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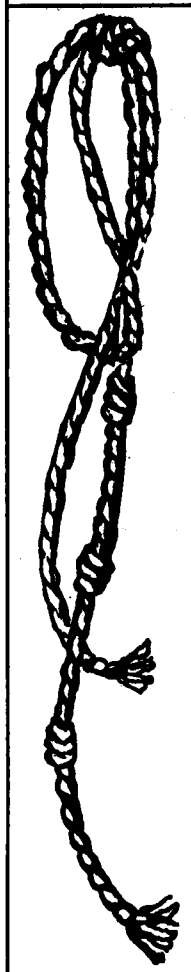

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Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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

[1]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).

EDITORIAL

A Time Of Purification

Within recent months the Church has witnessed an event which has caused great sadness to the Holy Father and to all catholics in good faith, namely, the heresy and schism of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and his followers. While many bishops may now be breathing a sigh of relief that Lefebvre's Pius X fraternity is not going to receive legitimization within their dioceses as once seemed likely, nevertheless, there is great regret that now the long threatened schism has finally taken place. This has caused deep divisions between those catholics who were sympathetic to the Archbishop's movement and the vast majority of others who remain completely loyal to the successor of Peter and to the Church. Denying such truths as the supremacy of the Holy Father and the authority and nature of a universal council of the Church to make decisions to which all catholics must give assent Lefebvre's schism has sought to create a church formed in its own misguided image and in doing so has caused untold damage to the Body of Christ.

Closer to home and of more recent vintage is the release of the film "The Last Temptation of Christ" and the great furor it has caused among catholics and non-catholics alike. While the Cahtolic bishops have expressed their opposition to this blasphemous and theologically flawed film and have been joined by many christians of other denominations in their opposition, the film has been viewed by thousands and is now making a great deal of money. Both of these events clearly demonstrate that the divisions, the persecutions and the vilifications experienced by Christ and his Church down through the ages continue in our own day and age.

Understandably catholics and others of good faith are offended and scandalized by these events and rightfully so, but we know that God can always work good out of evil. Can any good come to the Church out of these events? As we study Church history we see that since its foundation the Church has always been under some form of attack not only from without but all too often from within. Heresies and other assaults have abounded but out of them all the Church has always emerged stronger. It becomes a time of trial but also a time of introspection, conversion and purification. And so it should be now for us.

Both Archbishop Lefebvre's schism and "The Last Temptation of Christ" as well as all the other attacks which continue to occur should cause the Church and the faithful certainly first of all to protest and to make very clear to all the Church's true position on these issues, but most of all it must cause the Church to look within, to use these moments as opportunities for introspection, and yes even of conversion and purification. We need these moments to remind ourselves of who we are as catholics, who we should be and what a great treasure we possess in our common faith. There is always room for improvement and there is always that tendency to take for granted that which we have and even to slowly and often imperceptibly drift from the truth. It is moments such as these that should act as a shock treatment, so to speak, bringing us back to reality, the reality of our true faith and how we should be living it.

God can always bring good out of evil. Hopefully these two events will cause the Church and all the faithful to look not only outward in protestation, but inward as well and draw forth from this examination a renewed strength and vigor in faith and action. Ω

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Towards an Unfolding of the Structure of St. Bonaventure's *Legenda Major*

REGIS J. ARMSTRONG, O.F.M.CAP.

Bonaventure's *Legenda major* originates, as we know, from a decree of the Chapter of Narbonne in 1260 when the friars mandated the Minister General to compile a new legend based on those already in existence. Six years later, at the Chapter of Paris, the work was reviewed by the friars and so favorably accepted that all pre-existing legends were ordered destroyed. With the rediscovery of the biographies of Thomas of Celano in this century, however, historians have developed critical judgements of the *Legenda major* and have viewed it as a purely political weapon that used the earlier material of Thomas and Julian of Speyer to either achieve peace in the Order or to water down the message of Saint Francis. A. G. Little, for example, wrote:

> The official life [Celano's], omissions and modifications, preserved too much of the primitive spirit and gave too much support to the contentions of the zealous upholders of the Rule to suit the new times . . . [The *Legenda*] of Bonaventure was compiled mainly with a view of pacifying the disorders in the order. It adds little that is new, and its chief historical value lies in its omissions and in its subsequent influence.[1]

This same judgement has been made by Bishop John H.R. Moorman who claims that Bonaventure "never really understood the Franciscan ideal" and, more recently, by the biographer Anthony Mockler who added to the pejorative statements concerning the *Legenda major* and characterized it as biased, misleading, and "fit merely for the wastepaper basket."[2] These critics have failed to see the *Legenda major* as the literary accomplishment of a profound mystical theologian who accepted the responsibility given to him although inexperienced in writing medieval hagiography.

The author, internationally known lecturer and writer, serves on the editorial board of **The CORD.** *Besides professorial duties in Rome, he teaches in the summer graduate program of the Franciscan Institute. His latest book, soon to be published, will provide the english-speaking Franciscan world with a rich resource for scholarship on the spirituality of Saint Clare.*

In light of the tremendous advances in Franciscan research, especially in knowledge of the writings of St. Francis and the early biographies, it is opportune to develop a more sophisticated methodology with which to study the *Legenda major*. While such a development cannot overlook the historical circumstances out of which Bonaventure's work arose, it should concentrate more on a literary analysis which would highlight the unique theological contributions of the author. A first step in this has been taken by the friars who edited the text of the *Legenda major* in the *Analecta Franciscana*. They took as their starting point in approaching the text the mandate of the chapter of Narbonne, that is, the request made of Bonaventure *to compile* a new *legenda,* that is, to work from the already existing *legendae* of Thomas of Celano and Julian of Speyer so that an official synthesis could be presented to the Church and the Order. Thus the friars presented an extremely detailed edition of the *Legenda major* in which the words of Bonaventure are clearly visible alongside of those of Thomas and Julian. A second step in this study was taken with the publication of the *Corpus des Sources Franciscaines* in which a computerized analysis of the text, together with those of the other biographies of St. Francis, was offered to scholars. With the help of this invaluable tool, as well as that of the *Analecta Franciscana,* it is now easy to perceive Bonaventure's approach to the life of Saint Francis and to ascertain the main lines of this thought.

What becomes evident, in light of such research, is the fact that Bonaventure was not writing a biography that followed the traditional lines of medieval hagiography as those found in the *Vita prima* of Thomas of Celano or the *Vita S. Francisci* of Julian of Speyer.[3] He was, rather, presenting a work in which life became spirituality or, in the words of contemporary popular theology, story became theology. As a theologian, Bonaventure approached the figure of Saint Francis, understood him as a paradigm of the human person, and told the story of his life using those earlier biographies according to his own theological principles. The validity of Bonaventure's interpretation or judgements on his understanding of the charism of Saint Francis can only be responsibly made in light of this perspective.

Parameters

What parameters, then, should be established in attempting to understand the theology underlining the *Legenda major*? We believe there are three to be observed and adhered to:

1. A proper analysis of the *Legenda major* should be limited to the fifteen chapters that deal with the life, death and canonization of Saint Francis. This excludes the remaining ten sections of the work that deal

with the miracles brought about through his intercession. No doubt these passages are important in knowing the details of Francis' life, but their presence in a totally different context suggests that Bonaventure considered them as extraneous to the theology of the spiritual life underlying the first fifteen chapters of his work.

2. The examination of the text of the *Legenda major* should be limited to those sections dependent on the earlier biographies. This will narrow the study to the portraits of Thomas of Celano (the *Vita prima,* 1229; the *Vita secunda,* 1246 - 1247; the *Tractatus de miraculis,* 1250 - 1253) and Julian of Speyer (the *Vita Sancti Francisci,* 1232 - 1235). In this way the nuances of the Bonaventurian text will more easily surface in contrast with those of Thomas and Julian.

This does not diminish in any way the importance of the writings of Saint Francis which influenced in some way those earlier biographies. Nevertheless, as Kajetan Esser observes, "the writings retain their own special value only when we interpret them in themselves and in their total context, and not — as has happened so often and still does — in the light of the later Franciscan tradition."[4] Therefore, it is wise to set the writings of Francis aside, except where they are explicitly quoted by Bonaventure, and to leave comparisons to other areas of scholarship.

Moreover, although an appreciation of the so-called "Franciscan Question" centering on the sources for the *Vita secunda* of Thomas of Celano is of primary importance for ascertaining an accurate portrait of St. Francis, it too should be left to other endeavors. Were we to include in a study of the *Legenda major* the "non-official" sources for the life of St. Francis, that is, those involved in the "Franciscan Question," we would run the risk of losing sight of our goal of discovering the theological principles operative in the *Legenda major*. It would be far better to concentrate on an analysis of the text of the *Legenda* itself without the distractions, important as they might be of other textual difficulties.

3. Finally, only those writings of Bonaventure that can be determined as prior to or contemporary with the *Legenda* should be considered. In this regard, a more conservative approach should be taken in the hope that the Franciscan ideal may be more clearly seen in the works established as belonging to Bonaventure's early years. These writings may be divided into three broad headings: (A) those of Bonaventure's years at the University of Paris (1248 - 1257); (B) those of his early years as Minister General (1257 - 1263); and (C) those sermons on Saint Francis written during these periods.[5] Thus:

A. **The University of Paris:**
   a. The Four Books of Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard (1250 - 1253)

b. The Biblical Glosses or Postillae (1248 - 1254)
   — in evangelium Lucae
   — in evangelium Ioannis
   — Collationes in evangelium Ioannis
   in Ecclesiaten
c. The Disputed Questions (1255 - 1257)
   — de evangelica perfectione
   — de scientia Christi
   — de mysterio Trinitatis
d. The Letter concerning three questions to an unnamed master

B. **The Minister General**
   a. The First Letter (April 23, 1257)
   b. Breviloquium (1257)
   c. The Ninth Letter (September - October 1259)
   d. Itinerarium mentis in Deum (September - October 1259)

C. **Sermons on Saint Francis of Assisi:**[6]
   a. The Fifth Sermon (October 4, 1255)
   b. The Fourth Sermon, evening *collatio* (October 4, 1262)

Obviously, there are important writings of Bonaventure missing from this list, writings that could be most helpful in understanding the theology of the *Legenda major*. The *De triplici via,* for example, is a fundamental text for understanding Bonaventure's hierarchical view of spiritual growth, a quality that would make it extremely helpful in our study of the *Legenda major*. Despite the judgement of some scholars that the work comes from that early period at the University of Paris, it is very difficult to date the work with any certainty and, since we have suggested a more conservative approach to these writings, it must be left aside. The same may be said of the *De Reductione artium ad theologiam* which seems to come from that same period; it too remains a text most difficult to date and, therefore, should not be included as prior to the *Legenda major*.

The Text of the Legenda Major

After setting these parameters, then, we may proceed to an examination of the fifteen chapters of Bonaventure's work. Methodologically, however, we must keep in mind the theological principles Bonaventure follows and recognize his manner of weaving together the texts of Thomas and Julian. Even a superficial glance at the chapter headings reveals a twofold approach: six chapters that are strictly historical in nature (I, II, III, IV, XIV, XV) and eight that are concerned with the virtuous dimension of Francis' life (V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII). That leaves only the chapter concerning the Stigmata (XIII) as ambiguous in nature. But its inclusion among the chapters concerned with virtue becomes apparent when it is seen as visible proof or evidence for the saint's life of virtue. In fact, a passage from the *Legenda minor* is helpful here: "What are all these virtues of Francis, all of his Christlike (*christiformi*) virtues, except so many ways in which he was made like to Christ, ways in which he was prepared to receive the very marks of the sacred stigmata"?

We may well ask if there is any correlation between the two approaches and in so doing discover an important Bonaventurean principle that unlocks the treasures of the *Legenda*. "From the visible to the invisible"[7] Bonaventure maintains throughout his writings, or, in this case: the historical, observable events of Francis' life lead us to an understanding of the mysterious, hidden ways of God.[8] An application of this principal leads to an understanding of the entire work in which biography becomes a tool of theology or a means of comprehending Francis' manner of spiritual development. The opening lines of the *Legenda* suggest its revelatory and symbolic aspects: "The grace of God our Savior has appeared in his servant Francis. . ." Bonaventure's compilation, it would seem, is held together with the unifying theology of grace in which all the events of Francis' life reveal the unfolding of the mysterious power of God's grace.

Based on these principals, then, the *Legenda major* could be seen according to this framework:

Phase One:		
I. Francis' Manner of Living while in the dress of the world		V. Austerity
	parallels	VI. Humility & Obedience
II. His Perfect Conversion		VII. Poverty
Phase Two:		
III. Founding of Order		VIII. Piety
	parallels	IX. Charity-Desire of Martyrdom
IV. Confirmation of Order		X. Prayer
Phase Three:		
XIV. Transitus		XI. Love of Scripture-Prophecy
	parallels	XII. Preaching-Healing
XV. Canonization		XII. Stigmata

The fifteen chapters, examined from an historical perspective and a virtuous one, are broken down into three major sections in which the historical resonates with the virtuous.

A Hierarchical or Vertical Approach

When we begin with the concept of grace, as Bonaventure's opening phrase of the *Legenda major* suggests we should, we soon discover, that its dynamic unfolding is threefold in nature. In the fifth section of the *Breviloquium* we find:

> "Grace is a gift that cleanses, enlightens, and perfects the soul; that vivifies, reforms, and strengthens it; that lifts it up, makes it like to God, and unites it with Him, thus rendering it acceptable to Him."[9]

In his commentary on Luke's Gospel, Bonaventure further writes of grace:

> The whole of mystical theology consists in an excessive love according to a threefold hierarchical way: the purgative, illuminative, and the perfective."[10]

"The grace of God our Savior," therefore, is threefold in nature, be it in the traditional Pseudo-Dionysian terminology of the purgative, illuminative and unitive or perfective ways, or according to the more dynamnic concept of the *sursumactio* or the elevating principal of the grace that leads to a mystical embrace of God. And from this perspective we are bound to see a threefold movement or pulsebeat in the unfolding of the "graced" life of Francis. "In him," Bonaventure continues in the Prologue, "they can venerate God's superabundant mercy and be taught by his example to utterly *reject ungodliness and worldly passions*, to live in conformity with Christ, and to thirst after *blessed hope* with unflagging desire (Tit 2:12-13)." The interruption of Titus 2:12-13 with a phrase typical of Bonaventure is indicative of his intention to use this framework in the unfolding of the life of Francis.

Is it correct to interpret this threefold division according to the classical understanding of the spiritual life? That is, in the following way:

Purgative:		
I. Francis' Manner of Living while in the dress of the world	*parallels*	V. Austerity
		VI. Humility & Obedience
II. His Perfect Conversion		VII. Poverty

Illuminative:		
III. Founding of Order	*parallels*	VIII. Piety
		IX. Charity-Desire of Martyrdom
IV. Confirmation of Order		X. Prayer
Unitive/Perfective:		
XIV. Transitus	*parallels*	XI. Love of Scripture-Prophecy
		XII. Preaching-Healing
XV. Canonization		XII. Stigmata

In the *Documents de Saint Françis d'Assise*, Damien Vorreux first proposed this interpretation and based it on his sense of the text and the principal of *sursumactio*.[11] In my own doctoral dissertation, *The Spiritual Theology of the Legenda Major of Saint Bonaventure*, I attempted to confirm this interpretation by examining the early Bonaventurean writings, investigating the pivotal understanding of the virtues found in them, and reflecting upon them in light of the medieval concept of spiritual growth.[12] This was far from easy especially when confronted with, for example, Bonaventure's treatment of Francis' devotion to Scripture found in chapters eleven and twelve or the so-called Unitive consideration of the virtues. Ewert Cousins in his introduction to the Bonaventure volume of the Classics of Western Spirituality more or less confirmed that interpretation, at least in the English speaking world.[13] Without a doubt, it is consistent with Bonaventure's theology at the time of his compilation of the *Legenda major* as well as that of his *De triplici via*. But is it sufficient to remain with this perspective? Does it capture the total richness of Bonaventure's approach?

An Anthropological or Horizontal Approach

There is a far richer approach found in a "horizontal understanding" that has been largely overlooked. Whereas I hesitatingly presented it in my doctoral dissertation, I am now convinced that this is the more important theological substructure of the *Legenda major*. When it is applied to Bonaventure's compilation of the texts of Thomas and Julian, it offers far richer insights into his understanding of Franciscan spirituality and offers many valuable applications for contemporary spirituality.

This horizontal approach has its starting point in Bonaventure's anthropology especially as he describes it in the *Proëmium* to the *Second Book of Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* and the first chapter of the *Soul's Journey into God:*

"In the initial state of creation, man was made fit for the quiet of contemplation, and therefore God placed him in a paradise of delights (Gen 2:15). But turning away from the true light to changeable good, man was bent over by his own fault, and the entire human race by original sin, which infected human nature in two ways: the mind with ignorance and the flesh with concupiscence. And a result, man, blinded and bent over, sits in darkness and does not see the light of heaven unless grace with justice comes to his aid against concupiscence and unless knowledge with wisdom comes to his aid against ignorance."[14]

Two aspects of this Bonaventurean anthropology are worthy of our immediate attention: the portrayal of the human person as "bent over" and the challenge confronting us to become upright through the gifts of grace and knowledge. In the *Proëmium* to the Second Book of Commentary Bonaventure develops this approach far more indepth by accentuating God's plan to have us as the *rector* or *rex* of creation and, therefore, *rectus*. Yet, because of the ravages of sin, we have become blind and bent over caught up in or own closed worlds and oblivious to what surrounds us or, as Bonaventure writes quoting Ecclesiastes, we are "caught up in an infinity of questions."

From this starting point, then, the power of "the word full of grace and truth" can be cearly seen: the Word of grace to effect our wills; that of truth to effect our minds. It is this twofold power of the Word that Bonaventure sees as enabling us to stand up straight, to be what we are meant to be, and, in this instance, to be fully aware of our vocation seen in light of the mystery of Christ. Curiously Bonaventure omits in the *Seoul's Journey into God* what he had earlier underscored in the *Proëmium:* the importance of the virtues of this "renewed" human person. Bonaventure sees virtue as the uprightness of reason leading towards a goal or as the beginning of a process in which the soul becomes "righteous" or "upright," is helped in its spiritual progress through the gifts of the Spirit, and arrives at the possession of eternal beatitude.[15] This is a strong characteristic of this Word-centered anthropology in that Bonaventure now sees us using our "rectified" intellect and will to continue the creating power (*virtus*) of God.

There is yet another aspect of this anthropology emerging in this period of Bonaventure's thought. It appears quite clearly in the *Disputed Question on the Trinity* and the *Breviloquium* which, as we have indicated, comes from that first year or so of Bonaventure's ministry as General.[16] He returned to it frequently in his later years so that it seems to have captured much of his understanding of the challenges of life. In its simplest form this theology can be expressed in this way: God has written three books of us: the Book of Creation, the Book of Scripture, and the Book of Life.

Had we not sinned, Bonaventure maintains, the Book of Creation would have been efficacious in leading us to discover the power, wisdom and goodness of God. Yet, because of sin, the book became obscured and our eyes dimmed. Thus God gave us the Book of Scripture which marvelously teaches us of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and, in its light, enables us to read the Book of Life in which we can come to the fullness of knowledge.[17]

Once we discovered this understanding of the call of the human person, it becomes easier for us to accept Bonaventure's concern for vision, another aspect of his thought that surfaces at this period of his life. It is certainly obvious in the *Soul's Journey into God* as Bonaventure skillfully develops his theology of the Franciscan approach to the world, the human person, and God. But it appears quite succinctly in the *Breviloquium:*

> *Through the eye of the flesh, man was to see things outside him; with the eye of reason, things within him; with the eye of contemplation, things above him. Now the eye of contemplation cannot see with perfect clearness, except through glory, which man may lose through sin but restore through grace, faith, and the study of Scripture. By these means, the human soul is cleansed, enlightened and perfected for the contemplation of heavenly things, unto which fallen man cannot reach unless he first admits his insufficiency and blindness. . ."*[18]

Again we may be struck by the Bonaventurean three's as the challenge of life is described as cultivating three types of sight.

At this point the computer read-out of the Legenda major presented in the *Corpus des Sources Franciscaines* suggests some interesting insights into this theme. For example, the noun, *visio*, appears thirty-two times, whereas its verb, *videre*, can be found one-hundred and nine times. These indications alone indicate the importance of sight in the *Legenda*. But when they are joined with other words such as *apparitio, appareo, contuitus* or *contueor*, the important undercurrent of vision becomes more evident in Bonaventure's thought.[19]

If we keep in mind that this theology of our call permeates Bonaventure's writings prior to or contemporaneous with his endeavor to compile the works of Thomas and Julian, then we are able to approach the *Legenda* in a different way. The hierarchical approach does not lose any of its validity, on the contrary, it remains for us a simple, easy-to-follow approach, typical of Bonaventure, that follows an easily understood classical theology of spiritual development. But this "horizontal" or "anthropological" vision expresses a far greater richness and is far more capable, it would seem, of capturing what Bonaventure perceived as the uniqueness of Francis' approach to God. From this perspective, then, we might interpret the *Legenda major* according to this structure:

I. Francis' Manner of Living while in the dress of the world		III. Founding of Order
	leads to	
II. His Perfect Conversion		IV. Confirmation of Order

the perfectly converted (upright), Gospel filled person now discovers the balance of a virtuous life:

V. Austerity	and	how creatures provide comfort
VI. Humility and Obedience	and	God's condescension
VII. Poverty	and	miraculous fulfillment of our needs

so that the Books written by God can be read:

Book of Creation	**Book of Scripture**	**Book of Life**
VIII. Piety	XI. Understanding of Scripture	XIV. Patience and Passing in death
IX. Charity	XII. Preaching	XV. Canonization
X. Prayer	XIII. Sacred Stigmata	

The first two chapters of the *Legenda major*, therefore, deal with the struggle of the "Franciscan curvatus," caught up in the things of the world, unable to contemplate the things of heaven, and distracted from thinking of God. Only through the embrace of poverty, that is, through his "perfect conversion," as Bonaventure considers it, does Francis come to be permeated with the Gospel and to understand the ways of God correctly. This might well be what we would call in the language of the *Proëmium* to the *Second Book of Commentary* and the *Soul's Journey into God* "the ability to stand upright *(rectus)*" and to be permeated with 'the Word full of grace and truth." It is this Gospel life that Francis proposes to his followers, becomes the foundation of their life, and leads to the development of virtue, as Bonaventure describes in the third and fourth chapters of the *Legenda*.

