revisited

JOSEPH DOINO, O.F.M.

IN HIS *First Life of Saint Francis*, Brother Thomas of Celano gives his readers a moving description of Francis' discovery of the Portiuncula, the "little portion" (1 Cel 21). We are made to share Francis' reaction to the pitiable condition of the ancient church dedicated to Mary. Because of his love for "the mother of all good" he began to live there and repair the tiny church.<sup>1</sup> Celano goes on (22) to describe that momentous occasion when Francis responded so dramatically to the gospel passage of the sending of the disciples.<sup>2</sup> It contained all that he wished, and sought, and longed for with all his heart. Now in the third year of his conversion Francis was moved to abandon his quasi-hermit's garb for a simple tunic shaped like a cross, and he set out to carry out the Gospel mission to the letter. Celano understates this radical response of Francis with the words: "For he was no deaf hearer of the Gospel."

Some twenty years later, in his *Second Life* (18), Celano's account of Francis at the Portiuncula undergoes unusual stylistic changes. Description gives way to symbolic discourse. With obvious intent the biographer uses his literary craftsmanship to construct a symbol of beauty and power. Henceforth Saint Mary of the Portiuncula will be much more than a name; its mere mention will evoke a series of mutually enriching images that unite Francis to Mary with compelling logic. The symbol that issues from this will possess the power to awaken in every Franciscan heart the deep biblical appreciation of Mary inherited from our seraphic father.

Celano needs only three compact sentences to accomplish his purpose and he leaves no doubt as to the focus of his imagination. His very first sentence engages us by means of a clever concatenation of realities made possible by the notion of "smallness." Francis pos-

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*Fr. Joseph, professor of Franciscan theology and spirituality at the Franciscan Institute, is editor of The Cord,*

sesses this quality in unusual ways: he is of small stature (*persona modicus*), he is humble in spirit (*mente humilis*), he is *minor* by profession (*professione minor*). We move immediately to the *portiuncula*, the little portion, which he, "the Servant of God" had chosen for himself and his brothers who were "to serve Christ." Thus with mounting intensity, we are made to enter into imaginative activity that brings Francis, the brothers, and an unusually named place below Assisi into a dynamic unity that unleashes an extraordinary concept of service.

Celano is not finished with the Portiuncula; so our imagination is made to dwell there in the second sentence. It was Divine Providence, we are told, which had given a special name to the place which would fall "to the lot of those who desired absolutely nothing of this world." Poverty is thus joined to humility, and we are ready to encounter the other pole of the symbol.

This is reserved for the third sentence where Celano finally speaks of the chapel which had been constructed there to the virgin-mother, "who by her singular humility merited after her Son to be the head of all the saints." "Her singular humility" and her poverty, so concretely evident in the little church, are the living source of her fecundity: she is the "Virgin made Church."<sup>3</sup> The paradox imposes itself upon the self-image of the entire brotherhood. For, as Celano sums up, precisely in this place, the order of Minors had its beginning, and with this very church as its foundation it grew in numbers to achieve its "noble structure." Henceforth, the brothers will not mention the name of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula without having to look into their hearts and see the providential identity of their vocation with that of Mary. The name Saint Mary of the Portiuncula will forever challenge the Franciscan imagination to move through a series of interrelated and mutually enriching realities until it reaches the supreme expression of paradox: out of littleness comes greatness, out of poverty comes richness, out of virginity comes motherhood.

Celano concludes his reflection by telling us of Francis' loving preference for "this place," a love and reverence he demanded of his brothers. Furthermore, it was his desire that life there give credibility to the symbol: it was to mirror the Order's commitment to humility and poverty. It was to mirror Mary, the prototype of Gospel discipleship.

It is only after he has brought this important literary unit to a close that Celano proceeds (19) to describe the brothers' life at the Portiuncula. Their prayer and praise was incessant and their life is described

as "angelic," not an uncommon designation for monastic life.<sup>4</sup> Celano is intent upon making a connection with Saint Mary of the Angels, the ancient name of the place, so that this name too will have its own symbolic value. However, the one time Francis refers to it in his writings (RNB XVIII, AB 124) it is Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. This would certainly relate much more directly to the reason why Francis wished this place "to be preserved as a model of humility and highest poverty for their order...."

The Portiuncula united the hearts of Francis and Mary in a most unusual way. Bierbaum (12) describes it as a mystery-filled exchange, a kind of mystical conjoining of hearts and minds. So sensitive is Francis in intuiting the supernatural nexus between a symbol and the reality to which it refers that the little church which he repaired and loved so deeply became the very person of Mary (Pyfferoen - Van Asseldonk 449). Celano has used his literary talent to create a symbol that will demand of all the followers of Francis an undying recognition of how intimately their lives and history are associated with hers.

It remains for us to revisit Saint Mary of the Portiuncula in a loving quest for that paradoxical image of gospel service and discipleship which Francis' love discovered in the virgin mother of God.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>A. Fortini, *Nova Vita di San Francesco*, Vol. III, p. 95, gives the measurements of the chapel as 11 meters in length and six in width.

<sup>2</sup>The date is commonly given as February 24, the feast of St. Mathias, probably in the year 1208.

<sup>3</sup>Francis invokes Mary with this title in his "Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary." cf. Armstrong and Brady, ed., *Francis and Clare. The Complete Works*, p. 149, fn. 2. on Francis' unusual use of this image; also, H. Pyfferoen, *Laurentianum* 12 (1971) 413.

<sup>4</sup>cf. S. Clasen, "Vom Franziskus der Legende zum Franziskus der Geschichte" in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 29 (1966) p. 16.

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## To Him Who Gifts My Dreams

Master:

Does thanks suffice  
That You  
have given me

Within my being  
this — a  
gifted memory?

Herein I slip

unto a flash  
joys—sorrows  
present—past

Where I may with  
my soul's eyes trace  
a smile—a tear  
on lov-ed face

Of those held dear

And should desire—I even can  
On winged steed  
the heavens span

But—should it chance  
be none to care  
speedily I seek  
my solace there

in friendship's lore  
— to share

Who? — Who? — my Love

can e'er contain  
in human boundaries  
limitless thoughts  
ecstasies  
or pains — hurts — joys  
these

Which oft abide

Your gaze alone can pierce  
And I may hide  
in memory

Yes! One:

Only YOU

Who ransomed me

Destined on *this World's tree*  
to set *all* free  
to wander

Ah! Then must haste

Again once more —  
Reality

Then: Who shall care

or even dare

to weep

Who holds the precious key

To ope the doors  
That traverse in and out  
Where all may flee  
To live and love  
in Memory

*Sr. M. Thaddine, O.S.F.*

# Francis' Integral Prayer: Was Francis of Assisi a Man of Prayer?

SR. FRANCES ANN THOM, O.S.C.

YOU MAY WONDER how anyone could think such a thing or go so far as to ask such a question about St. Francis of Assisi; the troubadour of the great King; the Christ of Umbria; the man who lived the marrow of the Gospel; the one who strongly supported the Pope in his Eucharistic Crusade by admonishing all to have devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and wrote intensely about a deeper relationship with the Lord! Yet, there seems to be a point in time when Francis was no longer a man of prayer; a point when his whole personhood dissolved into the person of Christ; a point at which he became one with all creation and its maker so that one could not be distinguished from the other. This is the point where he ceased to be just a man of prayer. This is the point when prayer became the man, Francis.

As Francis began to turn to Christ more and more, he also began to pray more and more in out-of-the-way places. From this we can deduce that public prayer was not his favorite sort of prayer, although it was very much a part of his life with his brothers in community, especially the recitation of the Divine Office. This type of prayer, however, was in practice in obedience to the Church and being a devoted son of the Church, Francis would uphold all that it required of him and his community. All that the Roman Church asked of him he would do with great zeal and devotion as if he, himself, had decided upon that particular formula or rule with full knowledge and deep faith that the obedience to the Church was greater than his own likes or dislikes.

Francis personal prayer, however, was a different matter. He could pray anywhere. The more he grew to know Christ, the more he found himself in an attitude and in an atmosphere of prayer. Much of this was due to his intimacy with God's creatures who spoke so eloquently to him of his Maker. He was never alone in his praise of God in the sense that he was always aware of all that surrounded him as being an aspect of the Divine.

*Sister Frances Ann Thom, O.S.C., of the Monastery of St. Clare in Lowell, Massachusetts, is a Consulting Editor of this Review.*

Having become the very personification of prayer, Francis could no longer speak with God but become the very words which he spoke. He truly became a living, walking biblical message to all around him. It is wonderful to see this in retrospect and admire all that Francis did... but we must remember that this journey from self to God-likeness was a long hard struggle filled with many misgivings, pains, misunderstandings, anguish of soul, doubts, terrifying visions of his own unworthiness, temptations and other sorts of disastrous and heart-rendering experiences which were concluded only with his death. It is only after that he is declared a saint and we read all these glorious things about him. While he is in the midst of these experiences, his holiness, his deep and lasting devotion to the Lord and all his tremendous qualities which we admire are not evident, for the most part, to him or to others.

Francis had first to learn to love himself. Truly he did seem to love himself in his vain way of life. He ate well, dressed superbly, enjoyed living to the very end degree and reveled in giving pleasure to others. When Christ came into his life he realized that his love was misplaced and mistaken and that he had to set things straight with himself before he could fully love others. He realized that he got in his own way as well as in God's way, even though what he did was not blamable nor really evil, he was not free to love himself or others. Knowing that God did not hold these faults against him he did not develop a guilt complex nor a scrupulous exaggeration of his own evil (which in itself is misplaced self-love and lack of trust in the Lord's ability to love the sinner) but learned to forgive himself completely thus enabling him to love others fully. Once he threw himself upon the mercy of God his journey could begin. His journey to the Father was a lovely journey (we can never take a companion on this journey). He did not look to see what others were doing to reach the Father, instead, he continued to look within; to search for the riches which the Father had given him for his own unique journey. While it is true that others admired him and followed him, Francis never imposed his way upon them; instead he encouraged their uniqueness and aided them to seek out God's manifestation of their own journeys. They all travelled side by side with the same goal in the distance, but Francis was well aware that God spoke in various and personal ways to each one of them and he wanted them to be sensitive to the touches of love (graces) with which God favored each of them at each moment of the day.

Even though Francis tried to conceal his own touches of love, he was sometimes overcome while in a group and in such instances would attempt to withdraw into his cowl in silent peace and acceptance of God's presence. Through these experiences Francis learned much about himself;

he found that he had a positive attitude toward most people and things and it was the confrontation with the leper which perfected his attitude; he had an ability to be present to the other, which was his strong characteristic as a salesman in his father's shop, but when he shifted the emphasis from the other to the Other (God), his spirit was freed of duplicity; he was decisive in word and action, especially in those things which smacked of adventure, however, once he was visited by the adventure of meeting the Lord, he relied entirely upon God's word to direct him; his sociability, his adaptability, his copability, as well as his optimism all served him well in his newly chosen service; his enthusiasm, his freedom from fears and his openness and energy to change, helped him as he set out upon the task of taking a risk for the Lord. While this risk meant a movement from what was known to what was yet to come or unknown, his God-given talents would be his most treasured assets. For God proved once again that he builds upon what a person possesses; he does not demand the impossible nor an immediate transformation which is totally foreign to the person. Francis was never asked to deny his desire to become a great knight or troubadour, he was simply asked to change his allegiance to God; he was never denied the right to use his bargaining powers but used these to bargain for souls; he continued to sing, to rejoice, to sympathize, to empathize, to write down facts and ideas which seemed to him necessary sharings for others of those elements which had been useful to him. These were never sets of instructions or regulations, but admonitions which had grown out of his own experience and elements by which he had learned to praise all of God's creation thus glorifying God Himself.

There were many difficult phases in Francis' journey as well as those which gave him great consolation. We know from the prayers he wrote how unworthy he felt of the gifts the Lord bestowed on him. The truth of his relationship with God is especially clear in his prayer, my God and my all! The closer his friendship with God, the more keen was his awareness of the imperfections in himself and the more he longed to be freed from this life. In order to keep the movement of the Spirit alive Francis employed what ever would produce in him the greatest devotion and when he prayed with others he did not hesitate to share much of his own soul while keeping only the most personal secrets of the King to himself and advising others to do the same.

During his time of prayer many values flowed forth which helped to formulate the style of life he and his followers embraced. One of the main requirements for persons entering upon his way of life was that they be questioned about their Catholicity in order to insure their allegiance to the Pope and the Roman Church; following Christ's example, Francis and



his followers were to move about as itinerant preachers of the Word and not only move about but have the capacity to pick up at any given moment and leave one place to go to another; the value of poverty had the quality of freedom for the itinerant, mobile friar who would not be able to move easily if he were hampered by great wares of property; thus, at first, poverty only meant the lack of anything unnecessary. Later on, poverty took on the aspect of great self effacement or self-emptying which eventually led to poverty in fact as well as in spirit.

Francis gave evidence of his apostolic itinerancy and mobility in his attempts to go to the Orient. One wonders what the final chapter might have been for the Sultan had Francis been allowed to enter the trial by fire or ... what might have been the final chapter for Francis! Since he sought martyrdom that surely would have evidence of faith even had he been consumed by the flames. For some reason God did not permit Francis to have his great desire in that particular way. Francis willingness to throw his life away, as the Sultan viewed it, proved to the Sultan that Faith cannot be rationally explained but that it must give witness in the following of Christ even to the cross or, in this case, a blazing fire. We can envision that fire as a reflection of that great fire of faith which burned in the heart of Francis and which, in a sense, emblazoned the path of those who would follow him.

Flames, of themselves, are impressive and call one's eye to focus upon them. Anyone who has been in a darkened room with only one small light knows that the eye immediately tends to go toward the light. It absorbs the attention of the looker while the darkness around enfolds the looker who has become one with the light. The light, however, has no awareness of the looker or the darkness nor does it realize its importance as an oasis in the darkness. It is the person who looks who is centered upon the light and that same person who is aware of the darkness and the light simultaneously. Francis was such a person, such an observer of the light and darkness simultaneously. He had found the center of his being; had gone deep into himself to find the light within his own darkness. But this was only the beginning. His going into the center was a step toward expanding outward, scattering some of the light into the darkness to see more clearly what it was that the darkness had to teach him. As he expanded this consciousness, the life of his soul expanded more into the darkness and he was able to recognize the darkness which prevented him from being all in the light. In knowing himself through his darkness it was easier to become more light and to bring others to study the whole person in their journey to Infinite Light. This acceptance of his own darkness allowed him to accept darkness in others. Delving into this

darkness and light Francis had found the balance of good and evil which prevails in all of creation. He sought to transcend this darkness by encompassing it; by embracing it. Rather than have it encompass him, he brought it into agreement with the light. His recognition of it; his awareness of it as an integral part of his own being, gave it a value that the suppression or repression of it would only have frustrated. Being recognized; being found out, the darkness could not function in an evil manner. Only when the darkness is not accepted and given attention does it kick up its heels and create havoc in the soul, like a spoiled child longing to be noticed. Deep into the mystical life, Francis found that the darkness claimed a place too, and he had to find a proper balance for it before it tried to destroy what the light was doing for him. To help himself to recognize the darkness within himself, Francis called upon the qualities of light, i. e., he employed virtue, prayer and all the contrary elements to assist him in bringing forth the opposite, or, lack of virtue, indifference and even vice. He did this by spending long hours in vocal and meditative prayer in which he invoked the aid of the Most High. His constant question, "Who am I, Lord, and Who are You?" is, indeed, a very profound and unsettling question when taken seriously. He realized that even though he ended that prayer by saying that he was only a poor little worm, the servant of the Lord, there was a very great void in the depths of his soul and he felt himself being drawn into the vortex of emotions — contrary emotions, such as those he would feel again in his experience of the vision of the Crucified; simultaneous emotions of joy and sorrow. He found himself volleying between moods of good and evil, judgments, choices and decisions. He became rational and irrational at the same time, such as he felt when the Sultan presented him with the trial by fire or when he heard a voice which tempted him to leave off his fasting lest he become like the humped-back old woman. Irrationally he had jumped into a bush of sharp thorns and just as irrationally he had run out naked into the snow to make for himself a snow wife and children.

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*Francis was such a person, such an observer of the light and darkness simultaneously. He had found the center of his being; had gone deep into himself to find the light within his own darkness. But this was only the beginning.*

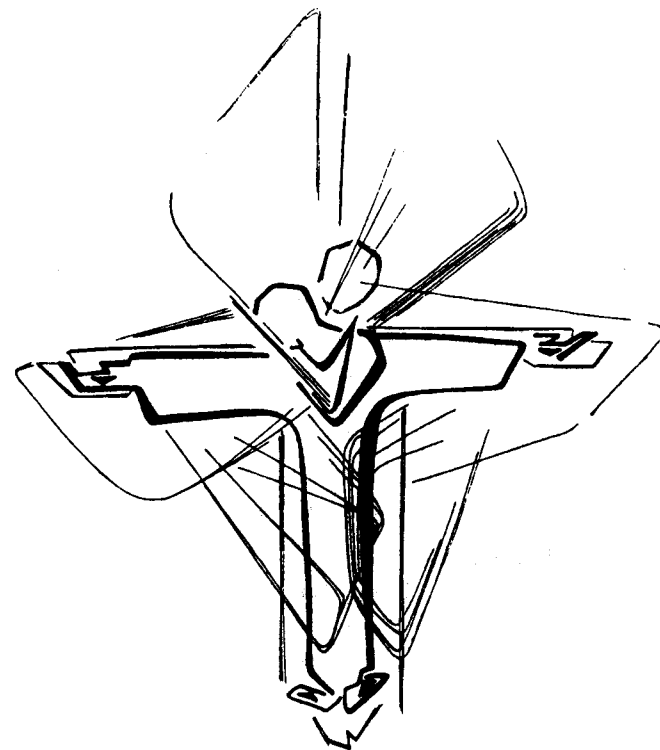
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Throughout his life there were instances of his attempt to integrate more fully the darkness which he perceived within himself and the light which he was trying to bring forth. He would tell a brother to whirl around until he fell dizzy upon the ground in order to discern the path they should travel, as if he could not trust his own judgment; another brother would plant cabbage upside down in obedience to brother Francis and they would grow, and still another would be told to preach a sermon in his underwear then, would be joined by brother Francis also in his underwear, as a penance for his hasty decision. Slowly, slowly the integration process continued even to the extreme point of following Christ by not having anywhere to lay his head. Francis was totally aware, however, that even some of these could be the result of darkness and not from the light. He was careful not to display his piety and reminded his brothers who were priests, to finish their holy Mass and then offer thanksgiving to the Lord, rather than display their piety before the laity. He admonished his friars who recited the office not to sing the psalms, but rather to recite them with complete attention and with devotion.

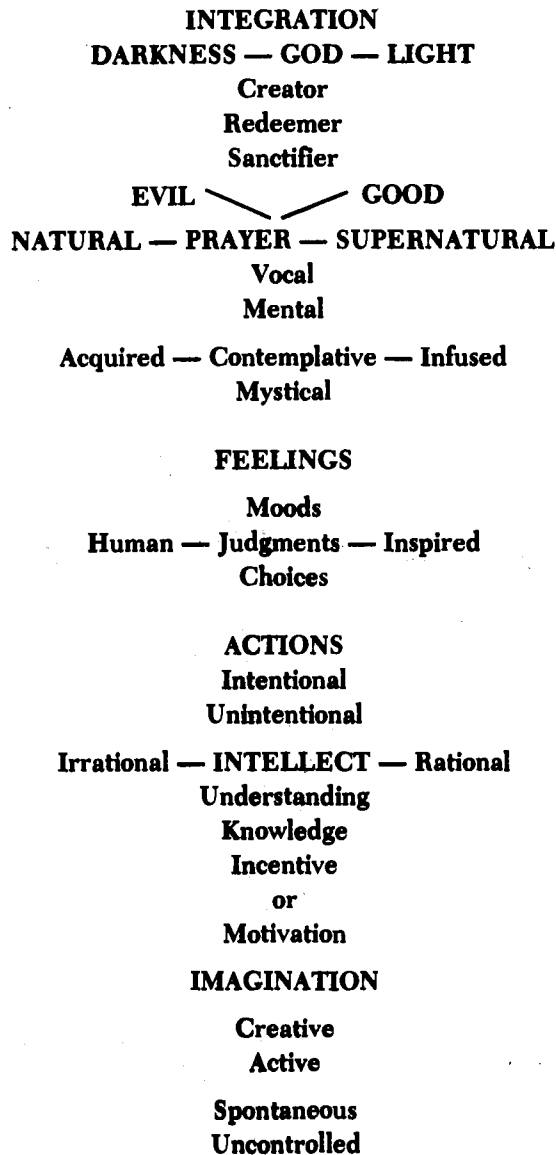
In the darkness, poverty had taught him to be wary of the brother whose prayer became his possession. Thus, he himself, strove to know his unworthiness of this gift of God, the gift of prayer, but his greatest example of self-emptying or integration of darkness with the light is contained in his story of perfect joy. Far from the laughing, singing, praising, fun-filled troubadour, Francis presented a sorry story of returning home to his own place and having his own brothers tell him to leave. "If," says Francis, "I kept patience and did not get upset, then that is perfect joy!" One might also add that... that is perfect love! What a full circle Francis has made in his life. He was a far cry from the spoiled youth with the up-turned nose at the sight and sound of a leper. His own darkness, his own leprosy has guided him to acknowledge man's waywardness. He had fully imbibed the lesson of the Crucified that no man can take offense at the darkness of another man, for all are in it together... working to integrate the darkness with the light to form a whole person. Even in his admonitions Francis mentions that one must not take offense at the sin of another nor become angered by it. It is by undertaking, patience and example that other souls will come to recognize the necessity of the unity or integration which must take place in each person in order to perfect the whole and that each whole person contributes to the whole of the world's unity or integration. In this sense, too, Francis is a man of peace.

Does this mean that once Francis was on the road to integration that he never again sinned, never lost his patience or that he was not tempted? He was probably tempted more than usual and because he was aware of

what he was about he saw more opportunities for trying his patience. It simply means that he understood the workings of his own interior and the interior of others as being fundamentally the same. This understanding enabled him to accept in others what he was attempting to recognize in himself in order to gain the necessary balance for a life of intense union with God. It further enabled him to realize that the closer one is to the ALL HOLY the more distressed will be that part of one's person which is not attuned to holiness or wholeness.



In the instance of perfect joy, Francis demonstrated the perfect integration of light with darkness as the dark side of others is presented. It was because of this intense work at total integration that Francis was not a prayerful person for his person had become the essence of prayer, the very core of prayer. He had put on Christ as one puts on a garment or even more closely, as if one could take within one's body the life fluid of which God (figuratively) exists.



Francis, therefore, presents to us a picture of a mystic whose concentration remained always deep in the center of his being in order to expand outward to a greater awareness. The wider the expansion of his consciousness, the greater was his mystical life. As he focused on himself, he simultaneously thrust himself outward toward others, even unconsciously. This contemplative awareness grew so that even if he, himself, may not have wished consciously to go outward, his own interior thrust manifested itself in mystical ways to those around him. This is why others sought him, unaware of the reason themselves. His secret was so powerful that it could not be contained and its power radiated to others. This is what we commonly call charism; a type of magnetism which attracted great crowds to hear him preach. The evidence of this is found in one of the dialogues between Francis and one of the friars when the friar asked Francis why everyone was following him and Francis remarked that it was because he was the lowest of men. That, indeed, seems to be the key. By being the most abject of men he has followed the Abject One and has the same magnetism for the same reason. This charism is often even greater in those who have attempted to isolate themselves for the sake of the world. Their light, as Christ himself remarked, cannot be hidden.

Francis shied away from those who would honor him as a prayerful person or as a saintly person because he knew that the full integration of darkness and light would never be accomplished here and that one could only hope to maintain the balance until the time of perfect unity with the All Holy Integrator and that he was still subject to failing. He used a healthy distrust of himself by immersing himself in the reality of who he was, who he desired to be and what he could become if the balance was not maintained. Even for a saint that was not an easy job. We have only to peruse the works of Celano to see the struggles with fear, shame, pride, vain-glory, etc. which Francis recognized in himself. He used his faults as stepping stones to attain more height, more balance, more perspective in his spiritual life. He recognized, acknowledged and accepted his fear, shame, pride, vain-glory as an integral part of his being and used their presence as a (warning) call to do better; to go beyond and develop a pattern of virtue from these recognizable vices.

In our sophisticated way, we read the well-formulated stories of Francis and his light touch of the world; the taming of the wolf; talking to the birds; playing a violin by using two sticks; singing the *Canticle of the Creatures*; performing a number of miracles; being graced by the marks of the stigmata; enamoured of Lady Poverty; at peace with all of creation and wallowing in a pig sty in obedience to a Pope; and we are at peace with it all. Seldom do we consider at what price that peace was

purchased. We have not been on the long journey with Francis; we only enjoy the results. Had Francis not been able to come to grips with his dark nature and integrate it with his light side, there would not be such stories for us to read. Had his prayer ended with lovely consolations and the popular approval of the world, he would never have become the Christ of Umbria; the patron saint of the environment nor the personification of prayer.



## God Words

God  
 Inexhaustible Mystery  
 Origin and Creator  
 Above and Beyond  
 Near and Within  
 Majestic and Powerful  
 Holy and Humble  
 Pure and Vulnerable  
 Strong and Compassionate  
 Tender and Merciful  
 Unbounded Beauty  
 Unending Peace  
 Gentle Healer  
 Unseen yet Manifest  
 Penetrating and Revealing  
 Abiding and Reconciling  
 Teacher and Guide  
 Strength in Our Weakness  
 Protection in Adversity  
 Consoling Companion  
 Food for Our Journey  
 Rest for Our Unease  
 Light for Our Darkness  
 Wisdom for Our Confusion  
 Life for Our Deadness  
 True and Trustworthy  
 Perfect Love and Destiny of All  
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

*John Harding, O.F.M.*

## A Daisy Speaks

Little daisy, with your snow white face,  
And heart of deep, deep gold,  
If you could speak, what would you say,  
What messages unfold?

"Each petal pure of velvet fair,  
As you behold me here,  
Would tell of great simplicity  
That banishes all fear.

I stand in fields or garden plots  
And thank the God above,  
He sends me rain and gives me sun,  
That's what I speak of — Love!"

*Sr. Mary Lenore Baader, O.S.B.*

## To a Sable Collie

God made you lean and strong, my dog,  
To run and bark and so, I know,  
He gave you all you need to have  
And taught you all you need and so;  
I only pray, my dog, my friend,  
That I may run as quick as you  
To what this life decrees for me;  
Toward my eternal destiny.

*Fr. Joyce Finnigan, O.F.M.*

## Like the Ocean

Who knows my depths?  
Not even I. God knows.  
I glimpse from time to time  
in graced moments  
exhilarating or painful  
Am I so deeply loved?  
Am I yet so shallow in response?  
What sparkles on my surface  
if not your great love.  
What is this faith called forth  
from my depths, except your gift?  
How do I know, feel, perceive  
that my small efforts touch  
other shores?  
You have splashed me round  
to all of them  
given me grace to ripple on and on.  
What languages do I hear  
shell cupped to my ear?  
What tears mixed with mine  
in this same salty sea?  
What great desire for Your Peace  
washes every shore  
And if peace comes with justice,  
I would send fish from this  
well fed shore to the  
African side.  
And let my waters serve mine and  
others needs —  
baptizing, curing, cleansing,  
soothing, nourishing.  
Let the surprises I contain delight  
those in need.  
Let my sure rhythms calm the  
anxious ones, as calmed I've been.  
Fearless then, let me plunge  
into the Word one with the Trinity  
and all of us, now and  
at the hour of our death.

*Sister Bernadette Sullivan*

## Arise, My Soul

Arise, my soul!  
 Your lover has arrived!  
 Not on stallion white  
 And gilded,  
 Nor with treasures laden,  
 But on a whispered prayer  
 With only promises etched in His hands.  
 Arise, my soul!  
 And shake off the clinging dust,  
 For already has He entered  
 And knot Himself to you,  
 And your hands are His hands,  
 And His Father, yours.  
 He lives and you live,  
 But not you,  
 For you now are He.  
 Arise, my soul!  
 The wonders He has done before  
 He now does for you.  
 Behold,  
 In the blinking of an eye  
 Has He made you clean  
 And whiter than the whitest snow.  
 He has taken off your rags  
 And dressed you in the finest linen,  
 And a crown adorns your head.  
 Arise, my soul!  
 Be not ashamed.  
 For always has He loved you,  
 Though you knew Him not.  
 And though your dress was dirty,  
 He took you.  
 Arise, my soul!  
 Your lover has arrived.

Stephen Kluge

## Franciscan Studies M.A. Program Summer 1987 Offerings

THE FRANCISCAN STUDIES PROGRAM offers a full schedule of courses in Franciscan theology, history, and spirituality, allowing fulfillment of student interests.

All courses meet in Plassmann Hall, except for those marked with an asterisk next to the days on which they meet. Those so marked meet in Friedsam Memorial Library. Three credit courses meet Monday through Friday. Two credit courses meet Monday through Thursday, except FS 650 M-F, June 29 - July 31; FS 518, M-F, June 29 - July 30, and FS 600.

| Course | Title   | Cr. | Days  | Time                | Instructor                         |
|--------|---|-----|-------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| FS 502 | Sources for the Life of St. Francis   | 3   | M-F   | 8:30-9:45           | Michael Blastie, OFM Conv., S.T.L. |
| FS 504 | Life of St. Francis   | 3   | M-F*  | 8:30-9:45           | Conrad Harkins, OFM, Ph.D.         |
| FS 506 | Survey of Franciscan History  | 3   | M-F   | 9:55-11-10          | Dominic Monti, OFM, Ph.D.          |
| FS 508 | History of Franciscan Thought   | 3   | M-F   | 9:55-11:10          | Julian Davies, OFM, Ph.D.          |
| FS 520 | Writings of St. Francis & St. Clare   | 2   | M-Th  | 11:20-12:25         | Michael Hart, OFM Cap., S.T.L.     |
| FS 540 | Franciscan Spirituality   | 2   | M-Th* | 11:20-12:25         | Joseph Doino, OFM, Th.D.           |
| FS 518 | Script. Foundations of Franciscanism  | 2   | M-F   | 1:00-2:05           | Leslie Hoppe, OFM, Ph.D.           |
| FS 561 | Developm. of the Franciscan Person  | 2   | M-Th  | 1:00-2:05           | Edward Coughlin, OFM, Ph.D.        |
| FS 500 | Method and Bibliography   | 2   | M-Th* | 2:20-3:15           | Paul Spaeth, M.L.S.                |
| FS 517 | Introduction to Paleography   | 2   | M-Th  | 2:20-3:15           | Girard Etzkorn, Ph.D.              |
| FS 532 | The Secular Franciscan Movement   | 2   | M-Th  | 2:20-3:15           | Donna Marie Kaminsky, SFO, M.A.    |
| FS 552 | The Franciscan Contribution to Justice and Peace  | 2   | M-Th  | 7:00-8:00 (evening) | Daniel McLellan, OFM, Ph.D.        |
| FS 650 | Seminar — "The Future Order of Things: on Franciscans, Apocalypticism, and Medieval Prophecy" | 2   | M-F*  | 7:00-8:00 (evening) | E. Randolph Daniel, Ph.D.          |

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JUNE, 1987

# The CORD

## A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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Volume 37, No. 6

## The CORD

### A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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### Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

#### I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions  
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo  
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun  
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony  
EpCler: Letter to Clerics<sup>1</sup>  
EpCust: Letter to Superiors<sup>1</sup>  
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful<sup>1</sup>  
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo  
EpMin: Letter to a Minister  
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order  
EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People  
ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God  
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father  
FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221  
LaudDel: Praises of the Most High God  
LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours  
OffPass: Office of the Passion  
OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix  
RegB: Rule of 1223  
RegNB: Rule of 1221  
RegEr: Rule for Hermits  
SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady  
SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues  
Test: Testament of St. Francis  
UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare  
VPLast: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy  
<sup>1</sup>I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

#### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis  
2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis  
3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles  
CL: Legend of Saint Clare  
CP: Process of Saint Clare  
Flor: Little Flowers of St. Francis

LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis  
LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis  
LP: Legend of Perugia  
L3S: Legend of the Three Companions  
SC: Sacrum commercium  
SP: Mirror of Perfection

Omnibus: Marion A. Habig, ed., St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

AB: Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., Francis and Clare: The Complete Works (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

## EDITORIAL



### If St. Francis Were Here Today

WE IN THE Franciscan tradition have been called to our roots. This is a serious commission and we want to return. But immediately the question arises: Where will our roots lead us?

It is an honest question and there are many honest answers. One honest answer says: We must do what St. Francis would do if he were here today.

The answer has the ring of the real in it. The answer is valid for the First Order, the Second Order and the Secular Franciscans. The response realizes that the texture of society has changed. The reply is conscious of the fact that to do literally many of the things that Francis did would not have the same meaning today. The response purposes rather to do the things that a 20th Century Francis would do in 20th Century times. The reply asks for the conviction of Gospel poverty today. It looks for the desire to be little people. It asks for the warm arm of fraternity today.

In support of the *today* proposition there are solid factors that are well known. First, Francis is a man for all times. Second, there is that in his message which has the compelling ring of truth for any day.

Then there are difficulties. There is difficulty in almost every good answer. Sometimes the difficulties point to the doors that must be opened in order to find the answers.

To the resolve to do what St. Francis would do if he were here today, one honest answer is: I do not know how to do it. That is a door that has to be opened. But the difficulty indicates that the first step is to seek to know, to be bold in trying to know, to put this resolve at the head of each day.

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Another difficulty is that we immediately pass over the ordinary and search for something that is startling, because somehow we imagine that is the way to what St. Francis would do if he were here today. But Francis lived ordinary days, and he would live them if he were here today.

Perhaps the greatest requirement is centered about the faith factor. To do what St. Francis would do if he were here today would require a heroic faith commitment. If St. Francis were with us today he would indeed give himself in a huge faith dedication and surrender. That is what we must give if we would do what St. Francis would do if he were here today.

*Fr. David Temple, O.M.*

### Mary's Sister

The clatter of the cups and plates  
broke through the reverence of his words.  
A parted curtain. A deprecating glance.  
A heart that yearned to wear the yoke of freedom.

"Lord, is this fair?"  
A cloud of interruption. A shower of complaints.  
"I have been left alone to do the serving,"  
(while my sister, the bride, sits here at your feet.)

She caught his glance, and saw him look away,  
that burning gesture of surprise.  
And in a heartbeat she knew:  
he had been waiting for her, too.

*Sr. Edmund Marie Stets, C.S.B.*

## Francis and the Three Ladies

CLAUDE JARMAK, O.F.M. CONV.

IN APRIL, 1226, six months before his death, while traveling from Rieti to Siena in search of relief for his ailing eyes, Francis and his companions had an unusual and interesting experience. They met three poor women on the road, exactly alike in height, age and appearance.

They offered Francis the gift of a new salutation, saying, "Welcome, Lady Poverty!" When he heard this, the true lover of poverty was filled with unspeakable joy because there was nothing in him that he would rather have people acknowledge than what these women singled out (LM VII, 6).

The friars who accompanied Francis immediately discerned a mystical significance in this extraordinary experience. The three women, "because of their similarity, their novel greeting, their strange meeting and disappearance," showed the beauty of Gospel perfection in Francis in his poverty, chastity and obedience, although they had singled out poverty for special praise. This was the reason why the greeting, "Welcome, Lady Poverty," pleased Francis so much. Francis was "Lady Poverty," no longer merely poor, but rather the embodiment of poverty: he had become what he practiced. Celano cites a parallel instance when he writes that Francis "not so much prayed as he himself became prayer" (2 Cel 95). Poverty was no longer something Francis did; poverty was something Francis had become.

The three women were exactly alike in height, age and appearance. One did not exceed the others in height, all of them being of equal importance. Nor did any of them excel the others in age, but all were of equal excellence. All three were of the same appearance since they shared the common trait of poverty. They were the personification of the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, which "shone all perfectly in Francis."

*For more than three years, Fr. Claude was a member of the community at the Sacro Convento, adjacent to the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. He now teaches at St. Hyacinth College and Seminary in Granby, MA.*

Three allegorical ladies still continue to pay homage to Francis in the lower Basilica in Assisi. Above the altar, beneath which lie the mortal remains of the Saint, there are four curved panels on the vaulted ceiling which in Italian are called "vele," that is, "sails" inasmuch as they look like wind-blown sails. On these four vaults, seventy or eighty years after the body of Francis was buried in the church, Giotto and his companions frescoed the Saint surrounded by three ladies, the allegories of poverty, chastity and obedience.

### Francis in Glory

Resplendent as the dawn and as the morning star, or even as the rising sun, setting the world alight, cleansing it, and giving it fertility, Francis was seen as kind of a new light" (L3S Prologue).

In the vaulted panel facing the nave, Giotto portrayed Francis no longer emaciated by fasts and weakened by physical illness, but a resplendent figure sitting on a throne, full of light and glory, his beardless face beaming with a look of ethereal youth. Rays emanate from his whole body, encircling him in light. Dressed in a brocaded gold dalmatic, the official vestment of a deacon, he sits on a cushion covered with tapestry. In his left hand he holds the book of the gospels, in his right hand, a cross. The figure of Francis forms a triangle pointing up to heaven, symbolic of the perfection of the Gospels reflected in Francis through the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Visible over the throne are the words "Glorios 'Francisc,' Glorious Francis. A victorious banner hangs over the throne on which is depicted a cross surrounded by seven stars. The banner is surmounted by a seraph, a symbol of Francis' stigmatization, the crowning point of his conformity to Christ. Gregory IX in the sequence, "Caput Draconis" honoring Francis wrote:

A new knight is dispatched  
From the side of Christ,  
Bearing in his sacred body  
The insignia of the cross.

(AF X, 401)

Giotto did not portray the Francis of history, but Francis as the Angel of the Sixth Seal, "ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God" (Rev. 7:2).

Surrounding the triumphant Francis are innumerable angels, arranged into groups according to the office and tasks assigned to them. In front of the throne are two pairs of angels, ladylike in appearance, with a lively

gait, leading the procession. In their hands they carry flowers and palms of victory. Around the throne are angels with a golden harness around their shoulders and breasts, for it is their task to bear the throne of Francis into heaven. Behind the throne are angels holding hands and merrily dancing with each other, while on either side of the throne, angels with puffed cheeks sound a flourish on their trumpets. Arrayed on both sides of the throne are lines of angels who play musical instruments, sing and dance. The musicians play flutes and cymbals. The singers have their hands on their stomachs, pushing up their diaphragms to produce a mellifluous voice. The dancers offer hands to each other in an invitation to dance. There is a solemn, yet lighthearted elation to the entire fresco, reflected in the vivacity of the figures and in their lively and vibrant facial expressions, bringing to mind the responsory from the first Vespers of the feast of St. Francis: "Francis poor and humble enters heaven rich in merit."

On the other three vaults are depicted the allegories of poverty, chastity and obedience. There is a master narrative-plan to each of the allegories. The left hand corner contains an invitation to the practice of the vow; the right corner shows vices impeding its practice. In the center is found the allegorical figure representing the vow, flanked by two other allegorical figures representing the virtues necessary for its fulfillment. Each scene is full of angels looking on, providing a community setting for the keeping of each vow.

Directly opposite the fresco of Francis in glory is the Allegory of Poverty, indicating even visually that Francis' glory is a reflection of his poverty. Whereas the fresco of Francis in glory is readily seen on approaching the main altar of the lower Basilica, the Allegory of Poverty faces the friars gathered for prayer in the choir stalls behind the altar.

### Allegory of Poverty

Looking upon poverty as especially dear to the Son of God, though it was spurned throughout the whole world, Francis sought to espouse it in perpetual charity. Therefore, after he had become a lover of her beauty, he not only left his mother and father, but even put aside all things, that he might cling to her more closely as his spouse and that they might be two in one spirit. Therefore he gathered her to himself with chaste embraces, and not even for an hour did he allow himself not to be her husband. (2 Cel 55).

The Allegory of Poverty depicts the mystical marriage of Francis and Lady Poverty, concerning whom Dante wrote in Canto XI of the Paradiso:

---

*The allegories of the vows over the tomb of  
St. Francis in the lower Basilica in Assisi  
are an open book of Franciscan spirituality.*

---

... slighted and obscure  
for a thousand and hundred years and more  
she remained without a suitor  
until he came.

Lady Poverty, thin in appearance, dressed in a patched and mended wedding dress, girded around the waist with a rope, stands prominently in the middle of the fresco, a short bridal veil covering her head. She is standing in briars, a symbol in biblical imagery of desolation and need. These same thorns blossom into a luxuriant bush of roses and lilies behind her head, recalling the words of the Song of Songs: "I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley. As a lily among thistles, so is my love among the maidens" (2: 1-2). Lady Poverty is extending her right hand, and Francis, the bridegroom, is slipping a wedding band on her finger. Between the couple stands Christ, joining their hands and blessing this mystical union.

Two bridesmaids stand next to the bride, symbolizing the two virtues essential for the observance of poverty: hope, dressed in green, and charity, clothed in red. Hope is seen extending her hand toward the bride, ready to accept the ring which Francis is slipping on her finger, and as if whispering to her: "Trust in God who provides us richly with all things for our use" (1 Tim 6:17). The other bridesmaid, Charity, offers a gift of a heart to Lady Poverty, as if telling her: "May the Lord rule your hearts in the love of God and the constancy of Christ" (2 Thess. 3:5). Poverty cannot be espoused without hope and without love. What would poverty be without hope and charity?

To portray graphically that the world does not understand this type of renunciation, two little boys are portrayed at the bottom of the fresco. One is throwing stones at Lady Poverty; the other one is pushing brambles against her with a stick. To add insult to injury, a dog is depicted barking threateningly at her.

Celestial choirs of angels who encircle the bride and the groom, are witnesses to this mystical union as guests at the wedding feast.

In the left corner of the fresco there is an angel pointing with one hand to Lady Poverty as an example to a young man who is shown giving his cloak to a poor beggar: "I tell you in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40). The same cloak is taken up to heaven by an angel and accepted by the two hands of God depicted at the top of the fresco. The right corner shows an angel with arms extended, barring three men from joining the wedding feast. The first man, elegantly dressed and holding a falcon on his arm, makes an obscene gesture at the angel with his right hand. He symbolizes pride. Next to him stands another man, a sullen frown on his face, who points contemptuously with his thumb at Lady Poverty. He represents envy. The third man with his entire body turned away from the wedding scene as if in rejection, has only his head turned toward the angel. In his hand he clutches a bag of money. He symbolizes greed. Inasmuch as he is depicted with a tonsure, he could symbolize simony. This group of three men brings to mind the words of Jesus: "I tell you most solemnly, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 19:23). These three vices, pride, envy and greed are the enemies of poverty. It is with just reason that Francis wrote this plea in the Rule of 1223; "With all my heart, I beg the friars in our Lord Jesus Christ to be on their guard against pride, boasting, envy and greed (RegB 10).

### **Allegory of Obedience**

Christ said: "Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Mt. 11:29-30).

The Allegory of Obedience uses this scripture passage as its theme. A winged, monastic figure, representing Obedience, sits in an open loggia of a cloister, probably a Chapter Hall, symbolic of a place of obedience. On the wall behind her, barely visible, is painted a crucifixion scene. The allegorical figure of obedience is depicted with a yoke around her shoulders, assisting a kneeling friar in putting a yoke on his shoulders. It is noteworthy that the friar imposes the yoke on himself, she merely assists him. The forefinger of her left hand is raised to her lips in the common gesture of asking for silence, making at the same time a cross with the lips and the finger. Flanking Obedience are two allegorical figures of virtues required for obedience. To the left is a most unusual lady with two faces, a young and attractive face in front, and an old wrinkled face

in the back. She represents Holy Prudence, a virtue which prompts a person to remember the past and at the same time to look to the future, keeping watch over the past and the present.

Francis taught them besides to follow prudence as the charioteer of the virtues, not the prudence which the flesh recommends, but the prudence taught by Christ (LM V, 7).

In her hand she holds a compass, an instrument of precise measurement, and a mirror which casts a perfect reflection. Standing in front of her is an astrolabe, an astronomical instrument for determining the position of the sun and stars. These three instruments of precise measurement emphasize the necessity of prudence in the fulfillment of obedience.

Opposite prudence, on the other side of the allegorical figure of Obedience, is Holy Humility, a young lady with eyes cast down and holding a lighted candle. Whereas Prudence is depicted seated, Holy Humility is shown kneeling before obedience.

Francis added: In an office is found an occasion for a fall; in praise, an occasion for complete destruction; in the humility of a subject, an occasion for profit by the soul (2 Cel 145).

Outside the cloister, kneeling on both sides, are angels looking on the scene. The two angels in either corner of the fresco hold cornucopias, reminiscent of the words of Jesus: "Everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children or land for the sake of my name will be repaid a hundred times over, and also inherit eternal life" (Mt. 19:29). In the left corner an angel, pointing to Obedience, invites a young man and woman to the practice of that virtue. In the right corner, an angel, with arms extended, prevents entrance into the cloister to a centaur, half horse, half man, a symbol of pride. The centaur has his right hand raised in the air in a gesture of defiant rebellion against the angel. Pride has no place in the cloister of obedience.

Francis abhorred pride, the source of all evil, and disobedience, its worst offspring, but he welcomed the humility of repentance with no less intensity (LM VI, 11).

In the upper part of the fresco, Francis is depicted with the yoke of obedience on his shoulders. The reins from his yoke are held by the two hands of God at the very top of the fresco to show that the truly obedient are guided from heaven by the word of God. Francis stands between two angels, each one holding a scroll: on one are inscribed the words of the Gospel, and on the other, words from the Franciscan Rule, two sources

of obedience. Guided by the yoke of obedience to the Gospel and the Rule, we too are to follow Francis into heaven.

### Allegory of Chastity

We must hate our lower nature with its vices and sins; by living a wordly life, it would deprive us of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ and eternal life, dragging us down with it into hell. By our own fault we are corrupt, wretched, strangers to all good, willing and eager only to do evil, as our Lord says in the Gospel: Out of the heart of men, come evil thoughts, adulteries, immorality, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, shamelessness, jealousy, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, from the heart of man, and it is these that make a man unclean (Reg NB 22).

The Allegory of Chastity takes place in a setting of chivalry. On the summit of a bare rock stands a fortress surrounded by a wall with small turrets and battlements, and in the center, a strong and majestic tower, from which flies a white banner, the emblem of chastity. The castle is guarded by two knights holding instrument of penance, denoting the vigilance and perpetual warfare of those who wish to guard the treasure of chastity. In an open window of the tower can be seen in profile a young girl, Lady Chastity, clad in white, whose hands are folded in prayer. Two angels fly down from heaven and present her with a crown of glory and a palm of victory: "Come, spouse of Christ, receive the crown the Lord has prepared for you from all eternity" (Evening Prayer: Common of Virgins).