That the lessons of the Gospel form the starting point for Bonaventure's virtuous Francis is obvious from the opening lines of the fifth chapter:

> When Francis the man of God saw that many were being inspired by his example to carry the cross of Christ with fervent spirit, he himself like a good leader in Christ's army was encouraged to reach the palm of victory through the height of heroic virtue. He directed all his attention to this text of the Apostle: *Those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.*[20]

The nine chapters describing the virtues of Francis, then, offer us the "fleshing-out" of the theology of the upright person and that of the divinely written books meant for salvation. We notice, for example that chapters five, six and seven, while weaving together incidents of the "purgative" virtues in Francis' life, also present more positive elements touching on his miracles. Thus "the austerity of [Francis'] life" is balanced with "how creatures provided him comfort." The treatment of "humility and obedience" is set off by a consideration of "God's condescension to his slightest wish." And, finally, "[Francis] love of poverty" finds its completion in "the miraculous fulfillment of his needs." Bonaventure, it would seem, is presenting us with the Gospel virtues that guarantee our standing upright and does so by presenting a balanced portrait.

Further, we can notice in the fifth chapter a passage which is unique to Bonaventure: neither Thomas nor Julian contain it. It is found in the consideration of Francis' difficulties with his eyes.

> "Although he had already attained extraordinary purity of heart and body, he did not cease to cleanse the eyes of his soul with a continuous flood of tears, unconcerned about the loss of his bodily sight. When he had incurred a very serious eye illness from his continuous weeping, and a doctor advised him to restrain his tears if he wanted to avoid losing his sight, the holy man answered: "Brother, doctor, we should not stave off a visitation of heavenly light even a little because of love of the light, which we have in common with the flies. For the body receives the gift of light for the sake of the spirit and not the spirit for the sake of the body." He preferred to lose his sight rather than to repress the devotion of his spirit and hold back the tears which cleansed his interior vision so that he could see God."

As we have indicated, this is a strictly Bonaventurean addition to the text of Celano and no doubt underscores that call of the human person to read the various books provided by God that we have been discussing.

The first of the books, that of Creation, unfolds in the eighth, ninth and tenth chapters of the *Legenda major*. In the eighth chapter, for example, Bonaventure masterfully weaves the animal stories spread throughout Thomas' lives according to a theology of *pietas* that seems to be Augustinian in origin. "If you ask what is the virtue that makes a person love creatures because they come from God and exist for him," Bonaventure asks in the *Third Book of Commentary*.

> "I reply that it is pietas and a sort of natural affection... Therefore the greater progress we make and the nearer we approach the state of innocence, the more docile these creatures become towards us and the greater affection we feel towards them. We see this in the case of Saint Francis..."

From the theological perspective, Bonaventure arranges the stories of Francis' dealings with creatures in concentric circles moving from the saint's relations with his fellow human beings to the animals.

The ninth chapter, "On the Fervor of His Charity and His Desire for Martyrdom," continues this creation motif, as we can see in this magnificent statement: "In beautiful things he saw Beauty itself and through his *vestiges* (Job 23:11) imprinted on creation *he followed His Beloved* (Cant 5:17) everywhere, making from all things a ladder by which he could climb up and embrace him *who is utterly desirable* (Cant 5:17)."[21] This is totally consistent with Bonaventure's teaching in the *Breviloquium:* "All material things are made to serve us and to enkindle in us the fire fo love and praise for the Maker of the universe through Whose providence it is governed."[22] And to be perfectly consistent in his theology of love that maintains that perfect love is expressed in dying for and with Christ, Bonaventure places at the heart of the nine chapters describing Francis' virtue a consideration of his desire for martyrdom.[23]

Throughout the ninth chapter Bonaventure takes the texts of Thomas and Julian and carefully blends numerous references to the mystical Song of Songs, thereby accentuating the aspect of a love that develops through knowledge of the Book of Creation. In the tenth chapter, however, he portrays Francis as the pilgrim who "has no desire for the things of this earth," who "longs for some comfort from his Beloved," and who "penetrates the dwelling places of heaven in his eager search for his Beloved." There seems to be a totally different theology operative here, one in which the Book of Creation is set aside that the activity of prayer might be enhanced. We might easily come to this conclusion were it not for the insertion of the Greccio incident at the end of the chapter in which we discover Bonaventure's Christology which envisions the Incarnate Word as the perfection of the Book of Creation. In light of that consciousness of the mystery of Christ, then, we come to read the Book of Creation with perfect clarity.

It is easier for us to discover the contours of the Book of Scripture in chapters eleven, twelve and thirteen. The very title of the eleventh chapter, "on [Francis'] understanding of Scripture and His Spirit of Prophecy," clearly gives direction to the remaining two chapters, "On the Efficacy of His Preaching and His Grace of Healing," and "On His Sacred Stigmata." These two chapters, however, excemplify themes found in the *Commentary on Luke's Gospel* that touch on the office of preaching and those in the *Soul's Journey into God* that sees the Gospel "fleshed-out" anew in the stigmata of Francis. Even without a knowledge of the theology of the Book of Scripture, we could easily summize its presence in these three chapters for they are so totally absorbed in it.

Thus we arrive at the last two chapters of the *Legenda major*, [Francis'] Patience and His passing in Death" and "On His Canonization and the Solemn Transferal of His Body." They form the "eschatological" chapters of the work in which Bonaventure portrays Francis as "fixed with Christ to the cross," "falling asleep in the Lord," and "under the appearance of a radiant star being carried aloft on a shining cloud over many waters."[24] The themes of new life, entering the land of the living, passing from death to life flow throughout these two chapters. We arrive, then, at reading the third and final book, that of Life, in which the mystery of Christ becomes perfectly clear to us and reveals to us to fulness of life.

Conclusion

What we have presented is an overall, somewhat superficial approach to Bonaventure's *Legenda major*. In this we have attempted to consider two points that are of extreme methodological importance: (1) the establishment of clear parameters within which the text may be examined: and (2) the application of some basic Bonaventurean theological principals in order to discover the contours of his compilation. When these methodological tools are applied, we believe that some of the richness of this work can be discovered as we have attempted to illustrate. Far from being a simple work of medieval hagiography, the *Legenda major* becomes a work of symbolic theology in which Bonaventure uses story to articulate the principals of Franciscan spiritual life.

Much more could be done to exemplify a more thorough methodology. The individual chapters, for example, should be studied indepth that their inner structures become more obvious. Even a superficial study of the fifth chapter suggests Bonaventure's eagerness to offer a complete description of an austerity that embraces the entire human person. The tenth chapter marvelously weaves together the strands of Bonaventure's theology of prayer in such a way that it may well be said that it presents his complete teaching by means of the incidents of Francis' life.

In addition, many of the connections or associations made in each chapter should be investigated in light of Bonaventure's theology. Why does Bonaventure begin with portraying Francis' *conversatio morum* before his *conversio* when in traditional monastic spirituality the order was reversed? What, we may ask, is the connection between knowledge of Scripture and the gift of prophecy as presented in the eleventh chapter? Or does Bonaventure maintain the same bond between preaching and the healing ministry described in the twelfth chapter as we see in some contemporary charismatic theologians?

An even richer reading of the text of the *Legenda major* would come about by looking carefully into medieval understanding of some of the medieval words. We have already suggested a nuanced interpretation of *pietas* that would bring out more of its rich Augustinian sense. Much more, however, needs to be done in this regard. Thus DuGange's *Glossarum Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis* (Paris: 1840) or J. F. Niermeyer's *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954 - 1976) would be essential tools of the dedicated student.

There are any number of questions that must be asked about the *Legenda major* in light of Bonaventure's own theology. Over and again we discover articles that deal with its historical or spiritual value. Repeatedly, Bonaventure is portrayed as the politician, the manipulator, the unfaithful disciple, or the second founder who never really understood Francis. So many of these works become lost in comparing the *Legenda* with the writings of Thomas of Celano or the other biographies; few examine it in light of the profundity of Bonaventure's own thought. It is our hope that this brief article will encourage others to apply a more methodological approach to this rich work.

Notes

[1]A. G. Little, "Guide to Franciscan Studies," in *Études franciscaines* 40 (1928) 517-33; (1929) 64-68.

[2]J.H.R. Moorman, *The Sources of the Life of Saint Francis* (Manchester: University Press, 1940), p. 141; Anthony Mockler, *Francis of Assisi: The Wandering Years* (Oxford: Phaedon, 1976), p. 21.

[3]Excellent studies of the lives of Thomas of Celano abound of which *La Conversion de Saint François selon Thomas de Celano; étude comparative des textes relatifs à la conversion en Vita I et Vita II*, (Paris: Editions Franciscaines, 1963) of François DeBeer is most noteworthy. While there is not much written concerning the *Vita S. Francisci* of Julian of Speyer, an excellent study and translation of the work was done by Jason Miskuly, O.F.M., at St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, New York. It is presently being prepared for publication.

[4]K. Esser, *Origins of the Franciscan Order*, trans. A. Daly and I. Lynch (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970), p. 5.

[5]For discussion of the chronology of these early sources confer among others: J. B. Bougerol, *Introduction a l'étude de S. Bonaventure* (Paris - Tournai, 1961): 239 - 245; I. Brady, "Bonaventure, Saint" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York, 1967), 658 - 664; J. F. Quinn, "Chronology of Saint Bonaventure (1212 — 1257)," *Franciscan Studies 32* (1972), 168 - 186.

[6]Cf. I. Brady, "St. Bonaventure's Sermons on Saint Francis," *Franciskanische Studien* 58 (1976): /129 - 41. Also, E. Doyle, *The Disciple and the Master: Sermons of Saint Bonaventure on Saint Francis*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983).

[7]*Legenda minor* VI 9. Translation that of author.

[8]Among the many citations that can be discovered, those from the Gospel commentaries are most clear. Cf. *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis, Proëmium;* VI 9 (VI 243).

[9]*Breviloquium* V 1:1 (V 256)

[10]*Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* XIII 21: 47 (VII 349).

[11]Cf. *François d'Assise: Documents, Écrits et premières biographies*, ed. T. Desbonnets, D. Vorreux, (Paris: Editions Franciscaines, 1968): 585.

[12]R. J. Armstrong, *The Spiritual Theology of the Legenda Major of St. Bonaventure*, unpublished dissertation, Fordham University, 1978.

[13]*Bonaventure*, ed. Ewert Cousins, (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

[14]*Itinerarium mentis in deum* (I 7 (V 297 - 298). Translation is that of E. Cousins, ibid., p. 62.

[15]15 Cf. III Sent., d. 23, a. 2, q. 1, resp. (III, 488b) l Brevil., 5:4 (V 256b).

[16]*Questiones Disputatae de SS. Trinitate*, Q. 1, a. 2, concl. (V, 54-55); *Breviloquium* II 5:2 (V, 222).

[17]For excellent presentations of this material, see K. Foster, "Liber Vitae bei Bonaventura: Ein begriffsgeschichtlicher Aufriss", *Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Michael Schmaus, zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht* (München, 1957), 397-414; W. Rauch, *Das Buch Gottes: Eine systematische Untersuchung des Buchbegreffes bei Bonaventura* (München: Hueber, 1961); G. A. Zinn, Jr., "Book and Word. The Victorine Background of Bonaventure's Use of Symbols." *S. Bonaventura 1274 - 1972* (Sta. Maria degli Angeli: Tipografia Porziuncula, 1973). 143 - 169.

[18]Cf. *Breviloquium* II 12: 1 (V,).

[19]For a further treatment of this theme, see N. Muscat, O.F.M., *The Life of Saint Francis in the Light of Saint Bonaventure's Theology of the "Verbum Crucifixum,' Doctoral Dissertation, Pontificio Atheneo "Anthonianum," 1988*.

[20]*Legenda major* V 1.

[22]*Breviloquium* II 4 (V, 222)

[23]Cf. *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae* XXII, 33 n. 44 (VII, 553).

[24]*Legenda major* XIV 1, 6.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

on a hill
in a little spot
known simply as
Tepeyac,
came a mere
slip of a girl
draped in a starlit
turquoise mantle,
haloed by a mandorla
of tongues of fire
and perched on that
moon of dark memory...
In ancient Mexico
they built high
altars
for human sacrifice,
step after sorrowful step
gushed and ran red
with the lives
of the poor
enslaved to a
religion
which gouged and robbed
them of their hearts.
The priests and cultists
of the Way of Fear
hung the still beating
hearts — quivering talismans —
round the waist of
the insatiable goddess.
Into the nightmare
and unspeakable suffering
of people still haunted
by their ancestral past,
just outside Mexico City,
Mary,
ever so slightly
nodding,
with the most
tender
gentle
humble
and loving gaze
one could ever imagine.
She appeared pregnant
full of the Word,
burning with the
Love within.
She brought roses
to the skeptical
wonders and a teaching
to the very Church
she images
and left
her blessed visit
ever-sealed
on the clothes
of a poor man.
Her message
rings out anew
in this year of
Jubilee,
this Favorable Time:
"I listen to your
weeping and solace
all your sorrows
and your sufferings."

William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O.

Francis of Assisi and Unceasing Prayer

BRIAN E. PURFIELD, O.F.M.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is divided into three sections. The first deals with establishing a basis for an understanding of unceasing prayer. Here I have relied very much on the insights of Henri Nouwen and these serve as foundational insights upon which the rest of the paper builds. In the second section we look somewhat cursorily at the context of Francis and deal very briefly with the concept of unceasing prayer as the *"Opus Dei"* of the monastic life. We shall also mention the changing circumstances and reforms that Francis was heir to, in an attempt to situate the vision of Francis himself with regard to unceasing prayer. This vision will be set down in the third section and I shall endeavor to indicate the continuity of Francis' vision with what he inherited, but also deal with his unique contribution, particularly with regard to the role of the Spirit as the medium through which we gaze on God and share in the inner life of the Trinity.

SECTION I
UNCEASING PRAYER: CLEARING THE GROUND

The Biblical Basis: St. Paul

When St. Paul speaks about prayer, he uses very strong language. He does not speak of prayer as a part of life, but as all of life. He does not mention prayer as something we should not forget, but claims it is our ongoing concern. Without hesitation he admonishes his readers to pray constantly, unceasingly, without interruption. He does not ask them to

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spend some of every day in prayer. He is more radical. For Paul, prayer is like breathing; it cannot be interrupted without mortal danger. To the Christians in Thessalonica Paul writes: "Pray constantly, and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.[1] Paul not only demands unceasing prayer but also practices it. "We constantly thank God for you,"[2] he says to his community in Greece. "We feel we must be continually thanking God for you".[3] "We pray continually that our God will make you worthy of his call.[4] To the Romans he writes: "I never fail to mention you in my prayer"[5] and he comforts his friend Timothy with the words: "Always I remember you in my prayers."[6]

The two greek terms that appear repeatedly in Paul's letters are *pantote* (always) and adialeiptos (without interruption). Clearly then for Paul, prayer is not a part of living, but all of living; not a part of his thought, but all of his thought; not a part of his emotions and feelings, but all of them.

What does it mean to pray without ceasing?

Henri Nouwen looks at unceasing prayer as the conversion of our unceasing thought processes. He says that unceasing thinking is the source of our joy as well as of our pain.[7] Unceasing thinking can be turned into uninterrupted conversation with God. This ongoing conversion from thought to prayer is assisted by the discipline of prayer exercise.

Unceasing thoughts

We are always involved in some kind of thought process and being without thoughts is not a real human option. Our ability to think constitutes our humanity and our thinking sets us apart from all other created beings. All our emotions, passions and feelings are intimately linked with our thoughts. We are involved in, or subjected to, unceasing thoughts day and night, willingly or unwillingly, during our most alert moments and during our deepest sleep, while working and while resting.

Our ceaseless thought is our burden as well as our gift. We would like to be able to stop thinking for a while. Perhaps then we would not be haunted by the memory of lost friends, by the awareness of past sins, by the knowledge and oppression in our world. But then without thought there can be no smile, no laughter, no quiet joy. How can we be glad to see friends again when we are not able to think of them? How can we be grateful when we cannot remember the gifts we have received? Our thought are the cradle where sorrow and joy are born. This unceasing thinking which lies at the core of our humanity, needs to be converted slowly but persistently into unceasing prayer.

Unceasing Prayer

To pray unceasingly, as Paul asks us to, would be completely impossible if it meant to think constantly about God. Even for monks who spend many hours a day in prayer, thinking about God all the time is an unrealistic desire.

To pray does not mean to think about God in contrast to thinking about other things, or to spend time with God instead of spending time with other people. To pray means to think and live in the presence of God. As soon as we begin to divide our thoughts into thoughts about God and thoughts about people and events, we remove God from our daily life and put him in a pious little niche where we can think pious thoughts and experience pious feelings. Although it is important and indispensable for the spiritual life to set apart time for God, prayer can only become unceasing prayer when all our thoughts — beautiful or ugly, high or low, proud or shameful, sorrowful or joyful — can be thought in the presence of God. We are to move from a self-centered monologue to a God-centered dialogue. This requires that we turn all our thoughts into conversation. The main question is not so much what we think, but to whom we present our thoughts.

Jesus' life was a life lived in the presence of God his Father. He kept nothing hidden from his Father's face, fears, hopes, and his despairs were always shared with his Father. So Jesus could say to his disciples: "... you will be scattered... leaving me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the father is with me."[8] Prayer asks us to break out of our monologue with ourselves and to follow Jesus by turning our lives into an unceasing conversation with our heavenly Father.

Prayer is not introspection. It is not a scrupulous, inward-looking analysis of our own thoughts and feelings but a careful attentiveness to him who invites us to an unceasing conversation. Prayer is the presentation of all thoughts to our loving Father so that he can see them and respond to them with his divine compassion. Prayer is the joyful affirmation that God knows our minds and hearts and that nothing is hidden from Him.[9] It is a radical conversion of all our mental processes, because in prayer we move away from ourselves and direct all that we recognize as ours to God in the simple trust that through his love all will be made new. But this conversion is not easy and there is a deep resistance to being so vulnerable. We want to love God and worship him, but we also want to keep a little corner of our inner life for ourselves. We are always tempted to select carefully the thoughts that we bring into our conversations with God.

This withholding from God of a large part of our thoughts leads us onto the road of idolatry. Idolatry is the worship of false images and this happens when we keep our fantasies, worries, and joys to ourselves and do not present them to the Lord. By refusing to share these thoughts, we limit his lordship and erect little altars to the mental images we do not want to submit to a divine conversation.

... prayer can only become unceasing prayer when all our thoughts — beautiful or ugly, high or low, proud or shameful, sorrowful or joyful — can be thought in the presence of God.

The Need for Discipline

Unceasing prayer is an ongoing struggle against idolatry. When all our thoughts have been brought into a loving conversation with God, then we can speak about obedience in the full sense. Since this is never a task that is completed, we need discipline. Without it, unceasing prayer is a vague ideal. Discipline means that something very specific and concrete needs to be done to create the context in which a life of uninterrupted prayer can develop. Unceasing prayer requires the discipline of prayer exercises. Planned prayer-practice is important for through this practice God can become fully present to us as a real partner in our conversation.

The discipline of prayer embraces many forms of prayer — communal as well as individual, oral as well as mental prayer. It is of primary importance that we strive for prayer with the understanding that it is an explicit way of being with God. We can only say "All our thoughts should be prayer," if there are times in which we make God our only thought.

Common to all disciplined prayer — liturgical, devotional or contemplative — is the effort to direct all our attention to God alone. Nouwen discloses the discipline of contemplation as one road to unceasing prayer. Contemplative prayer is prayer in which we attentively look at God. The Incarnation makes it possible to see God in and through Christ. When Jesus spoke to his disciples about the Father, Philip said: "Lord, let us

see the Father and the we shall be satisfied." Jesus answered: "To have seen me is to have seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?"[10] Contemplative prayer means to see Christ as the image of God the Father. By looking at Christ with loving attention, we learn with our minds and hearts what it means that he is the way to the Father. Jesus is the only one who has seen the Father.[11] His whole being is a constant seeing of the Father. His life and works are an uninterrupted contemplation of His Father. For us, therefore, contemplation means an always increasing imagining of Jesus so that in, through and with him, we can see the Father and live in His presence.

This puts the Eucharist into a totally new perspective. It is there that the transformation of all images into the image of Christ finds its fullest realization. There the unity with Christ experienced through contemplation finds its perfection. In contemplative prayer, Christ cannot remain a stranger who lived long ago, but he becomes a living presence with whom we can enter into dialogue here and now.

The main thing is not that we use this or that prayer technique but that we realize that the Christian ideal of making our whole life a prayer remains nothing but an ideal unless we are willing to discipline our body, mind and heart with a daily practice of entering directly, consciously, and explicitly into the presence of our loving Father through his Son. Unceasing prayer as a permanent unchangeable state of mind will never be reached. It will always require our attention and discipline.

SECTION II:
THE CONTEXT OF FRANCIS

Basic Monastic Spirituality

If someone asks what a monk does, the spontaneous response will probably be, he prays. When the well-known courtier, Arsenius, turned to the Lord for direction he received a simple clear response: "Flee, be silent, pray always."[12] Monks go apart to find silence. In their solitude they embrace an ascetic life to silence the clamouring within. They seek silence so that they can pray, so that they can hear and respond to God. They go apart, embracing the monastic life because they want to find freedom and the support they need to enter into a complete union with God. They have somehow sensed that this is what they are made for. The whole of creation, all its being and activity, is the *Opus* of God, God's masterpiece. All is made to glorify God. The rest of creation can adequately glorify God only if it is lifted up to God through and by the mind and heart of the human person. For the human person alone is made in the

full image of God, with a mind to know God and a heart to love God. The lover of God, the one who truly seeks God, is eager that the whole creation, in accord with the divine will, ascend to God in glory. Through obedience, monks seek to be in constant harmony with this movement. Through their prayer services, which Benedict called the *Opus Dei*, the work of God, they seek to give voice to this movement, taking care "that our minds are in harmony with our voices."[13] When monks stand in choir, using the divinely inspired texts and listening to the shared faith of the fathers, they best express and constantly increase their "zeal" for the *Opus* of God, that longing that all that takes place in their lives and in the whole of creation is to the glory of the God they love.

Cluny and Unceasing Prayer

In the Middle Ages Cluny was admired even by those whose ascetical ideas were very different, because of the perfection of its organization of prayer. Abbot Odo (died 942) tried to convince the monks of the value of their state of life by reminding them that it consisted in keeping before the world the mystery of Pentecost, in showing mankind what the Curch essentially is: the holiness of God communicated to men. It is for monks to go out of this sinful world, to be strangers to it, as it were outside it, *extra mundum fieri*, and to become, as far as possible to human frailty, dwellers in paradise. The silence and peace of eternity must begin for them here and now; they must live as the angels; joining with them in the eternal praise of God; each one by asceticism sharing in the depths of his heart in the mystery of Christ.

In this atmosphere, this life whose centre was God, the whole point of the celebration of the liturgy could be understood. It was a worship and an asceticism. All that the monk had to do was to adhere to the inexhaustible marvels that the Church spread out before the eyes of his faith, throughout the Christian year. A ceremonial whose etiquette was regulated in its least details made it possible to carry out the service at the court of the King of kings. It called for sustained effort and constant self-abnegation from each one, always, and at all times. On the other hand, this complicated ritual could not be allowed to become an obstacle to the secret prayer of the heart.

Private prayer though is only alluded to in the way in which St. Benedict speaks of it. "If perchance a brother desires to pray by himself (*oratio peculiaris*) let him go out and do it speedily: *sub brevitate orationem faciat*." This ambiance shaped by the solemn prayer of the Church did not, however, preclude private devotion: only, like the liturgy, the latter expressed itself in terms of the sacred scripture, particularly the psalms.

The celebration of the liturgy in common was a stimulus to the mind of the individual during the times of silence, in the midst of every occupation, the words of the Office came back to his hearts and lips. It was the custom in England to recite psalms while washing; at Cluny while working in the kitchen or sacristy. Prayer took hold of the monk's whole life — a prayer which was not simply a heedless mumble, but came from the depths of a soul sanctified by the mysteries of Christ.

It was not particularly affective, being contemplative rather than theological or speculative. The medieval monk was not given to reflecting on his own sufferings, or analyzing his interior trials; to him anything which hindered the flight of his soul to God was a temptation of the devil and he turned his eyes towards the Cross triumphant. All his asceticism, the network of observances which restrained him was in order to his liberation.

Prayer held the monk of Cluny wherever he might be. It was for each monk individually to widen his learning and to cultivate a personal love for our Lord and a devotion to our Lady. Whatever he might be doing, the great work of his life was to put himself completely at the disposal of a society whose chief task was to carry out exactly a service at court. Any time which was not given to solemn praise was filled by spiritual reading, private prayer, and manual labour and all this had as its background the divine words learned in choir or meditated on during times of silence. Probably what one may call the habit of prayer has never been carried to greater lengths. Jean Leclercq remarks: "Cluny was the chosen home not so much of the '*laus perennis*' as of the '*oratio continua*.' "[14]

Unceasing Prayer and the Individual

The failure of the Gregorian Reform of the 11th and early 12th centuries had produced a creative crisis in medieval religious culture. The reform though served to change the focus of renewal from the institutional realm of traditional monastic forms to a religious awakening centered more on the importance of the individual. In this vein, C. Morris views the years 1050 - 1200 as a turning point in the history of Christian devotion. This period witnessed the development of a piety more suited to the so-called discovery of the individual:

> There developed a new pattern of interior piety, with a growing sensitivity, marked by personal love for the crucified Lord and an easy and free-flowing meditation on the life and passion of Christ... by the regular use of the confessional and the growing popularity of the position of homage as a posture for prayer; and by the emergence of the 'dying Christ' style of crucifix.[15]

The second half of the 12th century saw a gradual decline in the relative importance of the monastic orders and in the influence of monastic leaders in the life of both clergy and laity. The commercial revolution itself had contributed to this situation, for it shifted the focus of attention away from the feudal manor and monastery and transferred it to the city and cathedral. An increasing number of religious-minded people desired to remain in more active participation in the world than the older monastic orders allowed. Contemporary concern for one's neighbour was more outward looking. By the late 12th century, endowment of large monasteries was on the wane. Emphasis was placed rather on founding hospitals and other institutions of social welfare.

Interlocked with these developments, the idea of the apostolic life linked with itinerant preaching and voluntary poverty exercised a powerful appeal to the imagination. Instead of relying on the prayers and intercessions of monks on their behalf,[16] we find lay persons caught up in movements whose aim was evangelical. It meant a dual response for the Christian: to return to the gospel while remaining in the world.

The history of the various religious movements from the 11th to early 13th centuries reflect this emergence of direct lay involvement in spirituality.[17] Francis came at the end of this lengthy development.

SECTION III: UNCEASING PRAYER IN THE WRITINGS OF ST. FRANCIS

Francis' Call to Unceasing Prayer

From the very brief survey of the monastic tradition we have seen an understanding of unceasing prayer as an activity of our lives, an *Opus Dei* to be carried out daily and for which we must flee the world and devote ourselves to this work entirely, without any distractions, not even the distractions of ourselves. This was the first strain of thought we looked at. Then with the growing emphasis on the individual, there was also a desire to remain in the world: is it possible therefore to speak of unceasing prayer in this context? If so, in what sense? What kind of unceasing prayer are we a speaking of? Here I believe Francis is in line with the tradiiton before him, but he also contributes something unique and special of his own.

The call to unceasing prayer can be found four times in the writings of Francis and once in the writings of Clare.[18] It is to be noted that all of the references are from forms of the Rule and that the call to unceasing prayer is contained in the final form of the Rule from Francis and this is

repeated in Clare's Rule. Therefore, the call to unceasing prayer is to be taken as very much a part of Franciscan life. Neither Francis nor Clare considered it as an optional extra.

In the Rule of 1221 Francis says: "Therefore the servants of God must always give themselves totally to prayer or some good work."[19] The implication is that our prayer is an activity of our lives. This conception has overtones of the monastic stress on the *Opus Dei* to be performed continually. However in the Rule of 1223 Francis writes: "But let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and its holy manner of working, to pray always to Him with a pure heart."[20] The principle agent of prayer, that is, the primary sign of its presence, is unceasing prayer with a pure heart. Thus is confirmed by what he writes in the same Rule: "so that avoiding idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthly existence contribute."[21] I believe this passage is very important for a grasp of Francis' understanding of unceasing prayer and that it links him very much with the traditional understanding of unceasing prayer. It is interesting that the very phrase used at the beginning of the last passage — "avoiding idleness, the enemy of the soul" — shows a direct influence from the Rule of Benedict, for exactly the same words are in the Rule of Benedict.[22] Francis was undoubtedly aware of the Rule of Benedict,[23] though this does not mean that the Rule of Francis grew out of that of Benedict. I believe the textual similarity is not merely coincidental but that Francis also realized the importance of the *Opus Dei*, the activity of unceasing prayer in the lives of his friars and he also stresses, for example, the need to pray the Liturgy of the Hours.[24] The monks had fled the world to do this and though Francis speaks of "leaving the world,"[25] it is also clear that he and the friars are not to be behind monastery walls but to "go about the world."[26]

In the Rule of 1221 Francis refers back to a description of prayer he had suggested earlier in vv. 19 and 25, namely that we keep our mind and our heart turned toward God. This is what I would term Francis' traditional understanding of unceasing pryaer. We are to give ourselves totally to prayer and good works. He saw no disparity between prayer and activity. Prayer was the soul of his activity and activity was the sharing of the fruits of his prayer with others. Celano tells us that when anyone came to see him or some unexpected business needed his attention, he would interrupt his prayer at once, and return to it afterwards in his deepest heart.[27] He wanted his friars to be both contemplative and active. Celano again records that Francis once said: "The preacher must first draw from solitary prayer what he will later proclaim in sermons; he must first be on fire before he speaks words which in themselves are cold."[28]

Francis knew from experience the value of solitude and silence and the need of them in those committed to the active apostolate. For this reason he composed the Rule for Hermitages which testifies to that value and provides for that need.

However, twice Francis warns of the wiles of the devil who tries to turn our hearts away from God. There is a danger in describing prayer as an activity, a danger I think Francis was atuned to. The *Opus Dei* can easily become the *Opus Dei*. Particularly in the Rule of 1221 Francis touches upon the prayer/work tension or what we might call "my work is my prayer" theme that some use. Prayer is not an optional extra in our lives. Prayer is an indispensable element in our relationship with God springing from the transcendent dimension of human existence, without which nothing in our lives can ultimately have any lasting value or validity. This is the chief reason why those who hold that it is not necessary to pray if one works generously and devoutedly for others, support a fundamentally anti-human doctrine. I think Francis intuited this and this refers back to what we said in section one about the discipline of prayer. We know, of course, that there is a true sense in which to work is to pray, dependent on consciously attending to the things of God and so long as you "do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion."[29] But as anyone knows who has spent protracted periods in the active apostolate, and I think Francis realized this too, work sooner or later begins to lose its attraction and becomes a boring burden. It is then that one understands the power and value of prayer. Without prayer there is soon no work at all. The friars could be particularly prone to this because they did not have the prayerful security of the monastery wall to help keep the mind and heart turned to God.

Unceasing Prayer and Adoration

In the Rule of 1221 there seems to be two totally different aspects of unceasing prayer. V.27 we have examined above, refers back to the earlier description of prayer as keeping our minds and hearts turned to God. However, in V.29 Francis links unceasing prayer with adoration. He says: "And let us adore Him with a pure heart, because we should pray always and not lose heart (LK 18:1); for the father seeks such adorers. God is Spirit and those who adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth (cf. Jn 4:23-24)."[30]

The theme of adoration is accentuated as central to the life of Franciscan prayer.[31] In this context however, this is the type of prayer that the Father seeks i.e. the prayer of adoration characterized by a pure heart and an unceasing quality. In order to penetrate further the significance of the

prayer of adoration in Francis' writings, we must return to its biblical meaning. The Gospel of John, as in the passage just cited, is quoted frequently in this regard. An important aspect in this theology of prayer is the phrase "God is Spirit and those who adore Him must adore Him in Spirit and Truth."[32] Francis repeats this in his Second Letter to the faithful (19-20) and makes a reference to the first part of the verse in Admonition I:3. Was Francis aware that at the heart of adoration was an activity of the Spirit? I think so, since he gives another indication of what he means when he speaks of "never ceasing to adore and see the Lord God living and true with a pure heart and soul."[33]

Here there is something more than what we have seen in the traditional monastic outlook and more akin to what Nouwen was speaking of in section one. Unceasing prayer is a continual activity of the Holy Spirit within us, "the Spirit of Truth,"[34] with which we see things "with the eyes of the Spirit." In other words, through the Holy Spirit we are enabled to look upon the Father by sharing in the same power of seeing as the Son, or upon the Son by sharing in the same power of seeing as the Father. The Spirit becomes in us the medium through which we gaze upon the mystery of God. In this view of unceasing prayer, with the Spirit within us, we are taken into the very life and love of the Trinity.

Nouwen spoke of contemplation as one of the disciplines of prayer leading to unceasing prayer. In Francis, the First Admonition is inspired by the great desire to see the Lord. The role of the Holy Spirit is crucial to this desire and it is important to recognize the importance of praying with a pure heart, that is a heart which is transparent and an unassuming expression of the activity of the Spirit of the Lord, always pointing beyond itself (not introspection) and to the other, to pray with a pure heart implies recognition of the things of God and, therefore, unceasing adoration of the Lord, as Francis teaches in Admonition Sixteen.

Unceasing Prayer: Francis lives in the Presence of God His Father

Celano says of Francis that "All his attention and affection he directed with his whole being to the one thing which he was asking of the Lord, not so much praying as becoming himself a prayer."[35] The description serves to emphasize the principal point about prayer: prayer is not primarily saying something but being someone in virtue of a relationship with God who is ever-present everywhere in the totality of His Being.

The purpose of all prayer, be it liturgical, public, corporate, personal, vocal or silent, is to deepen our union with God, made possible by God Himself who, in absolute freedom and pure loving kindness, bridges the

infinite gulf that separates us in our creaturehood from Him the Sovereign Lord and Creator of the Universe. In this relationship we draw ever nearer to Him and the nearer we are to Him the more do we become like him. The more we become like Him, the more are we made truly ourselves. In unceasing prayer, there is no part of us that can be kept back according to Francis: "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves so that he who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally."[36]

There is nothing that can make a man more himself than the constant effort to deepen his relationship with God by loving the divine will and living in the divine presence.

Francis had a very clear grasp of what it means to be a creature. No created thing has meaning in itself. Its significance is derived from the Almighty Creator, who is, as Francis writes, supreme goodness, all goodness, eternal goodness, and without whom there is no goodness.[37] In gospel humility Francis acknowledged the gift-character of creation. To be created is to be a gift of God. This explains the sense of gratitude which pervaded his life and why he gives thanks so often in his writings. We find him thanking God for being God, for the gift of life, for every creature, for the love revealed and shared in Christ Jesus, for every grace and for the promise of glory. He gave thanks without creasing and he knew that thanksgiving was also a gracious gift.

Francis was always at prayer in the precise sense of living constantly in the presence of God and of centering his whole being on Him. He writes in the Rule of 1221: "All over the world, in every place, at every hour, at every moment, every day and without ceasing, we should believe truly and humbly and cherish in our heart and love, reverence, adore, serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and thank, the most High and supreme eternal God."[38]

According to this text and from ample evidence in his life, it is clear that Francis saw prayer first of all as an intimate relationship with the Triune God and a way of being (Nouwen's unceasing thoughts and unceasing prayer), and then as frequent communion with God in the liturgy and periods of personal recollection (the discipline that Nouwen spoke of.

CONCLUSION

In every one of us, there is an area of mystery at the core of which is an openness to God, who calls out to us from His own blessed eternity. As *homo sapiens*, as beings who find truth and reality not only outside ourselves, but in the inner depths of our own being, we must also be *homo orans*. If we are not the latter, then we will slip back into being no more than *homo sciens* — and knowledge only puffs up, wisdom it is

that builds up.[39] We must progress from *homo sapiens* to *homo amans* by being *homo orans*, that is to say, by praying we become ourselves a prayer.

Footnotes

[1]1 Th. 5:17-18.

[2]1 Th. 2:13.

[3]2 Th. 1:3.

[4]2 Th. 1:11.

[5]Rm 1:9.

[6]2 Tim 1:3.

[7]Henri Nouwen, *Clowning in Rome, Reflections on Solitude, Celibacy, Prayer and Contemplation*. Garden City, NY, Image Books, 1979. 61-84.

[8]Jn 16:32.

[9]Ps. 138:1-3; 23-24.

[10]Jn 14:8-10.

[11]Jn 6:46.

[12]*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetic Collection*, trans. Benedicta Ward, London: Mowbray, 1975. 8.

[13]Rule of Benedict 19-7.

[14]*A History of Christian Spirituality vol. II: The Spirituality of the Middle Ages* ed. Jean Leclercq, Francois Vandenbrouche, Louis Bouyer. Seabury Press, NY 1968, 110.

[15]C. Morris, *Discovery of the Individual: 1050 - 1200*. New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972, 160. On pp. 139-144 Morris discusses the changing form of the crucifix which manifests the new spirit of piety.

[16]The traditional dictum of Bishop Adalbero of Laon had divided society into three sacral orders: the clergy who prayed, the nobles who fought, and the rest who laboured. Cf. M-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, ed & trans. Jerome Taylor & Lester K. Little, University of Chicago Press, 1979, 264 no. 42. See also 255.

[17]For a treatment of the various religious reform movements of the period, see R. Brooke, *The Coming of the Friars*, London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1975, 40 - 113. Also D. V. Lapsanski, *Evangelical Perfection: An Historical Examination of the Concept in the Early Franciscan Sources*, St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1977. 6-50.

[18]RegNB VII:12; XXII:27.29; RegB X:9; RegCl X:10.

[19]RegNB VII:12.

[20]RegB X:8-9.

[21]RegB V:2; see also RegNB VII:11-12.

[22]Rule of Benedfict 48:1.

[23]Legend of Perugia 114.
[24]RegB III: 1; Test. 30
[25]Test. 3.
[26]RegB III:10.
[27]2 Celano 94.
[28]2 Celano 163.
[29]Reg B V:2; V:14; EpAnt 2.
[30]RegNB XXII:29-31.
[31]Cf. Adm XVI:2; IIepFid 12-20; EpOrd 4; OffPass X:3; RegNB XXI:2; XXIII:4; XXIII:11; Test. 5.
[32]Jn. 4:24.
[33]Adm XVI:2.
[34]IIEpFid 20.
[35]2 Celano 95.
[36]EpOrd 29.
[37]LaudHor 11.
[38]RegNB XXIII:11.
[39]cf. aso Adm VII.

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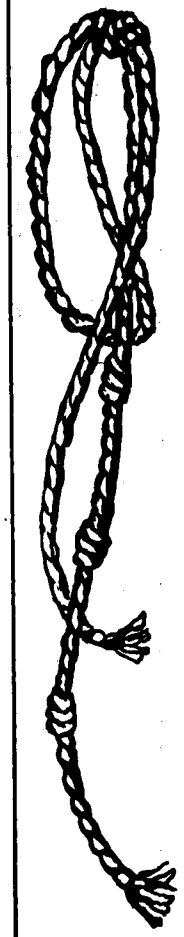

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Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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

[1]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).

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REFLECTION:

St. Francis: Sanity vs. Faith

JULIE A. SMITH

In an age when men wore hand-crafted money belts as a symbol of their affluence, a young rebel wandered freely, simple garments bound by a length of rope. While the concerns of war, business and family preoccupied those men of the world, the little poor man — Francis — sang improvised praises to his God.

And they deemed Francis insane.

So it has been since man's fall from grace. the god of gold and money has blinded us, deceived us into thinking that following the current social norms will gain us everlasting reward. Accepting what the majority rules will keep us "sane". How many times have we been proven wrong?

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, was born to a poor cerpenter and his wife. He took the risk of faith: depending on God the Father to provide for that Holy Family. When He gathered a group of disciples, there always seemed to be a place to sleep, food to eat.

Francis believed that God cares for all of us. He discovered, after long, tumultuous years, that he didn't need his biological father's wealth or name to be happy. He abandoned the material life and set an example which thousands have tried to imitate.

So many modern religious orders claim the charism of St. Francis, yet from the time a candidate passes through their portals until the day he or she dies, there is virtually no material risk involved. Indeed, these candidates will profess vows of poverty, chastity and obedience — while living in comfortable convents or friaries where so much is theirs for the asking. Many believe it is only common sense for such religious institutes to care for their own. It is the "sane" thing to do.

Whatever happened to leaving everything for the sake of the Kingdom?

Julie Smith, mother of four children, is a member of the Brethren of the Cross, a lay-covenant community in Rogersville, Missouri.

Whatever happened to taking risks — standing up for the rights of the unborn, the elderly, minorities? Whatever happened to getting involved?

Franciscans, of all three Orders, must take the social risks their founder did. Psychological neuroses are the creation of Freud and his descendants, often in an attempt to rationalize the working of faith in one's life. Nurturing this very faith, allowing ourselves to take risks — even if it means others in our social strata may look at us strangely, or whisper judgements about our "lack of sense" behind our backs — will lead us more quickly into the presence of God than 10,000 years of "following the crowd".

Actors are arrested for protesting nuclear arms. They receive publicity because they are widely recognized. They don't get involved just to have their photographs taken. If someone believes in a cause, he should do everything in his power to let everyone know he believes. Hare Krishnas shave their heads and roam around airports. What is our evidence that we believe in Francis and the Gospels?

Everything we say, all our actions should profess our faith in God and our belief in what is right. There should be no worry-lines drawing our lips into a frown because money is short this week. Such an event should be cause for rejoicing: when the necessary pennies appear — whether from an unexpected check in the mail or a bonus at work — we can be sure God is taking care of us. He will always provide.