To prepare a young man to enter the castle of Chastity, two angels are seen giving him a ritual bath of purification. From the tower two allegorical figures, Holy Purity and Fortitude, offer a banner and a shield to the young man to protect him from relevant vices while he purifies himself in a basin to be admitted to the castle, that is, the practice of the virtue of chastity.

The left corner, reserved for an invitation to the practice of the virtue, has St. Francis, extending his hand and inviting three people to ascend to the castle of Chastity: a nun, a friar and a lay person, representing the three orders which Francis founded. Popular belief has it that these three figures are St. Clare, Bernard of Quintavalle and Dante. Giotto, it is said, wished to immortalize Dante Alighieri as the source and inspiration of the fresco-allegories.

In the right corner of the fresco are represented vices which militate against chastity. Penance, a winged figure with a hood over its head, with a lash is driving the enemies of chastity into the abyss of hell. She is assisted by three angels: one holds a lance, the other, a container of holy water, and the third, a cross, three means of combatting threats against chastity. The first among the enemies being driven into hell is "Amor," Cupid, a garland of wilting flowers around his head, blindfolded, with a quiver of arrows at his side, and a string of hearts around his shoulder. He is painted a sickly pink color and depicted with the claws of a chicken for feet, to indicate the animal nature of blind sexual desire. Another enemy of chastity, impurity, a black beast with the face of a pig, lies on the ground defeated. Concupiscence, or lust, is seen as a coarse and unkempt man. Behind them is the skeleton of death which holds a scythe in one hand and with the other grasps concupiscence around the neck.

### Centered in Christ

The Rule and life of the friars is to live in obedience, in chastity and without property, following the teaching and the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Reg NB 1)

The Allegory of Chastity is located in the lower Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, on the vault facing the right transept, where Giotto and his followers had frescoed scenes from the birth and infancy of Christ. Francis' chastity is therefore a reflection of the purity of Christ and of his Blessed Mother. Opposite it is the Allegory of Obedience, facing the left transept, where the Sienese artist, Pietro Lorenzetti, depicted the passion and death of Jesus. Francis' obedience reflects the obedience of Jesus Christ, who "humbled himself, obediently accepting death, death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8).

In the center of the vaulted ceiling, holding the four panels together, is a fresco of Jesus Christ from the first chapter of the Book of Revelation: his hair white as snow, his eyes blazing like fire, in his mouth a two-edged sword, and his face shining like the sun (Rev. 1: 14-16).

The allegories of the vows over the tomb of St. Francis in the lower Basilica in Assisi are an open book of Franciscan spirituality, a guide to lead us in the footsteps of Jesus Christ which Francis traversed through his poverty, chastity and obedience, reflecting in his life the perfection of the Gospel, and finally meriting to bear in his own flesh the marks of the passion and death of Christ.

### From A Sermon of Saint Anthony for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul\*

O shepherd and idol  
who foresakes my flock!  
May the sword fall upon his arm  
and his right eye be totally blinded.

(Zech 11:17)

A shepherd who forsakes his flock  
is an idol\*\* in the church:

He has eyes for the vanities of the world,  
not for seeing the plight of the poor.

He has ears for the adulation of flatterers  
not for hearing the cries of the poor.

He has a nose for the fragrance of soft perfume,  
not for smelling the scent of heaven  
or the stench of hell.

He has hands for the acquisition of money,  
not for spreading the word of God.

Of him Jeremiah says:  
What have straw and wheat in common?" (23:28)

\**Sermones Dominicales et Festivi* III, 277. Translated from the Latin by Claude Jarmak, O.F.M. Conv.

\*\*Idol: used in the medieval sense of a graven image.

# Franciscanism and Spiritual Direction

FRANCIS C. POMPEI, O.F.M.

## Introduction

Jesus once compared the Spirit to the wind; that like the wind, we know neither from whence it comes nor whither it goes. As such, we do not possess the Spirit, but it rather captures us. However, because of our freedom, we need to choose and be open to the Spirit; seeking it, desiring to experience it, and being led by it. Just as a sailor knows that it is the wind that fills his sails, he knows too that the wind's direction determines his decisions for setting the sails properly in order to move his ship. When the sails are aligned to the wind's lead, then the sails fill with life and there is unity of movement. This dynamic of alignment between the sails and the wind is similar to the dialogical alignment between God and us. As the Lord's Spirit moves in our lives we are continually directed in order to move toward union with God and carrying out His will. Like the sailor who can easily drift off course, or not have his sails adequately set, we too can move away from God by our choices and sin. Thus, there is a need for continual discernment and spiritual direction.

In the emerging spiritual hunger in the world today, more and more people are seeking spiritual direction, which is taking many forms, some for the better and some for the worse. Our attention here is to consider some of the highlights of the Franciscan charism that demonstrate both rich and integrated elements that speak profoundly to the present search for God and contribute significantly to the understanding and practice of spiritual direction.

---

*Fr. Francis Pompei, O.F.M., a member of Holy Name Province, is engaged in the Ministry of the Word. He studied at Christ the King Seminary, St. Bonaventure University, and holds a Master's degree in Spirituality from Weston School of Theology.*

## Francis as Director and Directee

Our first consideration is to look at Francis himself as directee and director in the spiritual journey. This will be mediated through his writings and his life.

As directee, Francis does not seem to have had the kind of organized and routine spiritual direction that we speak of today; the one on one model with the same person on a regular basis. It is true that he did seek out direction in one on one situations, but from a variety of people, the Pope, the Bishop, St. Clare, and his fellow friars. Francis' special gift was his being dealt with directly by God in several ways. Damien Isabelle, in his book *Workbook for Franciscan Studies* (285), points out this gifted way of being directed:

His gift was that of being able to read God's action in the events of his life. God's voice was very real to Francis and it seems that he was in touch with his dream life which is a powerful source of growth.

Francis relied greatly on God to reveal Himself and His will directly, and from his writings and life this seems clear. In the *Testament*, written as a direction and exhortation for the brothers near the end of his life, Francis points over and over again to this dynamic of God Himself inspiring and directing him. The following is a section of the *Testament* that reveals the means through which God directed the saint.

This is how God inspired me, Brother Francis, to embark upon a life of penance. When I was in sin, the sight of lepers nauseated my beyond measure; but then God Himself led me into their company, and I had pity on them. (Omnibus, 67).

In this we see God directing Francis while he is in sin. He does so by leading him to that which is most repulsive to him, lepers. Through this encounter with his shadow, God is not only able to liberate Francis from sin, but directs him through events which results in a new perception and vision of reality and God. Francis expresses this new perception when he says, "When I had once become acquainted with them, what had previously nauseated me became a source of spiritual and physical consolation for me" (67). Another example of God directing Francis is expressed by the saint when he writes in the *Testament*, "When God gave me some friars, there was no one to tell me what I should do; but the Most High Himself made it clear to me that I must live the life of the Gospel" (67). Here, God Himself directs Francis in his confusion to the proper path he should take. This path is to the scriptures which dominate Francis' life as a place for continued direction. Early in his life Francis has a vision

of the Crucified Christ while deep in prayer and is moved deeply as he reflects on Christ's passion. From this encounter his conversion is moved more dramatically toward God through the scriptures. The Franciscan Order's official biography of Francis by St. Bonaventure, the *Legenda Maior*, describes the result of this vision and God's specific direction through scripture: "Through this vision, the man of God understood as addressed to himself the Gospel text: 'If you wish to come after me, deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me.' " (Cousins, 189). Having been so directed by God through this scripture, Francis wholeheartedly embraced it as the heart of his call to poverty and identification with the Crucified. In this we see Francis appealing to God seeking direction by placing himself as he is before the Lord through prayer, hoping for the Lord to reveal His will. Francis has thus assumed the position of a true directee, and God directs. This dynamic of spiritual direction involving God, the person, and scripture is described by Barry and Connolly in their book, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (62):

The person praying has the sense that he is not controlling the way the Lord seems to him. Someone else is setting the direction of the relationship, deciding its events. The praying person does not look for helpful thought, work up feelings, or concoct images. He simply looks at the Lord as he appears in Scripture or in experience, puts himself before Him as he is, and lets happen what will happen.

Just as scripture was an important place for direction for Francis, visions, dreams, and images were also key in aligning him to the Lord and His will. This verse given to Francis, of 'taking up the cross,' flows from the vision of the Crucified and Francis' reflection on the image of the passion. St. Bonaventure structures his whole biography of Francis around seven visions of the cross and Crucified in and about Francis. Bonaventure sees these visions as crucial and central to understanding the saint's life and journey toward God. In addition to visions, Bonaventure describes God directing Francis through dreams and images. For example, during Francis' conversion he has a dream in which God shows him a 'large and splendid palace full of military weapons emblazoned with the sign and image of the cross' (Cousins 187). When Francis misinterprets this dream to mean he is to become a military knight, God corrects his understanding in a subsequent dream. This dimension of spiritual direction involving visions and dreams is not only part of Franciscan tradition, but very much part of spiritual direction in general as explained by Gerald May in his book, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit* (40):

It is important that people in spiritual direction be attentive to their dreams and able to discuss them freely in the direction relationship. As with visio-

nary experiences, there is ample evidence of God sometimes using dreams as both direct and indirect vehicles of communication. Thus, dreams and visions are at least as pertinent to spiritual direction as are all other forms of experience.

That Francis sought direction from others, hoping that God would reveal His will through them, is evident in his life in several places; in his seeking direction from brother Sylvester and St. Clare about whether or not he should decide for a hermitage or preaching life. As a directee, then, Francis received direction from God directly through visions, dreams, images, events of life, creation, and scripture. Included in his experience are one on one, group, and general direction. Though all are operative in his journey there seems to be a predominance of one as Damien Isabelle claims: "We still maintain that Francis put great stock on the individual finding his or her own direction in the light of the revelation of Jesus Christ" (286). Francis was not only directed in this way, but as a spiritual director guided others in the same fashion. This is seen in his encounter with Bernard of Quintavalle who resolved to leave the world and do whatever Francis commanded. Francis rejoices over Bernard's decision and then immediately leads Bernard to the scriptures where three verses are revealed to him from God which they accept as counsels. The dynamics of this incident demonstrate Francis' reliance on the Lord to reveal Himself directly to the person. As director, Francis listens to Bernard with compassion and confirmation as 'he rejoices' over Bernard's experience and decision. Francis then moves him to bring all this before the Lord as He is found in the scriptures. By doing this, Francis shows himself to be a true spiritual director, guiding Bernard to dialogue with God. Barry and Connolly confirm this process when they say, "Spiritual direction proposes to help people relate personally to God, to let God relate personally to them, and to enable them to live the consequences of that relationship". Francis does just that and enables Bernard to live the counsels of the Lord by inviting him to join his company.

Francis' letter to Brother Leo, who seeks guidance from Francis, captures the depth and richness of the saint's wisdom to direct and serves as a model for all in the Franciscan tradition. He writes to Leo:

Brother Leo, wish your Brother Francis health and peace! I speak to you, my son, as a mother. I place all the words which we spoke on the road in this phrase, briefly and as advice. And afterwards, if it is necessary for you to come to me for counsel, I say this to you: In whatever way it seems best to you to please the Lord God and to follow His footprints and his poverty, do this with the blessing of God and my obedience. And if you believe it

necessary for the well-being of your soul, or to find comfort, and you wish to come to me, Leo, come! (AB 47).

In terms of the practice of spiritual direction, this letter indicates the open and warm relationship Francis has with his directee, Leo. The saint uses intimate personal language and describes his own feelings and sense that he is in touch with. He tells Leo that he speaks to him as a mother, Francis, so often referred to as holy father and seraphic father, switches perspectives and presents himself in spiritual direction as coming from a maternal and feminine stance rather than paternal. In doing so he is indicating to Leo his desire to be supportive and nurturing, rather than domineering. This becomes specific in the confidence and hope Francis expresses in Leo's ability to discern the Lord's will when he says, 'In whatever way it seems best for you to serve the Lord God...'. In addition to this, Francis is directing to the Lord Leo's desire to know God's will. In doing so, Francis is moving Leo to freedom rather than rectitude. The goal is to be free before God, to touch, experience, feel, and articulate the self as it truly is. This letter is saying that Francis has created such an atmosphere that dialogue takes place in the context of one's freedom and with a mutual sense of the Spirit's presence. Gerald May confirms this essential element of spiritual direction when he writes:

Spiritual direction is generally surrounded by a characteristic atmosphere that is seldom encountered in any other interpersonal relationship. This atmosphere is one of spaciousness and underlying peace; of openness and receptivity; of a kind of quiet clarity in which it is easier to allow and let be. As one person put it, "Being in spiritual direction is just like being in prayer, only there is someone with me in it" (May, 93).

Not only does Francis move Leo to the Lord and freedom, but reminds Leo of past direction and choices. He says, 'to follow His footprints and His poverty'. Francis merely places this term before him and leaves the specifics to the Lord and Leo. By doing this Francis is demonstrating the importance of our past development and formation. The stages of development from childhood to adulthood are essential to keep in mind for spiritual direction because of the attitudes, images, scars, conscious and unconscious feelings and dynamics that have resulted from them. Remembering our journey is to touch all these dimensions with an awareness and openness to discover the Spirit's transforming presence. Francis, then, is asking Leo to go before the Lord and to be free in his decision making, but with a sense of his past journey with the Lord and the brothers. This whole direction is really an enabling experience which Thomas Mart in his book, *The Art of Christian Listening* (18), explains as the factor which makes direction work. He writes:

"How did it work? They enabled me to believe in myself, to rejoice in my own being and gifts, to accept the mystery of my life in hope, and to make the most of it. Compared to this, analysis, advice, summaries of treatises, and exhortations to the heights come to very little."

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*Tha Franciscan Charism is such that it engages the person with life in the personal, communal, and universal dimensions, and in such a way that all are opportunities for giving and receiving spiritual direction...*

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Lastly, all that Francis says is done with assurance that he is with Leo in all of it and is available for him not only for more direction, but for consolation and companionship. It is this consolation of companionship that is the hallmark of Franciscan life and direction. This 'being with' is the 'life' of a friar minor: a being with the Lord in fraternity and poverty. It is this 'being with' the Lord and each other that is at the heart of good spiritual direction, and it is this that is essential to the Franciscan charism. The Rule of the Order is filled with exhortations to this kind of relationship with one another in the brotherhood.

This brief look at Francis and one on one spiritual direction, whether with God directly or with another, demonstrates the fundamental approach to direction from a Franciscan vantage point. What is unique here is that the friars, by the very nature of their charism, had ongoing direction because they were itinerant preachers and Francis always sent them out two-by-two. Encouraged and taught to minister to one another, they were thus guaranteed companionship and a source of direction.

Besides one on one direction, two other sources of direction that are characteristic of the Franciscan life are *general* direction and *group* direction. An explanation of what these involve speaks of the profound and yet very practical elements of the Franciscan tradition of spiritual direction.

## General Direction

Damien Isabelle defines general direction as "concerned with the basics on which all other forms of direction must refer" (*Workbook*), 290). He further quotes Adrian Van Kaam's elaboration on the subject:

"The objective universal directives of the christian spiritual life include reception of sacraments, following the commandments, obedience to the Church, general conditions for a life of prayer and the accumulated essential insights of acknowledged masters through the centuries."

Put simply, general direction is what the Church offers for all of its members through her office to teach, preach, govern, and celebrate. Because the friars were itinerant, they drew a great deal of their direction from the general faith of the local Churches wherever they were, praying, preaching, and participating in the liturgical and sacramental life. The diversity of their experience due to the many places they travelled added to the depth and universality of their direction.

This general direction comes not only from persons and the hierarchy, but from objects as well. Francis developed in his brothers a deep sense and appreciation of God's presence and communication in all of creation. Symbol and imagination were important to Francis and are still essential to Franciscan spirituality. He was able to build a ladder to God through his contact and contemplation of creation. The Tau, or cross, became his special sign which he marked people, objects, and his signature. He teaches and instructs his brothers to venerate certain objects, especially the cross. He gives them this prayer to be said whenever they encounter a cross while on their journeys, "We adore you most holy Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all Your churches throughout the world" (AB 154). The point here is that all this is not some schema for pietistic practices. For Francis, as well as the friars (who still say this today), this use of persons, objects, and symbols in prayer was a great source of aligning the brothers to God in and through all things, places, and events. This was both enriching and practical, because they were often away from the security of the larger community. This gift of being able to find strength and direction from the Church and all of creation is a great contribution to the field of spiritual direction, especially for those who are unable to find the one on one model. For the Franciscan, it was and still is an integral part of the life of a friar minor and of the essence of the charism. The outflow of this is that just as the friars were directed in this way, they were able to direct others wherever they were, which till this day has made them troubadours of renewal for the Church and the people.

Isabelle makes this statement concerning the friars' gift to direct others by their very lifestyle:

"From the other point of view, the brothers participated in keeping alive the general direction of the Church, restoring its freshness, immediacy and vitality. What convinced the people was the coherence between what the brothers said and how they lived. Their presence seemed to speak the Word afresh in the midst of a church that was already too formal and distant from the people's ways and language. For some reason the brothers' way of living together in love and poverty opened up the Gospel to thousands of people who sincerely sought guidance from the Church. They found it in the approved life of the friars" (289).

The coherence between what the brothers said and how they lived is important. There is the suggestion here of the necessity for continual discernment in order to live in reality the life that is professed. For the Franciscan then and today, the Rule is not a compilation of legislation, but is considered 'life' and, as such, gives life and involves a lifestyle. The vowed life is also a life lived in fraternity (community). This fraternal dimension is central not only to what Franciscanism is all about, but also is a fundamental place for group spiritual direction. The next section treats this extremely unique and significant aspect of Franciscan spiritual direction.

## Group Direction

This model of direction can take many forms, but in general, it means those gatherings of christians who seek to share their stories and journey with the Lord in an atmosphere of prayer, support, discernment, and openness to the Spirit. It is a time for listening together, a being with one another and the Lord as family. There is a certain peace and security about it that liberates and gives strength. If the group functions well, it is the place for direction and rejuvenation. Jacques de Vitry wrote this in 1216 about the brothers, attesting to the presence of group direction and its effect:

"In the midst of this corruption I nonetheless found consolation in seeing a great number of men and women who renounced all their possessions and left the world for the love of Christ... Those who have heard them say to their friends: 'Come along' and so one group brings another". (*Omnibus*, 1608).

For Franciscans, group direction has a special rhythm to it and each movement possess its own dynamics. Our intent here is to look at each movement and list the potential for spiritual direction in each, citing the *brotherhood* itself as spiritual director.

The first movement is a *Coming Together*. The friars gathered together when in chapter or for their common life. If we recall the story spoken of earlier about Bernard joining Francis' company, we see the response of Francis as one of invitation to 'coming together'. He says: "The Lord has sent us a good brother, and so they ate together, rejoicing in the Lord" (*Omnibus*, 'Life of Giles', 242). Isabelle gives this insight into the specifics of what can occur in this coming together:

This coming together is not contrived; it is the work of the Lord... In coming together, the call from/by God was discerned, the way of life was explained and shared, and the joy of living the faith was explained (292).

The initial place for group direction is basically learning the life and the shared experience of faith and the common call.

The second movement is a *Sending Out*. Francis, like Christ, sent the friars out two-by-two: "Go, my dearest brothers, two-by-two into the various parts of the world, announcing to men peace and repentance unto forgiveness of sins..." (292). Francis wasn't pietistically naive and realized the difficult struggles of living such a radical life. Only by continued support and direction from the Lord could the friars remain faithful. Therefore, in this 'sending out' movement (they were itinerant preachers) the traveling with a companion provided each friar not only with fraternal life and support, but with a spiritual director. On the road then, the Franciscan is directed by (1) God, directly or in and through creation and events (2) the general direction of the Church (3) one on one direction with his fellow brother referred to earlier.

The third movement is a *Coming Back*. Thomas of Celano, the earliest commissioned biographer of Francis, places before us the wholesome atmosphere that was so conducive for direction and 'new life' among Francis and his followers.

When they had gathered, they rejoiced greatly at seeing their kind shepherd; and they wondered that they had thus come together by a common desire. They then gave an account of the good things the merciful Lord had done for them; and, if they had been negligent and ungrateful in any way, they humbly begged and willingly received correction and punishment from their holy father. For thus they had always been accustomed to act when they came to him, and they did not hide from him the least thought or the first impulses of their hearts... (*Omnibus*, 30).

Needless to say, this aspect of Franciscan life is one of its greatest strengths. The diversity and uniqueness of each friar is brought together, shared, directed, and celebrated. It is a coming 'Home' in every sense of the word and this in itself gives meaning, direction, and security to the friars. There is a real sense of belonging and acceptance, of being able to experi-

ence the Lord in the gathering of 2 or 3 in his name. Isabelle sees this kind of group direction as an enrichment process by 'recounting their wonders, their accomplishments and their sins'. Direction here occurs on many levels as the 'life' is not only shared and experienced, but also discussed with a sense and knowledge that the Lord speaks through the gathering of friars.

The fourth movement of group direction is the *Living Together*. Pure and simple this is just what it says. It is the living out together of daily life with all its struggles, its pettiness, its personality conflicts, and the nuts and bolts of practicality. For the friars, even living together in poor physical environments was directive and provided them with the opportunity to be continually put at the mercy of God's providence. The poverty or powerlessness was a means of directing or aligning themselves with God. It also put them in touch with their need for one another and their responsibility to create an atmosphere of support and direction. This living together must be seen as distinct from ministering together. For the friar, this distinction is essential to his life. The friar's identity comes from his life with the Lord in fraternity; in the living together in community. It is out from this quality of life together that he moves into the world and ministry. One needs only to read the Rule and Francis' life to see that the attitude characteristic of life together for friars is motherly. All the brothers were specifically counseled to develop this attitude in order to create an environment of freedom, care, security, and peace. Though this is not spiritual direction in itself, it is very much the atmosphere in which it can and should take place. Once again, this is not just some optional practice for the friars. It is what they are about. As such, the brotherhood as *living together* is directive and directed by its very nature.

These four movements of group direction are cyclic and are repeated continually as the rhythm of Franciscan life. The striking contribution here is that in every movement of its life, the brotherhood provides and presents each friar with a profound source of spiritual direction, either one on one, general, or group.

Like anything that gives 'life', people are attracted to it and want to share in it. The comprehensive and universal appeal of Franciscanism is found in its not being exclusive, but rather inclusive. It is not a retreat or spiritual exercises, but a way of life which, for our concern here, provides direction in every moment of that life. The Franciscan charism, as a way of life, is truly a gift for all seeking direction and community life. Its appeal is both spiritual and practical. It is no surprise that Francis' lifestyle with the brothers developed quickly into the second and third orders, as women religious and lay people wanted to partake of the deep

and continual support and direction it offered then, as it still does today.

All that has been presented may appear to be idealistic and unreal. Without a doubt, over the centuries and even today, Franciscans distort, misinterpret, and both choose and give 'death' to one another rather than 'life'. However, where the charism is practiced and struggled with in sincerity, there is found the directing and directed movements of the Spirit.

There is in the world today an emerging spiritual hunger for God. As people search for experiences of God, they will discover quickly that there is an essential need for ongoing direction, because experiences of God are not ends in themselves, but are means to freedom in choosing and discerning God's will continually as a 'way of life.' Gerald May offers this insight on the subject (38):

"Although spiritual journeys often begin in the context of experience, and although experiences constitute major vehicles of insight, growth, support, and service along the way, the goal of the journey can never legitimately be experience itself. The goal is beyond experience, and has to do with our actually becoming who God means us to be and doing what God means us to do.."

Francis himself assumes this attitude when, on his death bed, he offers this final direction to the brothers: "I have done what was mine to do; may Christ teach you what you are to do" (*Omnibus*, II Celano 214). In saying this he directs his brothers to the Lord for their own discernment and so raises their consciousness of personal freedom and responsibility. The important point here is that this direction and discernment is nurtured and provided by the very nature of the brotherhood or charism.

The model of one on one, general, and group direction contained in Franciscanism offer people today a very real and concrete vision and approach to God, creation, community, and Church. The Franciscan charism is such that it engages the person with life in the personal, communal, and universal dimensions, and in such a way that all are opportunities for giving and receiving spiritual direction as we have seen.

### An Integral View

Certainly this presentation is limited in its attempt to treat the subject of Franciscanism and spiritual direction, but it nonetheless demonstrates the unique contribution of the Franciscan charism; that being its ability to incorporate the diverse models for direction. In addition to this it also illustrates that the Franciscan approach contains many of the proper no-

tions and criteria that appear to be at the heart of good and fruitful spiritual direction.

The following are a list of those elements which seem to be crucial to an integrated and healthy view of spiritual direction. These same ingredients have been cited as essential to Francis' and the order's understanding and practice of spiritual direction. A brief description of these elements and how they are incorporated into the Franciscan understanding will serve to reveal the depth and quality of Franciscan spiritual direction. The Franciscan examples of the different elements are taken from those already mentioned in this presentation.

**Freedom:** A freedom to touch, experience, share, and identify the realities of ones' self; a freedom to discern and choose with a sense of responsibility. (Ex. Brother Leo is given the freedom to choose what will please the Lord.)

**Listening:** To provide the experience of understanding, compassion, and support; a listening to the movements of the Spirit in the person's story as well as in the director/directee exchange. (Ex. The whole episode with brother Bernard's conversion, in which all the above are displayed by Francis.)

**A 'Witness':** The ability to convey or experience that we are together with God, another, or a group in our sharing; a sense of openness, receptivity, and in an atmosphere of nurturing. (Ex. Francis as 'mother' to Leo).

**Prayer:** All that makes up our uniqueness and journey, good or bad, is brought before the Lord in *prayer*, a prayer which is dialogical. (Ex. Francis' experience of being directed by God while in sin).

**Uniqueness of the individual:** That there is no teaching, preaching, or assumptions made on the directee. All are unique meaning makers and we need to check our filters continually in order to be free to allow the other to make their own meaning in their own way with God. (Ex. in Francis' saying "I have done what it was mine to do, may Christ teach you what is yours to do").

**Hope and Confidence:** An encounter in direction of being affirmed in the midst of whatever the experience is; that there is a very real confidence and hope for the person because of the Lord's presence and love; a knowledge that one's mature needs will be met (Ex. Seen in Francis' rejoicing over Bernard and confident that the Lord would speak to his needs through scripture.)

**Openness to Experience:** Dreams, images, visions, events, and relationships are all valid sources for God's communication and direction; each needing to be looked at carefully to discern the true Spirit (Ex. Francis' own journey was very much in touch with visions, dreams, images, relationships, and life.)

**Identification:** A need to look at real needs, feelings, and obstacles in order to be set free by the Lord; to feel what we are feeling! (Ex. When the brothers returned in the *coming back* movement of group direction, they prayed, shared their stories, hearts, and even their sins with Francis and each other in order to be freed, directed, and renewed by the richness of their life together in the Lord.)

**A Holy Indifference:** A profound sense that we are *more* than what we want and what we do: a warm detachment enabling us to be engaged in life and relationships, yet an apartness which allows us freedom to 'be' with God and one another (Ex. The *living together* and enjoyment of one another in companionship and fraternity; the warm apartness and freedom found in the one on one with God moments of Francis' life; this is found also in the saint's many trips into solitude. Poverty and powerlessness continually placed the friars in an experience of detachment.)

**A Sense of the Past:** What we are, in terms of our images of God, manhood, womanhood, and how we make meaning are the result of our past. How we make meaning and what influences our past has on us are integral parts of spiritual direction. (Ex. This is seen in Francis' recounting how the Lord spoke to him when he was in sin. His whole *Testament* illustrates his being in touch with the past and how the Lord directed him.)

**Trust in God through Relationships:** An experience in spiritual direction of being involved in personal relationship through which we mature and grow in our trust relationship with God. (Ex. Francis, as mother, puts confidence and trust in Leo through his use of intimate and personal language, assuring him of his support. Just as Leo trusts and is trusted by Francis, he can now go before the Lord, as Francis suggests, in the same trusting spirit.)

**The Need for Direction:** Our journey with God should never become freeze-dried, rather we must be receptive to new movements and stirrings of the Spirit. There is need for continual direction for those areas of ambiguity. Spiritual direction is not just experiences, but a way of life for those engaged in life. (Ex. The Franciscan charism,

by its rhythms of coming together, engage the person in life. Through the friars' being detached and itinerant, they are given the continual challenge of 'newness' rather than freeze-dried complacency. The one on one with God, the sending out in twos, the general and group direction, which are all of the essence of the order, provide a comprehensive opportunity for spiritual direction.)

## Conclusion

The prayer spoken by Francis before the Crucifix of San Damiano in Assisi at the time of his conversion is a sincere and humble plea for direction. I remember saying it in Assisi before the very same Crucifix, asking for discernment and direction after 8 years of Diocesan priesthood. Through most of the models of direction described, and because of the enabling and nurturing experience of the friars along the way, I too am a Franciscan today. My experience has been realistic, in terms of the positive and negative ways the charism is lived out, but I want to conclude with my own witness that Franciscanism has truly transformed and continues to transform my vision and life. Those dimensions of spiritual direction contained in this presentation are very much available in the charism for those willing to embrace it sincerely.

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## St. Anthony and the Child

In the beginning  
Anthony held only  
the Bible,  
and taught with  
the other hand  
uplifted.  
Artists simply assumed  
his proclamation  
of the Gospels  
was best shown  
literally  
with book in hand.  
But somehow  
the Child  
envisioned another  
revelation  
that night  
He crept into  
Anthony's arms.

*William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O.*



## Book Reviews

**The People Called. The Growth of Community in the Bible.** By Paul D. Hanson, San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, publishers, 1986. Pp. x-564. Cloth, \$31.95.

*Reviewed by Robert Donovan, Ph.D. (Fordham University), Associate Professor of Theology at St. Bonaventure University.*

In my youth I learned that the marks of the Church were one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Of course, at first I thought that catholic meant Catholic. After all that's what I was, "a Catholic," and the marks of being that in my neighborhood were obvious. I've grown older and so has my view of the Church or Community of Faith. But in many ways, even though one's interpretation may differ, those original marks still pretty much define the Christian Church. Some, of course, may disagree.

Paul Hanson, Bussey Professor of Divinity and Old Testament at Harvard, offers a slightly different set of marks and insists that these come from the Old Testament vision refined during the history of the Jews and carry over even up to the time of Jesus and beyond. For Hanson the marks of the faith community from the Yahwist to Paul are worship, compassion, and righteousness. In this exhaustive and well researched work Hanson traces in all of its variegated manifestations this notion of community which he sees as

an ongoing response of a people to an ongoing divine initiative. In so doing he shows the depth of his knowledge of the Testaments and adds to ours. He permits us to see old texts in some new and interesting ways.

Simply put Hanson invites the reader to see that "biblical faith looks to the God who invites a responding community to recognize the presence of God (worship) in the events it encounters, and to infer from that presence what is the just (righteousness) and loving (compassion) way to live." (p. 488) He painstakingly traces this development through to the Christian era. And he does so in order to call the Christian Church of today to be grasped by this biblical paradigm and struggle to embody it in its present struggle to be a community of faith. Ever responding to the ongoing divine initiative taking place in the real world of changing customs and political activity, the community of faith (Church) must change or die, but it must do so in continuity with what went before. Hanson even goes so far as to suggest that the Christians and the Jews together "seek a fuller understanding of the vocations of communities of faith dedicated to hastening the day when the blessing that the true God alone can bring will be known to everyone." (p. 412)

In the ongoing ecumenical dialogue as well as the discussion about the viable communal structures for those in the western, eastern, or third worlds, this

work represents a distillation of the present state of biblical scholarship gathered around the theme of community. Some may not agree with all of Hanson's conclusion or with his methodology, but one cannot but admire and use his scholarship.

**Faith's Answer: The Mystery of Jesus.**

By Vittorio Messori, New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1986. 298 pages. Hard Cover, \$16.95. Paper \$12.95. (Translated by Kenneth D. Whitehead; edited by Reverend Eugene M. Broown).

*Reviewed by Francis Berna, O.F.M., Ph.D. (Fordham University), Assistant Professor of Theology, St. Bonaventure University.*

Karl Rahner remarks on the need for an "apologetics of a less anxious and worried kind in this history of dogma." (*A Rahner Reader*, ed. G. McCool, p. 289). Unfortunately, that is not the sort of apologetics one finds in Messori's text. Mr. Messori is quite anxious and worried. One gets the impression that the author is clearly on the defense. But, his enemy remains unclear.

Msgr. George Kelly (St. John's University, New York) praises the text for clarity, conviction and commitment. Indeed these are the author's strong points. The introduction tells how he came to write the text and that he approaches the topic of Jesus not from the viewpoint of the theologian but from the viewpoint of a journalist. He intends to offer a picture of Jesus easily understood by the average lay person.

Such a task is admirable and the text does have a way of getting the reader's attention. For the most part the lan-

guage is clear and direct. And, the author is able to raise some fascinating questions which are answered with fascinating information. But it is precisely Messori's attitude towards scholarship which presents his downfall.

Repeatedly the author quotes Blaise Pascal, sometimes at great length. One must wonder if the average reader better understands Pascal than the scholars Messori attacks for making the question of Jesus their jealously guarded preserve. Throughout the text Mr. Messori seems to be at war with most every biblical scholar and theologian. Yet, he fails to mention the name of the attacked or their work! All too frequently the text simply employs such phrases as "a commentary: a recent Jewish scholar; a contemporary archaeologist." It is all too difficult to evaluate the author's ideas without specific references to those whom he would find inadequate. Several examples illustrate this point.

In the length of one page the author discusses the notion of a corporate messiah — the faithful of Israel would fulfill the messianic function in the world. He suggests that this notion is developed only as a consequence of Israel's rejection of Jesus as the messiah. A quick glance through Mc Kenzie's *Dictionary of the Bible* illustrates the complexity of the issue and establishes quite credibly that the concept of the messiah undergoes radical change throughout Israel's history. Furthermore, Mc Kenzie offers some clear indications that the messianic character of the people pre-dates the Christian experience.

Pascal serves as the author's main source for interpreting the Jewish people's declaration in John's Gospel,

"We have no king but Caesar." Paschal contends that in this acclamation the people "disavowed all desire to have a king of their own." The text accepts Paschal's words as the "typical Christian interpretation" and one that reflects the historical condition of Israel at the time of Jesus (p. 80). A careful reading of the gospel text can disclose a theological interpretation of greater significance. For John it would seem that this declaration on the part of the people is understood as a rejection of their own identity as the chosen people. It amounts to a rejection of God since ultimately only God is the true king of Israel. The issue is ultimately the issue of faith in God particularly as he has revealed himself in Jesus. That is what concerns John. It seems dubious at best to suggest that John was primarily concerned with future political realities and vague references to Old Testament prophecies, as Messori suggests.

Finally, when focusing on the prophecies of Daniel — an apocalyptic and not primarily a prophetic text — the author contends that it makes no difference "for our purposes" when the text was completed except to say that it was completed two centuries before Jesus (p. 81). Mr. Messori completely ignores the historical - critical contention that the date of origin has something to do with the author's intention. Since he uses this text to argue for the prediction of the exact date of the messiah (p. 85), one would think that the historical-critical questions would at least be addressed. Mr. Messori's rush to claim "precise and unquestionable evidence" should make even the most anxious apologist cringe! His style certainly becomes tedious for anyone with the least bit of scholarly concern.

If one could lay aside a concern for sound scholarship, the text could offer a different perspective than that of much contemporary Christology. His attention to the "Star of Bethlehem" presents some fascinating though undocumented "evidence." However, if one is seriously interested in understanding Jesus and is searching for a reason to account for our hope in him, there are certainly better texts.

**Life and Death in the Testament: The Teachings of Jesus and Paul.** By Xavier Leon-Dufour. Translated from the French by Terrence Prendergast. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986. Pp. xxi-316. Cloth, \$20.95.

*Reviewed by Father Charles J. O'Connor, O.F.M., S.T.D., Assistant Professor of Scripture at Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora, N.Y.*

It is of the nature of man and woman to question, and to seek out answers. To some of life's questions, however, the answers remain elusive. One such question whose answer evades us is, "What happens to us at death?"

Xavier Leon-Dufour meets this question head on in his recently translated book, entitled in English, *Life and Death in the New Testament: The Teaching of Jesus and Paul*. In it he seeks to unravel to some degree the mystery of human death by recourse to the teaching of Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul about it in the New Testament.

The book consists of two parts: *Part One — Jesus Faces Death*: Jesus Faces Death in Others; Jesus Before Death; Jesus Faces Imminent Death; Jesus on the Cross; *Part Two — Paul Faces*

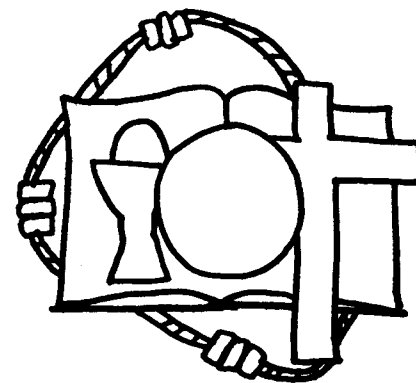
*Death*: Paul Faces Jesus on the Cross; Death, Where's Your Victory; Suffering and Hope; Paul Faces Death. In both parts L-D addresses the topic of our death as an aspect of the death of Jesus. As exegete he strives to understand the texts of the evangelists and those of Paul which deal with this topic. In so doing the author wishes to correct what are in his opinion the distorted and even deformed notions about the death of Jesus and our own.

With regard to this attempt at correction, L-D writes, "... the terminology in use to describe the effectiveness of Jesus Christ's life and death often is conditioned by erroneous understandings of the Scriptural text, and this begets further defective descriptions of the mystery. There is then a felt need to re-discover the meaning of the words and figures [like "sacrifice", "exploitation," "shedding of blood," "merit," "satisfaction," "substitution," "justification," "reconciliation," "transformation," etc.] employed in the New Testament, a task entrusted to the exegete first of all" (p. xxvi).

Both scholars and non-scholars alike can find something worthwhile in this book. Scholars will be challenged to assess for themselves this exegete's critical examination of the Synoptic and Johannine texts concerning the death of Jesus in which he distinguishes between Jesus' understanding of death in others and His own death from that of the evangelists' tradition or the evangelists' own understanding of it. Non-scholars will be exposed to the writing of a pastor who witnesses to the belief that life is not reducible to material existence, but has its origin and goal in God Himself. In the light of this the author avers that a Christian should be

unafraid of death since the ultimate power of death has been vanquished in and through Jesus' own death and resurrection.

At the conclusion of his introduction L-O writes, "... Whoever admits that God is present and alive will surely be able to grasp with greater serenity the mystery of that death to which we are all invited, a mystery that perdures, but nevertheless enlightens our present life" (p. xxxiii). This book is certainly worth picking up. Death faces us all sooner or later. To understand it more clearly from a biblical perspective is worth the time one spends carefully reading this book.



## Shorter Notices

FR. JULIAN A. DAVIES, O.F.M.

**The Healers.** By Robert Baldwin. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1986. Pp. 156. Paper, \$4.95.

This easy-to-read book is divided into three parts. Part One covers the period to 400, beginning with an account of the healing ministry of Jesus, and that of the apostles, up to Martin of Tours. Part Two treats of healing through relics, Sacraments, and Shrines from the 5th century to the recent past. Part three treats of Catholic Healers of the Recent Past — Brother Andre, Father Solanus Casey, Capuchin, and Padre Pio. A concluding chapter mentions the current healers like Fathers DiOrio and McDonough. I learned most from the book in the chapters on St. Francis, whose healing ministry tends to get obscured among his own, and St. Catherine of Siena. It was interesting to me to read too that Augustine of Hippo came to appreciate this ministry later in life, after originally downplaying it. I recommend the book to anyone seeking a background to healing as it has occurred in the Catholic tradition.

**The Catholic Classics.** By Dinesh D'Souza. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1986.

This book comes with an impressive array of recommendations, and most of them are deserved. The author introduces and summarizes ten pieces of writing in the Catholic tradition that have become "classic". The ten writers are: Augustine, Boethius, Bede, Aquinas, Dante, Thomas A Kempis, Pascal, Newman, Chesterton, and Merton. I found the summaries of *The Inferno*, *Consolations of Philosophy*, and the *Summa Theologica* most enlightening — though I regret that the author repeats the old calumny that Franciscans despised reason, and overdramatizes the split between Bonaventure and Aquinas. I found the presentations of Bede, Pascal, and Newman least interesting. My suggestion is to pick and choose which pieces you want to read, and read the essays one at a time.

## Books Received

- Angelica**, Mother M. with Christine Allison. *Mother Angelica's Answers Not Promises*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. Pp. x-275. Cloth, \$13.95
- Bergant, Dianne**, CSA. *The World is a Prayerful Place*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987. Pp. 132. Paper, \$8.95.
- Byrnes, Thomas**. *My Angel's Name is Fred. Tales of Growing Up Catholic*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. Pp. x-257. Cloth, \$13.95

- Davis, Charles. *What is Living, What is Dead in Christianity Today?* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. Pp. 131, including Index. Cloth, \$16.95.
- Doohan, Leonard. *The Laity. A Bibliography. Theological and Biblical Resources*, Vol. 3. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987. Pp. 169, including Index of Names. Paper, \$8.95.
- Droel, William L. and Pierce, Gregory F. Augustine. *Confident and Competent. A Challenge for the Lay Church*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987. Pp. 110 with Selected Bibliography. Paper, \$3.95
- Falardeau, Ernest, S.S.S. *One Bread and Cup. Source of Communication. Theology and Life Series* 19. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987. Pp. 134, including Index and Bibliography. Paper, \$8.95.
- Ghezzi, Bert. *Becoming More Like Jesus. Growth in the Spirit*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1987. Pp. 156. Paper, \$5.95.
- Gust, Dodie. *As I Take Christ. Daily Prayer and Reflection with Paul*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987. Pp. 135, including Bibliography. Paper, \$4.95.

*Regis Duffy, O.F.M. —*

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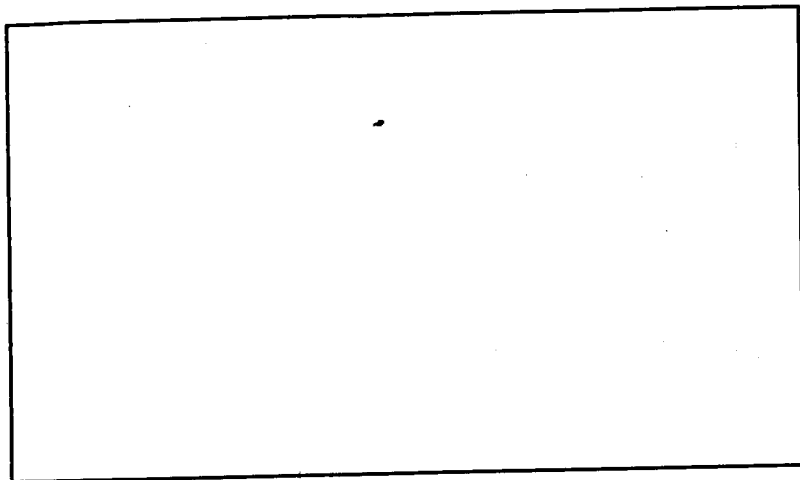
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This paperback collection has eleven articles on St. Francis by Paul Sabatier, Pius XI, David Knowles, Yves Congar, and others. Three of the articles are new translations; most are difficult to locate.

*The Knight-Errant of Assisi*. By Hilarin Felder, Capuchin. Reprint. \$7.00 plus postage.

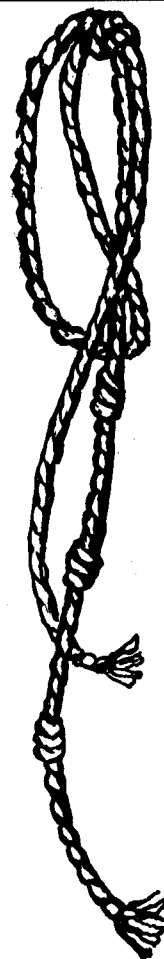
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# The CORD

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# The CORD

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### Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

#### I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions  
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo  
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun  
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony  
EpCler: Letter to Clerics<sup>1</sup>  
EpCust: Letter to Superiors<sup>1</sup>  
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful<sup>1</sup>  
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo  
EpMin: Letter to a Minister  
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order  
EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People  
ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God  
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father  
FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221  
LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God  
LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours  
OffPass: Office of the Passion  
OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix  
RegB: Rule of 1223  
RegNB: Rule of 1221  
RegEr: Rule for Hermits  
SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady  
SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues  
Test: Testament of St. Francis  
UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare  
VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy  
<sup>1</sup>I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

#### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis  
2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis  
3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles  
CL: Legend of Saint Clare  
CP: Process of Saint Clare  
Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis

LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis  
LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis  
LP: Legend of Perugia  
L3S: Legend of the Three Companions  
SC: Sacrum commercium  
SP: Mirror of Perfection

Omnibus: Marion A. Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

AB: Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

## A REFLECTION:

### Biblical Fidelity in the Life of Saint Francis and of Saint Clare

DAVID TEMPLE, O.F.M.

Fidelity or faithfulness is one of the constant themes in the word of God. At its highest point it is an attribute of God. God is faithful to his word. He is faithful to the covenant. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament ring with the record of God's fidelity.

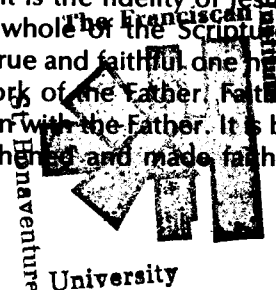
This biblical element is ever-present in the life of St. Francis and in the spiritual response of St. Clare. Francis before his conversion went by fits and starts. But, once he had set himself toward God, he was careful to hold with great fidelity to the course. Clare is constantly calling for fidelity in herself and in her Sisters.

The Old Testament witnesses to God's fidelity and it calls man to be faithful. God is the "rock". He stands firm and faithful in fulfilling his promises. He does not go back on his plan. He does not retract his word. He remains as faithful and as unchanged as the heavens.

The divine fidelity is praised in the psalms. It is acclaimed in the canticles and it is declared by the prophets. The word of God repeatedly calls upon man to imitate the fidelity of God.

Saint Francis and Saint Clare responded with a kind of biblical fidelity to the grace and gift of vocation. Throughout his whole life as a Friar Minor Francis was reminding and urging himself to be completely faithful to the fullness of the call. Both Saint Francis and Saint Clare in their Rules call for a profession that is directed toward observing the Rule faithfully. Likewise in both Rules there is a call to labor *faithfully* and devoutly.

The high point of the New Testament is the fidelity of Jesus. He is the faithful Servant. He fulfills the whole of the Scripture. He keeps all the promises of God. As the true and faithful one he gives himself completely to carry out the work of the Father. Faithful to his mission he leads men to communion with the Father. It is by the fidelity of Christ that men are strengthened and made faithful to their vocation.