So much more could be said. What it comes down to is this: We can take risks — little, daring ones or major, "insane" ones — as long as we believe. Francis did.

One Soul

Friendship is like
two chalices

filled with the wine
of a single

flagon: one soul
in two vessels,

one blood pouring
through different veins.

Br. Joseph Molleur, SSJE

Poverty and Prayer: the Franciscan Way to God

JOHN P. GRYGUS, O.F.M.

According to classical spirituality, the goal of all prayer is eventually to reach a state of union with God. Such a union, from the human perspective, involves a stance of total receptivity to God whereby God is allowed to be "all in all", the point at which life itself is experienced as pure gift, a pure manifestation of God's very goodness felt in the depths of one's being, to which one can only respond with a deep sense of gratitude and praise. Only within the growing experience of such receptivity can true worship, or what may be more properly defined as prayer, can be rendered to the most High, a worship in "spirit and truth," for then it is God Himself through the power of the Holy Spirit who becomes the source and foundation of that type of prayer. This state of union with God can only be entered into through a gradual dispossession of oneself of all that is not God. In other words, to put it briefly, one must become poor in spirit in order to become rich in God. The experience of poverty is then essential to the experience of authentic worship or prayer.

It is my intention in this article to reflect on such a connection that exists between poverty and prayer from a specifically Franciscan point of view. The concern will be not so much with analyzing how the former can be used as a type of a meditative technique for entering into the exeprience of the latter. Rather, I will attempt to focus more on the process of becoming, of inner change or transformation which occurs within the heart of the person committed to the practice of evangelical poverty and on the style of prayer or, better yet, on the "stance of prayer" that then begins to emerge. Our model for this will be Francis himself

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— his life, thoughts, and his writings — for it is he who most clearly exemplifies this connection that exists between poverty and prayer.

It is beyond a doubt that no other religious movement within the Church has placed such a heavy emphasis on poverty as has the Franciscan movement. This is its chief charism, the unique contribution that it has given to the history of spirituality and therefore a charism which it must seek to live out authentically in every age if it is to remain true to its ideals. As Sr. Mary Mildred points out, "Without poverty, there is no genuine Franciscanism. Other virtues are Franciscan only in combination with poverty."[1] To understand why Francis gave such a prominent position to the role of poverty in authenticating human existence, considered more from the spiritual rather than the economic and social point of view, we must first examine the unique understanding that he himself possessed of the nature of the human/divine relationship. Such an understanding is nowhere more clearly delineated than in his Second Admonition for it is here that he offers us his own interpretation of the plan that God intended for humankind from the beginning, the nature of the first sin which disrupted that plan, and what he sees as being the chosen pathway through which humanity can once again return to the original state of innocence enjoyed by our first parents. The Second Admonition then stands as foundation for Francis' entire life project. Consequently, as Regis Armstrong states, "It is here that we find concepts and images that we encounter many times throughout Francis' writings."[2]

Francis begins to describe the drama of the garden by reiterating the proscriptions which God gave to the first humans as contained in the book of Genesis:

> The Lord said to Adam: Eat of every tree; do not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (cf. Gen. 2:16-17)

and accepts the traditional Judeo-Christian understanding of the limits imposed on the will of the first humans as being specified by the need to render an attitude of loving obedience to the divine imperative:

> He was able to eat of every tree of paradise since he did not sin *as long as he did not go against obedience*.

However, it is in his interpretation of what constituted the human transgression of that limitation, the fact of the first sin, where Francis parts with tradition:

> For the person eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil who *appropriates to himself* his own will and thus exalts himself over the good things which the Lord says and does in him.

Here Francis specifies his understanding of the first sin as essentially involving not the act of disobedience espoused by most of tradition but that of appropriating onto oneself the good that essentially belong to God. We might say, then, that for Francis the act of appropriation becomes the *causa facta* through which the sin of disobedience itself is incurred.

In perceiving the root of all sin to lie in the sin of appropriation, Francis will dedicate the rest of his life to trying to reverse its effects. The means for doing this will be the practice of evangelical poverty. Just as the original act of appropriation involved cutting oneself away from God by assuming a prerogative which was God's alone to assume, so the healing remedy for Francis will involve dispossessing onself of that prerogative so as to once again experience the immensity of God's care and solicitude.

What essentially did this pursuit of evangelical poverty entail? Most directly it entailed that with which Francis is most popularly associated, the relinquishment of material goods. Thus those entering the Order are advised by Francis to "sell all that belongs to them and strive to give it to the poor" (RB II,5). Once in the Order, they are exhorted not to appropriate unto themselves "anything as their own, neither a house nor a place nor anything at all" and be content in living a life of utter simplicity "as pilgrims and strangers in the world" (RB VI,1-2). Chief in this category is the prohibition not only against the ownership but the very handling of money in any form (cf. RB VI).

Yet, when we examine the totality of Francis' writings, we begin to see that for him poverty implied much more than dispossessing oneself of material goods. Thus, in the Fourth Admonition he commands "those who are placed over others" in the fraternity *not to be so attached to their office* that they would grow upset were it to be taken from them. Again, Thomas of Celano recounts how on one occasion Francis told his friars that if a learned man wanted to enter the order, "he ought in some way *give up even his learning* ... so that having renounced such a possession, he may offer himself naked to the arms of the Crucified" (2 Cel. 194). In the Fourteenth Admonition he extends this prohibition even to the desire to maintain control over one's *honor, reputation or good name* to such an extent that one should not even feel scandalized or moved to anger should someone wish to place one in disrepute. In this instance, as Armstrong states, even *anger* can be seen "as a 'possession,' something to which we might cling and with which we might Lord it over or manipulate another."[3]

In short, nothing is to be excluded from this practice of evangelical poverty. The demand of poverty is even extended to the highest possession a person can have in life, the slavish clinging onto one's own will. For

this reason, rendering a spirit of obedience to one's prelate becomes for Francis the ultimate sign of the practice of evangeical poverty:

> The Lord says in the Gospel: 'He who does not renounce everything he possesses cannot be my disciple' (Lk. 14:33); and: 'He who wishes to save his life must lose it' (Lk. 9:24). That person leaves everything he possesses and loses his body who surrenders his whole self to obedience at the hands of the prelate (Adm. III, 1-3).

It is quite clear here, from the association we see being made between surrendering one's will to one's prelate and the Gospel imperative to renounce everything as a prerequisite of true discipleship, that Francis considers the prelate to be but the instrument through which God manifested his will for the individual friar. Consequently, surrendering one's will to the prelate implied a surrender of one's whole self to none other than God.

What we see here is the notion of poverty being extended to the consummation of the spiritual life. Consequently, as Scarfia states, for Francis "poverty is not simply a privileged evangelical virtue; rather it is a life of complete self-abandonment and unreserved surrender to the mercy and grace of God."[4] This is the real aim of the Franciscan dedication to a life of evangelical poverty, not the pursuit of poverty for its own sake but for the sake of achieving a total union with God. Dedicating oneself to the pursuit of such a union with God is what specified the contemplative dimension of the Franciscan way of life which was then expected to permeate all of its active dimensions with a certain spirit of prayer and devotion.

The starting point for entering such a life in quest for union with God was marked by a voluntary decision to release oneself from all attachments to material possessions (*expropriatio*). This was expected to be the normal outcome of taking seriously the inner call one felt within oneself to "leave the world" and enter a life of penance or conversion.[5] But certainly the friar could not stop there; rather, the act of material disappropriation was intended to have him experience the grace he would need to then gradually move into yet a deeper state of "inner" poverty, the disappropriation of oneself from all the inner attachments present in one's heart and mind, to the relinquishment of the depths of one's very will to God. Only when this was done could the friar be considered *sine proprio*, having nothing of his own. It is, then, the combination of this interior with the more exterior form of disappropriation which constituted for Francis the "summit of the highest poverty," that which marked the friars as true "pilgrims and strangers in this life" (RB VI,2),[6]

For Francis the model of such a following of a life of poverty was, of

course, Christ himself, a point which Fr. David wishes to clearly make in his attempt to specify the reason for this virtue needing to hold such a prominent position in the Franciscan approach to life,

> St. Francis understood poverty in a very comprehensive sense. Whenever he thought of poverty he thought of Christ, and the life of poverty meant nothing less, for him, than a life in imitation of the poor Christ.[7]

Thus, from the very beginning, Francis proclaims that "The rule and life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of their own (*sine proprio*), and in chastity" (RB I,1). When Francis looked at Jesus he saw One who existed in the glory of God but voluntarily dispossessed himself of his divinity for our sakes so as to be born in a lowly stable, live a life with no place to rest his head and without permanent resources, stripping his outer garments to wash the feet of his disciples in humble and loving service, to finally die in naked self-oblation, totally resigned to the mercy and grace of his Father. Thoroughly embued with the symbolism of these Gospel scenes, Francis came to the realization that the path of absolute poverty which Jesus followed must become his own as well.

The positive effect of such a total abnegation of self became felt in a profound attitudinal change which then gradually began to take place, a change from seeing everything as being the result of one's rightful due to seeing everything as a pure gift of God. This is certainly reflected throughout Francis' writings but nowhere more so than in his Testament (most important for our consideration here because it reflects the frame of mind and heart possessed by Francis toward the end of his life, that is, at the attainment of the highest form of poverty possible). Thus, looking back upon the whole of his life, Francis proclaims unequivocally that: "it was the Lord who *granted me*, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance" (v. 1); it was the Lord who "*gave me* such faith in churches (v.4)... and priests" (v.16); "the Lord *gave me* brothers" and "*revealed to me* a greeting" (v.23)... and "has *granted me* to speak and to write the Rule and these words simply and purely..." (v. 39). Here is a man who is conscious of the fact that all that he is and has is the result of pure gift, of God's overwhelming generosity and love freely having been poured upon him inspite of his natural tendency to sin, which by this time has probably been pretty much eradicated from him. Thus, "in being totally stripped of his own self, the truly poor man now begins to be filled with the utter fullness of God Himself. This is the state of union towards which the entire pathway of poverty is oriented.

The only form of prayer that can truly fit such an experience of fullness now is that of thanksgiving, praise, and adoration; and we see Francis

being thoroughly embued with this form of prayer as is made evident in the conclusion to "The praises To Be Said at All the Hours":

All-powerful, most holy,
Most High, and Supreme God:
All Good,
Supreme Good,
You who alone are good;
may we give you
all praise, all glory,
all thanks, all honor:
all blessing,
and all good things.
So be it.
So be it.
Amen.

Francis, now becoming aware of the Goodness with which he has been totally embued, has only one desire left in life: to totally give himself back to this Goodness which God is through a simple outpouring of himself in love, praise, thanksgiving and adoration.[8]

The above reflection can now lead us to make two important observations. Firstly, from all that we have said about the experience of poverty and the type of prayer it ultimately seeks to express itself in, we can conclude that the uniquely Franciscan form of prayer that we as Franciscans must seek to grow into is the prayer of thanks, praise and adoration — not merely because this was the prayer that best characterized Francis' own prayer life but because it is the prayer *par exellence* that flows out of an experience of total poverty of self which all Franciscans, by virtue of their charism, are called to enter into. And, secondly, from the above we can now further conclude, by way of outlining an important principle for discernment, that if one has not yet reached a more-or-less habitual state of praise, thanksgiving and adoration, then that one has probably not yet come to experience the level of poverty to which Francis wishes his followers to give themselves over. Still controlled by attachments which block the direct experience of God's goodness and love from flooding one's whole being with a spirit of praise and adoration, that one has still not yet been constituted as "pilgrim and stranger in this life, serving the Lord in poverty and humility" (RB VI,2). As is alluded to by Raguin, such a one (and in this category we probably would have to place most of the human race) must still rely upon the prayer of supplication as best reflecting his or her state before God:

> My prayer is the expression of my relationship to my God. It is my situation before Him... The prayer of supplication is an expression of weakness, limitation or trouble; but the prayer of praise and the giving of thanks is an expression of riches.[8]

Yet, even the prayer of supplication is a most fitting prayer to enter into for those of us who have still not reached the summit of poverty and for those times in our lives when we experience want and need instead of a sense of fullness. Why?; precisely because in directing us towards God, it already is capable of moving us beyond our self-attachment and so lead us to experience more fully the sense of Presence for which our hearts hunger.

... in being totally stripped of his own self, the truly poor man now begins to be filled with the utter fullness of God Himself.

In fact, it is on this level of supplication that we see most clearly how the conjoining of poverty and prayer leads us to greater transformation. The conjoining, the flowing of one into the other, occurs through the experience of faith which is a process inherent in both the practice of genuine poverty as well as of a genuine God-centered prayer. I would now like to explain this more clearly. We begin with the experience of prayer. What is prayer? Essentially, prayer involves a directing of one's whole being toward God. It is about forming a relationship with God through similar types of processes (i. e. speaking, listening, being present to and with, etc.) as are involved in forming a relationship with another human being, but with one key difference: Whereas another human being we can see, God we cannot. Nor can we apprehend God through any of our other powers, either sensible or intellectual. Consequently, we can only truly begin to relate to God through the eyes of faith; and growth in faith entails precisely entering into such an experience of poverty that we have been speaking of, that is, moving beyond all our self-constructed images of God be they sensible, intellectual or volitional — down to the deep things of the heart, the security structures or attachments which we have had to set up for ourselves in the experience of human limitation and need, the things that have ultimate control over us (i. e. the false gods in our lives). Why?; because God is always beyond all such self-created structures, so that in limiting God to any one of these structures (by relating to any one of them as we ought only to relate to God), we *de facto* end up severing ourselves from the true God of faith. Thus we

see that a genuine God-centered prayer must by its nature lead us to the experience of poverty.

The reverse is also true: as prayer has the potential of leading us to experience an ever-greater poverty of spirit, so a voluntary decision to enter into the experience of poverty can lead us to an ever-greater growth in prayer. Take, for example, the processes which are initiated through the act of material disappropriation. Why do we tend to so tenaciously cling onto material goods (or anything we might tend to perceive as a "good" for that matter)? It is because such goods afford us a certain sense of security which prevents us from being confronted with the horror of our own inner neediness (i.e. poverty of spirit which lies at the base of our creaturely existence). The one who willingly divests himself of all material goods, as Francis and his early followers have done, will then naturally be reconfronted with the experience of his own poverty. Unable to bear the pain of his own nothingness one will have to seek refuge in some higher forms of security, in those first that he can touch, feel, smell, perceive with his intellect, etc. — because they demand less of a sacrifice from him — to those false illusions of reality lying deep within one's subconscious which afford one at least some sense of power, though illusory, in the face of his inner experience of negation. However, should one remain true to the desires of his spirit and so refuse to be satisfied with all such limited forms of security, at some point (for a religious person such points would normally be expected to occur throughout the process of detachment) his heart will have to open itself up to a radical experience of faith in which he then would begin to lean upon none other than God. And this would mark an experience of true prayer because it is then really God with whom one is relating. From all that has been said above, we can now see how a genuine experience of poverty (i.e. one which through the medium of faith leads to and is allowed to rest in God) is a genuine experience of prayer, and vice versa.

However, as the mystics have continuously proclaimed, it is ultimately impossible for us to divest ourselves of all our attachments through our own good will and resources. The reason for this is related to the fact that at some higher stage of human development, we will ultimately have to be confronted with our very inability to become poor, precisely so that we might clearly come to perceive all to be the result of grace. Only then can life be enjoyed to the fullest. The dynamics involved in this process of self-emptying which occurs through the interaction of poverty and prayer is clearly delineated by Raguin in the following statement:

> The most important poverty for prayer is certainly that of the human means which we put to work in our seeking of the Lord... [But] as we progress further into this mysterious domain of divine action, our tools are snatched out of our hands one by one. After a short time, it is no longer I who put myself into a state of material or spiritual poverty so as to condition myself for the encounter with God; rather it is God himself who divests me of all the apparatus of means, methods and plans which I had conceived when I set out in search of him. The very activity of the Spirit of God within myself strips me of all my powers. The further I advance onto this divine ground, the more I feel poverty — stricken and disarmed, and it is to this profound poverty that God calls me, ultimately.[10]

When we reflect upon the sense of giftedness that one begins to experience after passing into the state of glory (i.e. that chiefly characterized by the prayer of thanksgiving, praise and adoration), it is easy to see why this must be so: because so long as I am still able to bring myself to a greater sense of poverty through the exercise of my own powers, what results can never truly be experienced as pure gift. Somewhere deep within I will always feel that I have earned it, that I have merited the prize, which in and of itself will diminish the force of the gratitude that one must experientially and intuitively feel in order to be brought to the fullness of the experience of praise and adoration. It is then only out of an experience of total poverty, of God breaking through the sense of one's total hopelessness and helplessness of self, that the prayer of thanks, praise and adoration can ultimately flow.

Do we see such breaking through occuring in the life of Francis? Most spiritual writers would probably tend to look upon the stigmatization experience on Mount Alverna as the point at which God fully breaks through all of Francis' inner attachment to life. I, however, would tend to see not this but the experience which directly preceeded it as constituting such a moment, namely, the hearing of the Gospel being read to him three times by his companion. But let us first try to give an account of the frame of mind and heart which Francis brings to the experience. We see Francis coming to Mount Alverna already by this time divested of all attachments to life, material and spiritual, except for one: the responsibility he feels for maintaining the Order in accordance with the vision of life God had given him. In seeing how the Order had moved away from that vision, Francis must have experienced a tremendous sense of failure concerning himself and his entire life-project. His torment of mind and heart over this must have been immense, especially in the wake of his seeming inability to bring the brothers back to the original observance God had given them. It was perhaps in this state of confusion, doubt, sense of helplessness and failure (i.e. experience of total poverty) that he climbed the side of Alverna desperately in need of guidance from the Lord.

Bonaventure describes how, upon arriving at Alverna, Francis asked

his companion to open the Book of the Gospels three times with it each time having been opened to the passion narrative, and then adds the following: "and so Francis understood that he must become like Christ in *the distress and the agony of his passion* before he left the world, just as he had been like him in all that he did during his life" (LM XIII,2). Could this have marked the point at which Francis had now been finally led to understand that his failure and distress over the failure to maintain the brotherhood faithful to the original vision of life was *not a failure* at all but a *significant part of God's plan for him and for the world:* since he had been called to become so perfectly identified with the Crucified throughout his whole life, a plan therefore now to even be identified with Christ's own seeming failure to bring about a state of liberation as perceived through the eyes of flesh? If so, then the experience would have marked the point of ultimate liberation for Francis. He would have now been enabled to joyfully relinquish to God his final attachment to life, the sense of his own responsibility for the future direction of his Order and so with that the sense of failure for not having carried out that responsibility faithfully. He would now have been able to see by direct revelation how he had indeed fulfilled perfectly the Lord's will for his life and how the rest was really up to God. The gratitude he would have felt for such a supreme experience of liberation and exaltation of him by God would now have impelled him with great longing to be truly made one with the Crucified to the very bearing of his wounds. Totally absorbed in love for the Crucified, one can alomost hear him plead with God. "OK, if this has been the meaning of it all; if this is what you intended to do with me all along, then make me complete: Allow me to glorify you, Most Holy Father, as fully as he had glorified you on the cross, to the limits of my human endurance, for my love for you will not allow me to settle for anything less than that." How could the Lord refuse such a prayer?

In the light of all this, one can only wonder whether the secrets spoken to him, by the Seraph which he felt he could "never reveal to anyone as long as he lived" (LM XIII,4) were not really concerned with the prophetic role that his life would bear as a "living Testament" to call the fraternity to a constant renewal. If so, then is it not possible that Francis could have also been given to understand that God's whole purpose in calling him to penance was not so much to found a perfect Order, as he had thought, as to create a near-perfect replica of his Son to leave as a living witness for all of humanity to concretely see what human beings are capable of in seriously taking up the call of the Gospel as he had done? Francis' great humility would have indeed not allowed him to speak of such things to anyone.

Certainly one who has entered the state of glory (i.e. union with God)

through the realization of perfect poverty will be enabled to see Reality as it really is; for now, in having nothing of his own, he is enabled to perceive it through the very ground of its being, that is, through the eyes of God. Is it possible to get a glimpse at the perspective that Francis, fully united with God, might have had of reality, though we could never fully comprehend its depth unless we became as poor as he was? I believe that it is. To do so we need to once again return to the subject matter we started this treatise with, to reflect on the understanding of the nature of the human/divine relationship which Francis possessed. (This will merely place what we have already said above concerning poverty and prayer into a greater theological framework.)

For Francis, God is the One who invites Adam and Eve to "eat of every tree" in the Garden except of the one that would lead them to ultimate destruction (Adm.II,1). He is then the Bounteous God whose care and solicitude for all of creation, and in particular for the crown of his creation — the human person — knows no bounds. He is "the God," "the All-Good," or "the Highest Good," as Francis most often refers to call God.[11]

Since God is "the eternal Good, from whom comes all good, without whom there is no good' (cf. Exp PN 2), creation must be characterized by a relationhip of total dependency upon God for all the good that it is. In short, it must be the result of pure gift. So pervasive is this concept of God's giftedness in Franciscan thought that Bonaventure, reflecting upon the heritage left to us by St. Francis, will go so far as to say that creation is *relatio essentialis*, dependent on God not only in its substance but even in its accidents; and here he will sharply part company with Thomas.[12]

To say that creatures are totally dependent upon God for everything is to say that they must be totally poor in themselves. Poverty must then constitute the core of all created reality for Francis. It is that which binds creature and Creator, total receptivity with total gift, into an indissoluble bond of existence and love. Now this state of poverty, dependence or receptivity which all creatures share in common with each other is also what constitutes the true act of worship which they render to the Creator — and therein we have the connection between poverty and prayer again — for in having nothing of their own, created substances are left to reflect back to the Creator and each other nothing but the very goodness through which they were loved into being and through which they are continuously sustained in being. Consequently, the Lord looking back upon what he had made can truly say, "it is good," because he can see within his work particular reflections of his own goodness, and so be immensely pleased.

Now Francis, in having himself returned to this primal state of poverty, looking through reality as if through a hollow tube with nothing to obstruct

his vision, would have been able to perceive, first of all, the inner connectedness of all things to God in their essential poverty or dependence on Him and, therefore, flowing from that, the inner connectedness of himself with all things and of all things with each other through the same gift of poverty which binds all of creation to God. In other words, he would have seen not just human beings but every aspect of creation as "brother" and "sister". And this indeed was the case as Thomas of Celano recounts:

> When he found an abundance of flowers, he preached to them and invited them to praise the Lord as though they were endowed with reason. In the same way he exhorted with the sincerest purity cornfields and vineyards, stones and forests and all the beautiful things of the gardens, earth and fire, air and wind, to love God and serve him willingly. Finally, he called all creation *brother*, and in a most extraordinary manner, a manner never experienced by others, he *discerned the hidden things of nature with his sensitive heart*, as one who had already escaped into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. (1 Cel. 81),

What would flow from such a mystical insight would be a profound attitude of reverence and respect for all things, which represented a striking contrast to the spirit of irreverance, domination and greed pervading the rest of his society.

In seeing all things through the Ground of their being, Francis would have also been enabled to see the tremendous act of worship they constantly render the Almighty (that is, the manner in which they perfectly reflect the goodness and grandeur of God in their stance of total poverty before Him). No wonder, then, that Francis was moved to tears and high praises of God each time he beheld the moon, the stars, the hills, and so on. It is such a vision of the glory of God pervading all things which acocunts for what is referred to as Francis' "nature mysticism." The single most important expression of that is perhaps "The Canticle of Brother Sun."

Of course, for Francis, the medium through which he beheld the secrets of the universe was none other than the poverty of Jesus. Thus, as Thomas of Celano again states, "Toward little worms even he glowed with a very great love, for he had read this saying about the Savior: *'I am a worm, not a man'* " (1 Cel.80). All of creation, then, brought him in contact with an ecstatic sense of presence and love because, in its total poverty (dependence) upon God for everything, it reminded him of the total poverty of Jesus, which also but now perfectly allowed the glory of the Father to reveal itself through Him.

Finally, in realizing the state of total poverty within himself, Francis would have been enabled to understand the depths of who he was and to experience within himself the fullest potential of his own personhood.

From the human perspective, he would always see himself as being "nothingness"; but from the divine perspective, from the perspective of the giftedness he perceived within himself, always as "fullness" in God — fullness not only in the experience of joy which comes from the human heart obtaining the object of its desire, which is none other than God Himself, as fully as this is possible in this life, but fullness in the experience of God's own power to be realized in his ministry to others. The experience of that fullness would have made Francis all the more grateful to God for all that he had received as gift and, therefore, all the more desirous to pour the gift of himself back to God in an ever greater act of praise, adoration and loving service to all of creation.

In summary, we can then say that total poverty is that privileged existential position in which all aspects of reality are brought to an essential fullness of being. It is the point at which the human person is enabled to most fully gaze at the very face of God and in so doing realize the fullest potential of his or her own personhood as a creature of God or better yet — in light of the human/divine synthesis achieved through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus — as a son and daughter of the most High Father. Embued with God's power and light flowing through a stance of total receptivity, one is then enabled not only to see reality as it truly is but to render to God a perfect act of worship which, among other things, involves relating to all living things with the same depth of reverence, respect and love with which one is also related to by God Himself. In that one who has achieved such a depth of poverty, the Kingdom promised us by Jesus has indeed come to full fruition.

There is something about this experience that allows us to see it as being the pathway which not only we as Franciscans but all men and women must take in order to realize the depth of the longing for life present in the human spirit for, as St. Francis pointed out, it is the pathway of the Gospel itself. This places a tremendous charge upon us Franciscans. We have been given this pathway as our fundamental charism to be shared with the rest of the world. But before we can so share it, we ourselves first need to be brought back to its practice. In this regard, if our present reflection has done anything at all, it is hopefully to have shown that such a return to our fundamental charism, though it must begin through a serious attempt to simplify our lifestyle materially, cannot end there; rather, the act of material simplification must be allowed in and of itself to lead us to that deeper poverty of spirit wherein we become totally submitted to the action of the Holy Spirit so that what then is allowed to flow from us is not our programs of reform but God's program of reform, which is the only program that can lead His people and all of creation to the fullness of the Kingdom. When that happens, keeping in

mind how we have defined true prayer as an expression of the fundamental goodness of God reflected back to God and to his world through poverty, we will end up with Francis "not so much praying as becoming prayer itself" (cf. 2 Cel. 95). *Pax et Bonum*.

Footnotes

[1]Sr. Mary Mildred, C.S.S.F., "Christocentrism and Love: Two Basic Forces in Franciscan Formation," *Cord* 15 (January-February 1965): 15.

[2]Regis J. Armstrong, "Prophetic Implication of the Admonitions," *Laurentianum* 26 (1985): 46.

[3]Ibid,. p. 443.

[4]B. Scarfia, "Poverty: The Life of the Friars," *Interest* 2 (Winter 1964):6.

[5]Lazaro Iriarte, *Franciscan History: The Three Orders of St. Francis of Assisi* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), p. 112.

[6](cf. Scarfia, p. 6).

[7]Fr. David, O.F.M. Cap., "The Franciscan Ideal of Poverty," *Cord* 16 (Summer 1966): 261.

[8]Regis J. Armstrong Lecture Notes for FS 541: "Theology of Prayer In Light of the Writings of Saints Francis and Clare," taught at St. Bonaventure University (Summer Session 1988), Ap. 6 v.

[9]Yves Raguin, S.J., "Poverty and Prayer," *Contemplative Review* 19 (Spring 1987): 31.

[10]Ibid., p. 34.

[11](cf. Reg. NB XVII 17-18; Laud Hor 11;l Exh Ld 10; Reg NB XXIII 9; Exp PN 2; Cant. Sol. 1; Ep Leo I,3).

[12]W. Hellman, "Poverty: The Franciscan Way to God," *Theology Digest* 22 (Winter 1974): 340.

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Franciscan Contemplative

Francis, King's herald,
Seraphic lover of God!
Clare, radiant light,
Spouse of God's Holy Spirit!
Franciscan mirrors of Christ.

Arch-typal Woman —
Resonate with Poverty.
Model Peacefulness....
Thank "Benevolent Giver" —
Mystical Lover... your Soul!

Contemplate Yahweh,
Holy Mirror of your Soul!
Center.. Life's graces —
Enjoy His Presence within —
Let God contemplate your face!

Tanka structure
Sister Barbara Mary Lanham, O.S.F.

St. Francis of Assisi Within the Framework of the RCIA

KEVIN M. TORTORELLI, O.F.M.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a program prescribed by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for the Church in this country. Its decree of implementation further specifies both its approval by the Apostolic See on February 19, 1987 and its mandated place in every diocese of the country as of September 12, 1988.[1] The structure of the RCIA is designed to lead an unbaptized adult to the sacraments of initiation through a process of catechesis and personal formation. It will be with us for a long time and many have yet to get used to it. It will require some adaptation not only from diocese to diocese but within a diocese as well. This can all sound too involved and one may fear that the program is a bureaucratic and intrusive thing. It is for this reason that I want to share with the reader what I discovered to be an indication of the potential and wealth contained in the RCIA. It was quite by accident that I found myself reading the life of St. Francis within the framework of the RCIA and the general effect was to be reading him with fresh eyes and as it were for the first time.

The RCIA is made up of four major parts. The method I have employed is equally basic. To an attentive reading of the text of each part I have wanted to develop its theological dimension which would serve to draw attention to points of meaning or consequence in the text. Finally, this theological dimension seemed to find its counterpart in the life of St. Francis. Here it is a generous matter both of Francis illustrating aspects of the RCIA and of the RCIA explaining aspect of Francis' life in terms of the mystery of the Church.

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I. Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

This first part of the RCIA opens the rectory door to greet an inquirer. How did he get here? What has brought her? The fact of the matter is that this inquirer is a manifestation of the evangelical mission of an often hidden grace. It is God at work drawing this very real person to his ecclesial self. One might pause before this profoundly hidden mystery — the interiority of the Church and the interiority of the inquirer are in touch however wistfully and frail such tender contact be. But this is a genuine effect of a real activity. And its fruit ripens into the life of conversion. Here is a development of the human spirit in the direction of a beauty issuing from a great depth and purity.

Conversion is a decision about who I am and why I am. It is a movement from one horizon to another, from the unauthentic to the authentic, from fear to love. What could possibly move a person along this way, littered with the debris of once entrenched horizons and attitudes? The operator of that ascent is the experience of God's love poured forth "into our heart through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rm 5:5).[2] This kind of reality Lonergan named a specifically religious conversion and he characterized it as a response of total self-surrender, bereft of conditions, qualifications or reservations, urging us to love God with all one's heart and soul and mind and strength. Everything is simply different — and my own self principally and first of all.[3]

What makes Francesco Bernadone tick, this inquirer at the door? He is likeable. Dreamy as a schoolboy yet his attention could be instantly quickened by the telling of the gallantry of St. George against the dragon. He is exquisitely courteous and impulsive. Generous. His times were the stuff of headlines and evening news broadcasts — Saladin capturing Jerusalem, for example, or the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VI, reasserting German authority in Italy or any number of new spiritual movements like the one that takes its name from the merchant Peter Waldo.

His conversion seems gradual. Who can overlook the signature of grace when Francis shows the importunate beggar the door? How dare the wretch endanger a delicate business deal with his rude stink and mumbling drone "for the love of God!" Yet in the next instant Francis hurls himself into the street, abandoning shop and customers, to make amends and to give mightily "for the love of God."[4] This incident is followed by the humiliating return from Spoleto. Bidden to serve the Master and to return home the would-be knight finds an Assisi choking with contempt and a father violent with rage. This is all quite gradual and more could well be added but the hidden and evangelizing grace has laid hold of his heart. Its fruit, the conversion that is a conscious decision about myself and

therefore about everything, emerges from the shadow and silence of San Damiano. There the word of the cross and the word of the gospel speak. One feels the strain bursting and the strange freedom of the cross adding abandon to his emotions. Here is that specific religious conversion which is manifested as the pure foundation for what I *now* affirm to be true and hold to be worthwhile. But differently, this religious conversion leads to intellectual and moral conversion.

What is his intellectual conversion? It is the mission to "rebuild my church." How? The peace of the gospel of the gentle and humble Christ. "Pace e bene!" and the befriending of each and all. This is the poverty of the gospel, the voice of her who alone "mounted the cross with Christ."[5] And his moral conversion? The lepers of Rivo Torto with whom the brothers lived and whom they served with a gentle, humble joy are the fruit of Franciscan moral conversion.

It is these dimensions of evangelizing grace and conversion which are constitutive of this first part of the RCIA and which cast their light on the life of St. Francis.

II. Period of the Catechumenate

The period of the Catechumenate is marked by a liturgical rite which receives the catachumens into the Church. To my reading there are three aspects of this rite worthy of mention. First, we note a brief conversation in which the candidate is addressed in this fashion: "What do you ask of God's Church?" The answer: "Faith." "And what does faith offer you?" "Eternal Life" (RCIA, 50). Second, the candidates are signed with the cross on the forehead and then all the senses may be signed with the cross (RCIA, 54-56). Third, there is a procession through the Church to the table of God's Word where the candidates receive the Scriptures (RCIA, 60-64). The rite of entry into the Catechumenate emphasizes the period as one of formation in faith and in the Scriptures.

What is faith? If we recall that religious conversion is the condition of total self-surrender as the fruit of God's love poured forth in our hearts then we may define faith as the knowledge born of that love,[6] the eyes of the heart (Eph 1:18), the eyes of love. We are brought to this matter of faith because love wishes to be understood and affirmed as true. Faith affirms love as true and so faith is knowledge of that love. Is this understanding of faith to be found in the life of our saint?

Francis's own formation in the knowledge that is faith is best seen in the encounter with the wolf of Gubbio. Here the conversation with Brother Wolf is instructive. His behavior is wicked. He is forbidden by Francis to continue in this destructive vein. To live in peace and to be reconciled

he must renounce evil. As for the townspeople, they are invited to imitate the repentance of Brother Wolf and to have a care for him by feeding him and looking after him.[7] This is a worthy parable of faith spoken here in the Galilee of Italy. It is representative of Francis' preaching whose content is the distillation of faith as the knowledge born of religious love. The instances of his preaching are numerous enough. At bottom, his preaching, the knowledge of God which he had in faith, is that Christ became poor to let us see the glory of the divine love and it was the poor who let shine the love of God in Christ. If one is poor, one lets Christ manifest love in that poverty. Here is a summons to let God be all in all, to be silent in God, to be freed from illusion by the wealth and faith of poverty who alone mounts the cross with Christ, who alone knows Christ. Here is a faith worthy of the Catechumenate period. It is a faith that draws out the deep things of God even with reference to Brother Wolf.

III. Period of Purification and Enlightenment

On the first Sunday of Lent, the catechumens are enrolled and admitted to election. In this rite of election, their intent is examined, their catechumenate formation attested, and their fellowship with their brothers and sisters affirmed. This rite now recognizes that these elect are "to enter fully into the life of the Church through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the eucharist" (RCIA, 132) at the Easter Vigil. As a result, Lent becomes a heightened, even an intense preparation for Easter. Its principal feature are the three great Scrutinies which aim to strengthen and purify the resolve of the elect.

These Scrutinies are conducted in terms of three Johannine gospels — the Samaritan Woman at the Well (Jn 4:5-42) on the third Sunday of Lent; the Man Born Blind (Jn 9:1-41) on the fourth Sunday of Lent; and the Raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:1-45) on the fifth Sunday of Lent. These three gospels offer an instruction to the Church regarding Baptismal faith as a way of living in this world and teaching the Church the whole doctrine of Christ in whom the Father is disclosed and our own Resurrection announced. The presentation of the Creed and of the Lord's Prayer may also be added to this Lenten preparation and even an anointing with the oil of catechumens. At the Easter Vigil they received the sacraments of initiation as the fruit both of a hidden grace and of a formal period of formation. The Church prays for them, for courage, faith, for the life of the Holy Spirit (RCIA, 220-236).

The Franciscan Lent is La Verna. Time and Space together. The Scrutinies are frozen in silence and reduced to an echo, "Who are you, Lord, and who am I?"[8] Once before, the interiority of grace and human

interiority met in initial evangelizing and conversion. Now they merge anew, in the flesh of St. Francis, an identity of wounds, a reconciliation of the world. the dignity of revealed Scripture would not I hope be lessened were we to consider the La Verna "gospel" as integral to the three great Johannine gospels of Lent. Here too life and doctrine are exhibited in the cross of Christ, the focus of Franciscan silence and theology — in sanctitate et doctrina. As with Easter anywhere and everywhere, the dark of La Verna melts before the light of dawn, the light of love.

... the RCIA is able to bring a purely historical study of Francis to a deeper view as well as add a control of meaning to the hagiographer's reconstruction.

IV. Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy

This last period of catechesis both for the community and for the neophytes extends from Easter until Pentecost. It is meant to strengthen the baptized in their living their baptism and the principal vehicle to achieve this end are the Sundays of Eastertide (RCIA, 244-251). Relevant to the Easter season is the number fifty. As with the forty days of Lent, the number fifty here symbolizes time as mediating. There the forty days of Lent really mediate the grace of conversion. Here the fifty days of Eastertide to the feast of Pentecost mediate the truth of Christ Risen. The gospels of these Sundays fairly burst with the transformed Christ in our world and in our history. The Risen Christ is himself transformed and he transforms grief and fear, betrayal and faithlessness. In all this the Lord is sovereign and free. He commissions and sends the believer even as the Father has sent him.[9] The centerpiece of these gospels as also the centerpiece of their proclamation is the Eucharist in which the Risen Christ is mediated in my time frame and life as true. Here is the mystery of the Church and a rich ecclesiology.

For Francis there was really only one Church and that was Little Portion chapel dedicated to St. Mary of the angels. It is the chapel of Franciscan birth and growth and death. Little Portion is the center which by that fact supports the periphery. Here is the setting for so much of

the Fioretti and here we see the life which Bernard, Sylvester and Rufino lived together with John the Simple, Juniper, Masseo, Giles and Leo. Here Clare's consecration was received. At Little Portion the friars gathered regularly and in great numbers. Here Francis received novices. and here (perhaps for the first time?) death, pallida Mors, was received as his Sister.

Little Portion then is the center of a Franciscan view of ecclesiology and of the Eucharist. This view not so much illustrated in Francis' Eucharistic piety which strikes me as of a piece with his time. The mystery of the bride of Christ and of the Eucharistic Christ is seen in Sister Death. She comes to him at Little Portion and he receives her, giving her a name, at Little Portion, rather as though she were a novice. This a real transformation of death in the Risen Christ. In this transformation Francis lived the Eucharistic mystery, announcing the death of the Lord as his Sister who leads to life.

Among the great gospels of Eastertide, the doubting Thomas (Jn 20:19-31) occupies a privileged place. It is Thomas who raises the question of evidence. What counts for evidence that Jesus is risen? and it is Thomas who fashions a heuristic answer that is deeply empirical, one that will not accept as true the apostolic proclamation of his brothers. The Lord concurs in this extraordinary experiment. At the end, Thomas is brought to a high and Catholic faith. But what brought him? The wounds of Christ. Our wounds. These are the warrants and badges of our Resurrrection, Lady Poverty is become Sister Death, his Beatrice, the escort of the Risen Christ. This astounding fact is visible to eyes informed by the Eucharist. For things Franciscan, Little Portion is the specific school and earnest tutor of Mystagogy.

Conclusion

These reflections and the method that has informed them have been built on an important premise. The RCIA provides the tools for an explanatory grasp of the pattern of grace in the life of St. Francis. This explanatory grasp yields fairly precise theological terms like conversion, faith, the Church and the Eucharist. Thus the RCIA interprets the event of Francis in terms of the high doctrines of Catholic Faith. In doing this, the RCIA is able to bring a purely historical study of Francis to a deeper view as well as add a control of meaning to the hagiographer's reconstruction. And Francis's life, in turn, is able to provide the materials on which an explanatory grasp operates and by which that grasp is illumined and kept biographical. It is just this fruitful exchange, like the upper blade and lover blade of a pair of scissors, that commends the RCIA. One can

and must substitute one's own experience for that of St. Francis and identify within one's own interiority the pattern of grace. I think that is the great promise of the RCIA.

Endnotes

[1]*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Study Edition, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, (Washington, D.C., 1988), v. All references to the RCIA are taken from this final edition.

[2]Bernard Lonergan, S. J., *Method in Theology*, (London: Dalton, Longman and Todd, 1972), pp. 267-269.

[3]very helpful texts are RCIA, 36-37.

[4]Julian Green, *God's Fool. The Life and Times of Francis of Assisi*, Peter Heinegg, translator, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), pp. 43-44.

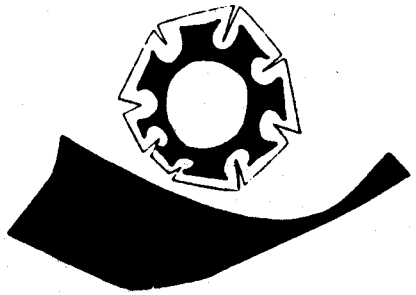
[5]Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto XI, 72: "ella (the Lady Povderty) con Cristo salse in sulla croce."

[6]Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 115-118.

[7]Green, *God's Fool*, pp. 218-220.

[8]In addition to Green, *God's Fool*, pp. 249-252, references may be found in Marion A. Habig, O.F.M., (ed). *St. Francis of Assisi, Writings and Early Biographies, English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*. (Chicago, Il: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973) under "Stigmata, p. 1807.

[9]The theological exposition of Eastertide in the thought of the late Father Hans Urs von Balthasar comes to mind. On this matter, see Richard Byrne, "Hans Urs von Balthasar and the mystery of the forty days after Easter," *Communio: International Catholic Review*, 14 (Spring, 1987), 34-48.



Book Reviews

Deepening Christian Life. By Francis J. Buckley, S.J., and Donald B. Sharp, S.J. Harper and Row Publishers, San Francisco. 1987. Pp 150. $7.50.

Reviewed by Sr. Marie Francis Galagher, O.S.F. Sister is presently working with the poor in the Ministry of Caring in Wilmington, Delaware.

How deep is the ocean, and how high is the sky? What is the length and breadth of the universe? Men and women are constantly exploring the world, and one new answer leads to many new questions. From birth until death, people are searching, finding, and looking for more. Some of us stop short of the next challenge, but many move on constantly in wonderment.

We are deepening our knowledge of life as we meet it. In general, each of us is born into a belief in God. Life and faith are similar in many ways. Both need to be nurtured as they grow in a positive manner. A true realization of one's faith can mean a strengthening of belief in God and neighbor. Despite all signs to the contrary, we are not made for death but for life. God made us to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him on earth, and then to be happy with Him forever in heaven.