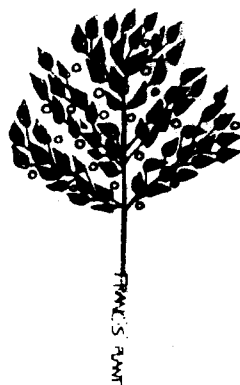
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In the Franciscan application of the biblical ideal of fidelity faithfulness must be shown in external deeds which are the proof of the interior purpose. But even more in the Franciscan vision is the call to cradle fidelity in the heart so that from this deep source it may inform every thought and deed of the person. Fidelity must be in the inner intent. It must give the direction to the purpose. It is to give the true bent to the desire.

Because of the deep roots of fidelity in St. Francis the brothers could in a certain manner make out what he would do in a situation. Yet in some instances they were taken completely by surprise because the fidelity of Francis went beyond their calculation as faithfulness was expressed in a new manner.

Four Popes had experience of the fidelity of St. Clare. The biblical ideal of faithfulness was well known to them. But they had a demonstration from Saint Clare of fidelity to poverty which was beyond anything they had ever seen.

In the bible fidelity is not a passive element. On the contrary it is a highly positive factor. In Franciscan spirituality likewise fidelity is active. It is dynamic. It moves forward. It pursues aims. It achieves goals. The faithful person in the bible is not standing still. He is going on. She is moving forward.



## Clare of Assisi: An Enabling Leader

MADGE KARECKI, S.S.J.-T.O.S.F.

SINCE VATICAN II almost every religious congregation has experienced at least some changes in their governmental structure and the way authority and obedience are lived out within those structures. Leaders and members alike struggle to find a model of governance which will allow for both enabling leadership and responsible obedience. Since the common experience of the exercise of authority prior to Vatican II was authoritarian, coming to a new model of leadership has not been easy.

St. Clare of Assisi (1194 - 1253) who was a strong minded medieval woman is someone whose life provides us with some helpful insights into what it takes to be an enabling leader. She was the leader of the community at San Damiano from 1216 until her death in 1253.

The testimonies found in Clare's cause for canonization<sup>1</sup> provide us with eye-witness accounts of her style of leadership which emerges as clearly what we would name enabling. The document of Clare's canonization process is, I think, one of the most neglected, but one of the richest sources we have for gaining information about her life and her manner of governance.

The process for her canonization was begun only two months after her death. On October 18, 1253, Pope Innocent IV charged Bishop Bartolomeo of Spoleto with promoting the cause for Clare's canonization. The investigative team was made up of members of the secular clergy and the Friars Minor. Among the friars were Leo and Angelo, two of Clare's most trusted friends, and Marco, the chaplain of the monastery of San Damiano. After

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*Sister Madge Karecki, S.S.J. - T.O.S.F., a graduate of the Franciscan Institute and a Consulting Editor of this Review, is engaged in the ministry of teaching and spiritual direction in Port Shepstone, South Africa.*

a month of preliminary preparations the investigation began. In all, twenty persons were questioned about Clare's character, spirituality and daily life. Each of the people interviewed knew Clare for at least seven years and many of them knew her since she was a child. Fifteen of them were nuns who lived with her and rubbed shoulders with her daily. They saw her in a variety of situations in which she related to various people.

Historically the testimonies are of significant value because they were given soon after Clare's death. The passage of time neither dulled nor sweetened the memory of Clare for the witnesses. They simply reported their experiences of her to the investigators.

What emerges from these testimonies is a portrait of what we might call today an enabling leader. In evaluating the testimonies one has to consider medieval values, language and manner of speaking. Once these are taken into consideration, Clare becomes a clear example of someone who had learned that the call to leadership was a means to enflesh Jesus' mission "to serve and not be served."

The accounts given by the witnesses confirm Clare's noble status and the wealth of her family. They also show that from her youth she was a lively, generous and compassionate person. From her mother she had learned the importance of prayer. Her spirit of prayer grew throughout her life and manifested itself in fidelity to her Beloved through loving contemplation. All of those she lived with testified to her deep love of the Word of God and her desire to hear good homilies. They also spoke of her spiritual gifts: reading hearts, prophesying, healing as well as the gift of tears.

None of her gifts come out as strongly though as her ability to serve others without making them dependent upon her. As one reads the testimonies, it becomes obvious that this kind of service was the fruit of her love, a love that was refined and sharpened through the self-discipline of fasting and penance. Clare did not have a morbid pre-occupation with ascetical practices, but rather saw them as a means for purifying her love of others. Clare artfully blended firmness of conviction with flexibility and openness to others. Perhaps it was her manner of leadership which caused none of the witnesses to remark about her administrative skills, but all of them comment on her ability to stir in them a greater love of Jesus.

A careful study of the testimonies reveals Clare's way of relating to people. She seems to have had a gift for friendship and a way of bringing out the best in others. The sixth witness to be questioned was Sister Cecilia, daughter of Messer Gualtieri of Spello. She lived with Clare for

thirty-nine years. She summed up Clare's role among the sisters and her ability to call them beyond themselves by her example:

God had elected the Lady Clare to be the Mother and principal Abbess of the Order in order that her example should confirm the other sisters of all the monasteries of the Order in their observance of this holy religion and that she would watch over the flock.<sup>2</sup>

Further, Sr. Cecilia reported that Clare was diligent in giving exhortations to the sisters, caring for them, showing compassion toward the sick, and being of service to them.

Clare related to the sisters very lovingly and as Sr. Cecilia has said, her example confirmed them in their way of life. Her leadership was indeed enabling. It enabled people to be themselves in her presence, and yet it inspired growth in them.

From what we know of Clare's family, education and personality, she could have easily adopted an authoritarian style of leadership; which was characteristic of the abbesses in monastic communities of the Middle Ages. Her strong and determined personality would have lent itself to an authoritarian mode of leadership, yet she chose another way to exercise her authority within the community of San Damiano. It was a radical departure from the then-current model of leadership. Hers was an example of servant leadership; a style of leadership which proved to be both administratively effective as well as enabling for the membership of the community. She made a prophetic decision not to accept either the cultural or the ecclesial model of leadership, but rather take the biblical model of leadership found in the person of Jesus.

Most of us who have been in religious life for a number of years have grown up with an authoritarian model of authority which produced a passive form of obedience. Due to this fact there are many members of religious communities who are still struggling to find a healthy and creative form of obedience appropriate to adult behavior.

Evelyn and James Whitehead point out that an authoritarian form of leadership is a kind of paternalism. In their book *Seasons of Strength* they call paternalism "a false love." Further, they go on to say that "Where genuine love wants the continued growth of the beloved, paternalism wants continued dependence."<sup>3</sup> We see nothing of this in Clare who confirms others in their pursuit of the Gospel and their desire to grow in love. All of the witnesses spoke of her great respect for the sisters in the community and also those who came to the monastery to seek her guidance. She had no need to keep people dependent on her; it was only the larger good of the community which prompted her to act.

The paternalistic leader on the other hand does not set to strengthen

the power of the group, but seeks to substitute for it. If the group shows any sign of independent power the paternalistic leader interprets it as a sign of ingratitude. If the leader has a strong need to exercise control he or she may see it as betrayal.

The paternalistic view of leadership, the Whiteheads point out, comes from the illusion that power is a personal possession. This attitude is characterized by an "I have it. You don't" feeling.<sup>4</sup>

Paternalism affects both the leader and the group. In this mode of leadership those in authority become unaccountable to the membership. Such leaders do not allow or encourage members to question them about how the community is being governed. This leads to social and psychological distance. The leaders become unapproachable because they are viewed as the "ones who know what is best." Leadership then becomes a privileged class. The leaders become recipients of special privileges. The result is a double standard of behavior in the community.

The effects of paternalistic leadership can be crippling for life on some of the members. Under this kind of system passivity grows and there is a tendency to leave things up to those in authority because *they* are responsible. There is no mutuality in this model of leadership. There cannot be because it would be too threatening to both, those who are leaders and those who are members.

There is also a diminishment of creativity among the members. Since leaders are viewed as smarter, holier, wiser and better, being creative is not perceived as a responsibility belonging to each member. The usual attitude is one in which the general feeling is that if new or different ways of doing things are to come about then they should come from the leaders!

Once leaders are seen as belonging to a special class of people then the membership no longer see them as servants of the common good. Members begin to view leaders as people to be pleased or feared. This in turn inhibits the growth of honesty and bonds of trust among the members and leaders and among the members themselves.

The great danger which is often the result of this kind of exercise of authority and obedience is that the charism is obscured and the approach to life becomes legalistic. The members adopt a legalistic mentality because it is the only way to survive. Members concern themselves with what is allowed by the constitution or statutes or what is not. The charism is not given the attention due to it because it does not fit into legal categories.

Clare was clearly not a paternalistic leader. In chapter four of her Rule she instructs those who will serve the community as leaders to govern more by example than word of command so that they call forth an obedi-

ence of love from the sisters. Clare used her gifts of healing so that people could lead wholesome lives, teaching so that others could grow in maturity, serving so that others could experience God's love through her very person. Nowhere in the testimonies of the witnesses do we find any indication that she sought to make others grateful or indebted to her. She was about the work of liberation. She enabled people to be all they could be and were meant to be in Christ.

Clare saw herself as helped and enriched by her interaction with others. Mutuality was a vital part of her concept of authority and obedience. It is for this reason that she instructed future leaders in her community to be sure and consult the sisters about matters that have to do with their life together. The Abbess was not to act in isolation from the community in matters that affected all of the members. It was her firm conviction that the Spirit of God worked in every person and therefore consultation with others was a necessary outcome of this belief.<sup>5</sup>

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*It is clear that Clare's leadership brought out the best in others and called them beyond themselves.*

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Among the sisters at San Damiano there was no need of competition nor was there fear of Clare and the authority which she exercised. All the sisters used their gifts for the good of the community. They were partners in creating the life they shared. This was not a question of equality in community, but a matter of respect for the different gifts active in each member. They were each responsible for promoting the common good. In such a community the leader's function was to help the community discern how their gifts could best be used in light of God's and their charism.

Clare knew that her authority was not something to be used in isolation from the rest of the community; nor was it to be used to gain privileges for herself. She simply let the grace of God, the power of Jesus work within her so that she could be of service to others. She had no need to hide her weaknesses or pretend that she was self-sufficient because the community was not openly her responsibility, but that of each member. She saw herself in relationship to the community not as a leader sitting on a pedestal above the rest, but one called to use her gifts for the

up-building of the community while calling the members to do likewise. From the testimonies for her canonization process it is clear that Clare's leadership brought out the best in others and called them beyond themselves.

Lady Bona de Guelfuccio of Assisi who lived with Clare and accompanied her when she went to visit Francis testified that:

The sanctity of Clare was so great that her heart was full of many things for which she could never find words because all that Clare ever did and said was a lesson to others.<sup>6</sup>

Lady Bona is describing, in a medieval way, what we today would call enabling leadership.

Clare made a radical departure from the paternalistic model of leadership that was characteristic of medieval times. Hers was an authority of service, one that she had learned from Jesus and one which she saw practiced by Francis. This example of service enabled others to respond to the light of Christ living within them. Clare never sought to stand in the spotlight by drawing attention to herself, but bore witness to the light of the Spirit in each of her sisters and in those whom she met at San Damiano so that together they might be co-workers for the Gospel.

As we seek a more biblical model for leadership within our communities we can benefit from Clare's example. Her style of leadership as witnessed to in the testimonies of her canonization process has three main qualities which would be helpful to us. It was

- 1) visionary — open to the Spirit of God at work in every person and calling upon each one to take greater steps in faith for the good of the Church and the world;
- 2) relational — exercised within the context of relationships which had been founded on bonds of trust;
- 3) accountable — was able to be questioned in the light of the Gospel and the charism of the community.

All of these qualities along with a heart filled with compassion made Clare an enabling rather than an authoritarian leader. She governed in such a way that the members of the community grew in freedom, responsibility and creativity. These gifts enabled them to spend themselves for the good of their brothers and sisters and to build the Kingdom of God. These gifts were used to renew the Church of the Middle Ages and are just as necessary for the renewal of religious life and of the whole Church today.

<sup>1</sup>The English text entitled "The Cause for Canonization" can be found in Appendix 4 in *St. Clare of Assisi* by Nesta de Robeck, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1980) 179-230.

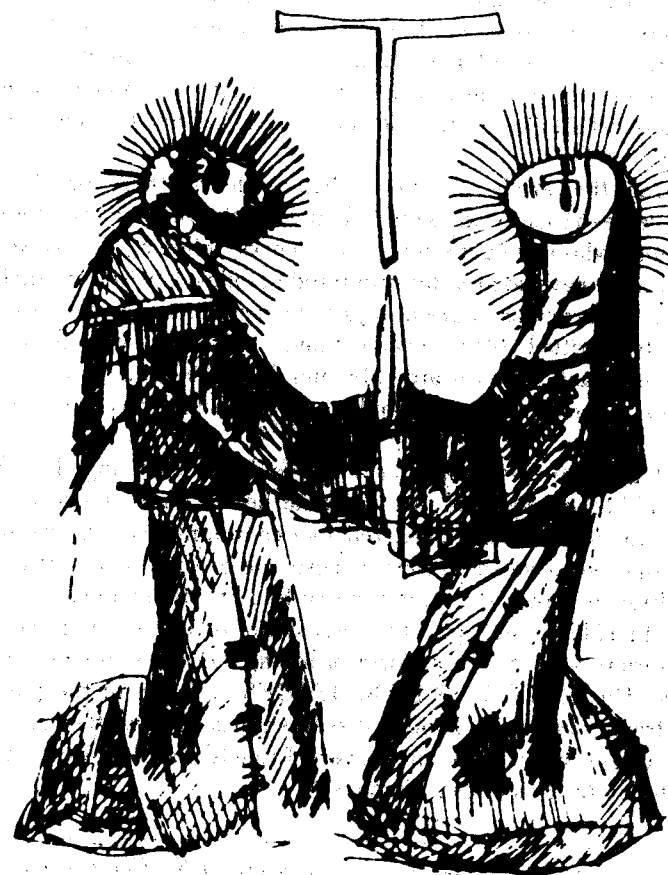
<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>3</sup>Whitehead, Evelyn and James D., *Seasons of Strength*, (New York: Image Books, 1986) 174.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>5</sup>*Rule of St. Clare*, Chapter IV. The text can be found in *Francis and Clare* by Regis J. Armstrong, OFM. Cap. and Ignatius C. Brady, OFM. (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) 216.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, de Robeck, 227.



## How Radical Was St. Clare?

SR. FRANCES ANN THOM, O.S.C.

I PUT St. Clare at the head of the list as being a radical for her time and I think St. Francis would agree with me. What he did was surely radical enough... following Christ even to the reception of the stigmata! But, Clare, a woman, wanting to follow Francis in his radical form of life was certainly the most absurd thing! It also follows that if she followed the radical, Francis, who followed the radical, Christ, she must certainly be a radical!

We know from the very beginning of religious life that there have been those who have been mainly attracted to living as solitaries and then there have been those who have gone into active works, following the Gospel example. But none have so literally attempted to follow Christ as Francis. And, women, in particular, were always held suspect if they desired to become deeply spiritual. Many women braved this criticism and loved the Lord intensely and were rewarded by him, but these were considered the exceptions... and it was usually only after death that this was recognized.

Christ had given the example of a two-fold way of living; Francis studied Christ's life and decided this was what he was to do. Once when he himself was in doubt he consulted two contemplatives, Clare and Sylvester to find out if he should just choose one or the other, but both agreed that Francis should continue the two-fold life style on his journey to the Lord. In 1217 Francis put this ideal synthesis into writing, which shows how seriously he took this form of life as the model for him and his followers. This RULE FOR HERMITAGES is short, to the point, flexible and freely adaptable. Though it seems it has been written for the friars of the First Order, since these were Francis' first followers, it is freely used today by Franciscan religious.

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*Sister Frances Ann Thom, O.S.C., of the Monastery of St. Clare in Lowell, Massachusetts, is a Consulting Editor of this Review.*

That Francis would commit such a rule to writing is evidence of the value it held for him and if it held value for him it must also have had the same value for Clare, his closest follower. However, it was much easier for Francis and his followers to implement this form of life than it was for Clare and her sisters. Francis considered the world his cloister; Clare had a very small world to wander in. Francis and his brothers could establish themselves in caves, live the RULE FOR HERMITAGES with the roles of mothers and sons without any difficulty since the mothers could go into the town and get food or do some preaching as the providers for others. Clare and her sisters had to depend upon the generosity of the friars or noble persons to bring them their sustenance. Later Clare does have sisters who do go outside to the city to procure things for the others, but it is not the same freedom enjoyed by the friars. Francis and Clare both had the spirit of dependency upon the nobility of others as God's providence for them and in this they were indeed following the example of Christ.

Even though Clare and her sisters did not enjoy the freedom of movement, this did not deter Clare from formulating a similar life style within the walls of the cloister. The two-fold aspect of action and contemplation was essential for her, with the emphasis on contemplation. Just as Francis' life evidences a pattern of a series of periods of deep contemplation and intense action, so, Clare, daily, held commune with Christ through activity and contemplation. While Francis and his followers could go off to a mountain or an island to be alone and pray, after Christ's example, Clare had to find a way to do this within her monastery. We are told that she did have a secret place where she prayed.

Francis' RULE FOR HERMITAGES limits the number of members to three or four as a safeguard for poverty and for community. The fewer persons, the fewer opinions and less time needed for discussion, the more smoothly the life style could function. Clare did not keep the number of persons to a few, but accepted those who came as a gift from God; however, her rule, which was not written and accepted until just before her death, presents the monastery as a place of deep prayer and a place of efficacious work. Clare admonishes her sisters to respect and utilize both aspects.

In the RULE FOR HERMITAGES the friars are all equal and from time to time they reverse roles. In the monastery Clare held equality in a high place emphasizing in her own way that no one had priority over the spirit and each opinion should be heard. She gave the example by praying and working alongside any of her sisters. While her role was mainly that of mother, there were the sisters appointed to do outside tasks who must have constituted the mother role for the sake of the praying community. Since we do not have any real information regarding these

outside sisters except that Clare washed their feet when they returned, it is possible that this was an assigned task and a rotating role for all.

Clare had to do in one area, in a rather large community what Francis and his brothers could do in a large area with a small community. She had to accomplish a synthesis of action and contemplation within the limits of an enclosure while Francis and his brothers had the whole world to utilize for this synthesis. Did Clare accomplish this? Was she radical enough to believe that she had? Francis seemed to think so. It is evident from the fact that Francis began to stay away from San Damiano that he knew Clare was completely capable of handling her own affairs and from the evidence of Francis' followers that others went to her after Francis' death since she was his closest replica, that she must have captured the spirit and the life!

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ST. DOMINIC  
ADVENTURE TO THE CLARES OF ASSISI

CONTINUALLY  
CLEAVE  
TO GOD  
WHO IS  
OUR  
POSSESSION  
OF  
PERPETUAL  
VALUE

## The Knight

You had all the qualities  
to enter knighthood, to sit  
at the Round Table,  
grace the pages of a fable  
in De Troyes romances;  
it would have been easy  
for you to bow to ladies  
and behave gracefully.

You might have been Lancelot,  
Percival or a Kay seated  
on a horse in splendid  
armour arrayed for famed  
deeds of knightly valour.

But no need for you to be named  
in any search for honour,  
quest for a Grail, possess  
a magic sword or handsome face:

Courtly love and all its grace  
was always with you,  
as any enamoured knight,  
you loved properly  
with higher chivalry  
in the Court of the Lady Poverty.

*William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O.*

# St. Clare

STRATFORD CALDECOTT

The town of Assisi has two centers: one on the Western side, one on the Eastern. (You might say, one on the masculine, one on the feminine.) The first is the Basilica of St. Francis; the second that of St. Clare. In each of them the physical body of their patron saint is present as an object of reverence and pilgrimage. But the church of Santa Chiara may give you a somewhat neglected impression — especially if you go there immediately after seeing the interior of San Francesco, every square inch of which seems to be decorated with brilliant frescoes. The walls of Santa Chiara are much barer, the altar enclosed and almost private. St. Clare, in death as in life, has had a knack of diverting attention from herself, while St. Francis has always attracted it. You can see St. Clare's blackened body downstairs in the crypt, and in a separate case her masses of curly golden hair; but although more of her is visible than of Francis, much less is known of her life. Francis turned outwards to the world, always in motion (though around a still centre), his life a series of spontaneously dramatic gestures. Meanwhile, Clare turned inward, to stillness, invisibility, and the privacy of her relationship with God.

Her religious life started, though, with a dramatic gesture. When the beautiful Clare ran away from home to join Francis' ragged band of followers, it caused as much of a scandal as when Francis had thrown off his clothes in the public square, some years before. Perhaps more of a scandal, because she was from one of the noblest families in town. (The kind of family Francis' father would have wanted him to marry into.) Clare escaped in the middle of the night, pursued by her brothers on horseback. By the time they found her, she had been welcomed by Francis in the woods by candlelight, her hair had been shorn, and she too was wearing rags. There would be no going back. Eventually, even her brothers realized that.

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*The author, a resident of Cambridge, Ma., has published an article on St. Francis in the English periodical Resurgence.*

There was no question, either, of a woman living the rough and dangerous life of a friar in those days. Clare herself did not necessarily want that. All she wanted was poverty, detachment from all worldly goods, complete dedication to God: the essence of Francis' preaching. So Francis found for her a temporary refuge with the Benedictines, and later an enclosure — a kind of nunnery — attached to the church of San Damiano (the church where Franciscanism really started). A whole group of women, some from her own family, including her mother and sister, wanted to live the enclosed life with her. Under her direction they became the first of the Poor Clares, the female branch of the Franciscan family, known as the Second Order.

## Lady Poverty

The relationship between Francis and Clare is a strange one, and very instructive. Obviously they loved each other, and if they had been less religious souls, that love would have found a more conventional expression. Francis was a romantic: chivalrous and charming, a troubadour, a questing knight. He must have felt drawn to her even more by the fact that she, like him, was on a Quest. Luckily, they were on the same Quest, and they knew it would eventually unite them more closely than a mere marriage in defiance of destiny. They lived in the higher reaches of Eros, as high above the loves of this world as the Himalayas are above the Cotswolds. Legend describes an occasion, much later in both their lives, when they shared an evening meal together. Farmers came running to put out a forest fire they had seen in the distance, to find only the two saints sitting in prayer, shrouded in light.

There is a less well-substantiated story in which we see the two of them parting in the snows of midwinter. Francis is about to go off on one of his long journeys after a brief visit with the Ladies of San Damiano. Clare, standing outside the walls of her convent, begs him to stay a while longer, but can only extract from him a promise that he will return. "When will that be?" she asks. "Oh, by the time those bare bushes are blossoming again." He starts to walk away, when suddenly he hears her call his name. She is standing in the snow with the bushes bursting into flower all around her.

Francis must have seen in Clare virtually the incarnation of "Lady Poverty." She was, in her own way, the purest and most perfect of his followers — or rather of those who joined him in following that paradoxical ideal. She was always fierce in defense of it, even when everyone else wanted to compromise. Her great victory came long after Francis' death, when she herself lay dying, and the final papal approval of the strict Rule

she had written for her Ladies was delivered into her hand. A previous Pope had not wanted to approve it, thinking it too harsh. But when Gregory IX had advised her to modify the strictures against personal possessions, she had only replied, acidly: "Holy Father, release me from my sins, but not from the vow to follow our Lord Jesus Christ."

Obedience was, of course, an essential element in the spirituality of both Francis and Clare. They understood the Gospel principle of overturning hierarchies by valuing the lowest, most submissive place over all. And they both recognized humility as a vital aspect of the detachment to be found in inner poverty. But obedience must always be given to God before it is given to God's designated representatives: in this case the Pope had overstepped his limits, as he later may have come to recognize.

The more normal relationship between Pope and Saint is illustrated by the following story. Clare's reputation for sanctity was so great that the Pope often visited her when he could. On one occasion, the tables had been set with loaves of bread, which Clare hoped the Holy Father would bless. But he asked her to perform the blessing in his place. She thought this very improper and declined, but he then commanded her to do it "under holy obedience," in order to overcome her modesty. When she made the sign of the Cross over the bread, "all of a sudden a very beautiful and clearly marked cross appeared on all the loaves." Obviously, this constituted a rather direct divine endorsement of holy obedience. Some of the loaves were reverently eaten, "and some were set aside as evidence of the miracle for the future." The Pope, seeing the miraculous crosses, gave thanks to God, blessed St. Clare, "took some of the bread and left."

### Nature and Sacrament

The "enclosure" of San Damiano, although not luxurious, was hardly closed off from the beauty of the world. There was a pretty walled garden, and there were fields all around, and even the homely buildings were beautiful in a way that formica and concrete can never be. Clare made sure that her Ladies were well aware of the wonders of nature all around them, and that they gave thanks to God for trees and flowers, caring for them as best they could.

She tended Francis there when he grew ill and began to go blind, and it may have been in her walled garden that he composed his Song of Brother Sun, praising the creatures of nature, "summarized" under the four Alchemical elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water. The song — the first recorded poem in vernacular Italian — is about God revealed and expressed by nature. It is about nature *in* God. It is Clare's vision as much as that of Francis, for it was drawn out of him by the power of eros

in the space between them, a space created by their celibate love. Some writers have traced the Renaissance to its source in that moment, a re-imagining of the world that would be taken further by those other followers of Francis, from Giotto and Dante to Christopher Columbus.

St. Clare stands with Francis at the crest of the Middle Ages. Before long, the civilisation of Christendom would begin to founder, unable to sustain its unifying faith. But the founders of Franciscanism still viewed the world through the eyes of faith, and no advancing darkness could stand against them. The statue of St. Clare outside San Damiano today shows her holding up what looks like a lamp. That would not be very surprising, since her name means "clarity" or "light". But what she is in fact holding is a "monstrance," designed to contain and display what Catholics call the Blessed Sacrament.

The origin of the image is an occasion when the Saracens were invading Italy, and advancing against the walls of Assisi. Clare led her Ladies out of their cloister, and stood unarmed between the invading army and the town. They held up the Sacrament, confident that the Body of Christ would protect them much more effectively than force of arms. Sure enough, whether from a sense of chivalry, or a fear of mad women, or the pressure of divine grace (or all three), the Saracens turned aside and spared the town.

It is a story of non-violent resistance. It also indicates the strength of Clare's faith in the Sacrament. And in this apparent superstition lies the clue to the Franciscan vision of wind and stars, forests and mountains, fire and snow, brought together in unity by the love of God. The dream of a universal Christendom, purged of the narrow ignorance and cruelty of the Middle Ages, lies dormant in the hearts of Catholics, like the dream of Camelot. What keeps the dream alive is the ineradicable persistence of the same faith, expressed in dogmas that unfold like leaves from a tree, or petals from a rose, generation after generation.

What Catholics believe today about the Sacrament is essentially what Clare believed about it: that when a priest completes the words of consecration over a piece of bread and a cup of wine (as Christ did at the Last Supper), symbolic truth turns into literal truth, by the power of God. With the words, "this is my body...", the bread which symbolically represents the body of Christ becomes present on the altar, using the sensory appearances of bread as a kind of disguise — the world's least obtrusive miracle. Communion would, in reality, be a form of cannibalism, except for two things. When we eat the body of Christ, it is not divided: like a hologram, the whole is present in each fragment, no matter how tiny. Second, in the process of receiving Communion, it is not we who digest

Christ, but he who digests us. It is we who are assimilated: into the sacramental body, which is also the Church.

The real presence of Christ in the Sacrament is, of course, a mystery of faith which dogma can only state, without trying to explain. Perhaps it can only be believed with divine help. It was a stumbling block when Christ taught it (see John 6), and it has remained one ever since. But it is the centre of a sacramental system that gives Christianity its cosmic dimension. Without it, there would have been no Song of Brother Sun. Echoing St. Paul's first letter to the Colossians, Francis writes: 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 is appeased and reconciled to God almighty." St. Clare did so. She saw with the eyes of faith, God revealed in the poverty of the Blessed Sacrament, and reflected from there throughout creation. In a special way, she became for us the saint of the eucharist.



## The Swallow and the Lark

Assisi heard the voice of Francis  
raised in joyful song;  
the sound of festive revelry  
echoed down the darkened streets  
and nightly beat the walls  
of Offreduccio's residence.

Clare, perhaps,  
her maiden sleep disturbed,  
wondered what it might portend  
when, peering through her shuttered windows,  
she felt an urge to add  
her soft soprano to  
his lilting tenor voice.

His change to gospel living,  
his preaching  
and suggesting —  
then Palm Sunday saw  
the urge become reality;  
and Clare, the gentle swallow,  
flew with the Lark of Umbria  
to sing the praise of God most High,  
before the Sun of Love divine.

Wondrous are the ways of God  
that brought two different worlds  
together  
in spiritual counterpoint:  
the brash and forward  
merchant's son,  
the maid demure and modest;  
the one that led  
and showed the way,  
the other that followed  
and lighted up his way.

*Luke M. Ciampi, O.F.M.*

## St. Clare of Assisi and a Look at Contemplative Motherhood

Barbara Ann Campbell, S.F.O.  
Gertrude Ann Heiser, S.F.O.

IT'S SO EASY to think of Clare of Assisi as a woman of her own time — the thirteenth century — and not look beyond to recognize that she is also a woman for today. For Franciscan women she will always be held in the highest esteem especially among religious women who sought to follow her in the Second order (of Poor Clares), as well as among the Third order religious in the active apostolates of Franciscanism. In this article, I should like to show that her relevance and her feminine theology can also speak to women who are mothers.

Clare wanted to follow her teacher and spiritual companion, Francis, in a way that was brand new in the history of developing religious orders of women. The fact that she was "enclosed," in order to be truly recognized as an authentic religious, in no way prevented her from becoming a shining light for Francis and the brothers, as well as her own Poor Ladies at San Damiano. Rather, it focused her on the full development of her order and on recognizing their life, as women followers of Francis. Though she followed Francis' spirit, indeed she and her sisters became the energizing principle of the early Franciscan movement, not only a light as a beacon, but a light on the path of sanctity for Francis and the friars by her fidelity to prayer and her fidelity to love.

Clare heard the clarion call to poverty and recognized poverty as a way of being in the Church. She translated poverty into a total manner of being as a woman, and in her grasp of the meaning of poverty, her faithfulness in seeking to discover and reveal the depths of the virtues of poverty, she uncovered the richness of Christ's Words in the Beatitudes, and in living the full Gospel message. Poverty as a "way of being," allows

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*Barbara Ann Campbell is the mother of six children, including one fostered special child. Gertrude Ann Heiser, mother and grandmother, also has six children. Both women, with their husbands and a diocesan priest, are founders of a Secular Franciscan covenanted community in Huntington Station on Long Island, N.Y.*

one to let go of so many self-orientations that are life's acquired baggage — possessions that are both temporal as well as spiritual. In that letting go, that surrender, one gradually becomes able to receive the fullness of Christ's goodness and holiness. Poverty as a way of being allows us to become free of the obstacles to receiving God's love. The more we are able to be empty of self, the more we are able to be filled with the power of the Spirit which is love. It is this love which is truly the energizing reality that nourishes, sustains and nurtures growth and development. Love expresses itself in thought, word, action, prayer and presence, according to the need. Love speaks to the heart of availability and hospitality; of generous listening, of compassion, mercy and forgiveness; of joy and gentleness. All of these are traits of motherhood.

When Clare spoke of Motherhood to her sisters, she spoke of a spiritual reality wherein her companions were to receive the Word of God (the Sperma) into their hearts, where the Spirit would facilitate the Word to become impregnated and germinate, so as to bring the Lord to birth into the lives of others. They were to be Mothers of the Lord for others. Clare's entire way of perceiving her call to follow Francis is fully feminine and always maternal. She patterned her call after Mary, whose motherhood was human and divine, who encompasses the meaning of disciple in the fullest manner, the prototype of the Church itself, and the example for individual men and women to emulate. Mary as mother, became the Essence of Poverty at the foot of the Cross; her hopes and dreams dashed — Her innocent Son a condemned criminal.

Clare knew that the call to radical poverty was Jesus' invitation to her to be espoused to Him Who had emptied Himself of everything (of divine glory) to lovingly embrace humanity in its brokenness, in order to cherish mankind and breath new life into the world once again. She wanted to reflect the poor Christ, her Bridegroom, to be a mirror of the redeeming love of God, and in so doing, be enabled to receive Him into her deepest being to become mother of the Lord.

If Clare taught and acted in the capacity of mother and showed her companions how to develop their lives as Mothers spiritually, it is really not hard to recognize that we as natural Mothers have a call that is graced by the Sacrament of marriage. Clare saw poverty as a way of being and we can also say that her way of being is truly our poverty of motherhood.

If we are truly to be mother, bringing a child to birth is only the first phase. Mothering grows and develops from pregnancy, through delivery and is usually a serious commitment for the next 20 years.

How does this relate to the poverty of Clare as a way of being? From the very beginning, from the moment of decision to have a child, the

process of self-emptying begins, and will continue throughout one's life as mother, if we accept the invitation God offers us as mothers. As a pregnant mother, little by little the "fullness of life" is more and more in evidence as is the life of another. Our attention is focused on the other still within. Pregnant with God's gift of life, we rejoice in new ways deep within our being. Self-emptying occurs dramatically at the birth of the other.

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*Life with a new infant is in the enclosure of the home where the opportunity of becoming a contemplative mother first presents itself.*

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Life with a new infant is in the enclosure of the home where the opportunity of becoming a contemplative mother first presents itself. The gift of a child is received *spiritually* when we are poor in spirit — simple, open, gracious, thankful and loving. Our total life as mother, which is not only a natural function but a Sacramental order, is a call to be always in motion towards God by the *being* of Mother. (This is likewise true for the father but I am primarily concerned with the vocation of motherhood.) In every vocation we are called by God to holiness, and in the Sacrament of marriage and family this call is so evident if we but look at the daily and endless varieties of opportunity built into the very fabric of daily family life. Opportunities to grow out of self-centeredness towards other-centeredness, and ultimately to The Other who is God.

The "poverty of motherhood" begins when we let go of our first self-centered image as a young woman and graciously become a person whose primary focus is now outside of her own self. We learn to let go of little things that heretofore were not even noticed, like sleeping through the night, and the new demands of a small creature totally dependent upon our goodness and caring. His/her own schedule of needs for nourishment, drink, dryness, and cleanliness, or just the physical warmth of a close body, are all things that spell love. Do we not, in the physical and natural order, allow self-emptying for a greater purpose? That of bringing to birth and nurturing for growth and development, is that which is now born of us. Do we not experience the responsibility and joy becoming a woman for others as truly the development of our maternal heart?

The call to motherhood is an invitation to embrace the Cross of Jesus, where little by little our ego is crucified with Christ through the little crucifixions of life's experiences, and where we can become poor or empty as the Crucified Christ and thereby be flooded with Himself. Clare responded to this invitation after the manner of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary responded to the invitation to motherhood and started on a long journey of faith. The Scripture tells us that after the confounding news at the Angel's announcement to Mary that she was to bear a son, and she consented by her "Fiat," "the angel left her." What began in illumination was lived out in the darkness of faith — poverty indeed. And in the end, her journey of faith led her to the road to Calvary and the foot of the Cross, where she not only embraced the poverty of motherhood but poverty was her very being. Surely she could look on her Son in confusion as well as faith, and say what he had said the night before — "This is my body which is given for you, and this is my blood which is shed for you." A Mother's experience indeed!

Clare also saw motherhood and priesthood as united intimately for her sisters. And if we see our own motherhood as a privilege in the order of grace through the Sacrament of Marriage, we too can recognize our call to holiness is also to share intimately in the sacrificial nature of the priesthood as intercessor. Parents grow into the vulnerability of loving, of giving of themselves daily for the benefit of their children, and gradually, from the home, to embrace all of God's people. It is really very difficult for a mother to remain in what could be a prison of her own little ego-centricity, for she is called to relinquish self-oriented things to become an other-oriented person. To love as mother is to share the Cross of Jesus in his priesthood.

This, however, puts no stamp of approval on mothering that squashes the real physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual needs of a woman, or her need and right to recreation, mental stimulation and pursuit of what will make her the most whole person, therefore a whole woman, wife and mother. Self-made mother-martyrs who are at the demanding whims of one's family is nonsense, and using one's head in the service of the heart, will readily distinguish the difference between whim and legitimate need. (A mother may allow herself to be manipulated at times just to test a situation, but she should know when manipulative measures are being used, and respond in whatever way she intuitively feels to be best in that situation.) Motherhood and increasing intuition are hand in glove companions. The great gift of intuition is one that needs to be regarded more seriously by both men and women. It seems to be more fully developed in women and seems also that in the vocation of contemplative Mother-

hood, it might have a broader base than we yet understand. I believe that long before the words contemplative mother was ever heard, the reality not only existed in many mothers lives, but was already blooming. Contemplative and mother are not mutually exclusive, but rather a call to recognize and integrate what may already have been kindled in the heart by the Spirit. By its nature motherhood tends towards what is contemplative.

Clare of Assisi herself was an insightful woman ahead of her times in many ways, not only in her concept of wanting to live as Francis did, but also in her psychological comprehension of each person, each one's unique dignity and personal freedom, which was emphasized in her Rule and her letters. I believe it is she today who is interceding for mothers of our age to look into the gift of motherhood on a new and deeper level, and see that we too, in our very ordinary life as mothers in a home, are likewise called to a holiness reflective of Clare who was called "the footprint of Mary." We live in the midst of the secular world, but many can rightfully call home a true place of enclosure — a place where the contemplative dimension of life can be developed, whether we are tripping over blocks and trucks, dolls, and teddy bears, or later, sports equipment, musical instruments, books, sneakers, and sweats. "Home" is truly the spiritual "house of self-knowledge" where we live in the absolute poverty of being before our selves and our families, and if, per chance we have overlooked a fault, weakness or outright sin, we can be absolutely guaranteed, it will be reflected in one of the children in living color. Self-deception is practically impossible unless we wear dark glasses all the time. This is truly the growing "poverty of motherhood!"

And isn't the painful process of self-knowledge, one of God's great gifts, that we can come to see, ever so clearly, the obstacles, the barriers to poverty of spirit and therefore the barriers to keeping back the flood of God's great love into our hearts?

Clare, of course, wanted the privilege of poverty in every way, even choosing dependence on God through the goodness and generosity of the friars for daily sustenance. I must say, even as a Franciscan mother, I did not enthusiastically *seek* the privilege of poverty (and at times the "privilege" part eludes me!) yet a family of active youngsters who eat like it's imminently going out of style, wear jeans designed for long wear and sneakers designed for short wear, make actual poverty a very tangible reality. Our children don't know anything about fasting. I've hoped they'd be down to 7 or 8 meals a day for years, and even though they've grown into people (i. e. post-adolescence) any number of them will still have "toast on a stick" as an appetizer, filler, or a post-dessert (if we have it)

conclusion. Working to support these habits is our "privilege of poverty" and our dependence on God who so generously provides the things He knows we need. Poverty is not destitution, nor should it be, but indeed it is a privileged way of living so as to have the sleep brushed from our eyes, that we may become consciously aware of the poor and our oneness with them. It can move us to become aware of the social ills of our day and do what is in our power to do, and to create a climate of concern in our homes and among our children, and take part in actively trying to establish justice for the voiceless poor of our society, the unborn, elderly, disenfranchised politically and all marginalized groups — all of whom are our brothers and sisters. From poverty as a way of being can come a great energizing capacity for compassion and care and service. From poverty as a way of being for mothers can come the enlargement of the maternal heart that eventually becomes a grace of universal motherhood. The great poverty of motherhood is God's gift to a woman, for it speaks of real truths as we make our spiritual journey with God, and energizes us to embrace God's people everywhere in love and mercy, reflective of the Motherhood of God.

The spiritual journey is for every man or woman and is tailor-made to their vocation. This is not the age to think that holiness is for the few. It is a universal call to be lived in the secular sphere, and we who are mothers are given ways unique to our vocations in the world. As Franciscan mothers, it is a joy to recognize in Clare, who fully acknowledged her call as a woman, that we have an eminent model to behold in our very ordinary lives as mothers within the enclosure of the home. We are offered a radical poverty of motherhood as our own way of being in the Church, which the Lord should then be able to use as an energizing power of love within the family and in the marketplace. We can be encouraged to re-create our homes to reflect this self-emptying poverty and motherhood by making them as inns of prayer and charity, simple and gracious, open to those whom God puts before us, consciously orienting the family towards seeing the Poor Christ in the poor and in all men and women. It may not be our vocation to imitate Clare's way of life, but to become Franciscan women and mothers as faithful as she was to God's unique call to us in our motherhood.

May we walk in the way of the Gospel as did Francis and Clare and like them, follow in the footprints of Christ and His Most Holy Mother. Let us recall the words of Clare, the most perfect disciple of Francis, and like our poor mother embrace the "Poor Christ."

What a vocation we share!

## Our Mother Clare : A Reflection

Fr. LUKE M. CIAMPI, O.F.M.

IN RECITING our Franciscan Crown, it is customary to round off the seven decades of our Lady's Joys by adding two Hail Marys to the seventy already prayed. This practice commemorates and honors the seventy-two years the Mother of God is believed to have lived on earth before being assumed into heaven. For our purpose we need not go into the historicity behind the belief.

What we do know with certainty is that Mary lived on for several years after the death of Jesus, that she dwelt for a time apparently in Ephesus and that she was cared for by the Beloved Disciple, to whom her dying Son on the Cross had entrusted her and in whose person she had been assigned the care of all humanity. The other Apostles also cherished her and must have gone to her periodically for encouragement and direction. Who, after all, better than Mary was qualified to reflect on and understand what had been started by her Son, the Christ God gave to the world through her faithful and obedient co-operation?

In other words, like a mother hen, she took His infant Church under her maternal wing and became, indeed, its guiding "Star of the Sea" and "Beacon in distress" along the Christian way (from Evening Prayer Hymn, Feast of the Annunciation). The words of Isaiah (66:10-14), spoken of the heavenly Jerusalem, can well apply to Mary: "Oh, that you may suck fully of the milk of her comfort... nurse with delight at her abundant breasts... (be) carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap; as a mother comforts her son..."

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*Fr. Luke is a member of the Immaculate Conception Province. Currently he is engaged in parochial ministry at St. Catherine of Siena Church, Burlingame, California.*

With that thought before us, may we not suggest a parallel for us in that daughter of Faverone di Offreduccio and his wife Ortolana, Clare of Assisi, who was born in 1194, some thirteen years after Francis, and lived on for several years after his death? Mary did not create Christianity, but she assisted in its promotion. Clare did not give birth to the Franciscan dream and message, but she nurtured it. When the Seraphic Family tended to stray occasionally from the thinking of its Founder, she was the one who held fast to his initial ideals, both for herself and her sisters and for the brothers who looked to her for help. Just as Francis had bidden his friars to hold Clare and the Poor ladies of San Damiano in high esteem and fraternal care, so Clare asked her daughters to remain always attached to the sons of St. Francis. If Francis merited the designation "Alter Christus" for us, surely Clare deserves to be called our own Franciscan "Altera Mater."

How much advice and direction the friars of her day may have sought from Clare, we do not know, but we do know how Francis leaned on her for counsel on at least one important occasion. It was early in his "public life", after he had gathered his first companions about him and had established the Poor ladies in their own monastery. Torn by doubt as to whether he should give himself up entirely to the spiritual delights of solitude and contemplation or go forth to preach, Francis wished to do what would best please the Lord. Both activities appealed to him, the first perhaps more than the second.

He asked Brother Masseo to go to sister Clare and "tell her on my behalf to pray devoutly to God with one of her purer and more spiritual companions, that He may deign to show me what is best: either that I preach sometimes or that I devote myself only to prayer" ("Little Flowers", 16, in *St. Francis of Assisi, Omnibus of Sources*, p. 1334).

As bidden by Francis, Masseo went first to Brother Sylvester, and then to Sister Clare. Sylvester received God's answer in prayer, and Clare confirmed that both she and her companion had gotten the same answer: "The Lord says you are to tell Brother Francis this: that God has not called him to this state only on his own account, but that he may reap a harvest of souls and that many may be saved through him." Clare's advice to Francis, in effect, was that he should take the fruits of his contemplative prayer life out into the marketplaces and there witness Christ for the benefit of all his brothers and sisters in the Lord; while she and her companions would, in their retreat of solitude and contemplation, furnish the vital launching pad from which he and his brothers could derive additional thrust for their endeavors in the fields ripened for harvest.

In his last will for the Poor Clares, written not long before his death,

Francis stated: "I, little Brother Francis, want to live according to the life and poverty of our most high Lord Jesus Christ and of His most holy Mother... And I beg you, my Ladies, and I exhort you to love always this most holy life and poverty. Keep close watch over yourselves so that you never abandon it through the teaching or advice of anyone". This was Francis' injunction to Clare that the initial dream should never fade from their midst.

In her own Testament, Clare makes constant references to what she and her daughters owe Francis and the devotion they should have to keeping his ideals always alive. She begins her Testament with recalling that among the many benefits they have received from God the Father of mercies is their vocation, which Francis was instrumental in pointing out and leading them to. She mentions the solitude and care he had for them from the beginning and how he had obligated himself and his followers to take as diligent care of them as of their own friars.

Francis' dedication to poverty became Clare's obsession, one that prompted her stubbornly to refuse any pontifical approval of her Rule until two days before her death on August 11, 1253, when Pope Innocent IV finally capitulated to her demand that theirs be an absolute poverty which excluded even communal possession of property. It was perhaps the single most important Franciscan ideal she commanded her daughters to keep untarnished until the end of time.

She wrote: "Just as the Lord gave us our most holy father Francis to be our founder, sower and support in the service of Christ and in those things we promised to God and to that same father of ours, and just as long as he lived was (he) concerned with cultivating and making us grow into his "little plant," by word and deed; so I entrust my sisters, present and future, to the successor of our holy father Francis and to the friars of his order, that they may be of help in our making progress in goodness, in the service of God and, above all, in the better observance of most holy poverty."

Her Testament, more than any of her other writings, with the possible exception of Chapter VI of her Rule, shows her bond with Francis and his friars. Moreover, we read in the "Little Flowers" (15, *Omnibus*, p. 1332) that Francis often visited Clare and consoled her with "holy advice." We can be sure that the advice was reciprocated in the two-way communication of those occasions.

We are told, also, that Clare desired greatly to share a meal with Francis, a desire he appeared loath to satisfy, until his fellow friars strongly urged him to grant that favor "to your little spiritual plant." The two, with their companions, sat down together for the repast and engaged in

such heavenly conversation that all were enraptured — to such an extent that it seemed to the people of the vicinity "the Church of St. Mary of the Angels and the whole Place and the forest which was at that time around the Place were all aflame." The fire was not material and did not consume the place and its surroundings, but symbolized "the fire of divine love which was burning in the souls of those holy friars and nuns" (Op. cit., loc. cit.).