The contents of this book are divided into two parts: Human Maturity, pp. 1-19, and Christian Maturity, pp. 21-134. The authors start with the human being who needs security, self acceptance, acceptance by others, interior and exterior integration, and finally a place to grow. Whoever has all these qualities in their positive aspects is most likely to be on the road to life. Whoever has these qualities in a negative aspect is most likely to be on the path that leads to death and decay.

From our experience of living, we know that maturity is an on-going experience and depends on how our human potential is developed by ourselves, our family, our educational opportunities and the influence of others.

The first chapter is superb in its detailed message related to the achievement of human maturity. Basic human needs are the foundation of Christian maturity. Drawing on a profound understanding of psychology and religion, the authors find fulfillment in the love and freedom that are of God. Religious faith and its celebration are involved in an expressison of our humanity, not in its denial. One's faith in God is the center of a truly human person. One cannot be human without being in touch with God. Whoever attempts to be God-like while denying his humanity has a difficult, if not an impossible journey through life.

While every religion may be based on the love of God, the religion of Christ is precisely what *deepening Christian life* concerns itself. Through the power of God, Christ assumed His humanity on earth and showed us how to live and how to die.

Chapters 2-7 are built on a clear understanding of the first chapter, Human Maturity. We can understand the love of God when we have experienced love at home. We can have faith in God when we have faith in a friend. We can be

the best of whatever we are, when we realize why Jesus lived as He did. This is not a quick, easy task. It is the work of a lifetime.

If we are to cultivate our potential, certain physical needs must be met. Food, clothing, shelter, sleep and companionship are some basics. Otherwise, we become preoccupied with our own self.

Maturity is never reached once and for all. It is an ongoing process. After our physical needs are met, we face the need for self acceptance and a strong desire for acceptance by others. Mature persons face the desires of their hearts. They confront their limitations and strive valiantly to open themselves to new experiences. This is the road of life and truth.

Freedom is the basic virtue with which all are born, and freedom is the central message of the Good News. To be redeemed means to be set free from whatever holds us back from God. Then, we are free to be our human selves and to become fully alive in Christ: As the bishops at Vatican II declared, "Authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man. For God has willed that man be left "in the hand of his own counsel" (Ecclesiasticus 5:14), so that he can seek his creator spontaneously, and come freely to utter and blissful perfection through loyalty to Him. Hence, man's dignity demands that he act according to a knowing and free choice. Such a choice is personally motivated and promoted from within. It does not result from blind internal pulse nor from mere external pressures. (CMW, No. 17).

It is necessary that Christians recognize that the Catholic Church is dedicated to freedom. However, we do find ourselves struggling to attain this freedom. Jesus came to set us free. When He spoke of the kingdom, Jesus stressed the need to be open to new growth and personal development. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven hidden in the dough silently affecting the mass.

The book calls all to question our lives as we read it because balance and maturity are abundant on every page. Counselors, teachers, parents and others will find this especially worthwhile reading. The authors make the readers believe that change is possible, that life is good and we have a responsibility to keep it that way.

American Martyrs From 1542. By Albert J. Nevins, M.M. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1987. Pp. 180. Paper, $6.95.

Reviewed by Peter F. Macaluso, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History at Montclair State College, Upper Montclair, N.J., and Adjunct Professor of History, St. Peter's College, Jersey City. N.J.,

Father Albert J. Nevins, a Maryknoller, says that he has a three-fold purpose in writing this book: 1) to present the lives, works and manner of death of the Catholic American martyrs; 2) to show that the Catholic Faith developed in the United States at the cost of many lives; and, 3) to reveal that many Americans themselves were willing to give their own lives to spread their Faith beyond their own borders.

Father Nevins fulfills all three goals and more. He presents a chronological list of one hundred and forty six United States martyrs and accounts of their martyrdoms. The biographies start with Juan de Padilla, O.F.M., who was martyred in Kansas in 1542 and conclude with Father John Rossiter and two laymen, Ferdinand Roth and William Hammes, who were killed in Olenaska in Wisconsin in 1985 by a man who disapproved of the changes in the Church brought about by Vatican II.

The Index includes an alphabetical list, by place of death and by religious affiliation. He also identifies the abbreviation with the particular religious order or affiliation. There is a short bibliography of sources after each biography. The book is dedicated to the late Father Marion A. Habig, O.F.M., who was the foremost authority on Franciscan history in the United States and whose notes and encouragement contributed to this work.

The introduction explains the mediate sense of the term martyr as a person who stays at their religious task despite threat of anti-Catholic violence and dies as the result of that choice. All died with evidence of *odium fidei*.

Of the one hundred and forty six martyrs, seventy nine are Franciscans, eighteen are Jesuits, eight are Maryknollers, six are diocesan clergy and sixteen are of the laity. The author recognizes the fact that there are Protestant martyrs but must focus solely on Catholics. The author, however, could have presented some sense of proportion with a brief reference to the number of martyrs for the faith in other parts of the hemisphere or the world. (130,000 Vietnamese have died for their faith, for instance, since the late 16th century).

The story of the 1980 martyrdoms of Sisters Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel and Lay Missioner Jean Donovan is told, as well as the 1908 martyrdom of Father Leo Heinrich, O.F.M., and his last thoughts and movement being for the sanctity of the Blessed Sacrament.

There are very poignant stories here, and one senses the faith of men and women whose terrible suffering resembled Christ's, in the trust and silent abandonment to the Father's Will.

The Future of Catholic Leadership: Responses to the Priest Shortage. By Dean Hoge. Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1987. Paper, $12.95.

Reviewed by Bob Donovan.

Last night at the small suburban Church I go to for daily mass, I got a glimpse into the future. The visiting seminarian announced that there was a temporary shortage of priests. Not to worry, he assured us, the Church provides for such things. And so I was a participant in my first "communion service." I was tempted to leave since I had come for "the real thing." I stayed. It was nice but not the same. And in a number of dioceses, it is already common fare in those parishes that have a permanent shortage of priests.

So having heard about the impending priest shortage for so long and finally experiencing it temporarily it was really a pleasure to read a balanced study of its reality. Professor Dean Hoge of Catholic University has accomplished this in a very readable yet scientific manner. He is true to his discipline, sociology, and not being a Catholic is able to stand back from any personal bias as to future choices. He sketches many choices and suggests what probable impact each would have on the shortage.

In the first part of the book, taking advantage of a number of sociological surveys, Hoge draws an interesting conclusion. The shortage of priests has an institutional cause and thus calls for an institutional cure. "The vocation crisis is not occurring because of any alleged rejection of the faith. The crisis is at the institutional level." (p-. 18). The Episcopal and Lutheran churches have no lack of pastors or pastoral candidates. So, he argues, the Church has no other option but to choose one of the eleven institutional options offered in this book.

Each of the eleven options, some familiar, some already practiced, are all discussed and rated as to their institutional impact. Since research has shown that neither the clergy nor the laity want to close any parishes Hoge has sketched his options to allow for this desire in the face of a shortage of "priest pastors." Hoge divides the options into four types: "reshape parish life or institutions to reduce the need for priests (pastoral associates are already functioning in many dioceses), get more priests, using existing eligibility criteria (even the best case scenario for this option will not put a real dent in the shortage), get more priests by broadening the eligibility criteria, and expand the diaconate and lay ministries." (p. 35) Hoge, ever the social scientist, makes no decision himself. But he does suggest very engagingly near the end that not to choose any is the most radical choice of all.

Using the words of Father Gerald Broccolo, Hoge asserts that to stay where we are with more and more parishes being led by lay pastoral assistants who perform communion services in the absence of a priest is taking the most radical step. For it leads to replacing the Eucharist, "the corner stone of our Catholic tradition" with communion services: basically masses "without a Eucharistic prayer." (p. 212) That was exactly how the young seminarian described the communion service I attended.

The less radical step says Broccolo/Hoge is "to ordain people to the priesthood who are not celibate and not male." (p. 213). This, Broccolo claims, is only a disciplinary change not a doctrinal or theological change. While there may be debate about the type of change, it is a change that seems to be rising from the people in places where the "pastoral assistants" are already being used. According to Hoge, parishioners in lay-lead parishes in Portland "are asking why their pastors couldn't be ordained, since they are ministering well." (p. 99)

The future is taking shape. If you are a Catholic concerned about the future, you will find this book "practical, realistic and helpful."

Praying Our Goodbyes. By Joyce Rupp, OSM. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press. Pp. 183. Paperback $5.95

Reviewed by Richard Mucowski, O.F.M., Ed. D. (S.U.N.Y. Albany) Psychologist and Vice President for Administration & Finance. St. Bonaventure University.

This book is a very reasonably priced, thoughtful series of chapters written to help those readers taken up with the issue of mourning to deal with their issue. The author's goal for this volume was to have those who were touched by her materials acknowledge their "leave takings." This was to be accomplished within the context of their own life of faith, with psychology serving as a foundation for such work.

Written in popular language so that the ordinary Christian might resonate with the experience contained within it, the author manages to spend her six chapters touching the hearts of thoughtful readers. She uses a reflective style of writing in which she interviews personal experiences of leave-taking with stories from the lives of others who shared their personal experiences with her. She uses a method of reflective questioning to encourage her readers to face their pain.

That pain, she maintains, may come from simple goodbyes that are involved in leaving friends to the deeper losses of years of friendship in a marriage which ends in divorce or with the death of a loved one. Her method involves an honest self-searching which, she contends, builds trust and courage in her readers to allow them to take many of the same risks that she did in moving ahead with life's challenges. Her paradigm is that of the death-resurrection experience of Christ which is the ultimate mystery that every Christian must face in his or her life. There are no quick fixes. That is refreshing in an age which offers instant cures and empty promises.

At times, however, the author's writing style is a tad saccharine for this reviewer's liking but, the substance of her message allows one to overlook differences in style and the use of an occasional cliché. The major insight which this reviewer received from this book was that each of us has our suffering work to do and that life's goodbyes call each person to journey into an interior life. Following such a call is not always easy, but Sr. Rupp maintains that it is the only journey whereby a person can reach unity with self and God. The journey through life ultimately becomes the familiar home.

The final section of *Praying Our Goodbyes* is a compendium of prayers for those experiencing goodbyes. This section of the book alone makes it a worthwhile addition to the pastor's library of resources. In a nutshell, this book is an excellent pastoral resource for those who are pastors, counselors and those who seek help in working through a process of grieving over goodbyes. Considering the cost and the wise counsel contained within its pages, this book serves a purpose that will keep it in the class of books that are timeless in their value.

Mezza-Voce

Little Poems Recollected

the poet's patience over religious attire
the rose remains at the spring it arouses me from a long
unawareness
*
the triumph of the word, winter's somber fire fades
in the almond blossom
*
with my eyes closed, my gaze guesses the secret of the rose —
it cannot give up its frailty
*
I raised my hand toward the moon
        the shadow from the rose on my face
*
the rose is the drop of water within me not polluted by winter.
My first cry, my last sigh
*
listen to the murmur of the blood in my heart
*
the rock becomes rosy in the reflection from the sky,
        the wind sways its palms
*
rose let my cheek approach your stream,
        my nape bent by daylight's scorching
*
the bird pecks at a puddle of cloud
*
in the heart of the rose remembrance of the moon,
        the remembrance of breathing as closed lips
*
I name you rose; if I knew your name I would die
*
cry within me of the pain
        which is trying to summon breath
*
two pure, tall holes, on the face of the moon —
night came on the chirp of the redbreast
        may my poem disclose your chant
*
the shadow of the cross on the rose

*
I passed through time and I saw the sign
the rose forever chooses silence — the poet dies
*
for a long time I awaited a mouthful of moon —
        I await fire and water
*
this evening but this is morning, I have a great desire to play the
reed flute, I am going to summon my breath when the sky
soars toward the almond blossom
        to laugh like a cascade of foam
            carrying me away contrite
*
don't you see that I am elsewhere, that my silence is
not attentive
it is the gaze toward the note suspended
I have tracked up hills in search of my name
*
space is open at night and unfathomable.
awaiting the mystery which dawn should reveal to me — ardent
patience — ardent blossoming
silence of religious habit and of whitewash the hills are blurred
the psalm surges and rises fleeting central point
I saw a face I stripped myself of my wanderings
a gaze draws me to the desert
*
the word is the place of the obscure encounter and of absence
*
I have no other chant but the sound of your name
*
spaces resound with the cry not projected
the spiderweb on the whitewashed wall
the workbench with the pale, crooked legs
an open book wool the color of religious garb
the Japanese cypress stretches
the spiderweb on the whitewashed wall
to the spot where the river subsided yesterday

*Lisa Boscane**

*aka Sister Marie-Elizabeth, O.S.C., Director of Novices, Monastery of Saint Clare, Nice-Cimiez, France.

Chemins (Paris: Editions Saint-Germain-des Prés, 1986), pp. 7-10.
(translated by Sister Mary-Theresa McCarthy, R.S.M., Professor of French, Georgian Court College, Lakewood, NJ, who holds the American rights)

The Kiss

The lips that once attracted me
were full and luscious,
shining with cosmetic gloss —
soft to the touch.
The skin I loved
was white as lily,
framing sea-blue eyes
beauty glistening
with awakening;

not lips where skin
flaked like dry stone,
not eyes shrunken
behind suppurating
seeping sores.

I would give much
could I lean to kiss
lips such as those
but
I lack your trust,
your generosity

to understand beauty
as the inner reality
of humanity.

Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M.

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Westermayer, Paul. *The Church Musician*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xiii - 128, including Bibliography and Index. Cloth, $15.95.

Wiederkehr, Macrina. *The Tree Full of Angels. Seeing the Holy in the Ordinary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xvi - 158. Cloth, $13.95.

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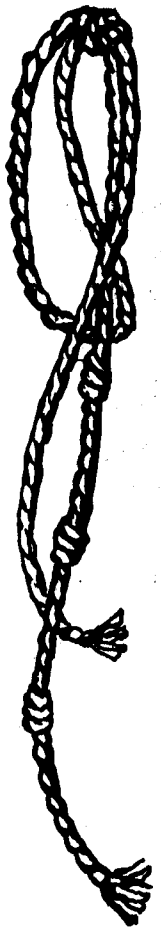
MARCH, 1989

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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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

[1]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).

REFLECTION:

Good Grief: A Vowed Perspective

MICHAEL DUFFY, O.F.M. CONV.

If one is grieving as a necessary process during one's lifetime why does the 'grief experience' affect one's life so intensely? I truly believe that the grief experience can be a 'rite of passage' if dealt with appropriately. The difficulties of grieving as I see it are experienced by individuals who do not anticipate certain losses, by those who do not allow sufficient time to grieve (or hurry the process). It is my conviction that individuals who embrace Religious Life must anticipate certain life losses, come to grieve these losses and move on in their journey of faith. Individuals, who either deny these losses or never really resolve these losses, are doomed to years of unhappiness.

Most Religious profess vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. If the above suggested coping paradigm is applied then said individuals who accept this call, and pronounce these vows should anticipate certain losses, namely: loss of free use of money, loss of intimate and sexual contacts, and loss of the final say with submission of one's will as to that of the superior. Then one asks the question: are these necessary losses? Are these losses truly a rite of passage? If one accepts the general assumption that these are methods of dying to one's self so as to dispose oneself to the will of the Lord and therefore place one's self at the service of the faithful, yes!

Unfortunately we have all met, and possibly even lived with the Religious who appears basically discontent and obviously lamenting their life's losses (evidence of grieving). Their vocation poster says, "come and be happy;" their way of life says, "come and grieve what you're giving up with us" or better yet, "come and be depressed with us." And again one asks, why?

Brother Michael holds a graduate degree in gerontological nursing and for the past several years has been involved in the health care of senior friars.

The grief experience necessary to be at peace with the loss has never been allowed to happen or unfortunately become more important than life itself. Yes, one could grieve the loss of a good income, but every Religious knows that every one of their needs will be met and on the first of the month the treasurer will distribute the monthly personal money. It would be nice to have a deep and intimate relationship with another person, but this is not the case. This allows the vowed person to be more available to everyone they meet in their ministry. And it might be added, that without detracting from 'chastity' one can develop a few significant and close relationships. However, some will say "I am a celibate and I can not get close." ...not true! You're simply afraid to get close. And lastly, one can accept the call to be obedient in the context of dialogue. the days of blind obedience are long and hopefully gone forever.

In conclusion I support and reaffirm my conviction that grieving can be a growth process, a necessary process and can help to bring an individual to a more peaceful existence. Religious Life can be an experience of 'good grief!'

Et Valde Mane

Early in the morning,
she brought good news
to men,
and they rejoiced in
their good fortune.

That night,
it was to a womanly circle
that she returned,
with tales of the One she loved
and men who
gently believed
what others might disdain.

Mary of Magdala,
bearer of the
odor of life,
trails the perfume
of His presence
wherever she walks.

Christine Diensberg, OSF

Franciscan "Re-Founding"

ROLAND J. FALEY, T.O.R.

"Refounding" is the catch-word of the day. Recapturing the spirit of the founder has become central to our post-conciliar endeavor in religious life. This article will modestly look at certain features of the Franciscan Tertiary or Penitential tradition and examine the ways in which it might be actualized. It may sound presumptuous to "refound" the Franciscan order. Francis was unique in Catholic history; his imprint on the Order is irrevocable and hardly repeatable. But having said that, we are still called to bring that spirit to life in our time.

Francis was a founder, even if this was not part of his original intent, and he was founder not of one Order, but, with certain modifications, the founder of three. There are certain underlying spiritual principles that characterized Francis as founder. The first and fundamental feature is a belief in a *transcendent* God. This may sound like laboring the obvious, but it is particularly important to bear in mind today. This means to say that God is not identified with the historical process, even though he is present to it. Prayer for Francis is not exhausted in contemplating the social and historical reality, as important as that is. God remains "other" for Francis, he was contemplated in the market-place but also in the silence of LaVerna. It was God's "otherness" that made the three central mysteries for Francis — the Incarnation, the Passion and the Eucharist — so vital in his approach to God. These mysteries were visible expressions of God's otherness.

Conversion is the central charism of the Third Order tradition. But, beyond that, it was also central to Francis' spirituality. As the Testament states, shortly after the experience of Christ at San Damiano, Francis began to do penance. This is his conversion, ongoing and progressive, which only culminated at the transforming experience of LaVerna toward the end of his life. The earliest designation he gave his followers was

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"Penitents of the City of Assisi." (Leg. of Three Companions). He was in a real sense the "refounder" of the already existing order of penance in his day.

This notion of on-going conversion has become so much a part of contemporary spirituality that its relevance for Franciscan "refounding" is inescapable. This continual growth in the dead and risen Lord, as one leaving behind the old person of the flesh, is to be lived with a particular intensity by the members of the Third Order Regular tradition. Eventually with Paul, "it is no longer I that lives but Christ lives in me." In terms of outreach and mission, it is the unconverted in whatever form that may take who should be at the center of the Tertiary vision. We are called to be people on the fringe with those who really do not see themselves as part of God's family. This may well mean pronounced institutional alterations, but so be it. This is but another aspect of our belief that we have here no lasting home.

"The Lord gave me brothers." This Francis says in his Testament to underscore founding as *gift*. It was not he who was the founder or initiator. There is serious question as to whether or not he originally intended to found a religious Order. Drawing on an already existing religious movement, he informed his first followers to be identified simply as "Penitents." Re-foundation must almost certainly be an inspiration, a "creating something new." It does not grow out of simple discontent or future planning. It is pure gift, the design of God and the re-founding person must be totally submissive to the Lord's voice. The spiritual posture must be one of continual discernment.

In the Franciscan tradition, the re-founding is not determined by ministry. There is no specific Franciscan apostolate. Francis clearly stated that he simply wanted to live literally the Gospel call; ministry was to emerge in different ways according to the needs of the time and place. What is particularly true of the Franciscan call is that it appears in what we are, not what we do. For the Third Order Regular tradition, this means living the spirit of ongoing conversion of life in a variety of ministerial expressions.

Levels of Response

How is a re-founding spirit brought to a religious institute or Province? The answer to this question must be tempered by a healthy dose of realism. Some members may desire a deep and radical reform. Others, perhaps the majority, will see their lives as totally valid, a life of generous service, which does not require any profound change.

Those who feel called to a deeper living of the Gospel life may be

moved by an authentic Franciscan spirit. If after a process of discernment, the superior is inclined to see the re-founding spirit as authentic, it should be allowed to happen. If it succeeds, it can do nothing but bring blessings to the institute; if it fails, "it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

However, when a "re-founding" community is allowed to be launched, the rule of the superior is vital. It is she or he who must serve as a bridge between the new community and the institute or province. The superior is the bridge, maintaining close ties with the "re-founding" community and interpreting the experience to the larger body. The task of the superior is as vital as it is difficult. One wonders which is more important to the life of the institute — the new community or the interpreting superior.

But what about the larger membership which is not about to make a new departure? Even then small steps forward can be taken. One thinks of the story of the man who sought counsel from his priest after being beaten up repeatedly for cheating at cards and then being thrown out of the window. Since there was little likelihood that he would stop cheating, the priest counseled him to play cards only on the first floor. Every community can be encouraged to take measured steps forward. One cannot over-estimate the importance of creative local leadership. Community can always be strengthened; a simpler, even if not austere, lifestyle can be implemented; greater openness in terms of welcoming outsiders can be encouraged. New ministries of service to the emarginated can be provided.