From the beginning, Clare was attracted to Francis by his preaching. Whether or not they had other contacts is neither clear nor important. Francis, however, did have occasion to urge her to break with the wordly life for which she was destined and devote herself to the cloistered life of complete dedication to Christ. On Palm Sunday, 1212, clad in all her finery, Clare attended the Liturgy in the cathedral of San Ruffino in Assisi. That night she slipped out of her family home and stole to the Portiuncula Chapel of St. Mary of the Angels, where Francis received her into her chosen life of poverty.

Here, certainly, are the makings of a love story! Was the attraction between Clare and Francis a romantic one? Well, yes, in a sense, but not with the biological overtones Zeffirelli appears to have implied in his "Brother Sun, Sister Moon" film. It was the love of one soul for another, mutually experienced, the love of a soul fired by Divine Love for another fired by the same Love. Clare came to Francis to requite that love in its fullest spiritual sense. Francis turned to Clare for refueling and keeping that love alive.

For that reason, whenever in Francis' time there was a move to depart from the base on which this love rested, it was Clare who held the line with her sisters and with the brothers who listened to her. We need only read her letters to her sisters and theirs to her to see her not as a love-struck teenager, swooning before the magnetism of Francis as contemporary teenagers often melt before a Bruce Springsteen. Rather, she was a strong-minded, rock-steady woman who loved and embraced his ideals of poverty, simplicity and fraternity and never permitted those ideals to lose their luster in her eyes.

Clare flourished in the shade of her spiritual idol, as Mary had flourished in the shade of her Divine Son. She called herself his "little plant," or "*pianticella*." As we can discern from her writings, her spiritual life, like his, was seeded in two extremes — absolute poverty and the richness of God's kingdom, a complete emptying of self and a complete possession by God. Those two extremes of absolute poverty and sublime wealth merged into one, with poverty always the underlying and cementing factor. Everything in her life, as in that of Francis, became for her a response to the Spirit, a wedding of *kenosis* and *metanoia*.

The whole spiritual experience of Francis was relived by Clare and her sisters to an ultimate degree in highest poverty. Clare was indeed a "Poor Lady" swallowed up in the secret that is God. The essence of her poverty was her naked, unfettered faith, her divesting herself of everything and of self before the Father. Passive always under the action of her Divine Spouse, her soul achieved the blessedness of being completely possessed by the God whose very essence is Love. The love infused into her being by the Spirit gave expression to the spirit of interpersonal love that made her a mother to her daughters and sisters as well as to her spiritual brothers, the friars. Yet, like Francis, she held herself to be the least among the little ones of Christ.

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*The whole spiritual experience of Francis was relived by Clare and her sisters to an ultimate degree in highest poverty.*

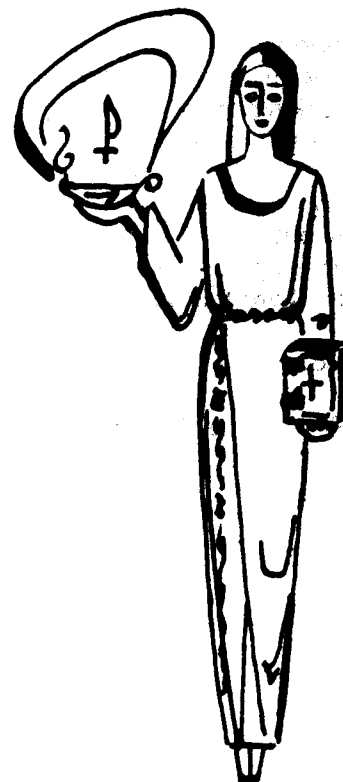
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Her model in so many ways, Francis was likewise her inspiration in other matters, such as devotion to priests, ministers of the Gospel and of the "most holy Body and Blood" of the most high Son of God, which they bring down to earth for others ("Testament of St. Francis," *Omnibus*, p. 67). The Eucharist and its adoration played a prominent role in her life, as it did in that of Francis and does today, still, in all her spiritual brothers and sisters. A favorite image of St. Clare is the one of her holding up the Sacred Host in its monstrance to repulse a hostile horde seeking to assail the Poor Clares' monastery.

Francis, we know, in addition to being greatly attached to the passion of Christ, was also especially devoted to the Birth of the Savior, as witness his emotional visit to Bethlehem and his re-enactment of the Nativity scene at Greccio on Christmas of 1223. No surprise, then, that Clare, too, was devoted to the Feast of the Nativity. One Christmas, we read in the "Little Flowers" (35, *Omnibus*, p. 1383), she lay abed sick deploring her inability to join her sisters in reciting Matins and receiving Communion during the Mass in the Church of San Damiano. She revealed to her sisters later, though, that she had been miraculously transported in spirit to the Church of St. Francis, where she participated in Matins, the Mass, Communion and the whole celebration of the Feast by the friars.

Clare's attachment to Francis, as we can judge from all of the above, lay at the root of her concern for and devotion to her own spiritual daughters and sisters. That concern and devotion, by extension, reached out in her life and activities to all the other units of the growing Franciscan Family. Today, while the friars of the First Order and the brothers and sisters of the Third Order, in both regular and secular fraternities, carry out their apostolic ministries in the various marketplaces of the world "according to places, times and climates," after the manner of Francis of Assisi, her concern for his Seraphic Family lives on in her present-day daughters and sisters.

Through the cloistered life of contemplative prayer led by the Poor Ladies, St. Clare, Mother Hen of the Franciscan Family, continues to witness, nurture and bolster all the sons and daughters of St. Francis, giving increase to their living the Gospel in obedience, without property and in chastity and to their vocation of spreading the message and love of Christ to the ends of the earth.



## Saint Bonaventure

Bona-ventura!  
Good journey to you!  
So you're a Franciscan!  
Me, too!

We travel well together,  
you and I,  
and strengthened by  
the telling of our own journeys,  
and the breaking of Bread,  
our baggage grows lighter.

Sandal-shod,  
we journey on,  
wiser for these graced moments,  
knowing the Lord has been  
with us  
on this road.

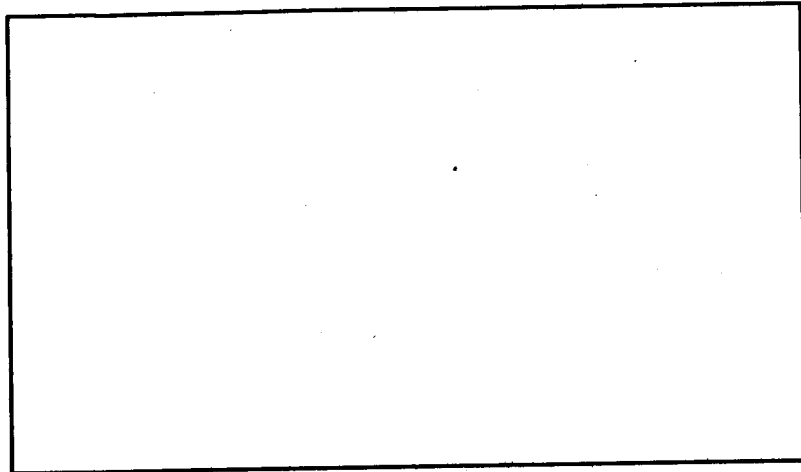
Chistine Diensberg, O.S.F.

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# The CORD

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### Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

#### I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions

BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo

CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun

EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony

EpCler: Letter to Clerics<sup>1</sup>

EpCust: Letter to Superiors<sup>1</sup>

EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful<sup>1</sup>

EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo

EpMin: Letter to a Minister

EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order

EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People

ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God

ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father

FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221

LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God

LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours

OffPass: Office of the Passion

OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix

RegB: Rule of 1223

RegNB: Rule of 1221

RegEr: Rule for Hermits

SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady

SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues

Test: Testament of St. Francis

UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare

VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy

<sup>1</sup>I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

#### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis

2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis

3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles

CL: Legend of Saint Clare

CP: Process of Saint Clare

Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis

LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis

LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis

LP: Legend of Perugia

L3S: Legend of the Three Companions

SC: Sacrum commercium

SP: Mirror of Perfection

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**AB:** Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

## The Character of Franciscanism

CONRAD HARKINS, O.F.M.

IT HAS BEEN over 21 years since Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965, promulgated the Second Vatican Council decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life. The Council had summoned communities to a renewal to be achieved through two simultaneous processes:

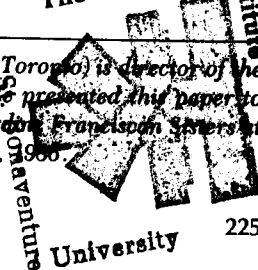
1) the continuous return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original inspiration behind a given community.

2) an adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of the time.

Related to the mandate to return to the original inspiration of the community was the Council's statement that it serves the best interests of the Church for communities to have their own special character and purpose. To effectively carry out the Council's mandate, it became important to specify the original inspiration, the character, and the purpose of the community.

For some communities this specification of purpose may have been very simple. The Dominican friars, for example, were the Order of Preachers, and even in their early history all other considerations were subordinated to preparing an educated and capable body of preachers. For the Dominican theologian Thomas Aquinas (*Contra impug.*, c. 1; *OO*, XLI, A53), religious Orders are distinguished by the works of charity to which the members are bound. Of contemplative Orders, some are monastic and others eremitical. Active orders are distinguished through their actions, as caring for the sick, redeeming captives, and indeed any other work of charity. But in the case of the Friars Minor the explanation of St. Thomas was clearly inadequate. For the purpose of the Friars Minor as stated in their Rule was "to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without property, and in chastity." The exact specification of the actions by which the living of the Gospel was

Father Conrad Harkins, O.F.M., Ph.D. (University of Toronto) is director of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. He presented this paper to a Provincial Ongoing Formation Meeting of the Bernardine Franciscan Friars at Mt. Alvernia Convent, Reading, PA, on September 27, 1986.



to be realized was left to the individual friar and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the Franciscan friars were as contemplative as they were active. Francis had lived as a hermit and wore the habit of a hermit for two years after his conversion, founded hermitages, wrote a Rule for hermits, retreated to hermitages for over half the year, and made of each friary a quasi hermitage located on the outskirts of towns so that the friars could withdraw at night to a contemplative existence.

But St. Francis was also a zealous preacher, and the Rule of the Friars Minor was the first religious Rule to contain a chapter on preaching. Indeed, thirteenth century friars used to say that it contained two chapters on preaching since Francis included a chapter on "going among the Saracens and other non-believers," an open invitation to face martyrdom for the sake of the Gospel. Still other friars engaged in manual labor. Those to whom God gave the grace of working, said Francis, should work in such a manner that they did not destroy the spirit of prayer and devotion to which all temporal things should be subservient. The diverse activities of the friars during Francis' lifetime are well reflected in chapter 17 of the Earlier Rule in which Francis exhorts all the friars not to glory in what God does through them. He addressed them as "all my friars, preachers, prayers, workers, both clergy and laymen." We can see the friars' recognition of the multi-faceted character of Franciscan life in the work ascribed until recently to St. Bonaventure, the *Answers to Questions on the Franciscan Rule*. The first question addressed is why St. Francis founded a new Order when there already were so many Orders in the Church. The author answers by saying that Francis burned with a three-fold desire: to be an imitator of the virtues of Christ, to cling to God through contemplation, and to gain the souls for which Christ wished to be crucified and to die. Of the Orders in the Church, some did one or the other: monks follow the footsteps of Christ in acquiring virtues, hermits in contemplation, pastors in the care of souls, but Francis founded an Order which would combine all three activities.

As far as the Friars Minor are concerned then, the charism or character of the community cannot be found in any particular activity. One could only ask if a particular activity is compatible with "observing the Holy Gospel."

The problem is even more complex when we turn our attention from the First Order to the Third. In 1277, Bernard of Bessa, secretary of the recently deceased Bonaventure, wrote a work called *The Praises of Blessed Francis*. The seventh chapter of this work, which circulated as a work in its own right, is a little treatise on the Three Orders. The statement of purpose for each Order may interest us:

"The First Order is that of the Friars Minor, whose purpose it is to serve the Lord according to the Gospel in poverty and humility and to preach penance." He gives seven pages to the Friars.

"The Second Order is one of virgins and continent matrons, whose purpose is to serve God in permanent cloister in silence and in mortification of the flesh." The Poor Clares receive only seven lines.

"The Third Order is that of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, common to clergy and laity, to virgins, widows, and the married, whose purpose it is to live honorably in their own homes, to be intent on works of piety, and to flee the vanity of the world." The Third Order fares better with 17 lines.

What we notice about the statement on the Third Order is the latitude — no specific work of piety is prescribed. What distinguishes these brothers and sisters is that they lived in the world. While in the world, they are not of the world, for they are as much penitents as are the members of the other two Orders.

In time many of these groups of Third Order members evolved into religious communities. Bernard of Bessa said they lived in their own homes but there must have been some who did not. A contemplative at home might eventually lack physical support — a benevolent parent might eventually die. Or it may have been that moral support was needed. Contemplatives living in community might persevere more easily than individuals. And those tertiaries engaged in a common work of piety might easily develop into a community. A hospice for the poor run by a Third Order fraternity would probably require some live-in members who would want to have morning and evening prayer and Mass. In time came the religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The wide variety of Franciscan Third Order religious communities resulted in a very flexible Rule for the Third Order Regular. Thus the 19th century American bishops, desperately needing school teachers and nurses for the immigrant population from Europe, obtained permission to establish Franciscan Third Order communities, flexible and adaptable to the needs of a missionary church in America. A case of point — St. John Neumann of Philadelphia originally intended to found a community of Dominican Sisters but was told by Pius X to found Franciscans instead. Otherwise the history of the Glen Riddle Sisters might have been very different.

Since there was no specific work that characterized the Friars Minor of the Third Order, an active community today which sees its purpose in a specific work would be adopting some one work of Francis as its purpose or accepting a purpose from an intermediate leader between Francis and the present day.

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*Characteristics which moved the hearts of early witnesses and which would move the hearts of contemporaries are the prayer, poverty, peace, and the patience of Franciscan Religious.*

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But there is another way of proceeding. The character of a community does not have to arise from a specific work. It can arise from the values that inform a work. Since most Third Order communities and the Friars Minor are active communities, I believe that we can find those common values in the earliest apostolic experience of the friars. John of Perugia, a companion of Bl. Giles of Assisi, one of St. Francis' first companions, records for us the experience of Giles and Bernard when, as friars, they visited Florence for the first time. Their experience was typical of that of all the friars: Refused hospitality, mocked, tormented, pelted with mud, unsuccessful in begging, denied hospitality. But John describes how the people were won over: "People saw how the brothers rejoiced in the midst of trials and tribulations, how zealous they were in prayer; and how they did not accept money like other people nor keep it when it was given them; and how they really loved one another." Prayer, poverty, peace, and patience — these were Gospel values to which Francis and his companions were deeply committed and they gave character to the movement.

*Prayer:* When Bernard and Giles came to Florence a woman let them stay by the cold oven on her porch — her husband thought these men dangerous and would not permit her to let them into the house or even give them blankets. But when the woman went to Mass in the morning, she found the friars already there kneeling devoutly in prayer, and she said to herself: "If these men had been vagabonds and scoundrels as my husband thought, they would not be praying with such reverence." Not only were the friars recognized as people of prayer, but the witness of their prayer was apostolic — it moved people to pray themselves.

I cannot emphasize enough the contemplative dimension of Franciscan life. The friars were contemplatives who went out into the world to preach and work. The challenge was to engage in those activities and still be contemplatives. Francis taught the friars to work and to study in such a manner that they do not destroy the spirit of prayer and devotion to which

all temporal things should be subservient. In the beautiful *Sacrum Commercium* the Lady Poverty tests the friars before she agrees to come and live with them. When she asks to see their cloister, the friars take her to a cliff and stretch out their hands to the whole world saying, "This, lady Poverty, is our cloister." The point is that the contemplative life was to be lived in the midst of the world. As they went through the world, a wayside cross would remind them of the Passion, a lamb of the Lamb of God, a sunset of the beauty of God, Brother Sun and Sister Moon, Brother Wind and Sister Water, Brother Fire and Sister Earth — all became symbols of God by which the prayers of the friar could be supported. Indeed the life of a friar was to be an active — contemplative synthesis. For St. Bonaventure, the height of contemplative prayer is achieved in meditation on the Passion of Christ. But this meditation moves one to a desire for martyrdom, i.e. to give one's life for the Gospel and for the salvation of souls. Thus the more one gives oneself to prayer, the more one is brought back to work among suffering humanity. Thus there is a spiral of prayer and work: prayer leading to work and work leading us back into prayer for the support of our work.

The importance of the contemplative dimension of Franciscan life is shown in both Francis' Rule of the Friars Minor and in the Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. In both documents immediately after the statement of the nature of life and the conditions for entering into it, the life of prayer is set forth first, as if it is the core of the life or the foundation of the life. In the Third Order Rule it is beautifully done because the Rule is a synthesis of what Francis said in so many places about the importance of prayer. Without this dimension to our lives we reduce our work to secular labor dealing with matter that happens to be religious, as if we were atheists teaching courses in comparative religion or disinterested historians setting forth religious beliefs of long-dead Sumerians. Without prayer, faith dies, and without faith we are ecclesiastical functionaries in soulless communities performing gestures devoid of meaning and purpose. It is put very well in the document on the Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life issued by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes back in 1980:

The contemplative dimension is the real secret of renewal for every religious life. It vitally renews the following of Christ because it leads to and experiential knowledge of him. This knowledge is needed for the authentic witness to him by those who have heard him, have seen him with their own eyes, have contemplated him, and have touched him with their own hands (cf. 1 Jn 1:1, Philip 3:8) C.D.R.L. 30.

*Poverty* according to John of Perugia, was the second characteristic of those early friars which won the people over. As Giles and Bernard knelt there that morning in the church at Florence, a man named Guido began to distribute alms to all in the Church. But the friars refused saying, "It is true we are poor, but to us poverty is not the burden it is to others for we have become poor voluntarily by the grace of God and we wish to follow his precepts." We all know how important poverty was to Francis. At the time of his conversion when he sought the form of life that conversion would take he "looked in vain in those around him" for that real poverty which he desired above all earthly things and in which he wanted to live and die. St. Bonaventure says that it was Francis' special charism and quotes him as saying that it is the foundation of the Order "so that if it were solid, the Order would stand firm, but that if it were undermined the whole fabric would be completely destroyed." The poverty of the first Order is set forth in the sixth Chapter of the Rule of the Friars Minor as that of the Third Order is set forth in the Sixth Chapter of the new Rule. Poverty was many things to Francis: an asceticism, a witness, an evangelical tool but above all it was a consequence of his deep love of God and an expression of his contemplative soul. Francis fell in love with God and in that love he could place no value upon money or property, or fancy clothes, or house furnishings. God was good, all good, the highest good, and he suffices for us, he wrote.

*Peace.* According to John of Perugia the people who saw those early friars were greatly moved by the fact that they really loved one another. They witnessed it in a very concrete way as the friars intercepted with their own bodies the stones and mud thrown in the derision at their confreres. One of the most beautiful passages in the Rule of the Friars Minor has to be that in which Francis, having obliged the friars to the highest poverty, gives them each other as support: "Wherever the friars meet one another, they should show that they are members of the same family. And they should have no hesitation in making known their needs to one another. For if mother loves and cares for her child in the flesh, a friar should certainly love and care for his spiritual brother all the more tenderly. If a friar falls ill the others are bound to look after him as they would like to be looked after themselves," words paraphrased in Chapter 7 of your own Third Order Rule.

*Patience.* St. Francis had told the friars as they went further from the Portiuncola on their second missionary journey that some would welcome them, but he also warned them that they would find many who would insult and injure them. "Prepare your hearts to suffer everything humbly and patiently." How could it really be otherwise. Francis himself had

entered into the life of Christ when he chose to call God his father. As Thomas of Celano recognized, this was the beginning of a mystery in which Francis entered even more fully into the life of Christ until at last he bore the marks of Christ's passion in his own body. Patience, the loving acceptance of suffering is our entry into the Passion. It is our compassion, our suffering with Christ in the poor suffering humanity for whom Christ died. The call of S. Damiano to rebuild the Church was a call to be a brother and sister of all those suffering human beings for whom Christ died. We must love them and suffer with them to bring to them the love and mercy of Christ. As the Third Order Rule says so beautifully in Chapter 9, "The Brothers and Sisters are called to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring. Whenever they are, they should recall that they have given themselves completely and handed themselves over wholly to Our Love Jesus Christ."

In summary, then, apart of particular charism of particular groups, the renewal of Franciscan religious life need not focus on a particular work of the community, because Franciscan life is very broad embracing almost any activity compatible with "living the Gospel." Of far greater importance is the spirit of the community engaging in the work. Characteristics which moved the hearts of early witnesses and which would move the hearts of contemporaries are the prayer, poverty, peace, and the patience of Franciscan Religious. Let us pray that these may be characteristics of our Franciscan lives and the world will know that God is present among us.





## Estampie

To dance your estampie  
and impress your Lady,  
two sticks your viol  
bowed with bony fingers.

But the melody was real  
and still lingers  
on a chord of reality

pitched by modern pipes  
to the timeless tabor beat.

I feel the Troubadour  
poetry in your love-song;  
sensing that your feet  
tapped with the rhythm  
of pure Provençal.

Today, that is all  
I have — the intuition  
that the stunning beauty  
of their song and poetry  
carried you along  
with the innovations,  
their sensitive creations.

You,  
God's Fool,  
Two sticks your viol,  
Poverty your attentive Lady,  
Fraternity your estampie.

*Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M.*

## Spirituality for the Laity: A Secular Franciscan Perspective

DONNA MARIE KAMINSKY, S.F.O.

SECULARITY, secularism, "flight from the world" by lay people, the "clericalization of the laity," lay formation, and lay spirituality are some of the issues raised in the *lineamenta*, the document released by the Vatican's Synod Secretariat in preparation for the 1987 world Synod of Bishops. The synod theme is: "Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World 20 years After the Second Vatican Council." The *lineamenta*, not a "complete and organic treatment of the theme of the laity" was intended to promote discussion and consultation on the synod's theme in local churches throughout the world. Most dioceses, in response to this document, initiated some type of listening process to gather input from the laity to accomplish this consultation. Consequently, and as a result of the mushrooming articles today on lay ministry or spirituality for the laity, there can be no authentic discussion of the Secular Franciscan vocation without first considering the documents of Vatican II, the new Code of Canon Law, the *lineamenta* and the responses to it, as well as the current discussions regarding the meaning of the terms laity, spirituality, secularity, and ministry, all of which are interrelated.

Having a clear understanding of these terms, however, presupposes an adequate theology of the laity, or more precisely, a theology of the secular. Yves Congar succinctly situates the central problem of developing a theology of the laity and notes that it goes beyond the sum of the many specific questions raised such as 1) the relations of the Church with the world; 2) an up-to-date pastoral theology; 3) formation of the clergy and the meaning of their priesthood; 4) the nature of the laity's obligation; and 5) the Christian meaning of history and of earthly realities. "The real difficulty,"

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*Donna Marie Kaminsky, S.F.O., an artist resident of Akron, Ohio, and a member of the national SFO fraternity, is a frequent lecturer on spirituality for the laity. This past summer she taught at the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, NY.*

asserts Congar, whose major pre-conciliar works along with those of Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx became the focal points for the theological evaluation of the specifics of lay life, "is that such a theology supposes the existence of a whole ecclesiological synthesis wherein the mystery of the Church has been given all its dimensions, including fully the ecclesial reality of laity. It is not just a matter of adding a paragraph or a chapter to an ecclesiological exposition which from beginning to end ignores the principles on which a 'laicology' really depends. Without those principles, we should have, confronting a laicized world, only a clerical Church, which would not be the People of God in the fullness of its truth. At bottom there can be only one sound and sufficient theology of laity, and that is a 'total ecclesiology.'... it will also be an anthropology, and even a theology of the creation in its relation to Christology." (LAY PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH, Ives Congar, xvi, xvii.)

Although the years during the Council and immediately afterward were characterized by enthusiasm for the newly developed roles and opportunities for the average Catholic woman and man, still there were doubts and questions regarding the direction increased involvement of the laity should take. A crucial question underlying these doubts was precisely the relationship between the laity and hierarchy, that is, how to maintain a strong, clear understanding of the hierarchy's role while fostering creative responsibilities for the laity.

Several theological positions on the laity emerged from the Second Vatican Council which are the underlying basis for specific approaches to Christian lay life, and which have impacted upon the Pauline Secular Franciscan Rule.

### Ecclesial Presence to the World

This viewpoint sees the layperson who does not belong to the hierarchy nor to a religious community as an active member of the ecclesial people of God and as one who is called to incarnate herself/himself as a sacrament of the world in the specific circumstances of secular life. It affirms the intrinsic goodness of the world, and recognizes that the Church indeed has a mission in this sphere. Thus, through the everyday work of being a lawyer or laborer, factory worker or farmer, teacher or typist, homemaker or office worker, the layperson is enfleshing Christ in the market place, affirming that the world is good, and imbuing it with the goodness of Christ.

St. Francis clearly perceived this goodness of all creation and all created persons. For Francis there was never any distinction in the call to live the Gospel. Both Celano and St. Bonaventure write that Francis accepted

all persons into the way of life he preached, "members of both sexes, clerics and lay-folk, married and single" (LM 4,6; 1 Cel 37).

The Secular Franciscan Rule concretizes this relationship among Franciscan families: "The Franciscan family... unites all members of the people of God — laity, religious, and priests — who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi."<sup>1</sup> There is present, then, in our family heritage that very real sense of belonging to each other, and to the Church as church. Along with this awareness, however, goes the challenge and responsibility of living out this interdependence by consciously joining and working together in various ministries.

### Theology of World Transformation

Another view of the laity is the position that emphasizes that the world has been entrusted to the responsibility of the human person; and the human person must engage in the redemption of the world. The lay person (secular Franciscan) is committed to the world, animates it with Christ's spirit, affirms its intrinsic goodness, and is dedicated to developing and transforming it according to Gospel values.

Again Francis' own life enfolded two essential concepts in this viewpoint: 1) the intrinsic goodness of creation; and 2) the necessity for personal conversion as a basis for world transformation. In the Canticle of the Sun, Saint Francis praises God's goodness and thanks God for the *gifts* of Brother Sun and Sister Moon and the Stars. Francis praises God and acknowledges creation's goodness *through* Brother Sun, Sister Moon; *through* Brother Wind and Air and Sister Water; *through* Brother Fire and Sister Mother Earth. He acknowledges God's loving presence in creation.

Further, Francis' call and challenge to everyone to embrace the penitential life, in the true biblical sense of *metanoia*, of a turning toward Christ... was not a turning away from an evil world (flight from the world), but rather a turning toward an acknowledgment of, and acceptance of, the world as gift... gift that was to be cherished and revered. *Metanoia* was a turning toward the attitudes and values of Christ which revealed the world and all of creation to be signs of God's love and loving presence. Penance, *metanoia* was embracing the attitude of God's pervasive love for all of creation and enfolding that love by concrete and practical service to God's beloved, the leper, the outcast. This loving action was not only a living out of the corporal works of mercy, but even more importantly, a challenge to the established values and structures of 13th century society.

Secular Franciscans are reminded of this challenge and responsibility in articles 7, 14, and 15 of the Pauline Rule. They are challenged to conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls "conversion." Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily".<sup>(7)</sup> However, personal conversion must be combined with the responsibility "to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively."<sup>(14)</sup> In the past, the most common understanding of social action was that of doing the corporal works of mercy on an individual basis. Little concern was evidenced for changing the structures of our society which produced injustice on a massive scale. This is no longer viable for secular franciscans. Article 15 of the Pauline Rule appeals to secular franciscans to "... individually and collectively be in the forefront of promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives (how one lives on a day-to-day basis) and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith." The very nature of some professions (attorneys, doctors, parents) require the commitment to change those social structures which are opposed to Christian values. This, then, is ministry. Ministry cannot be limited only to church activities of Eucharistic Minister, lector, religious educator, as necessary and valuable as these are. In the theology of world transformation, the secular franciscan becomes aware that one's chosen profession, occupation IS MINISTRY, is the means for proclaiming the gospel. In the theology of world transformation, the secular franciscan serves the world and transforms it through one's occupation, and prophetically challenges the world to turn away from the idolatry of technology and the mechanization and exploitation of the human person. This necessitates being imbued with the gospel values, and so again the Rule exhorts to "careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel."<sup>(4)</sup>

### Spirituality

The *lineamenta* defines spirituality as "... life according to the Spirit, ... possible and required of every Christian, in that he or she is called to the perfection of love, something strongly reposed by the second Vatican Council when speaking of the universal vocation to sanctity in the church: It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love." (LG 40) *Lineamenta*, 43.

Secular Franciscans voluntarily take upon themselves the commitment

"to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and center of his life with God and people."(4) Essentially our spirituality is our personal experience of God, of Jesus and the subsequent attempt, daily, to live in that relationship, to have that experience of God be the focal point of one's beliefs and actions, to respond to God's initiative and allow our very selves to be transformed even as we work to transform the world with Christ's presence.

Franciscan spirituality is to enflesh Christ in our world, to make Jesus fully present. Why? Because we believe that Jesus is the Incarnation, the enfleshment of God in our world. Jesus is sent to us to show us how God relates to us, how God wants to relate to us. Because Jesus reveals God the Father, because Jesus is the model of the fully integrated human person, then we embrace Jesus' attitudes and behaviors, knowing that even as Jesus invites us into relationship with the Father, we are summoned to love others into relationship with the Father.

### Secularity

A concern for secular franciscans and lay persons in general, has been to extricate ourselves from the model of religious life when explaining and living our spirituality. However, there has been resistance to the terms *secular* and *secularity* because the terms have been used indifferently and synonymously with secularism and secularization. Secularism is an anti-religious, anti-spiritual, false ideology whereas secularization is a social and cultural process by which non-religious beliefs, practices and institutions replace religious ones in certain spheres of life.

The Christian view of secularity, however, is distinctive and necessary. Secularity acknowledges, affirms the *meaningfulness* of this *world* and refuses to accept the false dichotomy between spiritual and temporal, religious and secular. The human person doesn't simply exist in this world waiting for the moment of death to be joined to God; therefore, "fleeing from this world." Rather, human destiny is both eschatological and incarnational, requiring that woman and man enflesh gospel values in her/his personal life, and in the world while looking forward to the ultimate relationship of union with God. Secularity restores the wholistic perspective of creation, wedding religious and secular, spiritual and temporal.

As Franciscans, we imitate St. Francis who so closely imitated and resembled Jesus Christ that Francis is known as the Second Christ, or the Mirror of Christ. The secular franciscan vocation to integrate the charism of Francis is no less serious or intense than our sister and brother

Franciscans who have chosen to live a fraternal life professing the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. We, as they, must identify the values of Francis' charism, grapple with them, and search out ways to give concrete expressions to them in the daily reality of our 20th century lives, in our family circumstances at our occupations. We have wrongly assumed that penance, fraternity, minority, contemplation, poverty and obedience are "religious" values; that secular franciscans need not (therefore, do not) grapple with these in their "secular" life. We have inherited the dualistic thinking that somehow there is a dichotomy between secular and spiritual. The truth is, however, that the above values are franciscan values. It is precisely the difficulties that continuously growing in these values presents to us that is our "ascetism," our spirituality. That secular franciscans may concretely express these values differently than the friars or sisters in no way indicates a necessary "watering down" of the values. Embracing authentic secularity requires concretizing franciscan values.

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*The Franciscan vocation is to preach the gospel with our lives, to enflesh Christ in this world.*

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### Contemplation

"As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do."(8)

Thomas Merton defined the contemplative life as one of prayer, solitude, silence and meditation, and questioned if it could have any meaning for the person in the atomic age. Before answering the question, he further clarified what he meant by the contemplative life.

When I speak of the contemplative life, I do not mean the institutional cloistered life, the organized life of prayer. ...I am talking about a special dimension of inner discipline and experience, a certain integrity and fullness of personal development, which are not compatible with a purely external, alienated, busy-busy existence. This does not mean that they are incompatible with action, with creative work, with dedicated love. On the contrary, these all go together. A certain depth of disciplined experience is a necessary ground for fruitful action." (Contemplation in a World of Action, Thomas Merton, p. 172).

Francis of Assisi was an active contemplative, and a contemplative actor. He knew that fruitful action was born of discipline and silence and solitude. He not only encouraged the friars to a voluntary life of intense prayer (the Rule for Hermitages), he himself spent many months in the hermitage. In Celano's second Life, Francis is giving advice to the friar preachers: "The preacher must first draw from secret prayers what he will later pour out in holy sermons; he must first grow hot within before he speaks words that are in themselves cold." (2 Cel. 163). And in the L3C, 58: "Since you speak of peace, all the more so must you have it in your hearts. Let none be provoked to anger or scandal by you, but rather may they be drawn to peace and good will, to benignity and concord through your gentleness. We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way." Francis exhorts the friars to BE LOVE, BE PEACE, BE GENTLENESS. Hans von Balthasar writes of this vocation to love: "Let there be no doubt. We are here to love — to love God and to love our neighbor. Whoever will unravel the meaning of existence must accept this fundamental principle from whose center light is shed on all the dark recesses of our lives. For this love to which we are called is not a circumscribed or limited love, not a love defined, as it were, by the measure of our human weakness. It does not allow us to submit just one part of our lives to its demands and leave the rest free for other pursuits; it does not allow us to dedicate just one period of our lives to it and the rest, if we will, to our own interests. The command to love is universal and makes demands upon everything in our nature: 'with thy whole heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.'" (*The Christian State of Life*, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, p. 27).

The Franciscan vocation is to preach the gospel with our lives, to enflesh Christ in this world. Francis of Assisi preached the gospel with his life. He encountered the living and active person of Christ in his brothers and sisters. He challenged the false values of the thirteenth century by actively and courageously changing his own life-style, attitudes, and values. He affected changes within the structure of medieval society and the Church. He loved so intensely that he is known as the Seraphic Lover. This is the vocation of secular Franciscans today.



## Golden Jubilee

We know your Jubilee Day will be  
A beautiful success;  
And love will always light your path  
To lasting happiness.

Novitiate days — how fast they flew.  
Profession Day drew near  
When you gave your all to the Spouse  
Whose love you hold most dear.

As you travelled on and up-ward  
To meet your goal above,  
Where your Final Vows had led you  
To your eschelon of love.

Then work on many a mission field  
Both near and far away  
Had kept you close to the Master  
Till your Silver Jubilee Day.

Now, as twilight shadows deepen,  
Stealing like a summer breeze,  
We're glad your heart will hold the joys  
Of Golden Memories!

*Sister Miriam Mercedes Hogan, O.S.F.*

## Franciscan Associates in Today's Church

SISTER ANITA BRELAGE, O.S.F.

THIS PERIOD of time in the life of the Church finds many lay persons thirsting for a deeper union with God, and searching for ways to quench this thirst. For some, an answer to this search for a creative spirituality is associate membership with a religious community.

Anyone who accepts the Gospel life accepts from God the commission to be the living Christ in one's section of the world. As Francis declared in his Letter to All the Faithful, "We are His mothers when we carry Him about in our heart and person by means of love and a clean and sincere conscience, and we give birth to Him by means of our holy actions, which should shine as an example to others."

Although all the faithful have been called to holiness, the Second Vatican Council specifically changed long-standing traditions. According to *Lumen Gentium*, the main document of Vatican II, the idea of a universal call to holiness was to be seen in a new light — holiness was no longer viewed only as the ambition of friars and nuns, it was everyone's vocation.

The laity are coming of age. Since Vatican II they have become increasingly more involved as leaders and active participants in the mission of the Church. And when the International Synod of Bishops convenes next month, the role of the laity in today's Church will be given further consideration.

Many Franciscan congregations have responded to the growing spiritual needs of the laity by offering an alternate mode of membership, believing that their community life compels them to be of service to others. Through associate membership (also called co-membership of affiliation), they have extended an invitation to persons who seek spiritual guidance and opportunities for growth while being identified with the charism of a particular congregation. As stated by an Associate, "The program has been an answer to my prayer. It has given me opportunities for spiritual growth through

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*Sister Anita Brelage, O.S.F., is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, Indiana. She has been Director of the Congregation's Associate Program since July of 1986. The Associate Program was begun in 1981.*

retreats, shared prayer, the Ministry to Religious Program, and contact with the Sisters. It has enriched every facet of my life. Because of the Associate program, my life will never be the same."

These extended Christian communities provide mutual strength, enrichment, and support for their members as they live the Gospel life. They also offer a way for them to share in the spirituality of the founder/foundress and in the heritage, goals, mission, and spirit of the particular congregation.

Membership criteria for associate programs vary from congregation to congregation. Some programs will accept members at 18 years of age, while others have set a minimum age requirement of 21 years. Some welcome the disabled; other congregations request some proof of physical and emotional stability. Nevertheless, there are inherent similarities among persons seeking associate membership with a Franciscan community: They want to live more fully their personal commitment to Christ; they share values and ideals similar to those of the congregation; and they have a desire to share in its mission. As another Associate says, "I've always felt a oneness with the Franciscans, and now I feel I have a home in a spiritual peace and love through caring and sharing with them."

The relationship associates have with the congregation is generally individual in nature. Associates are not a group within the congregation, nor do they have voting power. There is no mutual financial responsibility. The period of affiliation is a temporary one subject to renewal on a regular basis, and it is noncanonical, that is, it is without intent to enter into a permanent relationship as a vowed member.

After a request for membership is received, mutual expectations are shared and time is spent in acquainting the individual with the tradition, customs, and spirituality of the congregation. This period of orientation lasts from six months to a year and comes to an end, a peak experience, with commitment.

Associates are not merely passive recipients of the spiritual benefits of these programs. As People of God, they are actively challenged to commit their gifts to new and creative ways of loving and caring in their daily actions. Most of the time, these commitments are made in a prayerful setting using a written contractual agreement. The contracts of the associates are as personal and as distinctive as each associate. For instance, as part of their agreement, some associates work with individual community members in varied apostolates. Some offer their talents and assistance at the congregational headquarters, or serve in their parishes or civic communities. Still others believe that the dignity of human beings and the glory of God's creation can be enhanced by the manner in which they conduct their secular work.

Associates are mostly Catholic, but include a variety of religious faiths. They are single, married, divorced, widowed, and former community members. They are homemakers, business persons, retirees, and professionals. They are women and men from all walks of life, with myriad lifetime experiences, who are invited by members of the congregation to journey with them.

Specific guidance is offered during this journey in matters of personal development and spiritual direction. Many congregations have someone serve as a contact for the associate member. That person is a vowed member (sister, priest, brother) who shares prayer, the tradition and customs of the community, spirituality, Franciscan ideals, meals, and social time on a one-to-one basis with the associate.

Contact persons and associates also meet for more formal days of prayer and reflection. The days are sometimes planned specifically for those involved in the associate program, or they may be planned for the entire congregation. The contact person encourages participation in retreats, both with the other associates and with the vowed members. There are prayer opportunities with the local community, as well as with the larger congregation.

Continuing study about the congregation through its history and present happenings is essential for the associate to grow in knowledge of and appreciation for the community. They also gain insight by studying the rule of the specific congregation and the Third Order Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis.

Associate members are not the only ones who benefit from these programs, however. While it is important to know the who, what, and why of associate programs, it is also important to understand the valuable contributions these programs make to the religious communities and to our Church.

Every forward-looking institution relies on the vitality and animation of its members and affiliates for its progress, and religious congregations are no exception. Unless there is constant promise of growth in new directions, the viability of an institution cannot be guaranteed. For that reason, the associate program of a congregation is valued highly. It gives evidence that the congregation can be a viable institution in ways other than through the traditional works of its vowed members. That viability, in turn, translates into a Church that is vibrant and alive.

Trying to live holier lives according to the Gospel is, as the Church points out, the soul of the Second Vatican Council. The Franciscan communities which offer associate membership and the lay members of these programs have come to realize that in the vision of Vatican II everyone

in the Church, by virtue of Baptism and Confirmation, has a ministry. They have become Spirit-filled collaborators in a common mission because they know that there are not two churches, one religious, one lay. Rather, as Paul wrote, "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and works through all, and is in all." (Ephesians 4:5-6) Associate members, wherever such a program has been established, have been a strength and a blessing to the whole Church.



## Seraphic Doctoring in Tampa

Incarnation, Resurrection... who can believe?  
CRUCIFIXION, all too believable!

TRICKS — isn't La Verna Paradise — now Calvary?  
LEPERS, within and without.  
STIGMATA, within and without.

COMPASSION, permeates and distills empty, endless moments  
of fullness.

I came here to stand erect before the brilliance of brother sun.  
STOOP, you say, and the SON dances inside.

How I long that God would dwell in Disney World. Only \$21.50 for  
SALVATION.

CHRISTED! It's all CHRISTED, you say. But why does it have to be  
so expensive?

I hate wounds and blood. What happened to Bridegrooms and  
Brides? Away with torching SERAPHS!

FOOL! There is pain in the Nuptial Kiss.  
GLORY is in the prism of a tear beyond sadness.

how i fear to drink fully of the cup.;  
could you give me DESIRE and a straw?

*Robert J. D'Aversa, T.O.R.  
Franciscan Gathering VI*

## Padre Pio: Pie Pellicane

(How St. Francis awakened in a Jesuit  
a love for Padre Pio)

1

Once Padre Pio  
repulsed me.  
In childhood his  
photos were too vivid,  
a gruesome media victim,  
and I grew to avoid him.  
Later it was not  
so much he  
as the macabre circus  
which gathered around him.  
His name (along with the  
poor man himself) was  
pushed or trampled upon  
by angry seekers  
of signs and wonders  
who could not  
believe his wounds  
were enough.

2

It was on retreat  
where I found  
myself broken  
by the ghastly suffering  
and wounds  
of persons with  
AIDS, that I went  
crawling into the library  
to find father Francis,  
knowing he was converted  
by those with  
skin diseases,  
and knowing that just  
one little word  
of him  
would bring "light  
to the darkness  
of my heart."

3

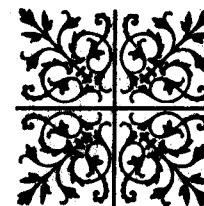
My heart went  
through rows of  
shelves of scriptures  
and Saints until  
Padre Pio  
fell into my reluctant  
hands,  
and though I  
ached for the father,  
he sent his son.  
Three times  
I opened to the  
story of the stigmata.  
Padre Pio  
branded so young!  
Better to have been  
taken swiftly  
at the altar  
like Becket or Romero  
than to have been racked  
for fifty years  
as the saint or freak  
of a ravenous  
public.

4

I did not receive  
the scent of roses  
or a visible visit...  
but he was there.  
He teaches me now,  
amidst the violence,  
chaos,  
misunderstanding,  
and accusations  
from the left  
and the right wing —  
that it is still  
the Way of Jesus  
the Mother Pelican,  
to feed her young  
precious blood  
from her own  
wounds.

*William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O.*

The pelican was thought to open her breast and feed her young  
with her own blood. Medieval writers saw it as a symbol of  
Christ on the Cross and, by association of ideas, the eucharist.



## A Reflection on the Complementarity of the SFO and TOR Rules

MARGARET O'CONNELL, S.F.O.

WHEN ST. FRANCIS heard the crucifix in the church of San Damiano call him 'to repair my church which is falling into ruin' this summons became his basic inspiration for gospel living. He made Christ's life the center of his own life. This same Christocentric gospel living is what all Franciscans pledge themselves to follow even to this day. Francis' lived example drew others to him: thus originated the lesser Brothers (Friars Minor) and the Poor Ladies of San Damiano (Poor Clares).

Many of the laity also wanted to live this form of life. Had Francis permitted it they might have left families, spouses, and occupations. Francis, however, told them that the Gospel could and should be lived in the lay state too. Those lay women and men who asked for and followed Francis' guidelines for gospel living in the world became known as the Brothers and Sisters of Penance (the Third Franciscan Order). In time some of these banded together into communities and adapted Francis' gospel guidelines to that lifestyle. To it they added the public profession of vows. This was the beginning of the "regular" or religious community expression of the Third Franciscan Order.

Although it has two expressions, secular and religious, this Order has one common origin and founding spirit. Secular and Religious Third order Franciscans therefore can be enriched by one another's respective Rules. As a secular Franciscan, I wish to share here some of my reflections on the Third Order Regular Rule (hereafter TOR rule) because it has expanded my appreciation of the context of the Secular Franciscan Rule (hereafter SFO rule) which states that its members are to "observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people." We are also told to devote ourselves "to (the) careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel." (SFO 1) Reflection on the TOR Rule helps one do just that because it contains the words of Francis, words based on his reflection on the gospels.

*Margaret O'Connell, a member of St. Benedict the Moor Fraternity at St. Francis of Assisi Church, New York City, is an associate editor at the Christophers.*

The first chapter of the TOR rule seems to explain these sentences of the SFO Rule. It gives a clear picture of what it means to follow Christ after Francis' example, namely to live a life of ongoing evangelical conversion. According to our state in life, single or married, we too should "make greater efforts in (our) observance of the precepts and counsels of Our Lord Jesus Christ." (TOR 1) We too should persevere in true faith which is nourished by the carefully reading of the gospel and the teaching of the Church. Evangelical conversion also is expressed by us "through a spirit of prayer, of poverty, and of humility." Secular Franciscans likewise are to persevere to the end in doing good "because God the Son will come in glory and will say to all who acknowledge, adore and serve Him in sincere repentance (ongoing conversion to gospel values): 'Come blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you...'" (TOR 1.2).

In calling us "brothers and sisters of penance" (SFO §7), the SFO Rule calls us to "conform (our) thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls 'conversion.'" (SFO §7) This is another word for penance and implies that path by which we go "from gospel to life and life to gospel." Penance, (conversion) therefore, is a life-long turning to God through conformity to gospel.

The sacrament of reconciliation is one of the ongoing means we have to turn to God. It is called a "privileged sign of the Father's mercy and the source of grace" in the SFO Rule. (SFO §7). The TOR Rule (III.13) exhorts "the brothers and sisters... to do penance interiorly by sincere sorrow and exteriorly by confessing their sins to a priest. Worthy deeds that manifest their repentance," among them fasting, are suggested. This is followed up by pointing out the root of all sin according to the mind of St. Francis, namely, appropriation. The TOR Rule then reminds us that we should "always strive to be simple and humble, especially before God; (III.13) and desire nothing else but our Savior."

Both Rules speak of other means to be employed in our life of evangelical conversion. Among these is participation in the Eucharist and "in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church" (SFO §8). Eucharistic life (SFO §15) is meant to lead to that total conformity to the Gospel (TOR III.11) which imitates Mary's "complete self-giving and earnest confident prayer." (SFO §9) How this is so is not always apparent. Sharing in the Body and Blood of the Lord celebrates our new and eternal covenant relationship with God in Christ and through Christ with each other. This relationship is celebrated in the Eucharist. We are in Christ in a way similar to Mary who carried the Christ within her. He whom the whole world cannot hold we hold in ourselves. He who knit us in our mothers'

wombs becomes our Guest and Friend. Through sacramental life, Christ is "put on" and evangelical life is empowered to be expressed through us.

Of great concern to secular franciscans who seek to put on the Lord Jesus Christ is the issue of temporal goods, material needs, and the desire in a consumer society for possessions and power. The TOR rule (I.2) speaks of living simply while abstaining "from all evil." "Though rich beyond measure (Christ) emptied himself for our sake and with the holy virgin, His mother, Mary, He chose poverty in this world." (TOR VI.21) Both rules admonish that we are to live as "pilgrims and strangers" (SFO §11: TOR VI. 22). Like Abraham we may be "very rich... in silver, and in gold" (Gen. 13:2), have so much that "the land could not support both [Abraham and Lot]" (Gen. 13:5-6). But, like our father in faith, we should always be the faithful remnant of Yahweh. What is necessary here is that attitude of heart whereby we appropriate nothing as our own. Everything and everyone in our lives belongs to God and are viewed for and cared for as gifts coming from the Giver of all that is good.

Daily ongoing conversion affects all aspects of living. The SFO Rule calls us to "faithfully fulfill the duties proper to (our) various circumstances of life" (SFO §10) and the TOR Rule suggests what that might mean. Franciscans, secular and religious, should be conscientious, avoid "that idleness which is the enemy of the soul" (TOR V. 19), and yet, never "be so busy that the spirit of holy prayer and devotion which all earthly goods should foster, is extinguished." (TOR V. 18) Both Rules, side by side, portray the dynamic of that active-contemplative life-style Francis projects to those who would be "totally and continually turned to the Lord." The SFO Rule adds "let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to Him even in difficulties, and persecution" (SFO §10). TOR rule is explicit saying that Franciscans are "to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring" (TOR IX. 30) so that by giving "witness by word and work" (TOR IX. 29) "they may make known to all that the Lord alone is God." (TOR IX. 29). In this the desired complementarity and rhythm of contemplation and action is set forth if not described in detail. One's own giftedness and circumstances have to determine that.

The sixth section of the SFO Rule deals with profession, a matter which needs much explanation. The SFO Rule says that secular franciscans "have been... united more intimately with the Church by profession." (SFO §6) What does this mean? The TOR Rule suggests that we are ecclesial people especially regarding worship and mission. It says the brothers and sisters "are to love the Lord with their whole heart, their whole soul and mind and with all their strength, and to love their neighbor as themselves"

(TOR IX. 29). But it also says that franciscans are to "announce peace with [their] lips... careful to have it even more within [their] own hearts. No one should be roused to wrath or insult on [our] account, rather all should be moved to peace, goodwill and mercy because of [our] gentleness." (TOR IX. 30) Similarly SFO Rule says a "gentle and courteous spirit," and accepting "all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ" (SFO §13) should characterize us.

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*What is outstanding about the Franciscan way of life upon reflection in these two Rules is that, through the assimilation of gospel values and attitudes, we put on the Lord Jesus Christ.*

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And both speak of peacemaking. Francis of Assisi discovered in his day that this involves the alleviation of the plight of the less fortunate, the sick, the elderly, the marginalized because all people are destined to be God's family. The SFO Rule is far more explicit here than the TOR Rule which calls on us to "be happy to live among the outcast and despised, among the poor, the weak, the sick, the unwanted, the oppressed and the destitute" (TOR VI. 21). The SFO Rule, on the other hand, tells us to "place (ourselves) on an equal basis with all people" (§SFO 13) and to "strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ" (SFO §13); to build a more fraternal... world" (SFO §13); and "to exercise [our] responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service" (SFO §14).

Through faith, sacramental life and the Christian community we are united to Christ in His body, the Church. Fostering unity with its head, leaders and members in the world is to preserve the Church in the bond of peace. The TOR Rule asks that we render "obedience and reverence to the Pope and the Holy Catholic Church" (TOR I.3) and summons us to "diligently and fervently show reverence and honor to one another. They should also foster unity and communion with all the members of the Franciscan family" (TOR I. 3). The SFO Rule says that peacemaking is only possible if we are "free to love God and (our) brothers and sisters" (SFO §12). Therefore secular franciscans are told to promote "... justice by ...their courageous initiatives" and to "... make definite choices in harmony with their faith" (SFO §15).

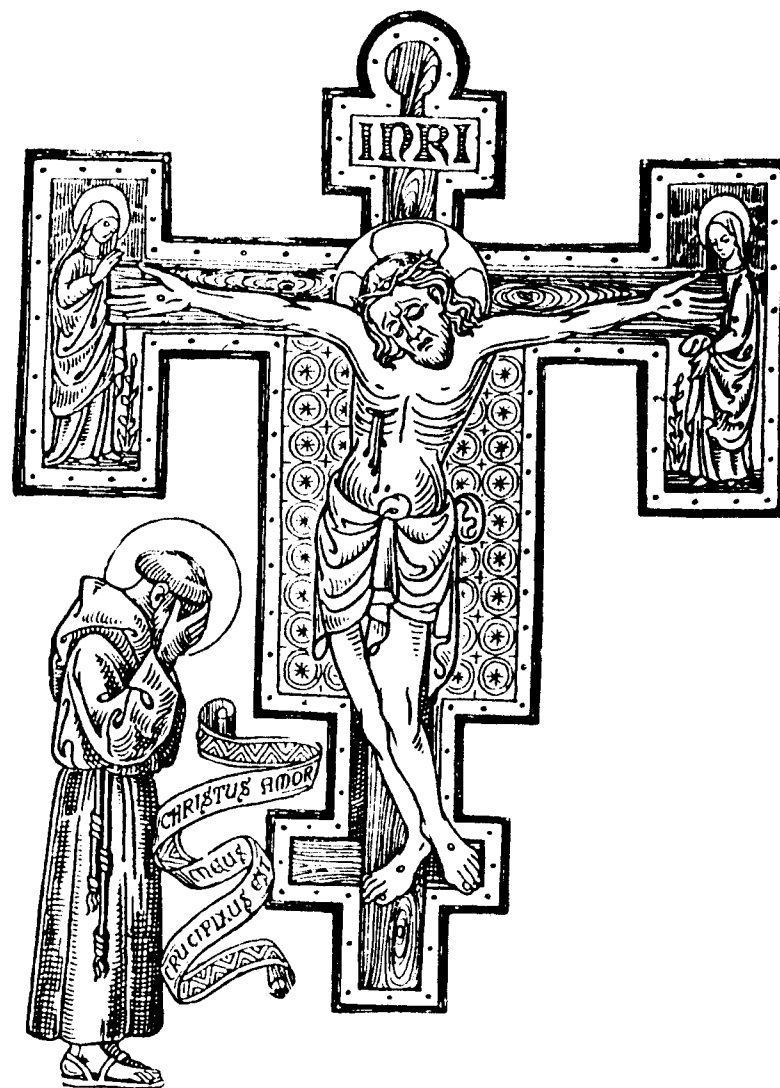
The value of work is mentioned in both Rules. The SFO Rule calls it

a "gift" and "a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community" (SFO §16). The TOR Rule contextualizes work within religious life. Its purpose there is for support and alms. Secular Franciscans do not take the vow of evangelical poverty, but its positive imperative, working for economic justice especially for minorities, noticeably women, the aged, the physically handicapped and others is definitely part of the SFO Rule's agenda. A lively gospel poverty is inferred calling on us to give of our time and to accept even harassment for the sake of justice, as well as to give of our material resources.

The SFO Rule continues, "In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ" (SFO §17). The TOR Rule, it seems, supplies a program of personal action! The values of the Beatitudes ring out as it urges all to "be gentle, peaceful and unassuming, mild and humble, speaking respectfully to all in accord with their vocation." Moreover Franciscans "should not be quarrelsome, contentious, or judgemental;" but "it should be obvious that (they) are joyful, good humored and happy in the Lord as (they) ought to be" (TOR V. 20)! The SFO balances this and even expands it to all creation. We "should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate which 'bear the imprint of the Most High' and we should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship" (SFO §18). Since the Canticle of Creatures celebrates the reconciliation of all creation in Christ the words of the TOR Rule are well taken. We "are to praise the Lord... with all His creatures and to give Him thanks because by His own holy will and through His only Son with the Holy Spirit, He has created all things spiritual and material and made us in His own image and likeness (TOR III. 10).

What is outstanding about the Franciscan way of life upon reflection in these two Rules is that, through the assimilation of gospel values and attitudes, we put on the Lord Jesus Christ. As one passes through the stages of life the need to go back and look anew at these values is more and more evident. At every age, because we wish to be continually turned to God, we need to see anew the insight and inspiration St Francis believed he received from God. In these Rules we have that. That is why Francis could pray:

May whoever observes all this be filled in  
heaven with the blessing of the most high  
Father, and on earth with that of His  
beloved Son, together with the Holy Spirit,  
the comforter.



## Book Reviews

**A Vacation With the Lord.** By Thomas J. Greene, S.J. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press. 175 pp. Paper, \$4.95.

*Reviewed by Fr. Francis Berna, O.F.M., Ph.D. (Fordham University) Assistant Professor of Theology, St. Bonaventure University.*

The Jesuits can rest easy. This Franciscan reviewer gives Thomas Greene's text the excellent rating it well deserves. *A Vacation with the Lord* is essentially an adaptation of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises intended for the person making a retreat on their own. While a Franciscan would want to incorporate more than the work of Ignatius into a personal retreat, Fr. Greene's insights into retreat dynamics and spiritual growth are invaluable.

Labeling a retreat a "vacation" initially catches one off-guard. So often the annual retreat seems like a lot of work — a burden of discernment rather than spiritual refreshment. Fr. Greene believes in the ESP plan offered by a friend of his. "Eat well, sleep well and pray the rest of the time." (pp. 20 - 21). At first the prayer might appear like a lot of work but along with the context of eating and sleeping it is to promote a time of "vacare Deo," being totally free for the Lord.

Tools for the private retreat include a variety of texts: Scriptures, the *Spiritual Exercises* and perhaps one of the recommended commentaries. To these a Franciscan might want to add Bonaventure's *Tree of Life* or the

*Meditationes Vitae Christi*. A personal journal is essential as is a good director.

The function of the director for a person following Fr. Greene's outline needs to be clarified. If one is having personal direction each day, why bother with the book? If the retreatant is having only occasional direction then how does that person really know when to move ahead or to stay focused on the need for a particular grace?

Fr. Greene details how the basic movement of the retreat is growth in self-knowledge which leads to an apostolic knowledge of God in Christ. The initial grace is that of "disponabilité" a total availability for God. The grace of a true self-knowledge is seeing oneself through the eyes of God. Biblical meditations are suggested for a focus on Jesus and the text offers keen insight into the process of discernment. Fr. Greene believes that the retreat is always both a school of prayer and a time for discernment. The discernment involved however is not primarily a reorientation of one's life for those already committed. It is a discernment of continued growth in the direction of one's commitment. "... Once we have made the choice in our early years to follow him (Christ) whether in celibacy or in marriage, that choice need not be repeatedly reevaluated or remade. It is continually reaffirmed... in the very living of our daily lives." (p. 85). Discernment naturally involves probing the moments of consolation and desolation. The latter remind the retreatant that all is grace. Finally there is the grace of confirmation through which one is led in the

direction of living out in everyday life the grace of the retreat.

Throughout the text one can find practical suggestions which are valuable for any retreat experience. For trying to see oneself from the vantage point of God, Fr. Greene offers a journal exercise. The retreatant should first make a list of all the things which come to mind with the question, "What do I think God likes in me?" After a bit of a break the retreatant should return to the journal and write down "all those things which God dislikes in me." Again, after a break the retreatant should attempt to rank in order of importance what God likes and dislikes. References to the Scriptures are then given to enable one to pray through the journal notations.

At various points in the book Fr. Greene gives evidence of his understanding of the Scriptures. He provides readily understood explanation narratives. Certainly one could make use of these explanations in contexts other than retreats.

The *Spiritual Exercises* show Ignatius to be a very organized and orderly person. He proposes there are "Three Occasions for a Good Choice," the metaphor of the "Two Standards" and "Three Kinds of Persons." Fr. Greene offers clear and contemporary interpretations of these and other Ignatian categories. "Three Kinds of Persons" deserves some attention and provides context for a closing comment.

Fr. Greene interprets Ignatius by proposing the situation of three men who have each legally acquired \$10,000 of their own will and not for the glory of God. All three now wish to give glory to God by means of their fortune. The first man makes all kinds of resolutions

but procrastinates. He takes no action. The second man decides that he will give a portion, perhaps even all of his money to those in need. While his action is commendable, he is really no more spiritually mature than the first man. Ignatius' ideal is the third man. He puts his money on the table and resolves to do whatever God commands. Ultimately it is a question of who decides (p. 109). Ultimately it is a question of who is Lord! This can readily remind one of Francis' "Prayer Before the Crucifix."

Whether Jesuit, Benedictine, Dominican or Franciscan — no matter what one's spiritual tradition — it is important not to be like Ignatius' first kind of person when it comes to reading Fr. Greene's book.

## Shorter Notices

FR. JULIAN A. DAVIES, O.F.M.

**Does Suffering Make Sense?** By Russell Shaw. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1987. Pp. 179. Paper, \$4.95.

For the Christian the answer to the question posed in the title of this book is in the affirmative. Yet, "making sense" out of suffering one must not — cannot — eliminate the element of mystery. Furthermore, a most important distinction between explaining suffering and offering consolation to the person undergoing the experience of it has to be kept in mind. Explanation for the Christian will include what faith teaches about Jesus' acceptance of pain and sorrow, and about our co-redemp-

tive role with Him, as well as the vision of eternal life which is our hope.

The author raises the problems of evil and suffering in plain and contemporary terms and responds to them on the levels of human experience, philosophy, and faith. He reminds us that these problems are problems for a believer and that the response to them means moving from weaker to stronger faith. Valuable in his treatment are his critique of the "ethics of success", his careful statements about the relation of love and suffering, his insistence that Christians are called to relieve suffering to the extent that they can.

This well-written and readable book can be a help to religious and lay person alike. Counselors will also find it a help, and also those who themselves suffer so much as they see the sufferings of others.

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**The Catholic Church & the Bible.** By Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskias. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1987. Pp. 120, including Appendix. Paper, \$4.95.

This work is a popularly written and brief source book for those who would begin to study the Bible and meet some of the common objections by fundamentalists that the Church is opposed to the Bible. The author shows the Church as steering a middle way between rationalism, which denies the possibility of anything supernatural in the Bible and which has no respect for the literal text, and fundamentalism, which adheres (selectively) to the very letter of the text without reference to the context or any living tradition of interpreta-

tion. Old Testament concepts like Covenant and Messiah are discussed in a chapter, and the background to the 4 Gospels is given in another. A special chapter shows the very Biblical character of all the prayers of the Mass. A fifth chapter answers 17 questions about the Church and the Bible. A short Bibliography of Fundamentalism completes the book.

*The Catholic Church & the Bible* could serve as a text book for an adult discussion group.

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**Answers to Your Questions.** By Bonaventure Hinwood, O.F.M. Newcastle, South Africa, Zulu Publications, 1986. Pp. 182. Paper, n. p.

Young Catholics — and old ones too — are inquisitive about their faith, and this book is meant for them. In eleven chapters it responds to contemporary and ancient queries about the Bible and Church Doctrine and Pope, about Jesus, Mary, the Sacraments, the Liturgy, moral life, ecumenism, social relationships, and last things. Sample questions are "unity in a strife-racked Church?"; "Confession: Why is it necessary and what happens?"; "What is TM?"; "Can Christians believe in Reincarnation?" All in all there are some 100 questions answered at length in a way that is careful and Catholic. Although written in South Africa by a priest laboring there, the focus of the book is biblical and doctrinal, and no more than two questions touch matters unique to South Africa. It would certainly be hoped that the publishers can make a connection with a firm in the United States to make this book more generally available.

The San Damiano Center,  
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***Imagination: A Franciscan Perspective,***  
presented by *Joseph Doino, O.F.M.*;

**Oct. 16 – 18**

***Paying Attention to Tension,***  
facilitated by *Mary Ellen McAleese, O.S.F.*;

**Oct. 23 – 25**

***"Your Poor Little Mother":  
Clare — Her Spirituality and Legacy,***  
offered by *Rose Cecilia Case, O.S.F.* and  
*Paul Sansone, O.F.M.*;

**Oct. 30 – Nov. 1,**

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For further details contact Sr. Susan Dentz, O.S.F.,  
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OCTOBER, 1987

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## A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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## The CORD

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## Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

### I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions

BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo

CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun

EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony

EpCler: Letter to Clerics<sup>1</sup>

EpCust: Letter to Superiors<sup>1</sup>

EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful<sup>1</sup>

EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo

EpMin: Letter to a Minister

EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order

EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People

ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God

ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father

FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221

LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God

LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours

OffPass: Office of the Passion

OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix

RegB: Rule of 1223

RegNB: Rule of 1221

RegEr: Rule for Hermits

SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady

SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues

Test: Testament of St. Francis

UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare

VPLast: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy

<sup>1</sup>I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis

2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis

3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles

CL: Legend of Saint Clare

CP: Process of Saint Clare

Flor: Little Flowers of St. Francis

LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis

LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis

LP: Legend of Perugia

L3S: Legend of the Three Companions

SC: Sacrum Commernium

SP: Mirror of Perfection

**Omnibus:** Marion A. Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

**AB:** Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

## Reflection: The Clown

Sr. M. ROSINE SOBCZAK, O.S.F.

He is wise if he plays the fool;

to gain he must lose his stature,

his balance,

and even his pants.

His greatness knowing how to fall.

His hope rising ever new.

Francis — a paradox.

— a nobleman by birth.

— a beggar by choice.

— a clown of sorts.

— a peripheral person. One certainly not in the limelight, but yet one who made his presence felt.

— an attraction. Not center stage, but one who helped relieve the tension of his time by living counterculture.

— a person who dared to be different and who appeared awkward and out of balance for his day.

— a person who shared our weaknesses.

— one whom many laughed at, but others watched in amazement.

We — the people of the Church

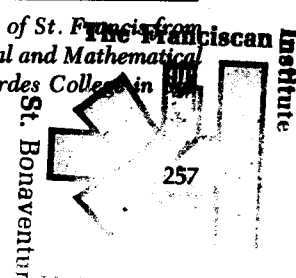
— the peripheral people

— people living counterculture.

We have much to learn from the fool-clown Francis.

We too, have been marked — chosen by Christ before birth to be a clown, a fool for Him.

Sister M. Rosine Sobczak, O.S.F., is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis from Sylvania, OH. She is presently the Chairperson of the Natural and Mathematical Sciences Division and Assistant Professor of Biology at Lourdes College in Sylvania, Ohio.



For a time we mingled about with the rest of the world. We walked among others, and with others, all the while bearing the "mark" of the fool as yet unrecognized by even ourselves. Then at some point in time, our hearts were touched by the love of Christ, and they told us the secret which still remained unknown to many. We felt the flame of the mark deep within our souls. That which had been hidden now blazed with intense heat, and we could only respond with a "yes." The "yes" was a response to a call to be a peripheral person, one who would preach peace, justice and love. "Surely, these people are fools," others say, but we continue onward, undaunted by their sneers and jibes, giving hope to those who have none, faith to those who despair, and love to those who believe themselves unlovable.

Our early years seemed to pass so quickly. We were so full of vigor then. Nothing was too much. We enjoyed our work for the Kingdom. And then — like a thief in the night, came the dryness, the searching, the desert.

"Why me, Lord?  
Why was I chosen?  
Are you still there somewhere?  
Are you listening to me?"

Doubts filled our minds.  
Coldness filled our souls and aches filled our hearts. A call to change; a call to conversion was heard, and it struck a heart of stone. The inner struggle began:

Person — "Not me, Lord. I've been doing things this way for years. I don't want to change now."

Lord — "LET GO, MY FRIEND. YOU'LL BE MUCH HAPPIER DOING THINGS THE WAY I DIRECT THEM."

Person — "Not me, Lord. This new task you call me to would just be expecting too much of me. I might lose my pants."

Lord — "LET GO, MY FRIEND. I'LL BE YOUR SUSPENDERS."

Person — "Not me, Lord. I must keep on moving and doing. I'll get lost in the hustle and bustle of life."

Lord — "SLOW DOWN, MY FRIEND. YOU MUST TAKE TIME TO LISTEN AND BE. ONLY THEN CAN YOU REALLY LIVE."

Person — "Not me, Lord. I like being on top of it all."

Lord — "LET GO, MY FRIEND. IT'S DOWN HERE THAT YOU GET TO THE TOP. YOU MUST LEARN TO WALK WITH THE OTHERS AND NOT ABOVE THEM."

Person — "Not me, Lord I'm comfortable in my position. Leave well enough alone."

Lord — "LET GO, MY FRIEND. I HAVE CALLED YOU TO BE SERVANT TO THE MASTER. ONLY THEN WILL YOU BE SERVANT-MASTER LATER ON."

The struggle went on, but captured by God's love for me, I groaned, as if I were being born again. In my dying I struggled to see the light of His love. Somehow, I got the courage to hang on tightly to His hand that I might let go. Truly, a paradox, isn't it? Stripped naked as Francis was and by choice I freely waited in total poverty. Then, slowly, but surely, my life took on new dimensions. I'm a fool-clown still, but now a much happier clown and a much better fool. My act is changed and now a freshness is added. The old clown is dead, but a new clown is risen.

My advice to you, my fellow clowns, is this: the journey of conversion is always painful and long. We move onward tightly holding the handles of our wagons bearing our gifts and talents. But, at a grace-filled moment, we grasp his hand to let go of the handle and in so doing, we begin to discover the riches within ourselves. They were always there, but we failed to see them for so long because we feared the risk of letting go in order to take a look inside.





## PEACE IN THE VISION OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

GERMAIN KOPACZYNSKI, O.F.M. CONV.

### Introduction

"A mark of Pope John Paul II's charismatic style is his ability to illuminate human aspirations with a telling phrase or a symbolic gesture. For several hours last week, an unprecedented event put together under his auspices dramatized one of the greatest of all aspirations. At his invitation, leaders from the religions of the earth gathered under glowering skies in the tranquil medieval town of Assisi and, with quiet dignity, uttered prayers for world peace.... The broad assemblage was set in Assisi in honor of St. Francis, the simple Umbrian friar whose life exemplifies humanity's quest for peace. 'If the world is going to continue, and men and women are to survive in it,' John Paul declared in English, 'it cannot do without prayer. This is the permanent lesson of Assisi. It is the lesson of St. Francis, who embodied an attractive ideal for us.' " (Time, Nov. 10, 1986, 78).

### The World Day of Prayer for Peace: October 27, 1986

I read recently that the Holy Father regarded what took place in Assisi on October 27, 1986. "The World Day of Prayer for Peace," as one of

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*Fr. Germain Kopaczynski, O.F.M. Conv., is President of St. Hyacinth College and Seminary in Granby, MA, where he also lectures in philosophy. This article is a shortened version of a lecture delivered at the College - Seminary's commemoration of the Assisi "World Day of Prayer for Peace," November 20, 1986.*

the most significant religious events of the past year. If you read *Time* on the event, you might be inclined to agree: the Nov. 10, 1986 issue gives a full two-page color spread to the Assisi gathering. *Newsweek* (or is it *Newsweek*?) on the other hand, made the Assisi meeting appear a minor happening at best, preferring to focus on a sideshow rather than the main event.

The choice of St. Francis' Assisi as the site for the gathering of world religious leaders to offer prayers for peace seems in retrospect to be a most propitious one. No saint is more revered by men and women of all faiths and even of no faith throughout the world than is St. Francis, the Little Poor Man of Assisi. One of the prayers offered by the participants at the Assisi convocation might well have been for the ability to translate the respect which all peoples have for St. Francis' person into a universal acknowledgement of St. Francis' message of peace.

Thomas of Celano, Francis' earliest biographer, tells us that such was the case during the Poverello's lifetime:

"In all his (i. e., St. Francis') preaching, before he proposed the word of God to those gathered about, he first prayed for peace for them, saying: 'The Lord give you peace.' He always most devoutly announced peace to men and women, to all he met and overtook. For this reason many who had hated peace and had hated also salvation embraced peace, through the operation of the Lord, with all their heart and were made children of peace and seekers after eternal salvation (*The First Life of St. Francis* 23.)

### St. Francis as the Quintessential Man of Peace

Down through the centuries, the stature of St. Francis as a man of peace has grown. Official papal pronouncements of our present century have enhanced the reputation of the Poverello as the quintessential man of peace: Pius XI's *Rite Expiatis* (paras. 33-34) and Benedict XV's *Sacra Propediem* (paras. 12-15), among others. But we find the theme of St. Francis as peacemaker being used in other locations as well, indeed, in places as far flung as Oslo and Washington.

When she began her 1979 Nobel Peace Prize Lecture, Mother Teresa of Calcutta did so with a tribute to the gentle Assisian saint:

"As we have gathered here together to thank God for the Nobel Peace Prize, I think it will be beautiful that we pray the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi which always surprises me very much. We pray this prayer every day after holy communion because it is very fitting for each one of us. And I always wonder that four hundred — five hundred years ago as St. Francis

of Assisi composed this prayer that they had the same difficulties that we have today as we compose this prayer that fits very nicely for us also."

The Nobel Peace Prize recipient is making a clear allusion to what is popularly known in our day as "The Peace-Prayer of St. Francis" which — though not the actual composition of the historical Saint of Assisi — nevertheless comes remarkably close to capturing the essence of the Poverello's vision. Though Mother Teresa's historical sense may be centuries off in attributing the prayer to the historical St. Francis, her spiritual sense is right on in praying this prayer in the spirit of the Little Poor Man of Assisi.<sup>1</sup>

That St. Francis and peace go together is not the message of Mother Teresa alone. What she said in Oslo about St. Francis as a man of peace the Catholic Bishops of the United States said in their own way from Washington in paragraph 115 of their 1983 Pastoral Letter, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response":

"In the centuries between the fourth century and our own day, the theme of Christian non-violence and Christian pacifism has echoed and re-echoed, sometimes more strongly, sometimes more faintly. One of the great non-violent figures in those centuries was St. Francis of Assisi. Besides making personal efforts on behalf of reconciliation and peace, Francis stipulated that laypersons who became members of his Third Order were not to take up lethal weapons, or bear them about, against anybody." <sup>2</sup>

Whether it be from Rome or Oslo or Washington, the legacy of St. Francis of Assisi as a man of peace *par excellence* made the choice of Assisi as the location for the world day of prayer for peace a most felicitous and, truth be told, a quite pacific one. On this point, world religious leaders can readily agree. Would that the rest of St. Francis' vision be agreed upon as well.

### The Writings of St. Francis on "Peace"

Up to this point, we have seen the esteem in which Assisi's Little Poor Man has been held by our contemporaries who regard St. Francis as symbolizing the best in humanity's quest for peace. How justified is this description in the light of Francis' own writings?

We discover seventeen references to "peace" and its cognates in the authentic writings of St. Francis.<sup>3</sup> To place this figure in proper perspective, it may be helpful to note that St. Francis speaks of "God" no fewer than two hundred and twelve times. Of "sin" forty-five times, of "enemies" thirty-two times, and of "penance" twenty-two times. Saint Francis speaks of "peace" about as much as he speaks of "wisdom." We cite these figures

not to show that St. Francis was not a man of peace but merely to illustrate the obvious fact that — comparatively speaking — he simply did not mention “peace” all that much in his writings.

Of the seventeen references to “peace” and its allied words in his writings, six are direct quotations from scripture while five are found in the opening greetings of several of the different letters that the Poverello was in the habit of writing to the various groups of his day. Of the half-dozen or so texts which remain, there are three which upon investigation would seem to hold a special place in establishing the reputation of St. Francis as a man of peace. Two — one from the “Testament,” the other from “The Cantic of Creatures” — come from the last year or so of his life; the third comes from the undated “Admonitions;” all three tell us clearly that peace is of paramount importance in St. Francis’ vision of reality.

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*We can say with certainty that peace is found only with God, is hard work, and is an essential part of the Gospel message.*

---

### 1. The Testament Text on “Peace”

Written about a month or so before his death in 1226, the “Testament” stands as one of St. Francis’ most important writings, a sort of “swan song,” a farewell to the brothers and a restatement of their founder’s ideals.<sup>4</sup> Much more of a spiritual than a juridical document, the *Testament* has Francis assuring his followers that God’s peace was and is to remain a cornerstone of any truly “Franciscan” view of reality. Saint Francis attributes the unusual greeting of peace which he and his brothers have employed on their journeys and in their sermons to nothing less than a revelation of the Most High himself: “God revealed to me a form of greeting, telling me that we should say: ‘God give you peace’” (Test. 23; *Omnibus of Sources*, p. 68).

The text on peace, at first glance, seems curiously out of place, nestled as it were between sections on “work” and “poverty.” If truth be told, its inclusion seems more “stream of consciousness” than anything else. That is precisely the point: “peace” is placed between “work” and “poverty” matter-of-factly, haphazardly almost, as if it were the most natural linking of ideas in the mind of St. Francis. Who could contest the centrality

of “work” and “poverty” in the vision of the Poverello? In like fashion, who could doubt the importance of “peace” placed so nonchalantly in this literary context by a man who was more poet than polished author?

Though “peace” might appear to be placed in the *Testament* in a cavalier way, we should remember that, when all is said and done, the peace of which St. Francis speaks is, after all, a revelation of God himself. In commenting on the passage, Franciscan scholar Cajetan Esser treats it as if it were in actuality a continuation of the section on “the manner of work.” Esser then goes on to note that these two paragraphs give one important exhortation after another. And if the one on “work” seems to be spelled out a bit awkwardly, the exhortation on “peace” impresses us all the more by its simplicity: peace is to be the true friar’s work! This is the deep meaning of St. Francis’ peace text in his “Testament”.<sup>5</sup> Far from being an afterthought, peace is central to St. Francis’ view of reality.

### 2. The Cantic of Creatures Text on “Peace”

I do not think there is much doubt but that Saint Francis’ greatest literary achievement is “The Cantic of Creatures.” Written in the Umbrian dialect a year before his death, the “Cantic” was composed in stages. First, St. Francis wrote verses one through nine as a paean of praise to nature’s Creator; next, in the section that interests us, he added verses ten and eleven in an effort — successful as it turned out — to restore peace between the mayor and the bishop of Assisi who had been feuding for some time. (The episode is recounted in *Speculum Perfectionis* 101). It is in this addition to the original nine verses that we find “peace” once again on the lips and in the heart of the Little Poor Man of Assisi:

“All praise be yours, my Lord, through those who grant pardon for love of you, through those who endure sickness and trial.

Happy those who endure in peace.

By you, Most High, they will be crowned” (*Omnibus of Sources*, p. 131).

Some purists might wince and feel that the addition spoils the plan of the “Cantic.” Whatever we might think of verses ten and eleven, the key point to keep in mind is that St. Francis felt the addition was warranted.<sup>6</sup> It is the soul of the poet that speaks in this instance. Rather than take issue with the poet for what he did to the poem — it is his poem, after all — it will be more beneficial to reflect on the fact that nature’s praises to God must be seen in the context of pardon and peace.

The additional verses tell us that man is not exempt from the laws of all creation which proclaim that God ought to be praised by everything that is. In a sense, it is sufficient for other creatures to be in order for them to praise God; man praises God not only by his being but also by

his way of acting. Men and women, being made in the image and likeness of God, continue and elevate that hymn of praise when they grant pardon, withstand trials, and finally when they endure in peace.

If the pardoning is seen as active and if the withstanding is seen as passive, the "enduring in peace" is a blend of the two qualities which go to make up humanity's unique contribution to the hymn of praise that all creation sends up to God the Most High. In a word, if the love of nature so eloquently described in the first nine verses of the "Canticle" comes shining through, so too must the greatness in creation of pardon and peace. As we noted in the analysis of the "Testament" text on peace, St. Francis is saying once again that "peace is the work of the true friar," a point which Thomas of Celano had duly noted as early as 1228 when he puts on the lips of Francis the following: "Go, brothers, to the world and announce to all peace and repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (*The First Life of St. Francis* 29). Indeed, St. Francis goes beyond a vision that would focus narrowly on the fraternity of his brothers in religion and comes up with a view that touches all peoples everywhere: "Peace is the work of humankind before God."

"Enduring in peace" — it is worth noting that for St. Francis "peace" and "patience" are often found together. What a world of comment might be written about the word "endure" which appears twice in these verses. This seems to be Francis the poet's way of telling his brothers and sisters that their efforts at peace will always be partial, demanding trust in a power higher than themselves. They will have to "endure" in peace because that is the way of creatures. God is the creator who is praised throughout the "Canticle of Creatures." To "endure in peace" is to stay close to the author of true peace, God the Most High. To "endure in peace" is for man to realize who he is and who God is. As we have already noted in regard to the text on peace found in the "Testament," "to endure in peace" is St. Francis' way of saying that peace is hard work. And surely we are justified in asking ourselves: can it be mere coincidence that in both the "Testament" text and the "Canticle" text, "peace" and "God" are found together in St. Francis' vision of reality?

Little wonder, then, that "enduring in peace" is one of the beatitudes of the Franciscan way of life: "Blessed are those who endure in peace." The revelation that God gave him of peace which St. Francis speaks of in his "Testament" must be seen in the context of the blessed character it brings to those who persevere in it, who endure in it. In truth, then, peace must be seen as one of the pillars of the edifice that Francis of Assisi wished to build under the inspiration of the Most High God. This peace will not come easy: the contexts in which these two key texts regarding peace occur leave little doubt concerning the arduous nature

of the quest for peace: it is born of work ("Testament") and there is a test of endurance and patience in the sense of suffering for those who would possess it ("Canticle").

### 3. The *Admonitions* Texts on "Peace"

We see most clearly that the brothers who follow in the footsteps of St. Francis must be men of peace when we turn to that writing of the Poverello known as the *Admonitions*, Francis' very own *Mirror of Perfection*, a sort of Franciscan Sermon on the Mount.<sup>7</sup>

The thirteenth and the fifteenth *Admonitions* begin with the same text from St. Matthew: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Mt. 5:9). The thirteenth *admonition* deals with a theme to which we have already alluded: the link which St. Francis sees between "peace" and "patience". The fifteenth treats of the essence of being a peacemaker: it consists in doing all for the love of the Lord.

Saint Francis wanted his followers to do one thing: to observe the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (*The Rule of 1221*, the so-called "non-approved Rule" 1). When the savior was born, Luke's Gospel has the New Testament's first message of peace: "Glory to God in the highest and peace to men of good will." When Jesus was raised from the dead, his first words to his disciples were "Peace be with you." Saint Francis knew that peace is emphasized in the New Testament as an essential aspect of the Kingdom of God. Little wonder, then, that peace is to be the work of the true friar and, indeed, of the true Christian. The peace texts of the *Admonitions* might be undated; their message however remains timeless.

### Conclusion

Our study of the writings of St. Francis on the topic of "peace" leads us to conclude that if the quantity of texts dealing with peace is not great, the quality of those texts in which "peace" does occur should leave no doubt but that it is a key ingredient in St. Francis' vision of reality. We can say with certainty that peace is found only with God, is hard work, and is an essential part of the Gospel message. Though the Poverello might not write about peace all that often in his writings, our study has shown that Francis preached peace from the beginning of his ministry. His earliest biographers have taken pains to point this out; our findings have borne out the truth of their claims. Well did the Holy Father choose Assisi and its saint as the locus for the world day of prayer for peace.

Concluding its report on the Assisi gathering, *Time Observed*

"As the day concluded and as those who had observed the cease-fire returned to making war, it was the simplicity of the meeting's vision, not its grandeur,

that seemed to endure.... Little had been said about specific actions or compromises that might bring peace. But in the many tongues from the many creeds had come a reaffirmation of the belief that religion, with its appeal to the heart, is necessary for peace."

### A Postscript

Be they Muslim or Catholic, be they medieval or modern, be they atheist or theist, be they from Rome or Oslo or Bangladesh or Washington, men and women have readily agreed on the fittingness of regarding St. Francis of Assisi as a symbol of what is best in the human striving for peace, as the man of peace without peer. Would that they might agree not only on St. Francis' person but *with* St. Francis' message as well:

"Perhaps we can't have peace without God's will," offered Syed Khalilullah, a Muslim delegate from Bangladesh" (From the *Time* article cited above, p. 79).

"In His Will is our peace": words of Dante Alighieri, Secular Franciscan (From *The Divine Comedy*, "Paradiso," iii, 85).

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>On the "Peace Prayer of St. Francis" as a creation of the twentieth century, the reader will find the following helpful: Marion Habig, O.F.M., "Origin of the Peace Prayer," in *Franciscan Herald* 53 (1974, -151-3; Jerome Poulenc, O.F.M., "L'Inspiration moderne de la priere 'Seigneur, faites de moi un instrument de votre paix,'" in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 68 (1975), 450-3; Kajetan Esser, O.F.M., *Die Opuscula des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi. Neue textkritische Edition* (Grottaferrata, 1976), pp. 54-5; Roberto Bayaras, O.F.M., "The Peace Prayer of St. Francis," in *Franciscan Herald* 60 (1981), 313-5. Among those authors who are aware that the "peace prayer" is of recent vintage yet feel that it correctly gauges the authentic spirit of St. Francis, we can cite the aforementioned Poulenc as well as Auspicius van Constanje, O.F.M., *Francis: Bible of the Poor* (Chicago, 1977), p. 203.

<sup>2</sup>There is an interesting observation to be made regarding the text: paragraph 115 has a certain looseness, linking as it does "Christian non-violence" and "Christian pacifism" with a singular verb in the first sentence as if we could speak of one entity, namely, "Christian non-violence and Christian pacifism," and then dropping half the phrase in the second sentence when it calls St. Francis one of the great "non-violent" figures in those centuries. Are readers to add the word "pacifist" in order to be in line with the sense of the first sentence? Can it be that readers should regard the Poverello as "non-violent" though not necessarily "pacifist"? I believe the bishops' reticence to come right out and say that St. Francis was a pacifist is in the final analysis well-founded. For a fuller analysis of

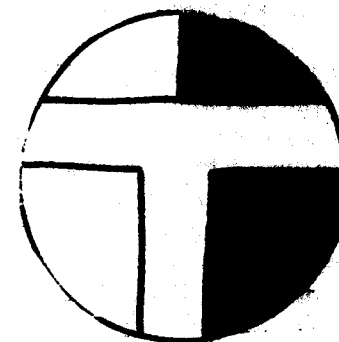
the question of St. Francis' views on war, see my "St. Francis and Pacifism," *Miscellanea Francescana* 86 (1986), 13-30.

<sup>3</sup>This information is based on Ioannis Bocalli, O.F.M., *Concordantiae Verbales Opusculorum S. Francisci et S. Clarae Assisiensium*, (Assisi, 1976). The Latin words analyzed are "pacifico," "pacificus," and "pax." The one Italian word is "pace."

<sup>4</sup>On the importance of the *Testament* to a correct understanding of the message of St. Francis, see the germane comments made by Cajetan Esser, O.F.M., *The Rule and Testament of St. Francis*, (Chicago, 1977), p. 82.

<sup>5</sup>In the thought-provoking, highly psychological interpretation of the poem made by Eloi LeClerc, O.F.M., *The Canticle of Creatures: Symbols of Union* (Chicago, 1977; orig. ed. 1970), p. 23, much is made of the integral nature of the last stanzas.

<sup>7</sup>Lothar Hardick, O.F.M., *The Admonitions of St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. David Smith (Chicago, 1982), p. viii



## Traces of Francis in Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*

GREGORY MALANOWSKI, O.F.M. CONV.

Francis and Bonaventure — two men of the same century, two men with the same vision, yet two very different men: Francis, the poor man of Assisi who attained the heights of sanctity in his radical following of Jesus; Bonaventure, the master theologian who wrote a variation on the theme of discipleship in his following of the same Lord. These two friar-saints are the subject of this paper, which is to examine

### The Traces of Francis in Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*

The *Itinerarium* is a short, intense work that was written by Bonaventure in 1259 and has been characterized as theological, as philosophical and as mystical. Whatever the label, it is a "pearl of great price" from the Franciscan mind and heart of the Seraphic Doctor. Perhaps the most difficult question in approaching this study is one of methodology. Exactly how does one study the "traces" of Francis in a writing of Bonaventure? One would be hard put to disagree with George Tavard in maintaining that what Francis simply felt and lived, Bonaventure was to think.<sup>1</sup> After all, Bonaventure was a Franciscan, and although his means may have been different, the ideal was the same.<sup>2</sup> And yet, how does one show their relationship? On the one hand, a general cataloging of Franciscan themes is to be avoided, while on the other hand, searching for a strict literary dependence would prove equally as fruitless.

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Fr. Gregory Malanowski, O.F.M. Conv., is a doctoral candidate at Catholic University in Washington. A faculty member at St. Anthony - on - Hudson Seminary in Rensselaer, New York, he holds an STL from the University of Fribourg where he presented a thesis on Saint Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*.

In searching for a common element, one need seek no further than the Prologue of the *Itinerarium*. Here one finds the starting point.

In 1259, two years after his election as minister General of the Order, Bonaventure sought the peace of Alverna, to bring himself into contact with the spirit of Francis that he, Bonaventure, might carry out his ministry with the mind of the Saint. In his own words, Bonaventure reveals what happened:

While I was reflecting there on various ways by which the soul ascends into God, there came to mind, among other things, the miracle which had occurred to blessed Francis in this very place: the vision of the winged Seraph in the form of the Crucified. While reflecting on this, I saw at once that this vision represented our father's rapture in contemplation and the road by which this rapture was reached. (Prologue 2)<sup>3</sup>

Bonaventure was inspired by the same vision that appeared to Francis in 1224. Both Francis and Bonaventure experienced Jesus in a similar fashion, although Francis was imprinted corporally with the wounds of the Crucified. Where did this experience lead the two friars? How did this experience affect them?

Bonaventure went about his ministry as General of the Order until his death fifteen years later. Francis, bearing the marks and the suffering of Jesus, died after two years of pain and failing health. One may say that, for Bonaventure, the immediate consequence of the vision on Alverna was his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*; for Francis, it was the reality of the vision that he bore until his death, in his hands, side and feet. What Francis wrote during these last two years of his life, the *Praises of God*, the *Canticle of the Creatures*, and his *Last Testament*, when set in the context of his life, articulate his "response" to the vision of 1224.

To ascertain the "traces of Francis in Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*" I propose an examination of those works written after the Alverna experience which had left its mark on them both, to see if there might not be common elements, points of convergence, that resonated in their spirits, as they reflected upon, and lived out their experience of the Lord Jesus — one, the poor beggar, the other the master theologian. Perhaps this method is a bit artificial. It does nevertheless provide the structure to discuss what at least this author senses in his Franciscan heart: namely, that, Bonaventure was a true son of his Father.

### First Convergence: Their Attitude Toward Creatures

For Francis, his love of creatures is sung in the *Canticle of the Creatures* which he wrote in 1225 during a time of much suffering.<sup>4</sup> This hymn,

with the happy ambiguity of the Italian word *per*, calls for the Most High to be praised "for" his creatures and "through" his creatures. Such praise arose from Francis' ability to see God in all creatures. Everything reminded him of the goodness of God the Creator and thus the birds and trees and animals could move him to praise the source of their goodness and beauty. For this service he called them "brother" and "sister" and felt a kinship with them all, when each, in its own way, praised the Creator.<sup>5</sup> This brotherhood with all creation, and his "sacramental" way of perceiving creation gave rise to the *Cantic of the Creatures* which calls forth representatives of creation to praise and to be channels of praise to the Most High God.

One cannot help but have this very "Franciscan" outlook in mind when reading the *Itinerarium* of Bonaventure, because it is profoundly true that the Bonaventurian doctrine of exemplarism can be called the *Cantic of the Creatures* translated into metaphysical language.<sup>6</sup> Bonaventure describes the world as a "ladder by which we ascend in to God." (1, 2) Bonaventure's exemplarism begins in the Trinity, for as the Father speaks His Word, He expresses all that He possibly can, all his ideas for creation. Through His Word, the Father creates.<sup>7</sup> Thus all creatures are grounded in the Word, and therefore reflect God and lead back to God, in as much as the Word is the image of the Father and therefore reflects the Father and returns to the Father in the Holy Spirit within the Trinity. All creatures participate in Being because they come from being itself. There are, however, various levels of participation in Being and therefore, various degrees of reflecting God and leading back to God. Things are a "shadow" of God because they make us think of God as their supreme cause and lead us to the knowledge of attributes common to the Three Divine Persons. Things can also be "vestiges" (literally, "footprints") of God if they make us think of God as efficient, exemplary and final cause, leading us to knowledge of the attributes appropriate to each person. Rational creatures reflect God in a special way, for they have God present within them as the object of their knowledge and love and in their faculties of memory, understanding and will, they "image" God as Trinity.<sup>8</sup> So Bonaventure begins the journey with a consideration of creatures in the world because they signify the invisible things of God... "partly because God is the origin, exemplar and end of every creature, and every effect is the sign of its cause, the exemplification of its exemplar and the path to the end to which it leads..." (II, 12) He then considers how the human person is a mirror of God, and through careful consideration of the soul's powers, Bonaventure shows how the memory leads one to contemplate eternity, the intellect to truth and the power of choice to highest goodness.

(III, 4) Therefore, in the quest of peace which Bonaventure undertakes in his *Itinerarium*, the creation outside the human person, and that which one finds within oneself, are important and helpful pathways of coming to know and praise the Creator.

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*... both the Itinerarium and Francis' life  
end in a transitus, God's final gift which  
raises the person beyond itself into the mys-  
tery of God.*

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Eloi Leclercq, in his extensive study of *Cantic of the Creatures*, advances the hypothesis that the "brothers and sisters" of Francis' hymn have a mythical, archetypal dimension to their meaning which is revealed, in part, by the attributes Francis assigns to each.<sup>9</sup> This dimension arises from deep within the author who, at the time, was nearly blind and undergoing tremendous suffering as the result of his wounds. Perhaps, Leclercq suggests, the *Cantic* expresses in symbolic language the profound reconciliation of the man with the totality of his psyche.<sup>10</sup> Notice the downward movement of Brother Sun toward Mother Earth, which suggests a journey into the interior of the soul, into the womb that sustains us and provides security. There Francis found his peace; there he found the treasure which the Lord promised him immediately prior to his composing the *Cantic*. (2 Cel 213)<sup>11</sup> If the *Cantic* sprang from such existential depths, is it not possible that it is meant to lead one there?