Ministries today offer interesting ways to bring charism to life. Tertiaries Regular were originally known as members of the Order of Penitents. Today this Order known also as the Order of Penitents, has been revived in modern times in parish ministry. It is a program and ritual for the reinsertion of people separated from the Church for a long period of time. It parallels the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and centers around a spiritual and psychological re-entry into the Church. The parish community accompanies the penitent on his/her journey in a catechesis that is well adapted to penance and communal needs. This is a program currently in use in well over one hundred U.S. parishes and is ideally suited to Franciscans, especially in the Tertiary tradition.

Finally, the Third Order Regular can never lose sight of its lay origins. The Order of Penance was basically a lay movement, pre-dating Francis, to which he brought a "re-founding" spirit. It was only by ecclesiastical decision and historical circumstances that secular and regular Penitents (Tertiaries) went distinct ways.

Today bonding with the laity has become a very distinctive feature of religious life. The spirituality of the religious institute is shared; cooper-

ation in ministry is accented; the life itself is shared. Tertiary Franciscans, both religious and secular, should find this a moment to recapture a century old unity of spirit and charism. Ways can be explored to join together much more effectively; outdated structures will have to give way to new creative models. This is bound to bring new vitality to religious life.

"Re-founding" is much to the fore today. But if it is to be more than a slogan, there must be concrete steps to bring the concept to life. A few are suggested here. There are certainly others as well. Even modest steps are important; they move us away from a "business as usual" mentality. Leadership in religious life is called to be innovative and challenging. The opportunities to do so are certainly present today. Ω

The Last Supper as Art

Three tables, sir?
Together or separate?
You're rushed, you say?
Yes, I expected you Friday night.
Most of them celebrate Passover
the night before. Too bad
Passover falls on the Sabbath
this year. Bad for business,
but good for assasinations.
Excuse me, I didn't mean
to ramble. Lamb for dinner?
Of course. Will the house wine do?
My God, why have you
forsaken me. Head waiter!
Is there an artist here who can
paint this scene? Do you
have souvenir menus?
What will tomorrow bring?
It might even be tonight.
Judas is anxious.
John is anxious.
The others are drinking.
Let's remember the good times.
What's the worst that could
happen. The cross. They won't
even be there. Waiter! Do you
have souvenir menus?
Alright, remember this bread
and wine. This is my body
and blood. Tonight is tomorrow.
I'll just change the clocks.
Yes, but is it art?
It could be worse.
I could drag them all
down with me.
I remember the Eight
Beatitudes. Now, that
sermon was art.
Excuse me for rambling.
I must make the first move.
There are things
to be done tonight.

Fr. Patrick Leary, O.F.M.

Joy in Fullness: A *Lectio* with St. Bonaventure

GREGORY SHANAHAN, O.F.M.

The Sermons of St. Bonaventure are ideally companionable with various forms of biblical meditation; (see *The Cord* 1987, Nov. 302-312; Dec. 334-342). This is particularly true for those sermons which the Saint later selected for revision and which contain many of his favorite themes. When he was halfway through his generalate, Bonaventure seized an opportunity to collect and revise a certain number of his Sunday sermons and, evidently, perfect them as models for other preachers.[1] Did he perhaps imagine that, while homiletic styles and tastes would change over the centuries, he was also in fact laying out deep biblical reflections for those who at a later time would not only seek through the Word to improve the quality of their lives but come to contemplation? Going on what he had said about the dispositions required of preacher, teacher *and* listener (in e.g., *Luke Commentary* prologue and *Breviloquium* prologue; see *The Cord* Jan. 1987, 5-13), we might well believe that such was his purpose, at least implicitly. Given also his mystical turn of mind, he is never content to preach to us merely on the overhauling of conduct; he leads us to penetrate the Word so as to enter somehow the hidden mystery of Christ and experience the working of the Spirit in our souls.

Be that as it may, if with the Seraphic Doctor we re-read the gospel text in this collection of his sermons we shall have the "essential" Bonaventure for guide, if only because these discourses are suffused with his theology and in line with the doctrine contained in his other works. And all the great features appear: by his use of triads he will remind us of the all-pervading Trinity; and by his emphasizing the saving mediation of Jesus he will confront us with the centrality of Christ. This article simply

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Friar Gregory of the Irish Province is a frequent contributor to **THE CORD** *which he serves as a member of the editorial board. He is currently doing research and residing at the Franciscan House of Studies in Oxford, England.*

looks at five out of this collection of fifty sermons. The five cover the Sundays after Easter (or, as we would say, *of* Easter) and each takes its theme-text from St. John's gospel; together they form a crescendo leading to Pentecost. It is as though we were in the company of the Risen One, with time to ponder the gospel promises, to view with new eyes all he said while he was with the disciples (and, as Bonaventure says expressly, "in them, with *us* also") in bodily presence. Rather than select one of these sermons and translate it *in toto*, we shall comment on all five, paraphrase their key sections and translate certain paragraphs.

Low Sunday **LIFE**

Theme-text

The disciples were glad
when they saw the Lord John 20:20

The joy with which the risen Lord filled the Apostles has the quality of permanence. They had left all to follow him; they sorely missed him, even if his absence was short enough. Now he is their living God, with them once again. Spiritual joy, however, is not achieved by humans without filial reverence first being practiced. In other words, as contemplation is reached through the degrees of prayers, so has gladness to be prepared for in stages.

> For this reason let us arrange in right order the words that are written. First comes subjection in reverent humility; it is contained in the word, *disciples* — not masters, not controllers, not partners. Next comes contemplation of the divine majesty, implied by, *when they saw the Lord*. Thirdly, the solace of interior joy is conveyed by, *were glad*.[2]

Bonaventure's treatment of the short pithy phrase and single words can be truly helpful for prayerful reflections on certain passages of Scripture. Often we need "anchor" words during the process of centering in otherwise wordless prayer sessions. Multiple meaning and image suggestion is probably of more value to *lectio divina* where elements of study (broadly speaking) and prayer often coalesce or at least succeed each other. Thus in the text lest we pass over the word *disciples* (see *The Cord* Nov. 1987, 304, for the alternate meanings, *pupil, follower, herald*), our attention is drawn to the implications of discipleship. A disciple is obediently willing to undertake poverty and renunciation (a prerequisite of discipleship in Luke 14:33). A disciple is a person with generous neighbour-love (a "covenanted" charity in John 13:34-35, mandatory as disciples' credentials). A disciple perseveres in good already begun; "continuing in" Christ's word, something which leads to truth and liberation, being a mark of authentic discipleship in John 8:31-32.

The first way the disciples *saw the Lord* was as shining forth in the attributes of the created universe. The Scriptures (e.g. Wisdom 13:1-9; Romans 1:20) testify to the Creator being somehow knowable through his creatures. This is in line with Bonaventure's philosophy of the Analogy of Being and the doctrine of Exemplarism which so much permeates his thought. The next manner in which they *saw the Lord* was when he appeared bearing his wounds. This, Bonaventure says, was to prove the identity of the wounded Redeemer and the risen Redeemer. The wounds are referred to as scars (*cicatrices*) and their retention by the resurrected Lord is meant to strengthen faith. St. Gregory is quoted as saying that Thomas, who hesitated before believing, in actual fact helped him more than Mary Magdalen did, who believed at once; because Thomas, by touching the scars, amputated the wounds of doubt in *our* hearts. The implication in this part about the glorified Savior still bearing the scars is that marks of defeat and cruelty can be transformed by God into things which are no longer hideous but beautiful. We may believe that our trials are changed into everlasting records of triumph. And all of it means that the Master has pity and feeling for his shaken disciples. Lastly, the disciples *saw the Lord* in their own conscience, saw him in his role as universal king (= ruler, unifier, benefactor) and remunerator from heaven. But conscience must be purified for this vision, since it is the pure of heart who shall see God. Is purgation of conscience alone sufficient for the vision of God? No. There must also be withdrawal from worldly attachments; there must be a "taking time out", such as is enjoined by Psalm 45:11 — ***Be still, and know that I am God***. This may even demand a withdrawal from (the heretofore helpful) imagination and from reasoning of a philosophical nature.

The third element of this sermon's text is, *were glad*, and this denotes the solace which disciples derive from an interior, spiritual pleasure. It is a "sapiential" joy nobody can experience without being illumined by the Son's wisdom, being adopted as son by the Father's power, and, finally, being filled with the pleasures the Holy Spirit gives. Apostles, and those who imitate them, derive inner joy first from the knowledge and love of truth which faith affords. Joy also comes from knowing that "our names are written in heaven," that life hereafter is guaranteed and permanent. Ultimately, interior joy comes with actually tasting the divine consolations when all yearning shall have been satisfied. Here is a glimpse of the prince of Mystics at his best. Is it not remarkable that he should wish to share such rare experiences in a sermon?

They *were glad* superessentially when desiring reached its goal and their tasting was the sweet taste of the divine, Isaiah speaks of it: ***Rejoice with Jerusalem in joy, all you who mourn over her, that you may suck and be satisfied with her consoling breasts; that you may drink deeply with delight*** (66:10-11). Those who wish to reach the height of contemplation must first experience the weeping of penance while still in the active state. For when this is done, the contemplative soul will *suck from the consoling breasts* of the Holy Spirit such sweetness of grace that it will be so utterly and completely drenched as to be lifted above what is human and into the heavenly world. And at such a height it will even hover over itself and be something other than its own self (!), and dance a dance of the heart with such happiness and delight that it will appear to be drunk rather than sober. Indeed, Sacred Scripture sometimes uses the word "taste" for this sweet experience and sometimes calls it "inebriation."

O God, if a tiny drop,[3] falling from this great torrent of pleasure, upon a human soul, inebriates it so perfectly, what shall we say of the soul when it is absorbed and inebriated by the very ocean of infinite happiness! If therefore the soul is so completely melted, edulcorated and rendered happy by just one drop, in a way that is beyond expression or description, how very much less can the deep in its entirety be known! And so, as Chrysostom says: "Let us rejoice over the gifts we obtain, the greatness of them, those we receive here and those we still wait for.[4]

Second Sunday After Easter **G O O D**

Theme-text:

I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd lays down
his life for his sheep John 10:11

The goodness of their Lord is manifold in the experience of the Apostles. He is the Good Shepherd who teaches them, nourishes them with living bread, and guards them. The paschal mystery it is that affords them full realization of all this. There is a lovely introduction on the shepherding aspect of the Incarnation. One sheep, or portion of his flock, the *human* portion, has strayed. The Son of God puts on the "shepherd's coat" of human flesh and goes to search for it. Meanwhile, the *angelic* portion of his flock is secure in the happiness of the Father's home. It is the Shepherd's intention to rescue the stray and bring it back safely. In all this, Christ is the model for all who are in the pastoral ministry, especially prelates.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, Shepherd both of the Church triumphant and the Church in earthly struggle, like any good pastor, having lost the human portion of his flock, settles the angelic flock in the wilderness where they have the joys of heaven. Then he puts on the garment of human flesh and purposely goes in search of the lost sheep until such time as he finds it, in a cleft where demons dwell. To free it from their biting attacks he runs the risk of bodily death; for he wishes to take the sheep he has found and rescued, and bring it back home to the heavenly fold and set it down among the flock of the angels where, there in glory, all is peaceful.

A good pastor must first keep watchful guard over his flock. Then he must put a generous heart into the way he provides it with warmth or feeding. After that, since the sheep are his own, he should be discreet and prudent with the expenditure involved in caring for them. In the text above, Christ is presented as one to be admired and praised for the practice of all three: the vigilant concern he brought to his pastoral duties, the breadth of benevolence in leaving himself open to bodily harm, a shepherd's greatest sign of love in the defence and rescue of his flock when he lays down ***his life*** for it and risks bodily death; the prudent discernment shown in defending and setting free the flock that is his own, not a stranger's — ***for his sheep***, that is, those that have ***become his***, resembled him through imitation, unlike those of a stranger that have followed the unfaithful path of error.[2]

Bonaventure, never straying far from philosophy, categorizes the works of pastoral care. A good shepherd is one that instructs by means of preaching, thus enlightening the ***understanding;*** nourishes sacramentally, thus satisfactorily feeding our ***affectivity;*** and invigorates us through personal presence and ***effective*** attentions. Pastorally (in a theological sense), preaching must be backed up with life example. Both the teaching and life of Christ are to be imprinted on the hearts of prelates (and preachers) like the impression of a seal on wax, so that by word and example together, these can be transferred to their charges. There is a distinction to be made between teaching (*docere*) and instruction (*erudire*) and between knowledge (*scientia*) and learning (*doctrina*): broadly speaking, teaching and knowledge pertain to the verbal transmission of content; whereas instruction and learning are the practical results of a teaching supported by example. Yet, preaching by itself is not complete shepherding. Humankind also needs to be nourished sacramentally, since the sacraments are the privileged means by which the Word incarnate restores us through grace. Moreover, the shepherd has not finished his work until he has personally visited all his sheep and attended to the wounded among them. This is his pastoral visitation of mercy and its immediate purpose may be the healing of the broken and injured; but its long-term purpose is the consolidation of the entire flock in the unity of faith.

One of the paragraphs of this sermon is reminiscent of Bonaventure's mysticism of the Sacred Wounds and the Heart of Christ (Cf. *The Tree*

of Life. 8th Fruit, 30). Its inspiration is the second element of the text, *he lays down his life,* which marks, according to the seraphic doctor, the breadth of Christ's generous love in the giving up of his bodily life 1) to ransom captive humans, 2) to inflame the tepid by means of love, and 3) to animate the timid by inviting them to imitate him.

> He laid down his life to prove his extraordinary love and thereby rekindle the tepid. And *by this we know the charity of God, that he laid down his life for us* (1 John 3:16). In John's Gospel, too, this is stated: *No one can show greater love than by laying down his life for his friends* (15:13). The powerful love of God's Son is symbolized by the behavior of certain aquatic creatures which Ambrose writes about in his *Hexaemeron*: "There are certain sea-beasts which, when they sense the coming of an attack upon their young, immediately open their insides and take their offspring safely in. They carry them like that until they bring them to a safe place, or else they protect them with their own bodies" (PL 14,209 A) Thus did Christ, as proof of his powerful love, will to have his hands and feet opened and to have an aperture made in his side; thus would he take us into the tender core of his charity and guard and defend us from the evil foe.
>
> And for this reason, dearly beloved, when the wiles of the devil arise, *enter into the rock* (Is 2:10), that is, Christ, and lay out your meditations, thought and affections; for the devil can never be better vanquished than by a remembrance of the passion of Christ. "None of the demons," as Bernard says, "can endure seeing the sword that was his downfall." So, when you are tormented by temptation, especially temptation of the flesh, *hide in the dug out earth,*[6] that is, the body of Christ which so many wounds have dug into — not as though he were physically there with you, but through continuous meditation. Whatever you lack, take from the inner heart of Christ. For like a cluster of grapes put through the winepress, there is no lack of streams of grace flowing from his bodily wounds. Let these stimulate you and make you strong, and you will easily triumph over the devil's wiles, the harassments of the world and the enticements of the flesh.[7]

Third Sunday After Easter JOY

Theme-text

The world will rejoice; you will be
sorrowful, but your sorrow
will turn into joy John 16:20

Before departing, Christ warns his disciples against the false joys of the world. He promises that their sadness, like his own at the end of his earthly life, will be converted into a permanent joy. The religious spirit of the Apostles is contrasted with the perilous ways of the world. According

to Scripture (1 John 2:16) certain human delights are unlawful and perilous, such as fall under the headings, sensuality, lust and greed. Steering clear of these, the Apostles are still faced with tribulations and sadness, admittedly of a temporary nature. The sadness will stem from, 1) a contrite recalling of their own sins, 2) thinking about the passion of their Lord, and 3) loss of his bodily presence among them. Each of these sorrows, however is earmarked for conversion into a consolation. Thus contrition for sins will mean escape from eternal death; memory of the passion will be rewarded by meeting with the Lord in heaven; and meanwhile, sorrow at the removal of his presence is obliterated by the happy vision of "resurrected wisdom."

Meditation on the Passion is an extremely frequent subject in the Bonaventurian writings; yet there is a variety of treatment. In this sermon, the *lectio* of John 16:20 sends us off to other parts of the Bible, so that we are given a view of the wholeness of God's word. Paragraph 8 becomes a commentary on Psalm 41, certain verses of which are given a repeated *lectio*..

> They experienced the sadness of sore compassion as they meditated on the Lord's passion. It was as in Psalm 41:3.5.7. — *I have no food but tears, day and night; and all day long they say to me, "Where is your God?" Why so downcast, my soul, why do you sigh within me?* The reply comes a little further down: *Deep is calling on deep as your cataracts roar*. Every true Christian, when told by the preacher that *your God* was cruelly lacerated on the cross, shamefully mocked and vilely debased, should redouble sorrowful utterances and pour out wider torrents of tears, so as to be able to say with loyal David: *I have no food but tears, day and night; and all day long they say to me, 'Where is your God?'* But then, out of a very great sense of wonder at such kindness shown, one should examine oneself and ask, *Why so downcast, my soul, why do you sigh within me?* Then one ought to make this reply to oneself: *Deep,* that is, the depth of Christ's passion, *is calling on deep,* that is, the depth of Christian compassion. For the reality of what a Christian professes depends on Christ, and one ought to express oneself accordingly and not otherwise. *Cataracts roar,* like a sea of troubles; *all your waves, your breakers,* that is to say, reproaches, pains and torments, which through inexpressible compassion now turn back on my own person, so that I experience them *in Christ Jesus,* flooding over me. Paul had this kind of sadness constantly; he said: *I bear on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus* (Galatians 6:17) — just as all the Apostles did. Through unmitigated sadness in sorrowful compassion with the Lord's passion, they were transformed into an image of the Crucified by a process of "conformation."[8]

Fourth Sunday After Easter TRUTH

Theme-text

When the spirit of truth comes,
he will guide you into all the truth John 16:13

The Holy Spirit of Truth, while also supplying for Christ's physical absence, will fill disciples with love, vigor and light. He is described as most kindly (*benignissimus*) because unlike other masters, he is willing to come among his disciples (= pupils). He is most noble, because of his personal dignity as the Holy Spirit. He is most generous, with his overflowing supply of doctrine.

When the Spirit of truth comes... In Latin the first element of the text is in fact *When comes* (*Cum venerit*). This affords the preacher an opportunity to point out the various ways in which the Spirit comes to us. He comes in three capacities: *medicus* (physician for the sick), *magister* (teacher of the ignorant) and *rex* (king to enrich the poor with gifts).

> In the first place (the spirit) comes as the medical doctor with all possible experience in conferring life both spiritual and corporal. O how skilled this doctor is, one who gives both spiritual and bodily life to the dead and cures every ailment — with no searing-iron, no burning, not a word of incantation, but solely with his will and good pleasure! Hence, Ezekiel says (37:P9): *Come, Spirit, and breathe upon these slain that they may live,* live, that is, after the death of sin, through the conferring of grace. For as the body is a dead thing without the soul, so is the soul without the Holy Spirit.
>
> Secondly, he comes as teacher of the whole of wisdom, to impart beneficial doctrine. He himself is the fontal principle of all Christian knowledge and spiritual doctrine, whether it be prophetic or apostolic, pertaining to the New or the Old Law. *And so,* says the Book of Wisdom (7:7), *I prayed, and understanding was given me; I entreated, and the Spirit of Wisdom came to me. I esteemed her more than sceptres and thrones; compared with her, I held riches as nothing.* The Holy Spirit, even though liberal and bountiful in giving, is still cautious and discreet in distributing. So, if anyone asks some great favor of him, certain suitable dispositions are required. That is why *I prayed* is there — a strong loving desire. And, *I entreated* — with devotion in prayer. Then, *understanding was given me* — that is, a sense of discretion and prudence. *And the Spirit came to me,* the illuminating Spirit *of Wisdom. And I esteemed her more than* all temporal things, since they are *nothing, compared with her.*
>
> And even if Scripture said nothing about this, experience would teach us that a world of "things" brings no satisfaction to the longings of a rational soul; people when they have got everything, only become more ardently acquisitive. Nothing is clearer than that all this gaining and possessing has more hollowness and want about it than substance and sufficiency. The craving never stops, because it never finds anything to hold on to. The Spirit of Wisdom, however, lends completion to the entire soul and keeps it in control as well; the Spirit inebriates the soul in such wise that, in all its activities, its conduct is sober.
>
> The third mode of the Spirit's coming is as king with unlimited wealth to remove all want. In the Acts of the Apostles (2:2.4): *A sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.* And this is followed by, *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.* The Holy Spirit filled and enriched the Apolstles with powers, gifts, endowments, so that they lacked nothing as he established them as heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven and princes of the Christian faith. He it is who *lifts up from the ground* of avarice both the greedy and the *needy, and raises from the dungheap* of uncleanness the sinner as well as the *pauper;* so that made splendid with the real riches of grace, they might *sit* with the apostolic *princess* and *occupy a glorious throne* in the heavenly fatherland.[9]

Fifth Sunday After Easter FULLNESS

Theme-text

Ask, and you will receive,
that your joy may be full John 16:24

The text chosen is taken to mean that suitable preparations must be made by the recipients-to-be of divine goodness. What we (*in them*) must prepare for is to be at the receiving end of God's affluent generosity which will, in its own time, certainly take effect. As usual the text is divided into three elements. (While this division determines the structure of the sermon itself, it also happens to supply a plan for meditation).

Ask: preparation for the reception of grace must be done a) *sincerely* (a right conscience declining evil), b) *prudently* (with discernment in choosing good, and c) *confidently* (with a sure hope in the future).