Bonaventure's Temple symbolism (III, 1 and V, 1) serves a similar purpose, indicating that the *Itinerarium* is not only an ascent, but also a descent into the depths where the human person discovers self as an image of God. The pilgrim goes deeper into the Temple at last reaching the Holy of Holies (V and VI) to gaze with wonder at the propitiatory which represents the two names of God: Being and Goodness. Using this image, Bonaventure asks the reader to go deep into self, past imaginations and emotions, through the memory, intellect and will to that center of one's being where God is, and once there, to wait for God's grace.

For Francis and Bonaventure the same truth emerges: we can return to God, be reminded of God through the creatures that God has given

us. The journey must start there, but indeed does not only mount upwards to God who is the Creator, but also descends into the human depths where God can be found as the stillpoint, the integrating source, exemplar and end of our quest for peace.

### Second Convergence: Praise

Soon after Francis' vision of the seraph, while still at Alverna, Brother Leo asked Francis for "something encouraging" from his own hand. Francis complied with the simple Leo's request and wrote down for him the *Praises of God*. (2 Cel 49)<sup>12</sup> On the reverse side of the paper Francis wrote down a blessing using the text of Numbers 6:24-26. Francis signed it with a "T", a Tau. Leo made his own notation on the paper, which Francis instructed him to keep with himself till his death. He notes the time and place of composition, then says "... after the vision and the speech of the Seraph and the impression of the stigmata of Christ in his body, he made and wrote with his own hand the *Praises* written on the other side of this sheet, giving thanks to the Lord for the benefits conferred upon him."<sup>13</sup>

Thus the *Praises of God* may be viewed as Francis' immediate response to the vision of Jesus, a response expressing the praise and the mystical heights which Francis experienced. The style of this composition is noteworthy: simple, short phrases, not terribly complex or difficult to understand. One can almost feel the emotion that Francis must have felt, but left unsaid, in each line. In its simplicity it defies analysis. It is the response of a poor man who, having received much, returns his love in the only way he can, simple praise.

Bonaventure's praises, as found in the fifth and sixth chapters of the *Itinerarium*, are no less profound, but the style is radically different, the style of a theologian. The sentences are long and involved, not simple in their expression. One almost has the impression that he tries to say everything about God and yet his own recognition of his finitude would never permit him to even think of such a possibility. He begins with the attributes of God, Who is the fullness of Being. He then moves to God considered as highest Good, expressed in the Trinity of Persons. Finally the union of God with the human in the person of Jesus is praised.

It is left to the reader to discover the details of the similarities in the two sets of Praises. For this author it is clear that, as a consequence of their Alverna experiences, Francis and Bonaventure expressed themselves in praise of the great things that God had done.

### Third Convergence: The Life of Grace — Poverty, Peace, Prayer

A third document of Francis is left to us from those last two years of his life, his *Last Testament*. In comparing this writing with Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*, there is a convergence that is best described as "the life of grace," a dependence on the Lord that permeates one's entire life. Francis' choice of language in his *Testament* clarifies this attitude:

... God inspired me to lead a life of penance... God himself led me into the company of lepers... God inspired me with faith in his churches... in priests... God gave me friars... the Most High made it clear to me that I must live the Gospel life... God inspired me to write the Rule...<sup>14</sup>

It was the Lord who called Francis and Francis allowed the Lord to lead him.

Bonaventure has the same attitude in his *Itinerarium*. It is to those disposed by grace that the way of the journey becomes clear. (Prologue 4) We cannot raise ourselves up, but must open ourselves to being raised by divine aid (I, 1), to being illumined by the divine light (II, 13). And once we have penetrated into our own human depths to contemplate the Mediator of human and divine, Jesus, we must wait in wonder, to receive the grace of passing into the peace of God. (VII, 1, 4) As the experience of Francis was grace and the passage of the Hebrews through the Red Sea was grace, so the transitus into God is grace, to be received, never to be earned. "God's grace is enough for us" concludes Bonaventure quoting Paul (2 Corinthians 12:9). This is the attitude of the pilgrim who makes the journey; this is the attitude of the Poverello who had come to the end of his earthly journey.

This convergence described as grace is not merely an abstract theological category for these two friars. As the recognition of his dependence on the Most High for everything, Francis chose a poor life. Poverty became the Franciscan nuance to the life of grace. In his *Testament* Francis asked the Friars to bear deep in their hearts his love for poverty. It was the Gospel life to be poor, so they were to be satisfied with a patched habit, cord and trousers. They were to receive no recompense for their work, except food. If they had no food, they were to beg. They were to live in the poorest of dwellings as strangers and pilgrims.<sup>15</sup>

Bonaventure was certainly challenged along these lines, especially by the Spirituals, for the lifestyle of the universities seemed to contradict, or at best obscure what Francis wanted. And yet, here is another instance of the same ideal with different realizations. Bonaventure begins his *Itinerarium* with: "Here begins the reflection of the poor man in the desert." This dependence on the grace of God, this poverty of spirit is

the condition for the beginning of the journey to which Bonaventure invites the reader. It is a recognition that one is truly a creature who, in his solitude, needs and desires union with the Creator. Only one small enough to acknowledge this need for the Other can make the journey.<sup>16</sup> Thus Bonaventure expresses the need for a poverty of spirit, even if his lifestyle or the toleration of less radical expressions of poverty in others would seem to indicate the contrary.

If grace is the means of the journey and poverty is a concretization of that attitude one should possess on the journey, peace is the goal. Peace that is found in the union with God was the goal of Francis. He encouraged the friars to greet all with the words "God give you peace."<sup>17</sup> The experience of God's peace amid suffering was the inspiration for the *Canticle*.<sup>18</sup> Peace was Francis' prayer for Brother Leo in the blessing on the back of the *Praises*. ("May God turn his regard to you and give you peace.") So great was Francis' reputation as a person of peace, the prayer "Lord make me an instrument of your peace..." has been attributed to him.

At the beginning of the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure describes Francis as a man "in all of whose preaching was the annunciation of peace, wishing for peace in every greeting, yearning for peace in every moment of contemplation... with those who hated peace he was peaceable..." (Prologue 1) It was to immerse himself in the peace which Francis found that Bonaventure went to Alverna in 1259. It is to this peace that Bonaventure invites the pilgrim who makes the journey, for it is in the experience of God that the journey consists, deepening to the point at which the person, quieted through more and more profound considerations, is opened, readied to receive the consolation of God in union with him, to the extent that it is possible in this life. (VII, 1). For Bonaventure, the purpose of the journey is to use the intellect and the will, to prepare the pilgrim for the peace which Francis experienced, which Bonaventure experienced, which is not limited to the poor or to intellectuals, but which is accessible to all.

Intimately related to this goal is prayer. Implicit throughout this study has been the prayer of Francis and Bonaventure in their response to Jesus. Bonaventure places the entire *Itinerarium* in the context of prayer as he invites the pilgrim "to the cry of prayer through Christ Crucified" (Prologue 4) as the necessary pre-disposition for making the journey. The title of the work itself, "the soul's journey into God" might be a good definition of prayer. Bonaventure concludes each chapter with words from the Scriptures, words usually of praise or thanksgiving.

Not only is the context that of prayer, but the structure of the *Itinerarium* can be considered a method of prayer. . Through creatures, through the

human person, through Being and Goodness Bonaventure leads the pilgrim to God. At each stage one goes deeper into the self, passing first from creatures to the sensory perception and judgement of them, then passing the emotions, the memory, the intellect, the will to arrive at that point at which one encounters Being and Goodness within. There one is invited to meditate on God, God as Trinity and finally the God-man Jesus. And to wait. One waits for God to crown our grace-aided efforts with that *transitus* which leads to peace. This type of centering prayer is the journey to which Bonaventure invites the reader.

When considering these writings of Francis and Bonaventure a pattern emerges in their prayer. Bonaventure seems to have given a structure to what is expressed in Francis' writings. The *Canticle* calls for praise for and through creatures and corresponds to the first stage of the journey (*Itinerarium* I and II). The *Testament* is Francis' statement of the transformation that was the fruit of God's grace in his life which blossomed into the brotherhood. Bonaventure acknowledged the human condition and the transforming power of grace in *Itinerarium* III and IV. The *Praises* of Francis intone in simple fashion the prayer of the Poor Man to the Good God, while Bonaventure elaborates that praise as only a theologian can (*Itinerarium* VI and VII). Yet both the *Itinerarium* and Francis' life end in a *transitus*, God's final gift which raises the person beyond itself into the mystery of God. Bonaventure provides a spiritual guide for the Franciscan who seeks to make the journey of Francis.

#### Fourth Convergence: the Cross and the Imitation of the Crucified

It would be an understatement to say that Francis imitated Jesus. His lifestyle was such a radical discipleship that he wished to feel, within his soul and body, the pain which the Lord endured in the hour of his most bitter Passion. His request was granted in a way that Francis could never have imagined. Through Francis' experience of Jesus on Alverna, the wounds of the savior would be his wounds for the rest of his life. And Francis continued to imitate Jesus until the moment of his death, laid naked on the earth because Jesus hung naked on the cross. (LM XIV, 4)<sup>19</sup> He blessed the friars, raising his arms in the form of a cross. (2 Cel 214)<sup>20</sup> He had the Gospel of St. John read to him, beginning with the verse, "Before the Paschal Feast..." (LM XIV, 5)<sup>21</sup> And he broke bread, giving some to each friar, recalling the Last Supper. (2 Cel 217)<sup>22</sup> Thus to the last moment, he wanted only to imitate his Lord who had called him to be poor and to proclaim the Kingdom by word and example.

It would equally be an understatement to say Bonaventure emphasized

the Crucified. The journey could only take place through the Crucified Christ (Prologue 3) who is the Way and the Door. (VII, 1) In the Crucified one sees the mystery of love poured out for all, so it is there that the pilgrim must begin. (Prologue 4) And it is there that the journey ends, in the passage with Him into peace. (VII, 2) For Bonaventure, Francis is the image of the Crucified: "The memory of Christ Jesus Crucified was ever present in the depths of his heart... and he longed to be wholly transformed into him by the fire of love." (LM IX, 2)<sup>23</sup> And so he was. And so the course of this reflection has returned to its starting point — the experience of Jesus.

The traces of Francis in Bonaventure have led from Alverna back to the imitation of Christ Crucified. Although the styles may have been different at times, the responses of Francis and Bonaventure to the mystery of the suffering Christ have been the same. What conclusions can be drawn? Probably what every Franciscan knows in his/her heart of hearts, that the attraction of Francis is the Crucified Christ shining through him. Might not Bonaventure's points of convergence with Francis be the same as our own?

<sup>1</sup>George Tavard, *Transiency and Permanence: The Nature of Theology According to Saint Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1954), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>Bougerol J.-G., *Introduction a l'etude de St. Bonaventure* (Tournai: Desclee, 1961), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, trans. Ewert Cousins, (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). References to the *Itinerarium* will be given in the text of this article by chapter and paragraph.

<sup>4</sup>Marion Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Omnibus of Sources* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), p. 128.

<sup>5</sup>Eloi Leclercq, *The Canticle of the Creatures: Symbols of Union* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup>Efrem Bettoni, *Nothing For Your Journey*, trans. by Bruce Malina, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1959), p. 119.

<sup>7</sup>See Genesis I: "And God said..."

<sup>8</sup>Cousins, *Bonaventure*, "Introduction", p. 27.

<sup>9</sup>Leclercq, *Canticle of the Creatures*, pp. 10-18.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas of Celano, "Second Life," in *Omnibus*, pp. 532-33.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas of Celano, "Second Life," in *Omnibus*, p. 406.

<sup>13</sup>*Omnibus*, p. 124.

<sup>14</sup>*Omnibus*, pp. 67-70.

<sup>15</sup>*Testament* 5, 6, 7, in *Omnibus*, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup>Zachary Hayes, *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in Saint Bonaventure* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 47.

<sup>17</sup>*Testament* 6 in *Omnibus*, p. 68.

<sup>18</sup>See 2 Cel 213 in *Omnibus*, pp. 532-33.

<sup>19</sup>Bonaventure, "Major Life" in *Omnibus*, pp. 739-40.

<sup>20</sup>Thomas of Celano, "Second Life," in *Omnibus*, p. 533-34.

<sup>21</sup>Bonaventure, "Major Life," in *Omnibus*, p. 740.

<sup>22</sup>Thomas of Celano, "Second Life," in *Omnibus*, p. 536.

<sup>23</sup>Bonaventure, "Major Life," in *Omnibus*, p. 699.

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# The Poor Clares and St. Francis

*Saint Catherine of Bologna*

FR. IGNATIUS BRADY, O.F.M.

SHORTLY BEFORE leaving Grottaferrata (Rome) in mid-June I came upon a notice that disturbed me not a little. A report in a Franciscan periodical (the title of which I failed to notice) told of a conference or talk given at the International Congress (Rome, 29 September – 2 October, 1981) to celebrate the eight centenary of the birth of our Holy Father Saint Francis.

The speaker or conferencier was a well-known German scholar, Fr. Engelbert Grau, who has written extensively on St. Francis and Franciscan history. Eventually, I hope, his paper will be published — and prove less devastating than the summary would indicate.

## I

His position was that in the first two generations of the Clares (the first sixty years, perhaps) the memory of St. Francis was much alive among the Sisters, so that his presence was felt and his influence quite vivid and apparent. They looked to him as their Founder and Father, from whom they received and derived their spirituality, and in practice lived out his message of simplicity, humility and poverty.

Thereafter, however, such conscious relationship and dependence on Our Holy Father Saint Francis, he claims, tapered out to the point of being marginal in importance or influence, beginning with the end of the thirteenth century. — In deed and in fact, Father Engelbert goes on, such an eclipse of St. Francis among the Clares lasted until Vatican II.

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*Fr. Ignatius Brady is an internationally known Franciscan scholar. For years he was engaged in research at Grottaferrata, Italy. He wrote this article a few years ago, prior to his return to his home Province of Saint John the Baptist, Cincinnati.*

So he would judge from a reading of the Clare Constitutions (down the centuries) and known documents of the Sisters themselves and of others. Only occasionally will one find a reference to our Father Francis and more rarely a mention of his love of poverty and his actual life of poverty.

Such findings would lead to the conclusion (as above) that from the last decades of the thirteenth Century until Vatican II (or after) the Poor Clares had a very limited knowledge of what Saint Francis meant or should have meant for them. Only the Council, with its plea to go back to our roots, awoke in them a fresh interest and acknowledgement of the importance of St. Francis for their vocation.

## II

Thus far the summary I had stumbled upon. Until the full text of the conference is published and put into English, one can hardly pass judgment on Fr. Grau's conclusions. Nonetheless, his position challenged me to find some Poor Clare or some community of the Second Order that knew and loved, cherished and followed, Saint Francis. Somehow, by the grace of God, I turned to St. Catherine of Bologna (of whom I knew all too little), and to my delight and great surprise, I found that the Library of our Collegio di S. Bonaventura, once at Quarracchi (Florence) and now at Grottaferrata (a bit northeast of Rome), contained an unexpected wealth of material in old volumes and in a few newer ones, as well as brief studies in the French *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* and in the Italian *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, plus one or the other longer study.

### A. Her Life and Works

Some fifty or more years ago (in 1927) a French writer, Mademoiselle E. Henriën, described the life of St. Catherine, her writings and teachings, as not an ordinary life, but rather as a romance or a poem of love, even though that life was by no means free of difficulties and trials.

Catherine was born in Bologna on September 8th, 1413, (the Feast of the Birthday of Our Lady). At the age of nine she was brought to Ferrara (some distance from Bologna), to be maid of honor to Princess Margaret, daughter of Nicholas III, Marquis of Ferrara, and to obtain an unusual education in letters and the arts, poetry, music and painting.

When Princess Margaret was married (1426), Catherine left the court to join a pious virgin, Lucia Mascheroni, director of a community of young ladies which in 1432 adopted the Rule of Saint Clare (something rather unusual, it seems to me, in that period) and made profession in the hands of the bishop.

In the first five years, life in this community was not always peaceful for Catherine because she was constantly the victim of diabolical illusions. The fruit of such harassment, one might say, is the work called *Le Armi necessarie alla battaglia spirituale* (The Army needed to do Battle in the Things of the Spirit). This Catherine wrote quite early in her religious life, and then destroyed it for fear she had composed it out of vanity! Yet she used to call herself, in a humorous way (so I'd judge), the lowest and least puppy of the monastery: *la minema chagnola*. No wonder the Lord bade her write the work again, which she did in slightly shorter form.

The works (Le Armi) is full of light from on high, a book rich in grace and elegance, "from an elegant soul and gentle heart," as Sr. Illuminata Bambo, her secretary and historian (biographer), was to describe it. At the heart of the work is joy in the Lord, a principle, we can say, that Catherine drew from St. Francis and St. Clare. The *arms* are seven in number: 1) diligence; 2) diffidence in oneself; 3) confidence in God; 4) remembrance of the Passion of Christ; 5) a constant reminder that we are to meet death; 6) remembrance of the glory of God; 7) the authority of Sacred Scripture.

In all these elements she saw the perfection of the spirit: "Groan no more under the weight of earthly things, but soar above them in the holy liberty of the Spirit." Religious life can be a martyrdom in itself, but for St. Catherine it was an exquisite joy which the world could not know or fathom. She would write:

*"Let each one come who loves the Lord!  
Come to the dance singing for love!  
Come, dance, on fire with love!  
Desirous only of Him who made her!"*

But behind such poetic guise is the austere spirit of the ascetic. Only by conquering self and the world and the devil through such inner joy and the Arms (or Armour) of the Spirit can one come to the Lord of glory. Hence she writes: "Remember St. Francis, who said: 'The best and greatest gift one can give to God in this world is that the servant of Jesus Christ know how to seek to conquer self and one's own will...' I did not become a Sister to have pleasure (an easy life), but to suffer," and yet she was always suffused with deepest joy! Does she not reflect/mirror St. Francis and St. Clare, and so set us an example?

There are other fruits of the Saint which perhaps are less known. Saint Catherine was also a writer, a poet, a painter of miniatures (in missals and prayerbooks), a musician. She wrote a Laud of the Nativity; a Laud

of St. Francis and St. Clare (perhaps with music); and another on St. Bernardine whom she called her beloved father. Often indeed her paintings (which illustrate the battle of life) are based on visions she received.

She is not beyond telling us that when she was copying (in her breviary) the liturgical texts of the Mass or Office of the Saints, they would sometimes appear to her. Blessed Illuminata, her companion, secretary and eventually her biographer, bears witness to this. She thus saw Saint Thomas a Becket once; and told Illuminata that she had seen St. Francis twice: *Ego vidi illum bis: Deus scit quia non mentior* (God knows I am not lying). — The Blessed Bernardino de Bustia made the same general statement about her vision (in a sermon), as did Mariano of Florence.

On the other hand, in the folios of her manuscripts devoted to the Litanies (Fol. 270ss), Saints Dominic, Francis and Thomas Aquinas are listed but no other friars. They are followed by a long list of women saints, including St. Clare. In all probability, yes, since she painted the image of St. Clare in her breviary, and saluted her as mother, example, model, mediatrix). Much later in the manuscript (fol. 378r), for the feast of St. Clare we read: *In festo S. Clarae virginis: vera discipula serafici francisci et mater nostra, humilis ancilla Christi et amatrix paupertatis(!)\* et omnium virtutum*. She seems to include a portrait (*effigies*) of St. Clare.

The Breviary ends with a colophon which bears repetition here even if the Latin is somewhat ungrammatical:

*Meus Christus, pro cuius amore Soror Catharine explevit liber iste (which she corrects: librum istum) in monasterio sacratissimi corporis Christi sub regula virginis praeclarissimae (=praeclarissimas) clara(!), humilis ancilla Christi et vera discipula et filia serafici francisci patris nostri. Mcccclij (=1452), XI die mensis Iuni in die sce (=sancti?) Barnabae apostoli.\*\**

We should note the feasts of Franciscan Saints in this volume: the Translation of St. Anthony; St. Bernardine of Siena; the Feast of St. Anthony (13 June); St. Clare; St. Louis Bishop; St. Louis of France; the Stigmata; the feast of St. Francis; St. Elzear; St. Ivo (no longer reckoned as a Franciscan of the Third Order); The Translation of St. Louis Bishop and confessor; St. Elizabeth of Hungary; The Conception of the Virgin Mary; and the Office of Corpus Christi. These are other offices, it would seem, were copied out by St. Catherine herself while still at Ferrara (§Cf. L. M. Nunez, O.F.M., "Descriptio breviarii manuscripti St. Catherinae Bononiensis", O.S.Cl., in the *Archivum Franc. Historicum* IV (1911), 732 - 747, especially pp. 735ff). I am delighted with her annotation of fol. 467 or a bit later, to the office of Saint Ignatius Bishop and Martyr: *Tu autem beatissimus Ignatius, vere discipulus Christi, intercede pro me*.

The fruit of this study would be that it does not seem possible to conclude that St. Francis is neglected or forgotten, even if there is slight evidence that the Sisters had his writings in their library.

This is by no means a complete answer to the text of Fr. E. Grau. One cannot pass a judgment without recourse to his own document and documentation.

### The Poor Clares and Saint Francis

By way of Appendix to Fr. Engelbert Grau's position that the Poor Clares did not show any interest regarding St Francis until or after Vatican Council (1962 - 65) urged religious to investigate their spiritual heritage, I should like to state frankly that my own experience contradicts his thesis. At least, in the United States we were a bit ahead of our European brethren; and I should like to think that what we did had influence in other English-speaking countries, both among the friars and the Poor Clares.

You may recall the zeal of the Minister General Pacificus Perantoni in 1947 and the following years. After the sudden death of our dear Valentine Schaef (of the Province of Cincinnati) 1 December 1946, the Pope, Pius XII of happy memory, appointed Perantoni Minister General, 13th January, 1947, to fill out the term of Fr. Valentine.

Full of zeal, Fr. Perantoni (who died 3 January 1982) issued a long pastoral encyclical on the Order, our vocation, our proper spirituality, and our life. The text was accompanied by directives and suggestions for our life as Friars Minor (and so indirectly for the life of the Poor Clares). He proposed what books and sources we should read and study; particularly the writings of St. Francis and the biographies (*Legendae*) of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano, St. Bonaventure and later writers. In addition, he gave norms for the spiritual growth of candidates, novices, and friars in formation. Such suggestions, etc. were followed by details in the execution of his programme: norms, outlook and directives, arranged for the various steps in the process of formation, that is, during the years spent on philosophy and then on theology.

In practice, as I well remember (since I was Master of Clerics at the time), this meant a series of conferences or lectures which would involve a study of the sources of our knowledge of St. Francis, his writings, the Legends or Lives written by Thomas of Celano, that of St. Bonaventure, etc. with a final series of conferences leading up to solemn vows (cf. *Acta Ordinis Minorum* 66, 1947, pp. 141-144).

This programme demanded preparation (I had to learn more first, to

teach others). Eventually, especially under the leadership of the late Fr. Philotheus Böhner, O.F.M., and the patronage and promptings of Fr. Thomas Plassmann, President of St. Bonaventure University, the Franciscan Institute came into being, and *The Cord* (a periodical) was begun (November 1950 onwards). Cf. *Acta Ordinis Minorum* 67 (1948), 201, on the approval of the statutes of the Institute, 15 November 1948.

I may not have all the dates and data correct, but I can vouch that the Second Order was certainly influenced by such innovations. As a result, well before the Vatican Council, some of us were asked to visit the Nuns and give modified or compressed courses on Franciscan Sources and the spirituality embodied therein: the writings and teachings of St. Francis and St. Clare. Witness, if you will, the book; *The Legend and Writings of St. Clare of Assisi*, published in 1953 by the Franciscan Institute. Long since out of print, the texts, or indeed the whole volume, were based on the model (in German) of Fr. Engelbert Grau! The texts were englished by myself, the Studies at the end were translated and adapted by Sr. M. Francis, S.M.I.C.

A year later, according to a notice in *The Cord*, IV (1954), Summer School at the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure, N.Y., included a course on Franciscan Philosophy (given by Fr. Allan Wolter); another, on Franciscan Theology (by Fr. Eligius Buytaert; a third grouping, Practical Theology, provided a Survey of the Franciscan School, the Life of St. Francis (Brady), and a study by Fr. Philotheus Böhner of the work of St. Bonaventure, *De perfectione vitae ad sorores*.

We cannot but conclude that in the United States at least the Poor Clares showed considerable interest in St. Francis a decade almost before the Second Vatican Council! Not that they attended summer school, but they were able to entice the teachers to come and give them at least an abbreviated course or courses. Eventually, we had requests from Australia and elsewhere.

\* On the feast of Saint Clare the virgin, true disciple of the seraphic Francis and our mother, humble servant of Christ and lover of poverty and all virtues. (editor's translation).

\*\* My Christ, for love of whom Sister Catherine composed this book under the rule of the most excellent virgin Clare, humble servant of Christ and true disciple and daughter of our seraphic father Francis. 1452, the eleventh day of June, on the day of Saint Barnabas the apostle. (tr. ed.)

## *Canticle of Sister Water*

Paraphrase of a Verse of *Canticle of Creatures*  
by St. Francis of Assisi

1  
"Praised be you, my Lord,  
through Sister Water  
Which is very useful and humble  
and precious and chaste."

Without her no earthly life is possible;  
She is the womb of the earth  
In which you, my Lord,  
First formed the marvel of living beings!

2  
Praised be you, my Lord,  
through Sister Water  
Which covers four-fifths of the Blue Planet,  
our earthly home.  
She is the medium for transport  
Around the world  
And in the bodies of all your creatures.

3  
Praised be you, my Lord,  
through Sister Water  
Which retains for so long the heat of Brother Sun  
And warms the land that it surrounds  
And retains the coolness of the night  
To temper the heat of the day.

4  
Praised be you, my Lord,  
through Sister Water  
Whose clarity admits the rays of Brother Sun  
To energize the teeming life  
of ocean lake, and stream.

5  
Praised be you, my Lord  
through Sister Water  
Which is cohesive and bouyant and  
Marvellous to behold,  
Whose molecules adhere to one another  
To be drawn up the length of a soda straw,  
Or to float a leaf, or a ship on its surface.

6  
Praised be you, my Lord,  
through Sister Water  
Which bathes, washes and cleanses  
Which is everywhere a solvent for many things,  
Which allows passage of life-giving goods  
Into all tissues and cells,  
And provides clearance of wastes therefrom.

7  
Praised be you, my Lord,  
through Sister Water  
Drawn up by Brother Sun  
and floating in clouds,  
Carried by Brother Wind  
To cycle down once more in life-giving rain  
for all your living creatures.

8  
Praised be you, my Lord,  
through Sister Water  
Which seeps and trickles into brother Earth  
And, being purified in this reservoir,  
Slakes our thirst at the well,  
And brings to deserts  
The greenness of growth.

9  
Praised be you, my Lord,  
through Sister Water,  
Whose crystalline, frozen form floats  
To ice-cover with protection  
The life of lakes and ponds,  
And snow-blankets all your living things  
In the sleep of winter.

10  
Praised be you, my Lord,  
through Sister Water,  
Which is a refreshing symbol of  
the LIVING WATER, JESUS HIMSELF,  
Promised to all who ask in faith.  
Let us daily draw  
from this life-giving font.  
All praise be thine, Oh Trinity in Unity!

*Sr. Julia Van Denack, O.S.F.*

## Book Reviews

**Answering Love's Call.** By Stephen V. Doughty. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1986. Pp. 128. Paper, \$4.95.

*Reviewed by Fr. Daniel A. Hurley, O.F.M., Campus Minister at St. Bonaventure University.*

Stephen A. Doughty, a Presbyterian minister, lives in Pennsylvania; he has written, in *Answering Love's Call*, a practical guide to the living of the Lord's commandment of love of God and love of neighbor. In seven chapters, the author recognizes that every Christian experiences a struggle in putting into practice Jesus' call to love. In a patterned outline, each chapter shows the background (landscape) of areas in which the individual is called to love, then a series of helps (approaches) with some practical suggestions and a number of Scripture passages to reflect upon. After writing about God's love for us, Rev. Doughty deals with the individual's love of God, of neighbor, of enemy, of community and of God's creation.

In a very practical way, the author calls upon his personal experience as a pastor and as a counselor in using individual examples of loving. Since the Commandment of love is all-embracing, the reader will find much encouragement and strength in his or her own living of the Christian life. What is especially beneficial in this book is the author's use of Sacred Scripture. Each chapter begins with two quotations that the reader can reflect upon while reading the chapter. At the conclusion of

each chapter, Rev. Doughty presents a series of Scripture references that the reader can make use of for further meditation. The whole plan of the book is aimed at assisting the reader in developing his or her spiritual life as well as his or her practical living of the Gospel call to love.

There are two Appendices: the first is a series of suggestions for the reader concerning the use of the book as a guide for Study Groups and as a guide for Retreats. The second Appendix is an annotated bibliography of spiritual works, containing both classical writers and contemporary writers.

The author adds a sub-title to his book, namely "Christian Love and a Life of Prayer." This sub-title accurately explains the author's purpose in writing the book. Every believer in Jesus Christ accepts his or her call to love God and to love his or her neighbor. The reader will find *Answering Love's Call* a practical guide for living the Christian life as well as a resource for living a life of prayer. These two benefits are not really separate and this reviewer recommends Rev. Doughty's book to all followers of Christ who are sincerely desirous of living a Christian life.

— — —  
**THE CORD** is happy to add to its Editorial Board Donna Marie F. Kaminsky, S.F.O.

"*The Knight*," a poem published in the July - August **CORD**, was composed by Sean Mulholland, O.F.M. It was erroneously attributed to William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O. We apologize!

The San Damiano Center,  
Aston, PA.,  
is scheduling the following programs and presenters:

**November 13 - 15**  
*Evangelical Spirituality, the Place of the*  
*Franciscan Charism in the Church,*  
*Thaddeus Horgan, S.A.*

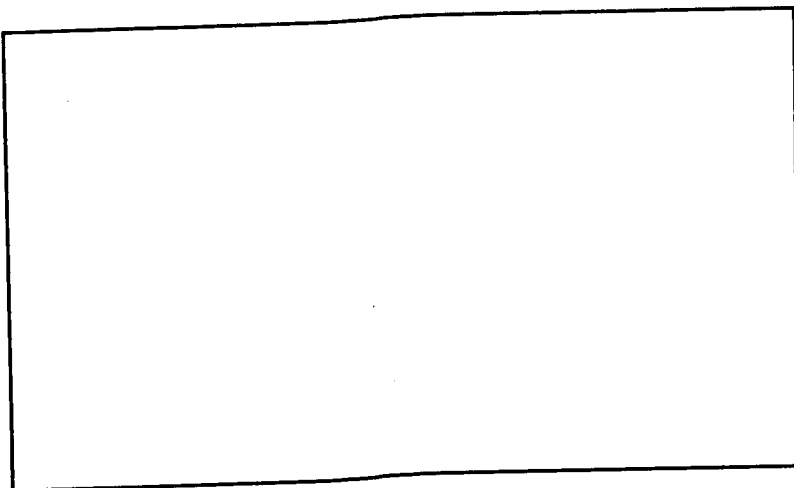
**December 4 - 6**  
*Advent Retreat,*  
*Our Call to be Initiators of Peace,*  
*Lora Dombroski, O.S.F.*

**January 3 - 10, 1988**  
*8-Day Directed Retreat*

**January 29 - 31**  
*Enneagram: a Personality System,*  
*Virginia Sampson, S.U.S.C.*

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NOVEMBER, 1987

# The CORD

## A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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### Standard Abbreviations used in **The CORD** for Early Franciscan Sources

#### I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions  
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo  
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun  
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony  
EpCler: Letter to Clerics<sup>1</sup>  
EpCust: Letter to Superiors<sup>1</sup>  
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful<sup>1</sup>  
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo  
EpMin: Letter to a Minister  
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order  
EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People  
ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God  
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father  
FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221  
LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God  
LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours  
OffPass: Office of the Passion  
OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix  
RegB: Rule of 1223  
RegNB: Rule of 1221  
RegEr: Rule for Hermits  
SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady  
SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues  
Test: Testament of St. Francis  
UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare  
VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy  
<sup>1</sup>I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

#### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis  
2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis  
3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles  
CL: Legend of Saint Clare  
CP: Process of Saint Clare  
Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis

LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis  
LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis  
LP: Legend of Perugia  
L3S: Legend of the Three Companions  
SC: Sacrum commercium  
SP: Mirror of Perfection

Omnibus: Marion A. Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies*. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

AB: Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

## On Being Heroic

BRUCE RISKI, O.F.M. CAP., S.T.L.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE to become a saint? Perhaps no question is more seldom asked. Deep down we really don't want to be saints! We really know what it takes. But we don't ever speak of it to others. We don't allow ourselves to think of it; certainly, to never ponder it. We know there's involved a "nasty" word. We'd feel much better about it if we could strike it out with gusto from the dictionary. That "awful" word is heroic.

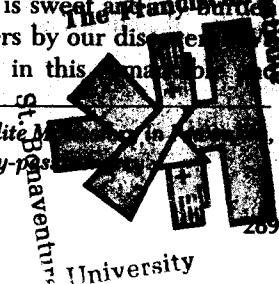
This is not to say we don't read splendid spiritual books and the lives of the saints. We may even be avid readers of spiritual matters. We may recount enthusiastically, in one way or another, the exploits and events in the lives of the saints. We impress many with our repertoire. We may even be considered "pious" and "devout". And that, truly, is what we are. Our minds and wills are bent on the supernatural. Our souls are satisfied and dynamic. We accomplish incalculable good in whatever way with our storehouse of spiritual things.

So we pass the days, the weeks, the months and the years. We are joyfully happy, and rightly so, with the successes we have achieved for God, for His Church, and for souls. We indeed deserve a resounding pat on the back for our services. The acclaim of others is "truly right and just."

Yes, we have made many sacrifices. Success is only born in sweat and blood. We even have learned, to a surprising degree, that there is only true life in the cross.

We have had our share of ups and downs, ins and outs, in the Way of the Cross, which is the straight and narrow road that leads to Heaven. Despite it all, we have, by the powerful grace of God, learned the reality of the optimistic words of Our Lord: "My yoke is sweet and my burden is light." We have not hesitated to benefit others by our disinterestedness. We have desired with our whole being that others join in this noble pursuit.

Fr. Bruce Riski, O.F.M. Cap. is chaplain at the Carmelite Monastery, St. Bonaventure, Wisconsin. He is recovering well from complicated by-pass surgery.



steady joy. God is a God of His word. New vistas opened up gloriously before us. The vast panorama in view almost stunned us. We received new lights, insights and understanding far beyond what we had ever expected or could have possibly conceived.

The spiritual life, we uncovered, was not pious sounding rhetoric, or a way of life really meant for others, or a dull prospect for those "willing to take a chance," or fulfillment only in oblique ways, or a goal meant for a shameful few. We could see first hand that the sky was the limit with a most generous and imaginative God.

We gasped at the possibilities that the staggering panorama presented to us. We had never dreamt that this could happen to us. It was something unique, unusual and yet strikingly beautiful and attractive. We felt like children standing before a candy counter displaying all sorts of varieties at reasonable prices. We just did not know where to look or what to touch or what to ask for. We became stupified by it all. It seemed too much to hope for; too much a reward for steadfastness, loyalty and devotion to God's cause. We blinked and rubbed our eyes in almost breath-taking disbelief. We lost our wind. Even our second wind. It didn't seem that such opportunities were possible. This was exceedingly far more than we expected. Surely, we thought, we must be dreaming.

We stopped right there. It just couldn't be for real. We were in strange and unfamiliar country. The Lord took us kind of "by storm." He overwhelmed us without warning. God swooped down upon our souls like a hungry eagle ready to lift us up still higher. The prospect of being transported to an area of rarified air frightened us. We knew full well that our God is a jealous God. We never imagined He could be *that* jealous.

In the very center of the gigantic panorama was a bridge, a span that was lost in the mist and fog at the other end. It seemed like it had no visible supports and that it had as a valley below only an abyss — an endless, awesome abyss.

Suddenly, a notion permeated our being. We had arrived at a juncture. However, the way to the bridge was cluttered with obstacles. Not impossible to overcome — nothing is impossible to a relentless God.

We shivered at the task before us. But we had gone a long, long way. We had matured spiritually enough by this time to suspect what truly lay before us. We somehow thrilled at the same time. A tug-of-war ensued then within us. We were baffled to a certain extent as we knew God deals with faithful souls on an individual basis. Here, right now, was a chance of a spiritual lifetime. We had prayed for something like this in our finest moments of union with God. We never considered seriously that God means business. Now that the "spiritual dream of a lifetime" was ours for the asking, we balked.

Why could not life be simpler? Why does God pick on us? We have labored hard and well — it's time to relax and enjoy the fruits of many hardships, we tell ourselves. We figured we had gone far enough; that it would be nice to recall our past accomplishments and secretly to enjoy what we recalled. We liked what we saw. Ah! but so did God! He liked it very much. God liked it so very much, He wanted us to do still more for Him. We could do so much more now that we saw we had completed only a part, but key part, of our journey to eternal life. We resented in some fashion that we had much more to go. It struck us that God absolutely wanted all. Fruitful as our lives were, it just wasn't enough.

We gawked. That couldn't be for us. Wondrous though it appeared, inspiring as it is to read about others "going beyond" this point — we felt most uncomfortable and uneasy. Surely, God made a mistake. It simply couldn't be! How could we make profitable use, personally and outside ourselves, of what we viewed. Would it not be better to either shut our eyes or turn away? After all, God would not punish us severely for standing still. He would never forget or cease to desire to reward us for what we already had done for Him. God is not an unreasonable God, demanding though He be. Surely, He would come to terms; an understanding, shall we say?

Listen, dear God, to what we have to say. We have, through many years, been exemplary to the best of our abilities. We were not all the time exactly what we should have been, but we kept struggling — and we made handsome progress. At no time was it easy. Asceticism never is. We have borne the heat of the day. The Church needs new blood. Let the younger ones take over. This is what the times require — zip, zeal and vitality in our day. We are tired — so tired. Life, as You know, has not been a bed of roses. Daily we carried our cross. And we must admit You helped us no end. You never failed to come when we called upon You. You are a merciful, kind and mighty God.

How often we praised You for Your invaluable assistance! How often we glorified You for blessing our efforts and good will! How often we thanked You for advancing us in the spiritual life! But, God, dear God, You desire still more! Oh, not as in the past. We are rather proficient in those matters. They are basic, fundamental. We are not spiritual pros. From experience and above all Your grace "we know what the spiritual life is all about." Except, that is, what You reveal in the endless panorama before us. But that is for saints. We *have* led a saintly life. That is more than enough for us. We were sure — though it is shaken-up a bit right now — we were sure You'd be more than satisfied.

Consider the material. Weigh the circumstances. Surely, we were not fit material; surely, we are not quite ready for a continuance of our journey

to everlasting life. First, consider what You have to work with. There are flaws in our personalities — one thing or another. It would impair the work You have in mind! In addition, we don't fast or abstain strictly enough, or curb our tongues sufficiently, or service our fellow human beings well enough. We have a lot to work on as should be well-evident to You! Besides, our present circumstances don't lend themselves for what You have in mind. We would be much like a flower left out of the greenhouse. We would shrivel-up and freeze in the unknown that You beckon us to. It would be foolhardy to venture out into the darkness of the soul — what with excruciating spiritual sufferings, and, dryness of soul to top that off — does not wisdom and prudence dictate the journey come to a temporary halt? Later on, after recuperating, we would finally accede to Your wishes, and resume the journey — from this juncture. Can't You understand our point of view, o condescending God?

But no! You say not a word. You tug. We feel it. We buck it. We do not want to budge . . . maybe an inch — but no more! All right, then our God! We give up! We surrender! All!

What sweetness and consolation fill our souls, now, o Divine Capturer of our souls! Never had we reckoned it could be this way! What went on before was just a preparation for this . . . the *real* preparation! How could we have been so stupid? To say it was worth it would be crude. It is most sublime. For this we were created. Nothing less. Ever more. We now get an inkling of the full definition of the word: infinite.

Innumerable times we lived and loved Your Presences: in the soul, nourished by the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, the primary purpose of which is to nourish, expand and deepen the life of union of our souls with the Triune God indwelling in our souls; the living Presences You have among the poor, in the Word that is preached them ("the poor have the Gospel preached to them"); and, Your "creative" Presence whereby You are everywhere, keeping everything in existence (since they do not have the reason for their existence in themselves). It took concerted effort and a driving persistence. O God, You are not easily attained. You manage to keep just a foot or two ahead of us. In our buoyant love for You, we did not notice You were leading us along the path we dearly and secretly desired. For You are all we hope and live for, without which all else is as nothing. You were showing us the Way while we were basking in the blinding sunshine of Your Presences. We never got lost though many times we did not know where we were going.

Then it happened! We traversed the bridge without knowing it! Like St. Therese, the Little Flower of Jesus, we were whisked "up the stairs"

— i.e., we crossed the bridge unknowingly and found ourselves in the joy of Your various Presences, at times, and almost mostly so, even in the state and condition of love! Words became useless or unnecessary. But we are only at the end of the bridge, ready, hopefully, to fall into the infinite Abyss, which is You!

Let us fall where we may — where you will! It matters not. It is clear to us that this is the point in the spiritual life that You make Your "strongest pitch": *Be Heroic!* What does it take to be a saint? Heroism. Now it really, truly and absolutely, can be said that all else was a required and necessary preparation for this. *This is true juncture.* This is where nearly all stop — either to fall back or remain "at ease". This is where we decide whether to go "all the way." This is where we decide whether to be a saint spelled with a small "s" or a capital "S". This is the most important and consequential decision we have to make in life. By far.

What does it take to make a saint — spelled with a capital "S"? Heroism. It is the key word in the dictionary. All other words are tame when and if compared with this one. It means absolute and that means absolute — absolute poverty of spirit and poverty of material goods. Poverty of spirit demands a total renunciation of fame, honor, position and pride of life on the one hand; on the other hand, it demands that we accept contempt, disdain, misunderstandings and rejection. Poverty from material goods demands complete detachment from wealth, possessions and greed. To do both requires one to hate self and to love only God for His own sake. "He who would save his or her life, must lose it." Lose means bereft of everything. Hate means shunning in horror at anything that is not of God. It's useless and meaningless anyway. So? . . .

Is it difficult? You doggone right it is. It calls for the heroic! It calls for being worthy of a spiritual "Medal of Honor." Is it a "freak" of the spiritual life? Of course not.

Is it easily (!) within reach once we get to the point where we feel we've gone "far enough; time to relax and enjoy our past labors and faithfulness"? Yes, indeed! Then — for sure — we are ripe for heroism. It is then comparatively easy, for we have well-prepared ourselves for this step, for this unique decision.

That not enough make this choice explains why there are so few canonized saints in the Church. It explains why the world is in throes. It explains why there must be a Purgatory. It explains why we are not as happy and fruitful as we could be; as we should be.

It's tough — it seems almost impossible to reach. We must, nonetheless, stick with it — leaving all to God, as we must leave all to make this act, this decision. Leave all to God. We are nothing. Let us begin for up 'til

now we have truly done nothing — but prepare! God it is Who will do all for us.

God does it all! We are totally in His Divine Heart, submerged, consumed in His devastating Love, and there we will find ourselves. Who we are; what we ought to be. Love will rush us headlong into God, the infinite Abyss. "My God and my All!" Congratulations to us all! God is All!

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## Symphony

I picked my way over  
the messed greying stones  
carbunkling the hill,  
searching for wonder  
among ordinary trees  
and mediocre stones.

As the sun gave way  
to an impatient moon  
I listened, hoping  
to hear a note  
break the silence

and orchestrate  
the stones, grass and trees  
into a symphony  
of passionate intimacy

that it might help me  
understand the serenity  
of La Verna.

*Seamus Mulholland, O.F.M.*

## Travelling With St. Francis

DONALD DeMARCO, Ph.D.

I HAVE JUST finished reading some letters complementing me on an article I wrote about St. Francis of Assisi which appeared in the December 1986 issue of *The CORD*, a Franciscan Spiritual Review. Receiving these letters represents the completion of a circle and the fulfillment of a hope. One writes articles for strangers, and is animated by the prospect that the written word might transform a nameless stranger into a personal acquaintance. Art uses images to touch hearts and enlighten souls. Therefore, it always aims at moving from the abstract to the personal. Though it begins in solitude, art always endeavors to end in community. At the same time, I thought another circle should commence, one that goes back out to my unseen audience, recounting some of the remarkable circumstances that surrounded the formation and development of my modest literary efforts on the Poverello of Assisi.

All good things must begin, as William Butler Yeats once said, in the "rag and bone shop of the heart." Our journey here has a genesis that is of comparable humility: in the community washroom of the men's dormitory at Gannon University. It was early in the morning and the occupant of the sink on my left, assiduously attending to his ablutions, was a Franciscan priest from a college in Massachusetts. "What's going on at your school this summer?" I asked, hoping that the effort I expended in raising my voice against a wide assortment of gargling and gurgling sounds would prove successful. My good Franciscan companion raised his head slightly and said in agreeable tones, "A workshop on Franciscan Aesthetics." It may have been the competing sounds of cascading water and clearing throats that altered his message a little. At any rate, I thought he said, "Franciscan Ethics." My next volley through the washroom's thicket of cacophonous sounds was much more ambitious and probably utterly inap-

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*Donald DeMarco, Ph.D. (Philosophy, St. John's University, NY) is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of St. Jerome's College, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.*

proprie for that hour of the young day. "Did you know that Lewis Mumford has pointed out that St. Francis and Henry David Thoreau are alike in that they both espouse the wantless life?" Under the circumstances, such a remark could justifiably be regarded as assault. Should I have meditated more deeply on the more salient fact that my involuntary communicant was still unshaven, unexercised, and uncoffed? Yet as an intellectual gambit, it was timely and appropriate. At least I thought so. It also seemed opportune that Thoreau is a native of Massachusetts. Surely it is not without interest that a distinguished critic of contemporary society, Lewis Mumford, would link St. Francis and Thoreau together on an ethical point. And what a fascinating point it is. Both Francis and Thoreau preached that a person is free to the degree he is *independent* of material things. Our consumer society preaches the opposite, that people are free to the degree that they are *dependent* on material possessions.

The rolling hills of Massachusetts, attired in their bright summer foliage, were dancing in my mind and I recalled the great love for nature that Francis and Thoreau both shared. It should be a good topic to discuss at the workshop, I mused. Francis and Thoreau have much in common, at least superficially, though their real, substantial difference is really the difference between Christianity and pantheism.

I was in luck. My next-door neighbor in our porcelain paradise not only possessed keen hearing, graciousness, and affability, but he was also an intellectual. He found the remark most interesting and even wanted to know in what work did Mumford record his observation. Our ensuing conversation led to the suggestion that I might actually come to his college and participate in the Franciscan workshop.

When we parted company, I told him that I would do more reading on the subject and see if I could come up with an acceptable presentation. I promised to call him after I returned to Canada. He gave me his card and thereby informed me of his full title: President and Academic Dean of St. Hyacinth College and Seminary. He explained that he himself was not authorized to invite me to the workshop, but would speak on my behalf with its organizer.

Since the workshop was a little more than a month away, I had plenty of time to meditate on my impertinence. How could I be so brazen as to try to muscle my way into a workshop on Franciscan ethics? And to badger a kindly Franciscan who, no doubt, had hoped he could complete his morning ministrations in peace. Nonetheless, amidst moments of self-castigation, I did do some more reading on the subject and my ideas began to take shape. As key references fell into my lap, my confidence increased and my fear that I was audaciously crashing a conference on Franciscan ethics began to dissipate.

Because St. Francis was on my mind, I found myself telling my daughter Elizabeth about such charming Franciscan stories as the Wolf of Gubbio. The part where St. Francis addressed the menacing wolf as "Brother Wolf" drew an appreciative sigh from her seven-year-old heart. She suddenly remembered that she had a book about St. Francis and ran off to her bedroom to get it. We were all set to embark on some serious Franciscan story-telling when the phone rang. It was the president of St. Hyacinth College with the news that the way had been cleared for me to speak at the workshop. I returned to my daughter and said to her: "You may not believe this, but that was a Franciscan priest in Massachusetts inviting me to talk about St. Francis to other Franciscans!" She looked at me searchingly and after a long pause said: "I don't believe you." But I sensed that underneath her slow and emphatic declaration of incredulity lay a reservoir of doubt. I went on to cite names and places that must have sounded somewhat convincing because she then said to me: "That would be a miracle.!" Maybe it was. St. Francis, at any rate, would have had an easier time believing in a miracle than in a far-flung coincidence. Elizabeth, bless her heart, did believe in miracles (though no longer in Santa Claus), but she had to test them first and make sure they could not be accounted for by a more prosaic explanation. Respecting her appreciation for the pragmatic, I promised to bring back to her hard evidence of my stay at St. Hyacinth. Yet I wonder whether she saw the miracle not so much in Providential as in telepathic terms. Did she believe my Franciscan friend 500 miles away in Massachusetts actually overheard our story-telling and was at once moved to invite me to share the same stories with his confreres? It would be in keeping with the humility of Franciscan friars to enjoy listening to stories told to children retold to them. Come to think of it, isn't this the normal way that Christianity is spread? When children grow up, they tell the world about the God they learned from their parents.

There would be two detours on my way to Granby, Massachusetts. The first was Lake Chataqua, New York, where I had to speak on a different subject. Lake Chataqua is a 19th Century Victorian community that is as charming as it is cultured. One afternoon while I was there, a steady downpour kept me imprisoned in the town library. I took this opportunity to acquaint myself with whatever books on St. Francis the library had available. I found one book that was unfamiliar to me and discovered a quotation attributed to Francis that seemed particularly important: "*La Cortesia è una delle proprietà di Dio.*" (Courtesy is one of the properties of God). This phrase was destined to have an important place in my talk.

Francis, being worthy of his name, had a great affection for France and its culture. His mother was French and his father, a merchant who travel-

led to France, brought back with him intriguing stories of knighthood and courtly love. Francis may have introduced the word "Cortesia" into the Italian language. It reflected a number of qualities — chivalry, politeness, graciousness — which the Poverello of Assisi believed were also attributes of God. But why, I pondered, is the plural word *delle* used to modify the singular noun *proprietà*?

My second detour provided me with the answer while I was teaching a course on bio-ethics at Holy Apostles College in Cromwell, Connecticut. One of my students, a native of Rome, Italy, explained to me that the plural modifier was a linguistic device that helped to express the notion that God is greater than any one singular individual. Similarly, the Hebrews had employed the plural form Eloim to represent the singular, but grandiose, Divinity. My stay at Holy Apostles was beneficial in another way in preparing me for the workshop. Its president, who had studied Thoreau many years ago, could still quote his prose and poetry from memory. I duly recorded some of the more pertinent samples he recited during our lunch-hour conversations, and eventually incorporated them into my workshop presentation.

At supper one evening, when I first disclosed my plans to speak at the upcoming workshop, my companion at the table just happened to be a young man who was not only interested in becoming a Franciscan, but had already been in communication with the vocation director at St. Hyacinth. He was anxious to see the college and seminary but because he did not have a car, did not have a convenient way to make the hour's trip to Granby. I invited him to accompany me. He accepted, and we had a most pleasant two-day sojourn.

When we arrived at St. Hyacinth, we entered by way of the front door, which, from a practical point of view, was the wrong door. While we were waiting in the reception room, my eyes fell upon a stack of plasticized cards showing St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio. My vindicating evidence for my daughter was at hand. One of the workshop's participants, as it turned out, proved to be rather knowledgeable about this famous legend and apprised me of the latest scholarship done on the symbolic meaning of the wolf that Francis had tamed.

Later, when I was being shown around the college, I was introduced to a delightful nun from Italy who cooked meals for the Friars. When I asked her to identify her home town, she said: "Campolieto." "My father was born in Campolieto," I happily informed her, "in the province of Campabasso!" She was absolutely flabbergasted. Since she had arrived in America, she had not met a single soul who was either from that tiny village or even knew of someone who was born there.

The coincidences (or Providential occurrences) were multiplying. I also

noted that where I was staying in Cromwell was flanked on one side by the Padre Pio foundation of America (Padre Pio was a Franciscan Capuchin) and on the other (and across the street) by a woodland shrine to Francis of Assisi. I was literally surrounded by the spirit of St. Francis. It seemed undeniable that Francis had been my constant travelling companion ever since I left home where, incidentally, "St. Francis of Assisi" is the patron of my parish.

My two workshop presentations were well received and I was most graciously entertained by the good friars of St. Hyacinth. Among the souvenirs I brought back for Elizabeth were the picture of St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio, and a holy card citing a favorite saying of St. Francis: "Love creation but love the Creator most." She still proudly displays both of these items on her bedroom bulletin board.

After I returned to Holy Apostles College, I decided to transpose my oral presentations into a publishable article. Soon thereafter, I returned to Canada and mailed the newly finished piece to the editors of *The Cord*. Yet I had the nagging sense that it was not quite complete. Something was missing. The ending needed to be rounded out better. A book entitled *Not As The World Gives* was lying on my desk. I had acquired it while I was in Cromwell primarily because it was written by one of my favorite authors — Dietrich von Hildebrand. But I had brought it back to Canada unread. I now opened it and began reading. I quickly realized, to my amazement, that von Hildebrand had written it to present St. Francis' message to today's laymen. As I continued reading I soon found the key that I needed to give my article its proper conclusion. I then dispatched my revised version to the editors of *The Cord* and they published it a few months later in their Christmas issue.

Informing me that my article would be published in *The Cord*, one of the editors stated that I would receive three copies of the issue in which it appeared and that, regrettably, would be "the only form of compensation" they could give me. "How wonderfully in keeping with the spirit of poverty that Francis so loved," I thought. But it was also delightfully ironic, for travelling with St. Francis was a more joyful and extraordinary a compensation than I could ever have imagined.





## Cloud of Witnesses

I dreamt  
I was Home  
today, while driving  
(winding really . . . )  
all along  
Northern Boulevard.  
My soul had this  
dream or memory,  
she saw the road  
softly evaporating  
into the womb  
of the dark tunnel.  
where she passed  
to the lullaby of  
Durufle's Requiem  
into the heart  
of the Light.  
Francis came first,  
not as I had seen him  
in Assisi  
O, he was bitter cold then!  
His haunted eyes  
ached to express  
the love within —  
even his frame leaned  
Heavenward.  
And the hands, the  
feet and the side  
were mute also  
for winter had  
all but sealed them  
frostbitten and  
silver blue.  
But now, released  
from that body  
of death  
the frozen wounds  
opened, reopened,  
and opened again  
like summer roses  
loved by the sun,

and he made their  
gesture of welcome  
and embrace.  
And then,  
my boy was there.  
Aloysius greeted me  
as his long lost  
and awaited relative.  
He gestured too (still pale)  
with the flickering hands  
of light  
Guercino's painting promised.  
Aloysius motioned  
to my room  
but before I could  
enter in,  
an ocean of sound  
like the flap and flutter  
of a thousand wings  
swept by me and  
the Spirit said:  
"This is the  
Cloud of Witnesses  
you have cried with,  
prayed with, anointed  
and died with, and  
carefully tucked into  
the womb of the dark tunnel.  
They bid you  
return home  
and await the Father's will.  
There be as the  
Lowly Handmaid . . .  
powerless and conversant  
only with  
angels."

*William Hart Mc Nichols, S.J., S.F.O.*

## St. Bonaventure's Sermons: Resource for *Lectio Divina*

GREGORY SHANAHAN, O.F.M.

THE GREAT BODY of medieval sermons appeals to us to help a congregation grappling with modern problems, caught in the cross-fire between faith and conduct. Few of them, if any, could be *preached* as they stand, in front of people attuned to many voices other than Christian, men and women sensitized to the short and pithy, to the advertisement-type homily. They should have to be, not merely translated from Latin, but transposed into an entirely new key. The scholar will always find them of great value as monuments of Christian literature. Great works of art in themselves, they presupposed the highest education and training and the most meticulous preparation (for preaching was itself a whole art — *ars con- cionandi* — the noblest of all, even from an academic point of view).<sup>1</sup> The audience was, in a sense, "classified" by the time the sermon had become a *doctoral* rather than a strictly *pastoral* discourse. But this does not mean that none of the great sermons were "popular"; far from it; many were delivered to vast congregations of ordinary Christians. Nevertheless, something more akin to the original design of the more formal of these sermons is served by their incorporation as readings in the Liturgy of the Hours; but for this there are criteria, which it is not within our scope to delve into.

### The Dimensions of Scripture

The most striking thing, however, about the typical medieval sermon must be its rootedness in the Bible; Scripture pervades it from end to end, and the entire discourse is built up around a text. It was, above all else, an expounding of Scripture, with a view to its (often detailed) appli-

*Friar Gregory of the Irish Province is a member of the community at The Friary, Ennis County, Clare, Ireland. He serves on the editorial board of THE CORD, to which he has contributed several articles.*

cation to life. For St. Bonaventure, the Scriptures are revealed to us so that we may know what to believe and know for possessing eternal life; they are, moreover, expressive of the universal love of Christ. In his *Breviloquium*,<sup>2</sup> he speaks of the "breath", "length", "height", and "depth" (cf. Eph 3:17-19) of the Scriptures. To the *depth* dimension he assigns the various "senses" or meanings that are recognized as existing in the word of God. Of these, the *literal* or historical is the most fundamental and the one always accorded the fullest respect, in accord with the traditional hermeneutic, in both teaching and preaching. There is also the spiritual or mystical sense, which is threefold: *allegorical* (when the text imaginatively reminds of another truth of faith); *tropological* (a figurative interpretation, especially of words); *anagogical* (the meaning that "leads up" the soul towards the object of hope).

### Biblical Meditations

In the broad sweep, the advances made in exegesis and in biblical scholarship generally, rarely lessen the value or interest factor of these great (written and preached) "meditations." Thus it is that as ready-made biblical meditations they can perhaps best serve us today. Their structure and technique (see Bougerol 137-138), their reflective selection of a "theme" and (usually) "protheme" and incorporation of an "initial prayer"; their isolating of a scriptural line and examination of its elements — cause, phrase, or word — all this can help us to select our own "prayer word" and can spark off our personal reflections.

Used for a *lectio divina*, these sermon-meditations could be a great instrument of contemplation. *Lectio divina*, that ancient form of contemplative reading of Scripture, belonging to the monastic tradition, is a prayer form that appeals to many people nowadays. *Lectio* is a "looking into" (*inspectio*) as well as the "teasing out" of a pericope. The Bible is its principal material, though it also uses the commentaries of the Fathers and the classic monuments of spiritual literature. Comprising in its technique elements of both study and prayer, *lectio* is an attentive soul's close scrutiny of the Scripture.<sup>3</sup> The root of all *lectio*, and its purpose, is, nonetheless, contemplation — that intuitive gaze in stillness, the gaze of *con-centra-tion* upon God whose word is allowed to penetrate the fibre of one's being. Meanwhile, a contemplative reading of the word is in reality its *mystical* interpretation; the contemplation sought is an "inward understanding" of the word (the *intellectus mysticus* of St. Gregory the Great).

The medieval sermon, for its own scope, follows similar lines. A text is singled out and analysed with a view to its "inward understanding." A clause, a phrase, a paragraph, a word, is regarded as an element in the

stages of understanding: each is looked into, and the honey of the purpose of its being (there in Scripture for our salvation) is extracted. Many authorities, mainly patristic ones, are cited in support of interpretation or application.

### *Lectio in a Seraphic Key*

St. Bonaventure's sermons, a great number of which are extant, are especially companionable with Bible meditation.<sup>4</sup> Bonaventure develops a captivating biblical theology out of the literal sense; but the "Prince of mystics" is equally at home with the mystical interpretation. His habitual approach is through "Affectivity" and his whole thrust is towards contemplation, the very goal, according to him, of spiritual life itself. Meanwhile, his fondness for the "signal-quality" in words and his ability to unearth multiple meaning, often open out what in his writings is a single term into a medium of transcendence.<sup>5</sup> Nor is the Seraphic Doctor's probing for multiple meaning indulged in for its own sake; what it does is to employ our *imagination* in the service of our whole spirit. Imagination, in turn, bursts open fixed horizons and continually challenges established positions, and thus becomes an agent of moral and spiritual conversion. This happens to belong to the very stuff of which deep Scripture-rooted prayer is made.

A Franciscan should derive inspirational benefit from the biblical theology elaborated in many of the sermons of St. Bonaventure. In several major ones a *leit-motif* will be *evangelical perfection*.<sup>6</sup> This fulfilment of the gospel is a goal which entails two important moves: firstly, one must become that gospel's *disciple* (= pupil) by hearing and listening to it as a word and message; reciprocally, some become *disciples* (= messengers) by teaching and preaching the gospel as doctrine. Secondly — though not *secondarily* — one must become the gospel's *disciple* (= follower) by observing its directives and counsels in a way of life totally obedient to and structured in accordance with the Good News. Now, a contemplative *lectio* of the word constitutes one of the vital steps, necessary at least at some stage, if one is to be transformed by the gospel; it is already, therefore, one of the ways in which the gospel may be "carried out" and "observed." Thus, as an inward, *mystical* observance, *lectio divina* becomes a method of following out the *interior* evangelical journey.

The sermon which follows in translation, uses a short Lucan line as text and is repleted with Franciscan topics.<sup>7</sup> It treats of poverty as the prerequisite of gospel discipleship; of following in Christ's "footprints." It quotes the Rule of the Friars Minor, and makes an indirect recall of St. Anthony's preaching; love in fraternity is depicted as a reflection of the Trinity.

### *Leaving all things, they followed him (Luke 5:11)*

Christ's teaching took the depth<sup>8</sup> of poverty as its starting-point. The principal foundation of evangelical perfection is firmly set in unencumbered poverty. Hence Christ's Apostles, who made the holy gospel their profession and on whom the Lord was to found his Church, are shown, in the words chosen for text, to have left everything: *Leaving all things, they followed him*.

In the statement are indicated two things which everyone needs for salvation, *viz*, to *discard* and to *attain*: to discard whatever hampers and drags one back; to attain the completeness that prepares one for action. In the words chosen as our text, *Leaving all things* means disregarding what is earthly. Admittedly, not everyone is bound to *actually* relinquish all; only those in a "state of perfection", who are bound by the vow of poverty. At the same time, all *are* bound to leave off an attachment to things; not to be overwhelmed by this attachment to the point of setting their heart on fleeting wealth and, upsetting the order of things, choosing the creature in preference to God.

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*His habitual approach is through "affectivity" and his whole thrust is towards contemplation, the very goal, according to him, of spiritual life itself.*

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The second point in the text, *they followed him*, has to do with the desire for what is eternal.

*Leaving all things*, then, is about whatever hampers us and drags us back. The Apostles left everything, like true envoys whose mission would resemble that of Christ; and they did this in three ways. First, by ridding themselves of oppressive weights, so as to follow after Christ more easily; second, by releasing themselves from fetters which would slow them up, so as to be unencumbered in denouncing evil; third, by removing stumbling-blocks, so as to be more effective in promoting good.

To begin with, they "left all" by throwing off oppressive weights to be more free to run after Christ who *rejoiced as a giant to run the way* of evangelical perfection, because no earthly load weighed on him. Indeed from the first moment of his birth he consecrated poverty in his own body; he lived in the world in a most poor fashion, associating with the

poorest of human beings; then at the end, naked he lay on the cross, and after his resurrection he appeared in the guise of an outsider. It follows that someone who is destined to be an envoy of Christ *ought also to walk even as he walked*. But anyone who travels in decorated *chariots and horses*, in richness and display, is neither following in the trail nor taking the place of Christ, because his way of life lacks the signs of poverty which are the credentials of Christ's envoy.

Peter, with this in mind, addressed the Lord, in Matthew 19:27.

Behold we have left all things and followed you:  
what therefore shall we have?

*And Jesus said to them: Amen I say to you that you, who have left all things and followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Now Peter was a fisherman; poor, he sought a living by the work of his hands. And still he has the confidence to make the rather large statement, 'We have left *everything* and followed you.' And he is inquiring about remuneration when he asks, 'what therefore shall we have' by way of reward?' The reason why he said this is that, as Gregory states, "As much was left aside by his followers as what those who were not his followers might have set their hearts on."

So, well done, Peter, well done, all you other Apostles! By leaving *all* you obtained the *biggest* reward. In no other way, to be sure, did you win command of the Christian faith; never would the Lord have founded his Church on you, never raised you to judgment seats, without first bringing you down to this, the rock-bottom, and fixing you there. Indeed, this is the summit of highest poverty which has established you, Apostles, as heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven: it has made you poor in possessions but exalted you in virtue."<sup>9</sup> Surely it is not to be wondered at that the height of poverty so exalted them, so enthroned them, made so much of them. For just as we observe in the material world how the rarer and lighter an object is, the higher it rises; so is it with the spiritual. The purer a person is, and more full of the capacity grace gives to rise out of earthly greed, the higher is his ascent.

Next, they "left all" as though releasing themselves from fetters which held them in check, in order to be more sure of themselves in denouncing evil. The Apostles, to be sure, gave nobody a wide berth where either passion for gain or dread of its loss was involved, as if chains of some sort held them in check. Nor did they refrain from speaking the truth; on the contrary, "the old and the young, without distinction, they smote with the javelins of truth."<sup>10</sup> Whereas, the anxiety attached to earthly power

and the press of business in worldly ambition generate an incertitude before the counterfeit, in people who have no wish to abandon the earthly. These would rather pay attention to flattery and ambition than take their stand by the truth.

This is why Mathathias and his sons, *leaving behind all they had* in the city, fled to the safety of poverty (lest they should consent to the orders of King Antiochus who was introducing the Jews to idolatry, after they had constantly said no to his messengers and even killed them out of zeal for the Law and for truth). We read of them in 1 Maccabees 2:27ff.

Mathathias cried out with a loud voice in the city, saying: Everyone who has zeal for the law, and maintains the covenant, let him follow me. So he and his sons fled into the mountains and left all that they had in the city.

To those blessed men, it was more glorious to be killed while holding to what was true than to be praised while clinging to what was false. O how glorious it is to die for truth! It crowns the one who proclaims it, even if it doesn't convert the one who hears it. O God, would that today there were many like Mathathias, many like John the Baptist, many more Apostles Paul! — people who would not suppress the truth before leaders, and especially before prelates. No behavior does more harm than that of leaders, more especially prelates. As Gregory says in the *Pastoral Rule*:<sup>11</sup> "Nobody in the Church does more hurt than he who holds the name and rank of dignity or sanctity but whose conduct is perverted. This is because nobody has the pluck to confront such a man with his faults. Instead, a sinful man is honored and respected for his status, while his wrongful behavior spreads as the shocking example it is."

The third move in "leaving all" was to get rid of so many stumbling-blocks, in order to promote good more effectively. Bearing upon this is what is said in Matthew 4:19, *Come after me, and I will make you fishers of people. And at once they left their nets and followed him*. See here how the Apostles, in order to fish for people more effectively, left earthly things, in case they would present a stumbling-block to those they were to fish for. Just as the way one lives speaks louder than the tongue, and example is better than words, so is an unworldly attitude together with mortification, more persuasive. One who is poor and has *crucified self with its passions and desires* is more persuasive than one who is rich and indulges in extravagant care of himself. Who would ever have believed anything the Apostles said about unworldliness, if they were seen to be worldly men at heart? Had the Apostles been men who were out to make themselves securely rich — why, people everywhere would have run

from them: of at least, their conduct would have kept people far from the love of God.

But as we now know, it was the net of poverty which drew people to love and praise God. It was through the pattern these men set, when wordly greed, the root of all evils, was demolished, that Christ's poverty was implanted in the hearts of the faithful; a poverty which is the principal foundation of every good. Today on the contrary, the salvation of souls has deteriorated into something carried on for gold and revenues.

On the other hand, lest perchance our praise of poverty be looked on as a condemnation of the temporal property of the Church, let this be said: the Church's temporal goods are something to be *admitted* on a temporary basis. They are even to be *furthered* howsoever for a number of reasons: for the honor of the Bridegroom, for the adornment of the Bride, for feeding the traveller, for caring for the poor, for comforting the sick, for the devotion of the faithful, and also for community use. And when for these reasons they are allowed, the perfect integrity of prelates will not be diminished thereby. Temporal goods, if properly managed, will increase merit; if, however, they be badly managed, they can only pave the way to damnation.<sup>12</sup>

The second point in our text is the words, *they followed him*, meaning they attained the completion which prepared them for action. In three ways the Apostles followed Christ as End and Completion of every good: *humbly*, without any pride over the light they received from inner knowledge; *harmoniously*, without ill-feeling, their incentive being love and fraternal<sup>13</sup> fellowship; *perseveringly*, with the steadfastness needed for bearing continual affliction. Following Christ, then, in this threefold manner, the Apostles were in all respects restored to the blessed Trinity. For, with the brightness of inner vision guiding their reasoning, they were restored to the Son's wisdom. By the love of fraternal charity rectifying their desires, they were restored to the Holy Spirit's kindness. By the vigor of manly steadfastness controlling their resentments, they were restored to the Eternal Father's power. These three, viz, an understanding of divine things, a harmonious relationship with others, and an acceptance of adversities, each one of us needs for salvation.

To begin with, they followed Christ *humbly* and without pride over the brilliance of their internal knowing. For humility it is that uncovers the brilliance of understanding. Pride shuts it out; pride, even 'as it puffs us up, has the effect of clouding over' and robbing us of the light of truth. In John 8:12 we read:

I am the light of the world;

anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark but will have the light of life.

I *am* the actual light of the world, (Our Lord is saying), 'since I am not merely receiving light from somewhere else. From the fountain of my wisdom, in fact, streams every other created light. And hence, anyone who follows me in humble attitude is not walking in the darkness of error and ignorance; instead, he will have the light of life and of grace, which will give life to his heart and light to his mind.'

Secondly, they followed Christ *harmoniously* without ill-will, their incentive being love and fraternal fellowship, 1 Peter 2:21 bears upon this:



Christ suffered for us and left an example for you to follow in his steps. He had done nothing wrong, and had spoken no deceit.

O what a lovely statement that is! O how true it is, and worth remembering and applauding! *Christ suffered for us* who had to be cleansed of every sin; *leaving you an example* of charity and kindness, *that you should follow his steps* as they lead you on to the heights of perfection.

If someone asks: 'What was it that moved the Son of God to suffer for us?' — there is no answer to be found other than his kindness and his boundless merciful charity; just as 1 John 3:16 puts it:

In this we have known the charity of God,  
because he laid down his life for us.

And since that example of great kindness is worthy of imitation, it adds:  
and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Well did the Apostles carry this out: they abandoned all ill-feeling, and willingly laid down their lives to save all the elect. Each one of them could have said:

My footsteps have followed close in his,  
I have walked in his way without swerving (Job 23:11)

His footsteps, let me say, of charity and kindness; *my* footsteps, with all the longing love of my heart, for *it is great glory to follow the Lord*<sup>14</sup> in perfect charity.

Thirdly, they followed Christ *perseveringly*, with the steadfastness needed for bearing with unremitting torment, as referred to in Luke 9:23:

If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself  
and take up his cross and follow me.

*If anyone wishes to come after me*, humbled and mortified, *let him deny himself*, going through the submissiveness of humility; *and take up his cross* of unremitting torment, *and follow me* perseveringly right up to the entrance to the eternal palace. And rightly, in that authoritative source, is humble submissiveness, meaning the denial of one's own will, mentioned first. Next comes the harshness of penance and mortification — "his cross" is what this is called here. And the reason for it is that mortification of self is ruined sometimes by pride, sometimes by gluttony. On this account, if we want to carry the cross of mortification faultlessly, we ought to be humble in heart and abstinent in body.

The sermons are frequently concluded with a prayerful summation of the theme or of some other key-idea that had been developed. If the above sermon had been used as the basis of a *lectio divina*, the following prayer might be considered as a suitable ending.<sup>15</sup>

Let us therefore ask Christ our Lord  
to prepare us to lift up our soul  
to the Son's wisdom  
by dint of the brilliance of faith,  
to the Holy Spirit's mildness  
through the ardor of charity,  
to the Father's power  
by means of the certitude of hope;  
in such manner  
that we may be able to win the endowment  
of unveiled vision,  
peaceful enjoyment  
and untroubled possession [of God, Three in One]...

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>For the shape and features of the medieval sermon, and for the place of Scripture in Bonaventure's theology, see J. G. Bougerol, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure* (Paterson, N.J., 1964), in particular 136-144.

<sup>2</sup>*The Works of Bonaventure*, Vol. 2, *The Breviloquium* (Paterson, N.J., 1963), Prologue, 3-16.

<sup>3</sup>A classic definition runs: *Sedula Scripturarum inspectio cum animi intentione*.

<sup>4</sup>Bonaventure's own preparation was born of peaceful recollection, when he could find it, and he required prayer and reflection of the Scripture teacher, preacher and learner (e. g. in his *Luke Commentary*). He could have made his own what St. Gregory said, in the *Moralia*, on the contemplative reading of the Bible: "The voice of God is heard when, with minds at ease, we rest from the bustle of this world and ponder the divine precepts in the deep silence of the mind."

<sup>5</sup>E. g. Sermon 1 for 3rd Sunday of Advent, *Opera Omnia* (Quaracchi) IX, 57-58. Through the text of Jn 1:26, *There has stood one in the midst* (middle) *of you*... Christ is contemplated as Center, Middle Point, Mediator etc. in three senses: in the incarnation he is the appropriate connecting *medium* between divinity and humanity; in his life he is the proper *middle point* in the regulation of all virtue and perfection; in his passion he *mediates* the influx of life and grace to the Church.

<sup>6</sup>E. g. the sermon on St. Francis, *Learn from me*... *Op Omn* IX, 590-597; on St. Anthony, IX, 535-538; for Septuagesima, 195-198; sermon 1 for 4th Sunday of Lent, 231-234.

<sup>7</sup>*Opera Omnia* IX, 372-375. In its trinitarian references this sermon resembles that for 1st Sunday of Advent, 23-26.

<sup>8</sup>"*Altitud*" means both "height" and "depth." "Depth" here seems more suitable in the context.

<sup>9</sup>The (Later) Rule of the Friars Minor, Chapter 6, with "Apostles" substituted for "my dearest brothers."

<sup>10</sup>From a responsory in the Office of St. Anthony composed by Julian of Speyer.

<sup>11</sup>*Regula Pastoralis* Part 1, chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup>The same remarks are made in (*Apologia Pauperum*, OpOmn VIII, c. VIII, n. 14), *Defence of the Mendicants* (*The Works of Bonaventure* IV, Paterson, N.J., 1966) Chapter VIII, no. 14, 178-179.

<sup>13</sup>The Quaracchi editors give "supernal;" but one manuscript reads "fraternal" and this latter seems to suit the context better.

<sup>14</sup>Ecclesiasticus 23:38 according to the Vulgate.

<sup>15</sup>It appears as the conclusion to Sermon 1 for 1st Sunday of Advent (OpOmn IX, 26); a section on the Trinity in this and one in the present sermon closely resemble each other.

## Love's Forest

In ancient forests  
Crickets sing: "Will you listen  
to our tale of Love?"

Beyond Redwood trees,  
Nesting rattlesnakes hissing —  
Heart abruptly stops.

"Roam unbridled paths  
til you hear silent footsteps  
approach, — God is nigh!

Days, nights, quickly go —  
Sun, Gentle Wind, lift me high;  
Let me live, not die!

Heart, wild with laughter,  
Leaps with you and skips a beat;  
'Tame the fox in me!'

Blaze a trail, follow —  
Share all you are with others,  
For Love, your Brother!

Seek not fame, fortune,  
For Poverty claims your soul . . .  
Earthen Vessel's gold!

Beyond mountain's peak,  
Silent footsteps await you.  
'My Heart, I Am LOVE!'

Violets meekly nod —  
Knowingly deck path you trod . . .  
Feet caught in briers!

Sr. Barbara Mary Lanham, OSF

## St. Francis and Some Traditions of Indian Spirituality

SR. CECILY PAUL POOTHOKAREN, F.M.M.

IT WAS IN 1980 that I had the privilege of spending a month in an ashram<sup>1</sup> in Rishikesh at the foot of the Himalayas in India. While talking to a Hindu sannyasi<sup>2</sup> there, I discovered for the first time that St. Francis was considered as one of the patrons of Hindu Ashrams. They consider him as a sannyasi, a jeevanmuktha.<sup>3</sup> Now that I am doing Franciscan Studies at St. Bonaventure University, I am beginning to see more clearly how Francis had been a sannyasi. And, of course, now that I am living in a foreign country, I appreciate my own Indian culture even more!

According to Indian spirituality, life is considered as a yatra, a journey or pilgrimage, toward an ultimate goal which is Moksha: release, liberation, salvation. The goal has always to be kept in mind and pursuit relentlessly with concentrated single-minded concern, ekagratha. It can be compared to a target to be hit in one go with the bow and arrow. Either one hits it or misses it! The image of the arrow shows direct pursuit in a straight line: it rules out a round-about way or wandering or drifting or stopping on the way for a while; or taking life easy, following a leisurely speed (Amalorpavadass, 151).

When Francis found the "hidden treasure" (Mt. 13:44), he sold everything in order to buy the "precious pearl" (Mt. 13:45), like the apostles who sold everything to follow Christ. Free of all baggage (Omnibus, 236) Francis continued his pilgrimage towards his ultimate goal of possessing Christ by following His teaching and footprints (AB, 109). With one-pointed concentration and single-minded concern Francis pursued his relentless quest for the Absolute.

If life is a pilgrimage, it consists of stages. One reaches his ultimate goal by passing through four stages:

*The author, a Franciscan Missionary of Mary, has held administrative posts in her congregation and has also served as director of its novitiate program. She is currently a student at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, New York.*

1. *Brahmachargia*, the stage of discipleship and initiation into adult life through the study of the Vedas (Scripture). It implies a life devoted not only to study but also to the practices of austerity which are intended to purify the disciple's soul. He must learn to master his senses, to keep himself from all impure contacts, to be satisfied with a frugal way of life, to practice the virtues appropriate to his status, such as humility and obedience (Lingat, 45-46). A *brahmachari* is initiated into the experience of God (*brahmavidya* — knowledge of God). This is done not so much with books and studies, as by the guidance of a guru. The disciple lives with the guru just as the apostles lived with Jesus. A disciple sits at the feet of the guru to listen to his words of wisdom. He observes the guru's way of life by working with him and for him.
2. *Grahastha*, the stage in which one gets married and becomes a householder. He is involved in the world and fulfills his duties to family, society, and profession.
3. *Vanaprastha*, a stage during which one goes to the forest. While engaged in household duties and social activities, one should not get so engrossed in them that he forgets his ultimate goal. Hence one goes to the forest for spiritual renewal. He has a fixed abode, a hermitage. He should give himself over to meditation and to study, clothing himself in bark or the skin of animals. He is to abstain from speaking for long periods and he undertakes a prolonged fast, drawing nourishment from the fruits, flowers, roots and vegetation of the forest. Normally the austerities which he undergoes during his life as a hermit are intended to prepare him for the fourth and the last stage — *sannyasa* (Lingat, 46).
4. *Sannyasa*, a life of total detachment and renunciation in view of total possession of the Absolute. His entry into this new phase of existence is marked by an inspiring ceremony wherein he performs a last sacrifice of particular solemnity. He announces in a loud voice his resolution to become an ascetic. He is thereupon dead to the world. He begs for the food needed to keep him alive. He will wander without care for this world or for heaven. He is not allowed to settle in one spot except during the rainy season. He may live only on alms and must eat only once a day, and then only certain natural foods. He should cover himself with rags or even go naked. Thus liberated from all ties with the world, indifferent to joy as to pain, to truth as to lies, he will search only the Atman, the Spirit (Lingat, 46-47).

The above descriptions of the stages of life is very ideal and very few complete them to perfection. All need not physically go through the four

stages but the values and dimensions of each stage are important and indispensable for everyone who undertakes the spiritual quest. In general, the stages are accomplished in various degrees.

Francis seems to have gone through these stages, though not chronologically. He took *sannyasa* when he stripped himself completely naked in the Bishop's court and announced: "From now on I can freely say 'Our Father who art in heaven, not father Peter Bernardone, to whom, behold, I give up not only the money, but all my clothes too. I will therefore go naked to the Lord'" (Omnibus, 372). Francis discards everything that speaks of worldly values and directs his energies to what concerns God alone so that "only the wall of flesh should separate him from the vision of God" (Omnibus 241).

Before Francis took up *sannyasa*, he did go through the stages of *vanaprastha* and *brahmacharga*. Francis was initiated into the experience of God (*Brahma Vidya*) by God Himself. Jesus was his Guru. He says, "While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and afterward I lingered a little and left the world" (AB 154). He often retired to hermitages and to abandoned churches and to lonely places in the wilderness (LM 10) to seek the will of God in prayer and penance. Francis listened to his Guru in the scriptures, in deep contemplation, in the Eucharist, in all of creation, in his superiors, and in the events of life.

Francis learned *brahmavidya* from the scriptures. The Word of God directed his path as he searched for direction, and he was told: "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me" (Mt. 19:2). Francis exclaimed: "This is what I wish, this is what I seek, this is what I long to do with all my heart" (Omnibus, 247), and he went about doing what he was told by his guru, Jesus, through the words of the Gospel.

Francis listened to his guru in deep contemplation. Bonaventure says: "He tried to keep his spirit always in the presence of God, by praying to Him without intermission... Whether he was walking or sitting, at home or abroad, whether he was working or resting, he was so fervently devoted to prayer that he seemed to have dedicated to it not only his heart and his soul, but all his efforts and all his time" (LM 10:3). Celano tells us that "often without moving his lips, he would meditate within himself and drawing external things within himself, he would lift his spirit to higher things. All his attention and affection he directed with his whole being to the one thing which he was asking the Lord, not so much praying

as becoming himself a prayer (Omnibus, 440-441). Thus Francis let himself be instructed by Jesus, his guru, who dwelt in the cave of his heart as he spent hours in the solitude of the caves with an open mind and an open heart.

Francis approached the eucharist with great unction, reverence, love and devotion because he was so sensitive to the intimacy of God in this sacrament. He admonished his brothers: "See, daily He humbles Himself (cf. Phil 2:8) as when He came from the royal throne (Wis 18:15) into the womb of the Virgin; daily He comes to us in a humble form; daily He comes down from the bosom of the Father (cf. Jn 1:18) upon the altar in the hands of the priest" (AB 26-27).

All of creation was a book of revelation for Francis. He saw God's beauty in the beauty of creation. As a yogi who has achieved harmony with nature, Francis was able to communicate with creatures as persons, and he would call them to praise the Creator along with him. The Canticle of Brother Sun is just one of the examples of his way of praising God through and for creation. In his attitude toward creation he is very much like a Hindu sage who sees God's manifestation in all the works of nature: in earth and fire and air and water, in plant and animal and man. Extraordinary sacredness is attached to every created thing in India. The earth is sacred and no ploughing or sowing or reaping can take place without some religious rite. Eating is a sacred action and every meal is conceived as a sacrifice to God. Water is sacred and no religious Hindu will take a bath without invoking the sacred power of the water which descends from heaven... Air is sacred, the breath of life which comes from God and sustains all living creatures. Fire is sacred, especially in its source in the sun, which brings light and life to all creatures, so also the plants and trees. Animals are sacred, especially the cow which gives her milk as mother; but also the elephant, the monkey and the snake. Finally man is sacred. Every man is a manifestation of God but especially a holy man, in whom the divine presence can be more clearly seen (Griffiths, 154).

Did Francis go through the stage of *grahastha*? Though the word *grahastha* literally means the married state of life, it implies solidarity with the world, involvement in society and contribution to it without evasion and escapism. Francis certainly did involve himself in society. In fact, his attention was drawn to the most unwanted, the marginalized people of his society, the poorest of the poor and the lepers. He saw the broken body of Christ in them. Francis lived with lepers in solidarity and served them most diligently for God's sake (Omnibus, 638-639). Furthermore, Francis went about preaching the good news of love, calling people to penance and wishing them God's peace which he himself experienced

deep within. The Legend of Perugia (Omnibus 1022-1023) gives an account of how Francis was an instrument of peace and brought about reconciliation between the bishop of Assisi and the Podestà by sending his brothers to sing the Canticle of Brother Sun which he had composed. David Flood (91) considers chapter fourteen of the Earlier Rule of St. Francis as a model of social action, a model which he describes as "Francis and his brothers received of others and shared with them.... The brothers declared their solidarity with the lepers: they made the goods of life circulate among all."

For Francis, "the reason for entering into a hermitage was not for escaping from reality but rather, in order to enter more deeply into it. It is to seek the Kingdom of God and His justice. This Kingdom is found, not by escaping from the world, ourselves, or others, but by a contemplative discovery of God in the world, ourselves and others" (Carrozzo, 149). Francis was a contemplative in action. For him there was no conflict between contemplation and the service of others. Fr. Bede Griffiths (1) has explained well how an ashramite (one who lives in an Ashram) is called to contemplation, to the experience of God in prayer, in meditation and selfless service:

"The priority has always to be given to the inner life, the experience of the indwelling Spirit in the cave of the heart and his demands times of silence, of solitude, of being 'alone with God'. But this need not and should not be an obstacle to concern for the needs of the world. Contemplative prayer means entering into the depths of one's being where one experiences one's solidarity with all humanity. It consists essentially in the surrender of the 'ego', the private self, and the awakening to the true self, the 'hidden person of the heart,' who shares the concerns of all beings. In other words, it is an awakening to the presence of Christ within and to the action of the Holy Spirit, which is love."

Though Francis spent long hours in contemplation he did not neglect others' needs: "Francis frequently chose solitary places so that he could direct his mind completely to God; yet he was not slothful about entering into the affairs of his neighbours, when he saw the time was opportune, and he willingly took care of things pertaining to their salvation" (Omnibus, 288).

While Francis continued his pursuit toward his ultimate goal under the inspiration and direction of his guru, Jesus Christ, he, in turn, became an upa-guru, one who leads others to the sat-guru, Jesus. No one claims to be a guru "even if one has all knowledge and understands all secrets; has all the faith needed to move mountains" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:2); unless and until a disciple chooses him as his guru. In the case of Francis, he would

say: "The Lord gave me brothers" (AB 154). It was not Francis' personal choice to call others to follow his way of life; the charismatic personality of Francis drew others to follow him as he followed Jesus Christ. His brothers drew inspiration from him. He became the 'forma minorum' to his brothers. He formed them by his very being, and his life spoke louder than his words. As the number of followers increased, there was need that he should give them instructions in writing. And he wrote in his rule how they should live as pilgrims: "the brothers shall not acquire anything as their own, neither a house nor a place nor anything at all. Instead, as pilgrims and strangers (cf. 1 Pet 2:11) in this world who serve the Lord in poverty and humility, let them go begging for alms with full trust" (AB 141) — a life very similar to an Indian Sannyasi.

Francis was a contemplative who preached and engaged in work. His life was a mixture of retreat and activity, of prayer and preaching, of following in the footsteps of Christ. Francis was a living, walking hermitage. He was able to enter into the cave of his heart at any time in any place. He could lose himself in prayer while riding on an ass, or in the middle of a crowd (Omnibus, 443). The brothers were to make of themselves "a home and dwelling place (cf. Jn 14:23) for Him Who is the Lord God Almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit..." (AB 128).

Finally, the places where Francis dwelt with his companions, Rivo Torto, the Portiuncula, and the other hermitages, seemed to have been very much like ashrams. An ashram is characterized by its simplicity of life, its primacy of prayer, its openness to all (Vandana, 25-27). An ashram is only a stopping place in which a sannyasi may live for a time — or for all time; but he is always journeying beyond time to the eternal reality. So also, every church, every religion, every human community is only a stopping place, a tent which is pitched on this earth by pilgrims who are on their way to the city of God (Griffiths, 44).

Francis, a sannyasi, lived a life of total renunciation, pursued his ultimate goal with one-pointed concentration and single-minded concern, and hit his target when he received the stigmata on Mount Alverna (Omnibus, 309). He became a "jeevan muktha", a totally liberated man, communicating vibrations of peace and joy to the whole world, to all classes of people of all time and place, up to this very day.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Ashram is a place of intense and sustained spiritual quest for the Absolute by a group of persons around and under the guidance of a guru. Guru is a person recognised by others as a God-realized person and a person of deep spiritual experience. (cvf. Amalorpavadass, 159).

<sup>2</sup>Sannyasi is a person who makes a complete renunciation of the world in order to seek for God. It is a total abandonment of everything in view of possessing God by self-realization and God-experience. (cf. Amalorpavadass, 158).

<sup>3</sup>Jeevanmuktha is a person who has attained "Nirvana", total liberation while he is alive.

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DECEMBER, 1987

# The CORD

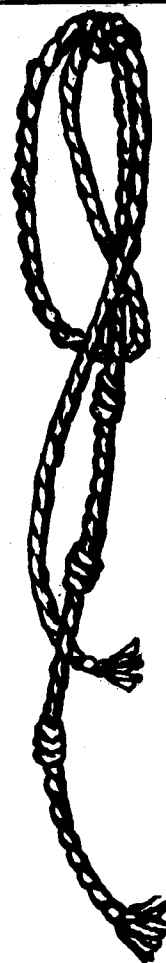
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Volume 37, No. 11

## The CORD

### A Monthly Franciscan Spiritual Review

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### Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

#### I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions

BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo

CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun

EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony

EpCler: Letter to Clerics<sup>1</sup>

EpCust: Letter to Superiors<sup>1</sup>

EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful<sup>1</sup>

EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo

EpMin: Letter to a Minister

EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order

EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of People

ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God

ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father

FormViv: Form of Life for St. Clare

Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221

LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God

LaudHor: Praises at All the Hours

OffPass: Office of the Passion

OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix

RegB: Rule of 1223

RegNB: Rule of 1221

RegEr: Rule for Hermits

SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady

SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues

Test: Testament of St. Francis

UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare

VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy

<sup>1</sup>I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

#### II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis

2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis

3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles

CL: Legend of Saint Clare

CP: Process of Saint Clare

Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis

LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis

LMin: Bonaventure, Minor Life of Francis

LP: Legend of Perugia

L3S: Legend of the Three Companions

SC: Sacrum commercium

SP: Mirror of Perfection

Omnibus: Marion A. Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

AB: Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

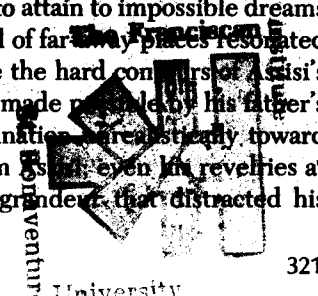
### Reflection:

## From Assisi to Greccio: the Journey of Francis' Imagination

JOSEPH DOINO, O.F.M.

SEVERAL years ago I came upon a splendid book written by Romano Guardini entitled *Focus on Freedom*. As one who had been privileged to visit Assisi (and later to have revisited it for some lengthy periods of time), I found it easy to identify with the description of the author's own experience (p. 9). In fact I believe that any pilgrim who has had the opportunity to simply walk Assisi's streets alone and without constraint of time would agree that initially there arises within the spirit a deeply felt desire to be one with the "hewn hardness of stone, row on row, the cubical masses suffused with light standing in the purity of wind and sunlight." Yet as one gets lost in the warmth of this happy feeling "the power of the form of nearby things, felt in all the fibers of one's being, suddenly stretches out into a great distance of yearning and infinity — without losing itself, without the slightest obscuring of its clarity of outline." Thus, the desire simply to be there, to be one with the "simple cubical masses suffused with light standing in the purity of wind and brilliant sunlight" must contend with the drawing power of the marvelous Umbrian plain with its hills rising in mysterious light. It is an unusual tension that courses through one's being and Francis, being the intuitive and dramatic person that he was, must have experienced it deeply.

In his youth Francis seems to have opted out of this tension of the circumscribed present and the beckoning of the infinite. His imagination gave way to dreams and fantasies of distant warfare, of a Francis returning in resplendent glory, acclaimed by Assisi's citizenry. He seemed more intent upon a kind of Quixotic quest, trying to attain to impossible dreams with impossible measures. The romantic call of faraway places resonated more in him than did the desire to embrace the hard contours of Assisi's reality. More and more his dreams of glory made possible by his father's lucrative cloth business stretched his imagination irresistibly toward other lands. His path to glory was away from home, even his revelries at home were the acting out of fantasies of grandeur that distracted his



imagination from the reality of the stony and impersonal coldness of the city's ethos. His search for glory would not allow his imagination to tolerate anything but self-serving and unreal visions.

Francis' imagination had to undergo a painful purification. He would have to learn by experience the great Christian truth that the way to true glory, to God, is not by way of a Mary Poppins' flight over the hard contours of everyday reality. Paradoxically it is precisely in and through the finite, the concrete, that one comes to that which alone can satisfy the hunger and longing of the human spirit.

The process of purification is well known. There was defeat in battle, and a year's imprisonment followed by a long illness led to some sobering realizations. When he looked far afield for consolation he discovered that nature had lost its appeal and failed to arouse his imagination. "He wondered," says Celano, "at the sudden change that had come over him." (1, 3). Yet when he heard of another military exploit, Francis "still looked forward to accomplishing great deeds of wordly glory and vanity, and puffed up by a gust of vainglory, vowed that he would go to Apulia to increase his wealth and fame." (1,4) But God began to displace Francis' fantasies with visions that were both gift and challenge. Francis responded by taking his fantasies into a cave where he submitted them in pain and groaning to God's designs. Here he learned and accepted that his fantasies were conditioned by the world of cloth, the symbol of power and money.

He would literally have to divest himself. Slowly the naked figure of the crucified Christ began to take hold of his inner mind; it began to exercise its demands upon his imagination as previously the world of fine cloth had done. Its power enabled Francis to abandon his cowardice and face his enraged father in public.

The image of the submission and compassion of the crucified Son took hold of Francis' consciousness. Francis joyfully walked into the "freedom of the children of God"; he could truly call God his Father. Stripped of all that had enslaved him, impervious even to the attacks of robbers who threw him naked into the snow, he sang a completely new song of glory.

One last reality, however, challenged the authenticity of his freedom. As liberated of his fantasies as he felt, the reality of the leper had no place as yet in his Christ-centered imagination. Celano (1,17) tells of it in this way: "So greatly loathsome to him were lepers, that he would look at their houses only from a distance of two miles and hold his nostrils with his hand." No biographer of Francis will ever overlook that which Francis himself memorialized in his Testament — the remarkable encounter when "he met a leper one day and made stronger than himself, he kissed him." (1 Cel 17). This sparked the complete rebirth of the imagination of Francis.

In embracing and kissing this despised portion of human reality Francis encountered God. He knew that he had not so much embraced Christ as that he had been invaded by "sweetness of body and soul" (Test); the undreamed of invasion of God's agape, had entered dramatically into Francis' life in the most unimaginable way possible — in the kiss and embrace of the leper. Francis' imagination had become thoroughly christified. Now indeed the last portion of reality reserved to Francis' selfishness had been surrendered to and retrieved by God's saving love.

For Francis the journey of the Son of God into human history had assumed overwhelmingly dramatic proportions. Now at last the depth and drama of the human birth of God siezed his imagination as it had siezed his life. He continued his committment to the cutting edges of everyday reality: he continued to serve lepers, to clean their wounds and to kiss them. He came more and more to sense the mystery of God's invasion of history in the Incarnation. In Celano's words (I, 84) it was "the humility of the incarnation and the charity of the passion" that took hold of his memory with such intensity "that he wanted to think of hardly anything else."

Three years before his death Greccio burst in upon his imagination and the cave of Greccio became a living symbol of the reconciliation Francis had experienced. "Greccio", says Celano, "was made, as it were, a new Bethlehem." (1 Cel 85) Francis summoned the brothers and people of every walk of life to re-member their Christian lives, to allow the forgotten Child of Bethlehem to invade their imaginations. In this way, and in this way alone could they accept their human stories as did the Son of God. In Him they would discover the power to embrace with hope the struggles of time and place, to walk into the sometimes resisting and punishing edges of human history with fidelity and with the conviction that only in this way does one come realistically to the glory which God alone can give.

Greccio became much more than an incident in the life of Francis and his followers. It would always remind him of the extent to which God's love had taken hold of his imagination. It would enable him and the brothers to imagine great journeys to far away places. They could entertain the call of distant lands, but they would journey as did the Lord accepting and welcoming the harsh realities of life with the hope that precisely in this unexpected transformations could occur. Francis loved Assisi. He had learned its lesson well. At Greccio the tensions of his christified imagination were played out in unforgettable creativity. As "each one returned to his home with holy joy" (1 Cel 86), it was a home-coming whose dimensions reached far beyond time and space. All of us continue to share in its richness.

## The Martyrology On Christmas Eve Morning 'In Bethlehem of Judea'

The old chronograph itemized  
The one who came, allotting Him  
A place like anyone's in the queue  
Of time. The last and greatest word  
Of God a gloss in the margin  
Of humankind. Like us He stands  
On the bank in the sinners' line.

The sickle-thin arc of the moon  
Lies on its back one end of sky  
Under a star, like a slender  
Lady playing with a baby.  
Night is not over; but morning,  
With a bird or two and distant  
Dog bark, is beginning to stir.

Open the wicket, then, and move  
Through to where beneath the black spire  
They have longed in the quiet hours  
For the Just One to fall like dew.  
The One who must come still is He  
That came in time past and is He  
—Who comes in the Now of this day.

We had unravelled, as we thought,  
The code of the prophets. Yet He,  
Catching the common in us all,  
Was catalogued for our surprise.  
The ancient scribe's crude innocence  
We would remember and applaud,  
Watching the moon cradling a star.

*friar GREGORY Ó seanacháin*

## The Laity in Global Perspective

FR. ANSELM MOONS, O.F.M.

### INTRODUCTION

It was with great hesitancy that I accepted the invitation to address this audience of academic excellence, which is honouring this evening the person of Fr. Joseph C. Wey, C.S.B., Professor Emeritus and former Superior General. However, the courage to meet this challenge I found in the importance of the theme of my talk: "The Laity in Global Perspective." The Church today is discovering the importance of the laity. The Holy Father will discuss the issue with Bishops from all over the world in October of this year. It is no exaggeration to say that the future of the Church depends on the laity. I should mention here that the laity represent more than 99% of our Church members, while the clergy — with all their rights and obligations — do not represent more than 0.06 which is less than one percent!

A final remark to bring this introduction to a close: the words "global perspective" in the title of this talk are there to remind us that our church is a missionary church. Therefore, I want to approach the topic of the laity from my own missionary experience.

### CHAPTER ONE: THE CLERICAL IMAGE OF THE CHURCH

#### 1. The profound clericalization of the Church

Cardinal Suenens of Belgium, in a recent interview, expressed his disappointment that one of the dreams of Vatican II has still not been

---

*Fr. Anselm Moons, O.F.M., internationally known and respected specialist in missiology, is director of the newly established Franciscan Mission Service in Silver Spring, Maryland. He delivered this lecture on July 15, 1987 during a convocation at St. Bonaventure University honoring Fr. Joseph Wey, C.S.B., as first recipient of the Franciscan Institute medal for Franciscan Scholarship. Fr. Anselm is a member of the Dutch province of the Order of Friars Minor.*

realized. The laity, he said, is still not recognized in the Church. Twenty years after the Council, where are the laity?

Priests are still seen and addressed as "Another Christ" to whom all authority is given. The clergy evaluates and controls theological reflection and teaching in the Church. The clergy forms and guides the conscience of the people. The clergy absolves them from their sins and the clergy are the ordinary ministers of the sacramental life. In a word, in all religious matters, the clergy has the authoritative voice.

Even in secular matters the clergy speaks with authority as soon as there is a bearing on religion and conscience. The hierarchy has a decisive word on war and peace, nuclear energy, economics, genetic problems, sexual behaviour, marriage life, family education, medical ethics, ecology, problems of labour, tourism and migration. In most of these areas the clergy cannot speak from personal experience, and, therefore, relies on theories and logical applications. The clergy has some of their historical privileges. They have their own dress, their own clerical institutions of education. For centuries the clergy reserved the reading of full Bible to themselves, and did not allow laypersons to enter into their theological schools. The clergy even tried to severely limit the contact with people of other faiths.



## 2. Negative impact of clericalism on the Religious

This extreme clericalism does not favour a healthy understanding of the rightful place of the secular faithful. But the seculars are not the only victims. The religious also suffered from this clerical predominance. Just a few examples: Celibacy, *the* specific characteristic of the religious, was eventually imposed upon the diocesan clergy. This imposition definitely blurred the difference between the two groups in the church. On their part, the clergy made the religious take over some of their duties which estranged the religious from their own identity. Church leaders used religious as stop-gaps when no clergy was available. Religious became, in the eyes of many people, helpers of the bishop and his assistants with lower pay. In mission countries the religious were usually the first representatives of the church. For many centuries the religious were *the* missionaries. Religious brought the new faith, the new code of life, the new cult. Religious built chapels and churches, schools and hospitals. The religious were the leaders, the pastors, the clergy. The religious were the Church. The distinction between the Reverend Parish Priest and the Reverend Brother Religious was totally lost on the new converts.

I sometimes wonder whether people in the first world know much better. Do the people easily distinguish between clergy and religious? If the clergy is a status by itself, where do the religious belong? Do the people see the religious as belonging to the laity? Even the Vatican does not see the Franciscan orders as lay, and wants to classify them as a clerical order!

## 3. Resistance from the Religious against clericalism

Religious have protested against this clericalization from the beginning. Already in the third century, Pachomius, the founder of Monasticism, did not allow his monks to be ordained by bishops. Another example of such a protest, closer to us in time and in affection, is Francis of Assisi who strongly resisted any change that would rank his religious family amongst the clergy. Francis stubbornly refused to call his religious family by the name "order" and, instead, always called it a fraternity. Francis refused the clerical rule of St. Augustine and wrote his own. The titles of "Father" or "superior" Francis did not want, but spoke of "ministers" and "servants". Francis called himself simply "your little brother." And, finally, the friars were to preach as the laypreachers of that time. They were not allowed to ride a horse like the clergy and the nobility used to do to address large crowds in the open.

#### 4. Theological foundation of clericalism

This protest against clericalism met with little success. In fact, clericalism claims even support in theology. We might perhaps call it rather a one-sided Ecclesiology. This Ecclesiology presents a church model which places the ministry in the center. Their power comes, by delegation, from God through Christ, the Pope and bishops, down to the lower clergy. This church model leaves little room for the laity. They are often identified as the "learning church" which has to listen when the "teaching church" speaks to them, obey when the clergy uses its authority, and be receivers when the clergy dispenses the sacraments.

### CHAPTER TWO: THE LAY CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH

#### 1. The Jesus Movement

Recent church history and biblical scholarship has come up with some evidence of a different church model. This model pictures Jesus as the leader of a new Jewish lay-movement which strongly criticised the temple, sacerdotal powers, ritualism and an extremely legal interpretation of religion. Jesus worshipped in a different way: he sacrificed his own life. For his early followers there were no new rules for cult but the awareness of new life, under the leadership of both men and women. Later on, the letter to the Hebrews calls Jesus a priest, but, even then, the title is special and different. Jesus is a priest in the line of Melchisedech who was outside the cult and animal sacrifice. Jesus' sacrifice is eminently spiritual, in the words of both Peter and Paul. The true worship is the sacrifice of one's own life for the sake of the Kingdom.

#### 2. The Church of the Spirit

The earliest experience of Jesus and his followers was first captured in a theology which we call a pneumatic Ecclesiology: (that is) an understanding of the Church in which due attention is given to the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who overshadows Mary. Jesus is announced by John the Baptist as the one who baptizes, not with water, but with the Spirit. After the resurrection, the Spirit is poured out over all, young and old. All of us are living stones of a *spiritual* temple. All of us are holy priests offering spiritual sacrifices.

Again, all of us receive the same life from the Spirit, and this sharing of life is the Church. Whatever belongs to the Church, belongs also to us. If the Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic, then all of us are one, holy, catholic and apostolic. This sharing of life and sharing of faith is the very heart of the church.

To draw one more conclusion from this gift of the Spirit: the life and the faith we have received, is not for us alone; on the contrary, it is a gift to be shared, a privilege to be passed on to others. In other words, every member has a mission in the world. Every one has to work for the Kingdom. Every one has to make use of every opportunity and has to make use of all talents given, all expertise available, all experience that can be drawn from. All life of the Church is apostolic, and, therefore, Ecclesiastical Authority has to function within the laity and their talents, not separated and above them. Authority is not power but service.

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*All life of the Church is apostolic, and, therefore, Ecclesiastical Authority has to function within the laity and their talents, not separated and above them.*

---

#### 3. Another perspective on Ministry?

To complete this reflection on ministry as service, I want to put ministry in another perspective. History teaches that a movement cannot last long without appropriate structures. The purpose of these structures is to support the movement, particularly at moments when the movement loses its first zeal and fervour. Therefore, structures are necessary but come in second place. If we apply this to the Church, we can say: the ideal lay-movement could, for a while, do without the structure of the clergy, but a clerical hierarchy without lay-people makes no sense.

History gives us some concrete examples which we all know:

- when the nomadic Jewish people completed the heroic journey through the desert, they wanted the structure of a king, like the other peoples around them.
- The inspiring examples of the desert fathers eventually needed the firm structures of organized monasticism.
- The struggle for liberation in Latin America has led to the structures of basic ecclesial communities. A typical example in our own time!

This perspective on ministry suggests an interesting conclusion with regard to mission. The first ones called to mission and to witness are the laity. The role of the clergy is to serve the laity in their mission to the world.

## CHAPTER THREE: LAITY IN MISSION

In a third and final chapter of this short reflection on the Laity in Global perspective, I would like to illustrate that a missionary church should come across as a lay-church in which the clergy serves as servants to the People of God. They are ministers of the community. Their role is so well expressed in the words which the Popes apply to themselves: "Servants of the servants." This view on laity and mission has a special relevance for Asia and Africa today. Here are just a few examples:

### 1. Majority of the church in rural areas.

People often think that the majority of humankind lives in cities. That is not true. The vast majority live in rural areas. And the most important social pattern of the family still prevails. And, therefore, the real leadership lies with the head of the family. This can be the father, the grandfather, the uncle, the mother, the daughter-in-law, or whoever. But surely with the laity. The most important value of these rural people in the Third World is social. The really pressing demands are carried out in a common effort and for the sake of a common reputation. A church in this rural setting really needs lay-leadership which can care for these many small rural communities. What is expected most from these leaders is counseling in problems, guiding the community toward decisions, and the witness of their own lives.

### 2. Life of prayer

The people's life of prayer also suggests this lay-model of leadership. Because of the lack of priests, the liturgical celebration with an ordained ministry is often the exception and surely not the daily model of prayer. Therefore, leadership in prayer must go hand in hand with the leadership of a local society. It does not matter whether this is the head of the family or of the village community. The concrete method to train such leaders is, of course, a matter of study and policy.

### 3. Inter-religious dialogue

Another field where the laity should come first is the challenge of inter-religious dialogue. Until now, the dialogue with other religions was reserved to scholars and experts. Experience has taught us that these learned discussions lead to little result. Instead, nowadays every one is convinced that much more importance must be given to what is called the dialogue of life. Without words but with good deeds and respectful attitudes, contacts are being made between members of different faiths.

Contacts on the level of daily life, and, from there, friendship and understanding can grow. Only from this mutual understanding in daily life will scholarly discussion have any chance to be fruitful and lasting.

### 4. Inculturation

Similarly, the role of the laity in problems of inculturation is very important. Inculturation really means that the church feels at home in the daily life of the people of a particular country. The laity are really the best people to feel what is going on in the very heart of the people because they are so close to them in daily life. A celibate clergy will always remain a little more remote from the people. Their guidance will have to take into account the experience of the laity. Should we not add here, that a clergy which is celibate, is itself in many cultures a foreign element to begin with, hardly suited to discover the soul of an alien culture?

### 5. Basic Christian communities

The most promising and contemporary example of lay-mission is, without doubt, the Basic Christian Community. In a basic christian community the people themselves read and discuss the Word of the Bible, draw their conclusions, and implement the conclusions into action. This action can take place within their own community but can also be directed towards human society, the secular world, and political structures. Very often they have become strong instruments of social liberation. The institutional church, however, often looks at these communities with suspicion and fear. They should be no threat to the clergy but the ideal place where the clergy can serve the community most effectively.

### 6. Global issues

A final example of the lay-mission in the church. Nowadays all christians are faced with the problem to formulate christian responses to problems and issues of global dimension. The examples are plentiful: peace, disarmament, nuclear energy, hunger, population explosion, trade, economics, migration, ecology, etc. In all these areas the Church should and does wish to speak. But her voice will carry no weight unless it bases itself on expertise and experience. Just principles will not convince people. This simple fact shows that in these matters we need a laity that can speak as church. To make this possible we have to develop new models in which competent expertise and appropriate authority can work together harmoniously. The happy result of this collaboration between lay expertise and clerical authority will be a new respect between these two, and, on a larger scale, a world-wide recognition of the voice of religion.

## CONCLUSION

It is time to bring this reflection to a close. I hope that all of you can see the need of a profound change in the image of the Church. Too often the Church is still identified with the hierarchy and the clergy. We are just not trained and educated into seeing our church as a lay-church. Occasionally we do say to the laity: "You are the Church." Popes and Bishops repeat these words in official statements. But they do not come from the heart and they are not the result from an experience of life. Clergy usually thinks of the laity when there is a shortage of priests. We have sisters, brothers, seculars in charge of parishes. We have eucharistic ministers. Why are they there? As long as lay-persons cannot give a homily, and are more tolerated than welcomed in the local community, and do not have their own authority in mission, the clergy itself needs conversion, in its service to the People of God. I hope and pray that all of us may see the day that the Catholic Lay-Church is recognized! That will be the day!

Thank you.



## A Prayer

HOLY MOTHER

Let me  
worship with thee the Lord Jesus  
in His Infant Majesty!  
Let me, O let me hold Him  
in my arms but a moment, Mother,  
and know His charms!  
Permit, that I caress Him  
unworthy me and I  
shall clothed be  
in dignity!

*Sister Mary Colette Logue, O.S.F.*

## A Night of Nights

It is Night  
Stars blinking winking  
in the sky  
A major Star scintillates  
above them...  
who-what-why?  
far far below  
a SPOT dispels  
darkness  
fascinates  
captivates  
O could it be,  
could it be  
Christ  
in the manger  
could anything be stranger?  
O heavenly Day — our High Priest  
comes  
to pay  
our Way  
(could any TRUTH be stranger)

## Christmas '87

yet  
still  
under a blue black  
winter sky  
a child  
cries  
for you  
lady  
maiden  
mother

*Bernard Kennedy, O.F.M.*



## At Greccio

I saw you almost submerged  
under the gold of cornfields.  
you were walking,  
and I heard your voice  
singing a song to soothe  
the tired birds.

At Greccio,  
I saw the candlelights,  
and heard the cattle  
crunch the dry December straw

and when the night  
fell silent as a dream  
I felt the smile  
that caught you enraptured  
and instantly captured

all your moments  
and in the cornfield  
the birds were no longer  
tired.

*Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M.,*

## An Advent *Lectio Divina* with St. Bonaventure

Fr. GREGORY SHANAHAN, O.F.M.

IN A PREVIOUS issue (November Cord) we suggested that the Sermons of St. Bonaventure be used as a resource for various forms of biblical meditation. The sermons themselves are clearly the fruit of a profound 'inspection' of the Scriptures and an attentive treatment of God's word in its various 'senses.' The well defined medieval system in which a passage or line was selected (to form *Theme*, *Protheme* etc.), its elements isolated for reflection upon and re-connected for overall meaning, mounts the structures from which a contemplative reading of the Word may be launched. For if *lectio divina* is a 'prayed reading' (and the Sermons are largely an exercise in this), *lectio* itself is the initial stage of an ascending series leading to contemplation: *read, think, study, meditate, pray, contemplate*. The frequent repetition of a key-text, characteristic of a medieval sermon, is in line with the technique of contemplative reading. Relating the key-text to other parts of Scripture, also characteristic of the *Sermones*, can have the effect of opening up for us 'doors of perception' through which we view a familiar passage or word with new eyes.

A respect for words in their significance and symbolism, and an adroit employment of them, are features of the Bonaventurian writings; in this we find the 'anchor words' for sustaining an otherwise wordless prayer. Thus, the Sermons lay before our eyes biblical words which are repeated again and again, so that they tend to haunt our memory. We need not fear this to be naïve; medieval preachers for the most part did this word-tracing neither haphazardly nor with credulity. They were conscious of 'the one Word spoken in all words,' and they experienced themselves as somehow searching from *within* that Word. Words held a Francis-like

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*Friar Gregory of the Irish Province is a member of the community at The Friary Ennis County, Clare, Ireland. He serves on the editorial board of THE CORD, to which he has contributed several articles.*

fascination for Bonaventure! In their variety they were scintillating announcements of God and the sacred written word itself was an aspect of the incarnation of *the Word*.

If, however, we feel let down by some seemingly strange exegesis or by a point drawn from an uncorrected text, this need not disturb our prayerfulness nor keep us from deriving some profit from what we read. The main thing is that we approach, receptive to eventual meaning, *bending the knees of our heart* (*Breviloquium*, prologue).

Quite a number of the Sermons have reached us only in the form of *schemata*, plans, or reported summaries. Sometimes these give a condensed though fairly detailed outline of the shape the sermon took or would take; often they merely indicate some texts and add comments. But it is precisely these *schemata* which prove to be the most serviceable prayer tools. These plans leave us with the essential scriptural selection and sometimes contain relevant patristic comments (more frequent in the full sermons) which, as is well known, constitute the secondary part of the material of traditional *lectio divina*. The four Advent sermons chosen here as examples are *schemata* as they show perhaps how effectively a reader may be involved in the spiritual riches of a liturgical season through such a presentation of the word of God. As the vast majority if not all of the Bonaventurian sermons were written and delivered within the ambit of Season or Feast, they are particularly helpful in linking contemplation with the liturgical cycle and therefore with the 'hidden mystery of Christ' experienced and worshipped in the Church's life.<sup>1</sup>

### I. The White Cloud

Theme: *Then I looked, and lo, a white cloud,  
and seated on the cloud one like  
a son of man* (Apocalypse 14:14).

The holy Evangelist John, held in suspense by what heaven was bringing to light, astounded by this sublime revelation, unfolds for us in these words the mystery of the blessed Incarnation. He does so by means of a double metaphor: the *white cloud* for the most graceful purity of the chosen Virgin who is conceiving; the *one seated on the cloud* for the noblest pre-eminence of the super-blessed Offspring who is conceived.

We ought to take into account that this mystery is such a hidden one as to be beyond the range of all natural insight; so lofty that the liveliest

intellect is powerless to probe it; so profound that it is beyond all telling, no power with words can express it. For this reason, the Holy Spirit discloses it under a variety of figures of speech, so that where one of them fails another supplies for it.

The most graceful purity of the Virgin chosen to conceive and the conception itself are singled out in sacred Scripture not only by the metaphor of the bright or shining white cloud, but also by that of

(i) the BUSH which in a marvellous fashion was in flames without being burnt up; this was to show that tainted nature had nothing to do with it:

*He looked, and lo, the bush was burning,  
yet it was not consumed* (Exodus 3:2);

(ii) the BRANCH that grew green and flowered in marvellous fashion and showed that the conception was independent of successive temporal events:

*There, already sprouting, was Aaron's branch,  
standing for the House of Levi. Buds had opened,  
flowers had blossomed* (Numbers 17:8);

(iii) the FLEECE which was miraculously rained upon and covered in dew and showed that here was a conception from which the pleasure of violent desire was absent:

*[Gideon] squeezed the fleece and wrung enough dew  
out of the fleece to fill a bowl* (Judges 6:38);

(iv) the CLOUD wondrously bearing moisture to signify a conception which was accompanied by the fulness of original grace:

*like clouds in a time of drought* (Ecclesiasticus 35:26);

(v) the RAINBOW glistening marvellously to signify a conception which was accompanied by the fontal fulness of wisdom:

*See the rainbow and praise its maker,  
so superbly beautiful in its splendor* (Ecclesiasticus 43:12)

(vi) the ARC in the cloud, which is like Christ in the Virgin, quadrucolored, possessing, as he does, a cognition that is *innate, infused, acquired, and glorious*:

(vii) the STAR that guides in wondrous manner to signify a conception which was accompanied by an uprightness of life that merited the highest esteem:

*Like the morning star among the clouds,  
like the moon when it is full* (Ecclesiasticus 50:6)

## 2. He Who Comes

Theme: *Blessed is he who comes  
in the name of the Lord* (Matthew 21:9).

These words are read in many a church on the first Sunday of Advent. In two ways they describe the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into this world: (a) *Blessed is he* describes his coming as grace-giving and wonderful; (b) *who comes in the name of the Lord* describes it as fruitbearing and entitled to respect.

a) The advent of the Son of God into this world was *blessed* in four ways. It was blessed at the *Incarnation*, due to plenitude of grace; this is what John's mother says to the blessed Mary:

*Blessed is the fruit of your womb!* (Luke 1:43).

It was blessed in the way he lived, for the quality of excellence in his life; it is written:

*Blessed will you be in coming in,  
and blessed going out* (Deuteronomy 28:6)

It was blessed in his *preaching*, for it was marked by the perfection of doctrine; as was written:

*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel  
... and blessed be these words of yours*<sup>2</sup> (1 Samuel 25:32).

It was blessed in his *actions*, for sanctity and blamelessness were his:

*Let Aser be blessed with children* (Deuteronomy 33:24)

— that is, 'with exemplary actions.'<sup>3</sup>

(b) We say the Son of God came into this world *in the name of the Lord*, for he came

(i) with zeal for his father's praise and honor; he himself said as much to Jews who were ungrateful:

*I have come in my Father's name,  
and you do not receive me* (John 5:43);

(ii) with zeal for peace and harmony, such as the assembly in the Book of Judith petitioned for:

*come to us a peaceable lord,  
and use our services as it shall please you* (3:6)<sup>4</sup>

(iii) with zeal for absolute truth and justice; this is what he himself spoke of:

*For this I was born, and for this I have come  
into the world, to bear witness to the truth* (John 18:37);

(iv) with zeal for kindness and mercy; this was his own saying:  
*For the Son of man came to seek and to save  
the lost* (Luke 19:10);

(v) with zeal for the highest poverty; for it is written:  
*See now, your king comes to you;  
the just and saviour,  
he is poor and riding on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey* (Zechariah 9:9);<sup>5</sup>

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*A respect for words in their significance and  
symbolism, and an adroit employment of them,  
are features of the Bonaventurian writings.*

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(vi) with zeal for the cleanness of chastity and purity; John the Baptist testified to this:

*He who is of the earth belongs to the earth,  
and of the earth he speaks; but he who comes  
from heaven, that is, from human nature at its  
peak, or, purity at its peak, is above all*  
(Cf. John 3:31 + *Glossa ordinaria*)

### 3. Show Me Your Face

Theme: *If I have found favor in your sight,  
show me your face*<sup>6</sup> (Exodus 33:13).

'O DEVOUT SOUL, what a great desire had the Saints of old to see the face of Christ in his humanity!' (Augustine, *Enarratio on Psalm 134*). There was Moses, highly favored in God's eyes, and none but this was his chief request of God. Anyone therefore, in the season of the advent of our Savior's grace, who wishes to adore and contemplate Christ incarnate and look upon that face of his which is longed for by all the elect of God, must take care to have credit with God and not with the world. He will then show him his face which is the image and perfect copy of the Father's nature.

Now, favor in the eyes of God is found by the following four means.

(i) Reverence for and worship of the divine Name:  
*You have won my favor and . . . I know you by name*  
(Exodus 33:17)

This was said to Moses, the great worshipper of the Divinity.

(ii) Love of purity in mind and body:  
*The one who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious*  
(that is, whose understanding and desiring are chaste) *will have the king* (that is, God) *as friend* (Proverbs 22:11).

(iii) The humility of inborn getleness:  
*The greater you are, the more you should behave humbly,  
and then you will find favor with the Lord*  
(Ecclesiasticus 3:20).

And, *You have found favor with God* (Luke 1:30) is what was said to the humble Virgin.

(iv) The grace and beauty of a pious and religious manner of living:  
*Esther found favor in the king's sight.  
She sought not women's ornaments, for  
she was exceedingly beautiful* (Cf. Esther 2:17 + 15).

Now, the face of the Word Incarnate will be shown by the Father of graces to the one who has the four dispositions just mentioned and who through them has obtained the favor of God. And that Face possesses four qualities:

Firstly, it is GLORIOUS, and as such is the fountain and destination of all honors and dignities; the Apocalypse (1:16) points to its majesty and glory:  
*his face was like the sun shining with all its force.*

The Psalmist [longing for the divine presence in the Temple] says:  
*When shall I come and behold  
the face of God?* (Psalm 41:3).

Secondly, it is LUMINOUS, and as such is the fountain and destination of all study or science, and all insight:

*At present, we are looking at a confused reflexion  
in a mirror; then, we shall see face to face* (Corinthians 13:12)  
— that is, in perfect clarity.

The Psalmist [praying to be taught the divine decrees] cries:  
*Let your face shine on your servant* (Psalm 118:135).

Thirdly, it is GRACIOUS, and as much is the fountain and destination of all desires and purposes:

*You are a figure of wonder, my lord,  
and your face is full of graciousness (Esther 15(5):17).*

Fourthly, it is AFFLUENT or abundantly provided, and as such is fountain and destiny of all consolations and delights or the resting-place from all hardships and misfortunes:

*I have seen God face to face,  
and yet my life is preserved (Genesis 32:30).*

#### 4. Meet The Bridegroom

Theme: After me comes a man who ranks before me (John 1:15)

CHRIST COMES *after*, firstly,<sup>8</sup> as the bridegroom coming after the *groomsman*.<sup>9</sup> The groomsman it is who handles the message sent out in advance of the bridegroom's arrival. And indeed it is clear, from the Old and New Testaments, that Christ comes into the world as a bridegroom. In the Old Testament:

*He has set a tent for the sun,  
which comes forth like a bridegroom  
leaving his chamber (Psalm 18:6)<sup>10</sup>*

In the New Testament:

*Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him (Matthew 25:6).*

It is clearly stated that John is the groomsman:

*The bride is only for the bridegroom;  
and yet the bridegroom's friend,  
who stands there and listens,  
is glad when he hears the bridegroom's voice.  
This same joy I feel, and now it is complete.  
He must grow greater,  
I must grow smaller (John 3:29.30).*

The Apostle, also tells us that Christ is a bridegroom:

*This is a great mystery, and I mean  
in reference to Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:32).*

Christ is the Church's Bridegroom, since no one else but he has the ability to make the Church fecund. 'How does the Church become fecund? By conceiving as a virgin' (cf. Augustine, *On Virginity*, ch. 2, no. 2; Sermon 213, ch. 7, no. 7).

But by what means did she conceive? By the Holy Spirit, of course.

But who can provide the Holy Spirit? He, surely, who can provide us with a bridegroom. That is why you have John the Baptist with power to baptize with water, but it is Christ who has the power to really baptize, since only Christ can give the Holy Spirit. So it was that Christ breathed into the Apostles the Holy Spirit; thus he was a bridegroom, coming forth, as the Psalm says, *like a bridegroom leaving his chamber*. Christ is human being as well as God, on account of the union in him between divinity and humanity. He is the one in whom are graces in their abundance, the one of whom the Gospel speaks:

*Behold, the bridegroom! Come out and meet him*

(Matthew 25:6).

Again it is written:

*Daughters of Zion,  
come and see  
King Solomon,  
wearing the diadem with which his mother crowned him  
on his wedding day,  
on the day of his heart's joy. (Song of Songs 3:11).*

The 'day' here spoken of is the birthday of the Lord, a day for rejoicing, and a day on which everybody should be joyful. This joy is the kind which Christ brings; it does not belong to ungodly people. Those who want to come to this wedding should go to confession — although some there are who only make sport of people who do that. But because Christ was born, for the mercy of God. *Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light*. It is not night anymore, the light is here. God forbid that anybody should be in mortal sin on that day of the Lord's nativity!

And so it was that Christ came *after John*, just as bridegroom comes after groomsman. . . .

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>The sermons, from *Opera Omnia* (Quaracchi) Tome IX, are 1) Sermon 7 (1st Sunday Advent), 32 - 33; 2) Sermon 15 (1st Sunday Advent), 39; 3) Sermon 2 (2nd Sunday Advent), 48; 4) Sermon 2 (3rd Sunday Advent) — excerpt from subsequent *Collatio*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Modern versions read *wisdom/discretion*.

<sup>3</sup>Modern versions read *Most blessed of the sons may Asher be!*

<sup>4</sup>This is not verse 6 in modern versions but the general sense is conveyed in verses 1-5 in these versions. The Sermon (though not the Vulgate) has a capital 'D' for *dominus* (lord/master).

<sup>5</sup>In modern versions *the just and savior* = *victorious and triumphant*, and *poor* = *humble*.

<sup>6</sup>Translations based on the Vulgate have *face* here instead of the original *ways*; verses 20 and 23, however, have *face*.

<sup>7</sup>This is rather the key-text of this excerpt from the longer Sermon 2 for 3rd Sunday Advent of which the *Thema* is Jn 1:26.27.

<sup>8</sup>Two other sections follow in the sermon in which Christ is said to come *after* John as a king follows his messenger, and as noonday comes after dawn.

<sup>9</sup>The word used is *paranympheus*; the gospel text has simply 'friend of the bridegroom'.

<sup>10</sup>For this verse applied to Christ, see Christmas Office of Readings, antiphon 2.



*The staff of the Franciscan Institute  
joins the Editors  
in wishing you a very blessed Christmas  
and every grace and good  
from our heavenly Father  
throughout the new year.*

## Book Reviews

**Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark.** By Elizabeth Struthers Malbon. San Francisco: Harper & Row. 1986. Pp. xi-212. Cloth, \$24.95.

*Reviewed by Father Charles J. O'Connor, O.F.M., S.T.D., Assistant Professor of Scripture at Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora, N.Y.*

Elizabeth Struthers Malbon in her book entitled, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark*, seeks in her words, an "audience of those who are willing to follow out a new methodology for the sake of increasing their understanding of an old — but ever current — text" (p. xii). Technical studies concerning the gospel of Mark abound, but few cover the ground of this present work. Malbon utilizes a brand of structural exegesis to arrive at a fuller understanding of this synoptic gospel.

Specifically, the author's method is adapted from that used by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his study of myth. Malbon's method assumes that underlying the 'apparent' content of the gospel, represented by a diachronic sequence of spacial orders or suborders, there existed a mythical schema or synchronic structure constituting the text's 'latent' content, i.e., "the formal theoretical organization of its narrative facts or relations" (p. 38). According to Malbon, having access to this latent content of the gospel, leads one to a deeper theological understanding of the text.

After defining her methodological

terminology in chapter one, entitled, *Investigating Markan Space*, Malbon proceeds to analyze the gospel's Geographical, Topographical, and Architectural Space in chapters two, three, and four respectively. The mythic pattern or schema which is latent in the rather confused sequence of each of these particular special relations is one of opposition, which in its development in the gospel moves towards mediation. In studying, for example, the chronological sequence of the architectural suborder in Mark, Malbon avers that it "is not a static tableau of stage settings but a dynamic pattern of movement within narrative space. The buildings of the Gospel of Mark enclose more than space; they capture the varied responses made to Jesus by those around him, those he healed, taught, challenged" (p. 117).

In the final chapter of the book entitled *Integrating Markan Space*, the author uncovers the mediation underlying all three suborders of Markan-space, viz., the meditation of the fundamental opposition between chaos and order which she, following Lévi-Strauss, describes as archetypical of myth. The gospel ends with the mediation of this opposition by a new order founded upon Christ's resurrection which constitutes less a set of spacial boundaries and more a direction into a new future — a transformed life for all disciples in union with their crucified and risen Lord. Such a life involves from Jesus' followers a risk to involve themselves in the paradox of the Lord's own life which was one of power and suffering.

Readers may be put off somewhat by the first chapter of this book because of its technicality and their unfamiliarity with what can be a complicated and involved method of exegesis. However, perseverance through this chapter will lead to easier reading in the chapters which follow. And the investment that one makes in getting through the entire work will pay dividends in the end by opening the reader to a deeper understanding of the meaning of this rich gospel.

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**Poets, Prophets, and Pragmatists. A New Challenge to Religious Life.** By Evelyn Woodward. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987. Pp. 248. Paper, \$6.95.

*Reviewed by Julian A. Davies, O.F.M.,  
Assoc. Editor of this Review.*

This book flows out of over ten years of experience in counseling individual religious and consulting with religious communities of men and women. It consists of six major essays. The first "Orientation" lays the groundwork of describing the status quo in religious life as one of pluralism, introducing the idea of "story" and describing the qualities of poetic insight, prophetic challenge, and pragmatic planning which should characterize leaders (or the leadership) in religious life. The second chapter explores the reality of community, the third describes a spirituality based on empathy. Chapter four deals with conflict in religious life, Chapter Five with Formation, and Chapter Six, Coping with Stress and Burnout. In my judgment any of these chapters can be read apart from the rest, for they are

full of examples and insights and draw conclusions commensurate with them. At the end of each chapter, there are questions for individual and community reflection and discussion.

Although her experience has made her very much aware of the harmful effects of some of the religious practices and discipline of the old days, it is clear that she does not condemn all that was going on in religious life prior to 1960. She seems alert to the dangers inherent in religious life today — too much "navel-gazing" that is, self-centered concern with community relationships to the neglect of community mission; the cop-out from dealing with problems by pleading "we don't have the skill"; the danger of building ghettos of likeminded individuals. A point that is underscored is that diversity should spring from the ministry of a community, not from its conflicts.

It seems to me that reading one or another of the chapters would make a good community project for a year. The chapters are not hard to read, although the physical appearance of so much print is somewhat discouraging. Any religious can profit from this book.

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**Inheriting the Master's Cloak.** By John Wijngaards, MHM, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1985. Pp. 191. Paper, \$4.95.

**The Wounded Stag,** by William Johnson, S.J., San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986. Pp. ix-203. Paper, \$8.95.

*Reviewed by Fr. Daniel Hurley,  
O.F.M., Campus Minister at St.  
Bonaventure University.*

"Creative Biblical Spirituality" is the sub-title of a book entitled *Inheriting the Master's Cloak*. The work is written by John Wijngaards, a Mill Hill Missionary from Great Britain. The author has for his purpose an explanation of the Old Testament as a "source of continuous inspiration in our spiritual life" (p. 11). He recognizes the difficulty people have in reading the Old Testament writings but emphasizes that what the sacred writers wrote has a bearing on today's living when it is understood in the way Jesus understood such writing (p. 13).

Dividing this book into three parts, the author, in twenty chapters, writes about the use of the Old Testament in understanding the God of the Old Testament (Part One), in making the most of reading and prayer (Part Two), and in discovering the roots of Christian discipleship (Part Three). It is not until Part Three that Father Wijngaards makes clear the meaning of the title of the book, that is, in Chapter sixteen: "Prophets and Witnesses of our Master." The prophet Elisha succeeded the prophet Elijah and his succession was symbolized by the acceptance of Elijah's cloak when Elijah was taken up into heaven (p. 153). The arrangement of the various chapters by the author enables the reader to discover the importance of the Old Testament in the understanding of Christian spirituality. After coming to an appreciation of the God of the Old Testament, the reader approaches the reading of Scripture in the light of that appreciation and then is able to apply such reading to the living of the Christian life (Christian discipleship). We disciples of Jesus Christ have inherited Jesus' mission; with his

help we carry out his redemptive purpose (p. 157).

Perhaps the most important chapter in the book is Chapter Ten, "Blind Guides That Swallow Camels." In this chapter, the author explains the different meanings that sacred writing has. These meanings are the ways that the words of the sacred author are to be understood. They are five: 1) the literal sense — the meaning intended by the author; 2) the fundamentalist sense — the meaning based on a word-for-word interpretation of the text; 3) the accommodated sense — a meaning imputed to the text on account of free association of thought; 4) the applied sense — the application of the literal meaning to one's own life; and 5) the fuller sense — a more complete meaning of an Old Testament passage in the light of New Testament revelation. In successive chapters, Father Wijngaards explains these various senses of the Old Testament texts.

The author has a good understanding of the Books of the Old Testament and makes appropriate use of quotations so that the reader is able to see that the Old Testament does have meaning for Christians of today. His use of New Testament passages shows that Jesus knew the Old Testament writings and used them himself, and explained their meaning in the light of his own teaching. The reader of today will benefit from reading the Old Testament if he or she makes use of Father Wijngaards book, *Inheriting the Master's Cloak*. We in the Twentieth Century are heirs to the kingdom that the Old Testament foreshadowed and that Jesus preached.

Originally published in cloth edition in 1983 under the title *Christian Mysticism Today*, *The Wounded Stag* takes its name from a sentence of St. John of the Cross: "The wounded stag appears on a hill." The sentence is found in the thirteenth stanza of "The Spiritual Canticle" and the term "wounded stag" refers to Jesus himself (p. 17). The author explains the significance of the title in a quotation from "The Spiritual Canticle": "Beholding that the bride is wounded with love for him, he, because of her moan, is wounded with love for her. Among lovers, the wound is a wound for both, and the two have one feeling" (p. 17). A book on Christian mysticism must center itself on the person of Jesus. William Johnson is a well-known spiritual writer and a teacher of mystical theology at Sophia University in Tokyo. This book on Christian Mysticism is a good resource for people interested in understanding what is meant by mysticism and what is meant by Christian mysticism. The author acknowledges that people of different religions come to know God and to experience a mystic relationship with God. He states, however, that the experience of Christian mystics has distinctly Christian characteristics. Father Johnson defines these Christian characteristics as the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, the celebration of the Eucharist, and the community (p. 10).

From the Scriptures, the individual learns of God's relationship to his people and of their relationship to God, a covenant relationship (Chapter 8). Again, through the reading of the Scrip-

tures, the individual understands the person of Jesus Christ and the relationship of Jesus to his disciples. Through the Scriptures, the individual appreciates how Jesus identifies himself with his disciples and how each disciple can identify himself or herself with Jesus. This identification is explained in the chapters on Presence and Absence (Chapters 4 and 5).

Through the celebration of the Eucharist, the individual nourishes himself or herself on the life-giving Body and Blood of Jesus Christ (Chapters 10 and 11). The person of Jesus, the life of Jesus, the call of Jesus — these bring the individual into an awareness of the presence within himself or herself of a transcendent God who permeates the life of each individual person. Identifying with the person and the life of Jesus, the Christian is able to understand the covenant relationship; of God (Jesus) with the people (friends). The Christian so identified with Jesus forms a similar relationship with the community that is the people of God. The Christian mystic is not separated from people but identifies with them in their poverty and their needs, just as Jesus does (Chapters 12 through 15).

Father Johnson gives a good history of Christian mysticism as well as an appreciation of the Christian mystic in today's world. From his own experience, the author speaks of the "desert experience" as understood by Christian authors. His personal acquaintance with the Buddhist and the Moslem prayer experiences enables Father Johnson to set forth the distinguishing features of Christian mysticism. This reviewer recommends *The Wounded Stag* to all sincere religious worshippers. This

book will not only give the reader information but will also benefit the reader's personal experience of the presence of God.

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**Frank Duff: Founder of the Legion of Mary.** By Robert Bradshaw. Bay Shore, New York: Monfort Publications, 1985, 267 pp. Paper, \$5.95.

*Reviewed by Friar Thomas Bourque, T.O.R., Chairperson of the Philosophical and Religious Studies Department of Saint Francis College of Pennsylvania.*

The Marian year is meant to promote a new and more careful reading of what the Council said about the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and of the Church... We speak not only of the *doctrine of faith* but also of the *life of faith*, and thus of authentic "Marian spirituality," seen in the light of Tradition, and especially the spirituality to which the Council exhorts us. Marian spirituality, like its corresponding devotion, finds a very rich source in the historical experience of individuals and of the various Christian communities present among the different peoples and nations of the world.

— John Paul II  
*Mother of the Redeemer, #48*

John Paul II invites all men and women to reflect upon their journey of faith with Our Lord in light of our relationship with his Mother Mary. If one individual is to come to mind when we reflect upon the journey of those individuals who truly embrace a life of faith in our Lord and his Mother, Frank Duff would be that individual.

Frank Duff, known throughout the world as the founder of the Legion of

Mary, is a man who embraces a life of prayer, faith, action and contemplation. During this Marian year, a reflection on his journey with the Lord and His Mother would truly provide one with faith-filled reading. This short biography of Duff's life is more an encounter with Frank, the person and the disciple of Christ, than it is a historical biography. The reader will find this biography to be easy reading and enjoyable reading.

As Father Robert Bradshaw attempts to capture the spirit and the essence of who Frank Duff was, he also captures who he was as a disciple of Christ. Bradshaw also shares with the reader his personal and intimate friendship with Duff. In doing so, he gives the reader the opportunity to get to know Frank Duff in a personal and intimate manner. The selections in this book are from meetings, recordings and encounters which the author had with the founder of the Legion of Mary.

As one thinks about the thousands of followers the Legion of Mary has in our country alone, one begins to wonder about the personality and charism of the founder of such a movement. When I first began to read *Frank Duff: Founder of the Legion of Mary*, I was not convinced that his story would be interesting or inspiring. However, after encountering the personal approach used by Bradshaw in his interpretation of who Frank Duff was, I became engrossed in the book and found myself reflecting upon the gentle and simplistic qualities of this gifted man.

The one quality that remains with me after reading this biography is Duff's desire to be a saint, a desire not rooted in vanity or selfishness, but in search for blessedness and happiness. The one

thing that motivated Frank Duff was his quest to be happy in life and in his relationship with God. The many things which Duff accomplished were done to bring happiness to his life as well as to the lives of others. As one reads *Frank Duff: Founder of the Legion of Mary*, one quickly finds out that Duff's human heart found fulfillment in God alone.

Bradshaw truly captures one's attention and stimulates the reader's interest in learning more about Frank Duff. Although one may be caught up in historical background and events, the author allows the reader to learn more about Duff's journey of faith and his search for happiness with the Lord. As one reads through the pages of this biography, one quickly finds oneself reflecting upon the prayer and faith journey of a simple man who loved his God. Duff's prayer did take on many different forms and styles, but his desire for God always remained intense. For the founder of the Legion of Mary, prayer was a way of life and his desire for God was his way of finding God. In finding God through prayer and desire, Duff was very much at home with God and his fellow brothers and sisters.

As the Church continues to celebrate the Marian year, its members should continue to reflect upon the lives of those many individuals who have given the Church a great deal in example, witness and faith. Frank Duff is one of these individuals and *Frank Duff: Founder of the Legion of Mary* will invite all of its readers to reflect upon their own personal journey of faith with the Lord and his Mother Mary. All are called to live out their faith and this inspiring book will challenge all to do so.

## SHORTER BOOK NOTICES

### How to Start Your Romance With God.

By John M. Scott, S.J. Chicago, Ill.: Franciscan herald Press, 1987. Pp. 143. Paper, \$7.95.

Reviewed by Phil Eberl, Instructor in the school of Education at St. Bonaventure University.

"This book is intended to save you the embarrassment of having to make a confession similar to that of Pope Paul's and Augustine's. The purpose of this book is to help you realize that we can begin our romance with God through the gift of wonder" (p. 90). This wonder is a result of an awareness of everything around us: the sun and clouds; space and stars; mountains and music; but most of all and of divine importance, our fellow travelers on this planet earth.

With innumerable quotes from people in every "walk of life" the author asks us to become observant of everything in our life; then to hope and trust in what we see, hear, and touch as God sent. If we wish to "romance with God" we must know Him, and to know Him is to find Him in His created wonders that are part of our daily life.

Illustrated with pictures and poetry Fr. Scott's book can be used for meditation, reflection and prayer. Or, if you wish, read on a weekend in the mountains; for enjoyment in realizing that one person, the author, has led a fascinating life in his own "romance with God."

The author is to be commended for his excellent format, style, and selection of pictures to accent his concept of romance. This is, indeed, a book for those who seek to find God in the reality of life and love.

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- O'Connor, Patricia. *In Search of Therese. The Way of the Christian Mystics*. Vol. 3. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987. Pp. 200, including Bibliography and Index. Paper, 9.95.
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