You will receive: Three gifts, corresponding to the three grades of preparation, are received: a) a clear guide from wisdom directing the soul toward the *rational,* b) precious grace enriching the soul and thus fitting it for what is *desirable,* and c) solid constancy corroberating the soul in regard to the *irascible.*[10] By means of these three the soul is configured in all its powers to the blessed Trinity.

That your joy may be full: The perfection of all gladness consists in the triple joy of glory: rejoicing at the unfolding of original truth, rejoicing

in the peaceful enjoyment of supernal deliciousness; rejoicing perpetually in the firm tenure of divine immobility.

> The first thing the saints will rejoice over is the open vision of First Truth. *You will fill me with gladness and joy in your presence* (Psalm 15:11). The soul will be filled with a great gladness, a great joy when it sees God *face to face;* this being a mode of vision which no error can blur, unlike the way we see a confused reflection in a mirror. As Augustine says in *De Trinitate:*[11] "Without any difficulty we shall see Truth and enjoy it thoroughly in all its clarity and certainty; nor shall we seek to know anything by mental reasoning, for we shall perceive by contemplating." And likewise in Isaiah it is said: *At the sight your heart will rejoice* (66:14).

These sermons within Eastertide bring us to the threshold of Pentecost. The Pentecost sermon in this collection (Bougerol, Sermo 27) takes its text from Job; in a sense therefore, it stands on its own. Likewise, the sermon for Easter Sunday, taking a verse of Psalm 3 for text, stands on its own. In between come five sermons based on texts from the Johannine gospel. They somehow constitute a little *corpus* in themselves, a rich mine of Paschaltide reflection on Christ as vivifier and donor, who in his resurrection exercises a centripetal force upon the temporarily dispersed and shattered disciples. These sermons trace a path through the gospels, sifting the cohesive promises of Christ. They thus can have the effect of reinforcing our faith, as we read and pray, and of preparing us for the reception of the Spirit of all truth and for the happiness of eternal live.

Footnotes

[1]Jacques Guy Bougerol, O.F.M. in 1977 published a critical edition of 50 Sunday Sermons [*Sancti Bonaventurae Sermones Dominicales*. (Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica Medii Aevi, XXVII), Grottaferrata]. (Reference: Bougerol). The edition used 21 MSS, or 15 more than were used for Tome IX of the Quaracchio *Opera Omnia,* (reference: IX). The 50 were found to be a collection in their own right, (differing at times importantly, though not extensively, from the text of IX); a selection made by Bonaventure and Mark of Montefeltro, his secretary, in 1267 - 1268. In the 5 sermons treated in this article the variants are few.

[2]Bougerol, 289, lines 9-16. (IX, 289).

[3]The Bougerol edition has *scintilla* (= spark) which makes no sense in the context; IX, 291 has *stilla* (= drop). A copyist, writing from dictation, could easily take *Ideo, si Deus modica stilla* (IX) to be *O Deus, si modica scintilla* (Bougerol).

[4]John Chrysostom, sermon *Gaude Sion*. PL Suppl. IV, 771-772.

[5]Bougerol, 296-297, lines 1-19. (IX, 293-294).

[6]The reference to St. Bernard should be rather to the Pseudo-Chrysostom (*Opus imperfectum*), PG 56, 896. Modern translations of Is 2:10 have "hide in the dust" for *abscondere in fossa humo* (Vulgate).

[7]Bougerol, 300-301, lines 132-157. (IX, 295).

[8]Bougerol, 306-307, lines 101-124. (IX, 307). In this passage there is a play on the words *gemere* (to sigh, lament) and *geminare* (to double, repeat) — but only in IX.

[9]Bougerol, 310-311, lines 36-37. (IX, 309-310). At the beginning of this paragraph, the physician (i.e. the Spirit) is said to come with "not a word of incantation"; whereas the Quaracchi edition has, *sed solo curationis verbo* ("but solely with a word of cure").

[10]When the "irascible" is dealt with in psychology it is not, strictly speaking, connected with the emotion of anger from the moral viewpoint. It means the faculty of "unyielding sturdiness" or "sturdy pugnacity." In the sermon, Bonaventure uses the philosophical term but applies it theologically to represent the power of spiritual resistance, as in Eph 6:13 — *Take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.*

[11]PL 42, 1092.

Easter Vigil

A wooden match is struck
and sputters softly while its sulphur burns off,
the only light
in brisk April's pre-dawn darkness.

By its flame
a fuel-drenchd cluster of crumpled papers and twigs
is ignited
and instantly blazes.

The new fire alternately displays
the assembled mass of faces,
among them that of an ancient man
with downcast eyes and unconscious scowl.

It reveals in his furrowed visage despair,
deep, widespread, and malignant despair,
despair antithetical
to the hope of the occasion.

He will know only Passiontide,
unrelieved, until,
his exhausted body and despondent soul
finally surrendering,

his flame of temporal existence
at long last extinguished,
he is, to his utter astonishment,
rekindled in eternity.

Joseph Molleur, S.S.J.E.

St. Francis and Evangelization

FR. JOHN HARDING, O.F.M.

St. Francis lived in a time of great upheaval. A long period of dormancy had come to an end and, in both society and church, great changes were afoot. In society there was an injection of new life as people moved from an agrarian to a city and town based life. The economies of Europe were experiencing a general recovery and this was coupled with the growth in trade and mobility. In virtually every aspect of life there was something new. Within the church there was a general awakening to a wider and less settled world. Social change brings much good but also many new problems. The church had to adapt or be left behind.

It was into such a fluid situation that St. Francis was born. He had the new spirit in this blood! His "conversion experience" must be understood against this turbulent background. God raises new apostles for every age to assist his church to carry out more effectively its ageless mission: to proclaim the gospel. St. Francis was God's gift to the church of his day and, since God does not repent of his gifts, St. Francis can rightly be seen as God's gift to his church for all the ages which came afterwards.

What did St. Francis do that was so powerful a force in his day and has remained so ever since?

The answer to this question is perfectly simple: He set out *to live the Gospel*. It is because it is so simple that we find it so hard to grasp! We are not used to such simplicity and are totally disarmed by it. This is the genius of God's grace in St. Francis. But unless we do seek to lay a hold on this, we as Friars Minor will never be able to fulfill our own mission effectively.

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How did St. Francis live the Gospel?

St. Francis was a man of his time. He was filled with the "spirit of the age" he lived in. Because this was so, he could readily understand that to live and proclaim the Gospel it must be done in a manner which accords with the realities of people's lives. Thus he became convinced that the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ must be incarnated in the here-and-now. He became a new "Apostle of Christ" (I Cel 101); a new "Minister of the Gospel" (I Cel 7); a new "Preacher of the Kingdom of God and penance" (I Cel 22-23); and a new "Proclaimer of peace" (Test).

It was not long before he attracted followers. These he saw as given by God to be cooperators in the single mission which was to live and proclaim the Gospel. St. Francis saw that to do this effectively demanded that his whole way of life had to change. He saw that he must attend not only to the teachings of Jesus but also to the life of Jesus with his Apostles. Jesus lived his life "on the road." He had no fixed dwelling and was himself a "stranger and pilgrim" in the world. Jesus had but one purpose: to do the will of his Father even if it should cost him his very life. St. Francis determined that he and those whom God had sent to him would do just this. They would have no fixed place and they would be as "strangers and pilgrims" in the world.

St. Francis' way of life, then, marked a radical shift from the long established patterns of religious life. Up to now the monastery was the centre of religious life and was recognized as such by both church and society. The monastery was the sign of stability and order. It spoke of the whole spirituality of being 'set apart from the world.' St. Francis came to see that this form of religious life could not of itself meet the new demands of evangelization in a world which was far from stable and ordered. The monastery functioned well in an agrarian world but not in a world where people were constantly on the move, lived in towns and cities and lived off trade and commerce. He thus discerned that a new form of religious life was called for. This would be based not on a place but on the experience of fraternity. In other words, what was needed was not more monasteries but more brotherhood. The idea of fraternity is all important. But what sort of fraternity?

The fraternity he established was based squarely on the model of Jesus and his Apostles. Their life together forms the rock on which St. Francis and his companions built their own life.

Jesus and his Apostles were mendicants — they had no place to call their own. The whole world was both their home and their mission field. So too, for St. Francis and his companions, there would be no fixed place. The only home they would have is within their own brotherhood (see the mystical text: *Sacrum Commercium*).

Living the Gospel is what matters. This applies to every friar no matter what form of work he is doing. It is not the work itself that is important but the manner in which it is done. The Order of Friars Minor is not defined by any particular work. It is defined by living the Gospel. Never before, since the Apostles, had anyone thought of this as a realistic form of life! Was it possible to actually live the Gospel? This was the question put more than once to St. Francis. He was often advised to choose another path or the Rule of an already established Order. His answer was firmly NO. The fundamental charism of our life is exactly this: to live the Gospel. This is also our basic apostolate.

Both the *Rule of 1221* and the *Rule of 1223* resolutely hold to this. Never before had a Religious Founder taken the Gospel itself as the form of life. St. Francis was not just concerned to preach the Gospel as one of his daily activities. He was more concerned that people everywhere should see that it is possible to live the Gospel — that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not just a set of propositions which can be taken or left aside at will. It is a way of life that is totally demanding. Those who hear his Word must take it to heart and live by it. This is evangelization.

To be evangelizers we have first to be evangelized. The apostolate is not simply a series of activities from which we retire to pray and recreate. There is no distinction between living the Gospel and proclaiming the Gospel. The one depends wholly on the other. Life itself is the apostolate. As the Apostles lived in close union with Christ, as his family, his intimate brothers, so St. Francis saw that it was his task to live in the same close union and it is this which he sought to impart to his companions and to the whole world. This life sees no fundamental distinction between prayer and work and fraternity. It is fatal to divide the life into isolated compartments. When St. Francis read the Gospels, he read of a unified life as actually lived by Jesus and his Apostles. This is the life he wanted and the life he actually lived. It is this which made him so new and so attractive for his own time and ever since.

St. Francis saw clearly that Jesus Christ is not only the "man for others" but is firstly "the man for the Other." This means that, for Jesus, the will of the Father comes first and that it was upon this intimate relationship with the Father that Jesus depended for the effectiveness of his mission in the world. St. Francis saw that to walk in the footprints of Jesus Christ after the example of the Apostles involved having this intimate union with the Father before all else since only this could guarantee the effectiveness of his own mission which was to live and proclaim the Gospel. This explains his love for solitary places. The point here being that we learn in our prayer what we later proclaim by our example and preaching. Jesus frequently retired to pray in the desert. Sometimes he went alone, sometimes

with his companions. Always it is prayer which conditions action for prayer makes the action fruitful.

What does it mean to "follow in the footprints"?

We have seen already that, in the first place, it means to have the same desire for intimate communion with the Father, as did Jesus. It means to have the same intimate communion with Jesus, as did the Apostles. It means also to participate in the mission of Jesus — the same mission that he received from the Father. To do this requires that we take up our own cross. It requires that we follow the path of self-emptying that Jesus has mapped out for his disciples. We have to leave all for the sake of the Kingdom: family, friends, houses, wealth, security, and especially our own wills. In other words, we have to take a radical risk on Jesus Christ. This is to live dangerously — we, like Jesus must be prepared to be rejected and despised, disappointed and maybe persecuted. What applies to the master applies also to the disciple. None of these comes easily but the choice has to be made. We must consciously opt for Christ and his Gospel.

Now the important thing here is that all this is done not apart from but within our society. For St. Francis saw that Jesus chose to live and work with and among people even though he knew that the very people he came to serve and save would be the ones who would reject and kill him. This is the cost of living and proclaiming the Gospel. The only way a disciple can endure all this is by living in union with Christ. Thus, for St. Francis prayer, the Sacraments, the Eucharist and the poor are all crucial. We have to learn to live with Christ. We have to learn to go the whole way with him, even to Calvary, if we are to share in his final victory. Not only do we have to learn to live with and follow Christ, we have also to do as he does: proclaim the Gospel of God's Kingdom. We must make the intention of Jesus our own. "I must proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God" (Lk 4:43), just as the Apostles made it theirs (cf. Acts).

To "follow in the footprints of Christ" (cf. 1 Peter 2) is to do today what Jesus Christ did while on earth. It is to live anew the whole of the Paschal Mystery. It is to accept the truth of Jesus' words "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through me" (Jn, 4:6). Jesus also told his Apostles "love one another as I have loved you" (cf. Jn. 13: 34-35). It is by taking the life and the teachings of Jesus so seriously that St. Francis was able to penetrate into the true meaning of the Gospel and was able to reveal this to others. He lived the Gospel because he made the Gospel literally his Rule of life. This same Gospel was to be the Rule and life of all who joined his fraternity.

What is our responsibility today as Friars Minor?

Our first task is quite unambiguously to live the life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ after the example of the Apostles. This we must do, not in the narrow ascetical sense, but in the far broader sense of the evangelical mission. By this I mean we are not called simply to live our own private lives of penance and mortification; we are not called to be crypto-monks whose life is dedicated to the liturgy within the confines of the cloister; we are not called to be social do-gooders. Our first calling is to know Christ Jesus and his Father in the Holy Spirit. We are called to pattern our lives (and our fraternities) on the model of Jesus with his Apostles. To do this is not to live the so-called "mixed life" but to live an integratd life of prayer and apostolic activity. We are called to be contemplative - apostolic without driving an artificial wedge between contemplation and action. Our life is a unity in diversity. In all the manner of works we undertake we are called to communicate to others the enduring love of God which we have first experienced in Christ and by his Spirit living within and among us as fraternity. We are called to bear witness among people to the truth that it is possible to live the Gospel life and become more human thereby! St. Francis was not made less human because he lived the life of the Gospel. In fact, it is precisely because he did live the Gospel that he became more human, more perfectly a man. This is what is meant by saying he lived a graced existence. His whole life was centered on the truth of God and truth, as we are told, sets us free.

We are called to the life of brotherhood. This tells us that our life is at once unity in diversity and diversity in unity. What do we mean by this? We mean that we do not live our lives as a random sample of individuals who all happen to be doing much the same thing. This is not the fraternal life. Our brotherhood speaks of many dimensions. First, it speaks to us of the community of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is perfect unity in diversity and perfect diversity in unity. Each person of the Trinity is unique in relationship with the other and yet each is perfectly at one with the other. This is effected by mutual love in self-giving and receiving. This mystery lies at the very heart of franciscan brotherhood. We are called to the life of fraternity. We are called to relationship. This mystery is disclosed to us by Jesus Christ and is exemplified in the life that Jesus freely chose to share and live with his Apostles. Jesus with his Apostles shows that it is possible to live in union with others without destroying each person's uniqueness. In fact, we only discover our uniqueness in relation to others. We cannot know ourselves apart from knowing others. We are mutually inter-dependent (cf. Jn. 15). Now the Trinitarian

life of God is always out-going. The life of Jesus with his Apostles was always out-going. To say this is to say that true fraternity is always missionary. The more we discover the riches and the depths of this life the more we are moved to share it with others. Our first mission therefore is to live the life of the Gospel and to draw others to do the same. St. Francis constantly sought to do this. He saw the need for universal brotherhood: among his friars, among his sisters, among those who came seeking his guidance whom we call today the Secular Franciscans. But his grasp of the centrality of brotherhood took him beyond these to all those among whom he lived and laboured.

Our first mission therefore is to live the life of the Gospel and to draw others to do the same.

St. Francis saw that such brotherhood could only be genuine christian brotherhood if it is ecclesial in character. The Church is the pilgrim people of God and so he saw that the pattern of the church is itself to be found in the union of Jesus with his Apostles. The fact that the church was in disarray did not deter him from loving it and placing himself and his friars firmly within it. Without the church his conception of brotherhood would simply degenerate into a facile form of humanism and be evacuated of all Gospel character. It could not function except as a mutual benefit society. If you are not for the Church you stand against it. This is the fate of so many other "apostolic movements." The Divine inspiration given to St. Francis was that to renew the Church it was necessary to live the life of the Gospel ("Repair my House") and to communicate this Gospel life to others. We as friars are not called to live simply the poor life, or the chaste life, or the obedient life. The vows we profess are but the means to the all important end which is to live the Gospel life. For too long our order has been torn apart by the futile obsession with how to live the vows. Is it any surprise that the order which is meant to witness to evangelical brotherhood is itself divided into numerous so-called families? If you think about it, it is the worse possible witness we could give to an already divided church and world! The only solution seems to be to take seriously the call to live the gospel. The church and the world have need of such a witness and we are given the task to provide it. What are we doing about it?

St. Francis never criticized the church for he saw that the church is the bride of Christ and his fraternity. Also, he saw that it is the church alone which is entrusted with the task of proclaiming the Good News. Only within the church is it possible to be united with Christ and to fulfil his mandate. The church does not exist for itself but for the whole of humanity. As members of the church, the friars are called to go to the nations to bring the Gospel of Christ to those who hunger for life. This we do by the witness of our fraternity and in the manifold works which the fraternity undertakes. We are called to create the possibility for real brotherhood/sisterhood among all peoples and between all peoples (read St. Francis' Letters!). We do this first by being seen to be brothers and then by inviting others to share this experience of brotherhood. Our brotherhood is our public witness to Jesus Christ and to the Father whom he revealed in the Holy Spirit. No limits can be placed on the field of our witness. We must witness before Christians, those of other Religions, and those of no religion. This is what St. Francis did and it is what Jesus Christ and his Apostles did. The world is our cloister!

As Friars Minor we must be convinced of the value of Gospel Life and live this life joyfully. To live joyfully is to live with unbounded hope. People are instinctively attracted by a life which offers hope, they rejoice in it and thrive on it. We should not deprive them. We are called to proclaim peace by our living in genuine peace with each other and not simply as polite gentlemen who co-exist. Peace is Christ's gift to us for the whole of humanity and indeed creation. Sometimes this is communicated in the witness of presence. This is especially true in those parts of the world where the Gospel cannot be proclaimed verbally. At other times it is proclaimed by preaching and by our apostolic labours. Always it is proclaimed by our example.

It is a tragedy that so many friars see their life and work in isolation from that of their brothers. Individualism is fatal to the life of Gospel brotherhood. We must learn to overcome this tendency. Our life and our work are inseparable and only make sense within the context of fraternity and within the wider context of the life and work of the whole church, (cf. LM II, 1; 1 Cel 89). Our whole way of life is our primary sermon (cf. Fior 30).

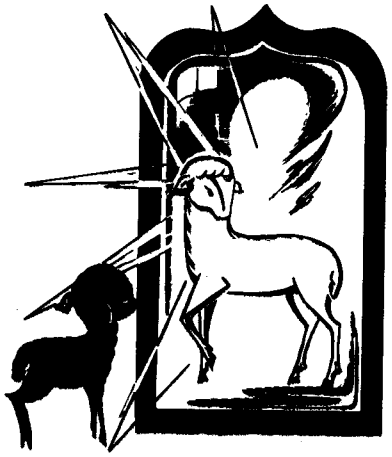
This life of brotherhood, lived within our fraternities, lived within the church, lived within society, flows over to embrace the whole of creation. Every creature becomes our brother and sister for all reveal the grandeur of God and show forth God's abundant generosity and love (cf. CantSol).

Here we have the totality of Gospel brotherhood. To live the life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ after the example of the Apostles is to embrace, and be radically involved in, the fulness of God and God's holy creation.

This is our vocation as Friars Minor and nothing should prevent us from living and proclaiming this.

Final Word

St. Francis was clearly a man of his time and place. We too must be men of our time and our place. Yet, like St. Francis we are invited to live and share a form of life which knows no bounds. It is for every age and every person. The more we see this the more effective will our lives and witness become. Our purpose is to live the life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ after the manner of the Apostles. We must therefore have one eye on St. Francis but also one eye on our present. We cannot attempt to re-create the past for this would be anachronistic and counter-productive. We must be wholly centered on God and wholly involved in discerning the "signs of the times" in which today we live. To live the life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to please God in all things. This above all else is our vocation.



Book Reviews

St. Francis of Assisi. By Raoul Manselli. Translated by Paul Duggan. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1988. vii-363 pp. $24.95.

Reviewed by Paul Lachance, O.F.M., St. Francis Retreat House, Oak Brook, Ill.

"Why does all the world seem to be running after you, and everyone want to see you, hear you, and obey you?" This is the question that Brother Masseo asked St. Francis in a well known episode related in the *Little Flowers of St. Francis*. One can transpose the question and ask: Why are there so many biographies of St. Francis, and why another one?

Each age must invent the present in the light of tradition. Francis of Assisi is the greatest light, after Christ, to illumine the Western Christian tradition. It follows by an inner necessity that repeated and multiple attempts have been and are being made to refract some of the light that "shone on Mt. Subasio" so as to more creatively respond to each passing historical moment. Like cameras zooming in from different angles, and with ever more sophisticated instruments, biographers from the earliest times (Celano, Bonaventure etc.) to the present have tried to capture the essential Francis. Major efforts in this century have not been lacking: Joergensen, Chesterton, Engelbert, Fortini, to mention a few. And in the flurry of publications that surrounded the commemoration of the eighth century of St. Francis' birth (1982), likely, the one that will have the most enduring significance is Raoul Manselli's *St. Francis of Assisi*.

Availing himself of the best of contemporary Franciscan research which in many ways, he spawned, Manselli's intent is to set Francis against the concrete background of his time and grasp the central and inspiring motive of his life and work. The material which he uses to sketch his portrait are Francis' own writings, with particular emphasis on his *Testament*, the documentation made available by those closest to him, especially as compiled in the *Legend of the Three companions*, and his own vast knowledge of the religious, social and political reality of the time. So as to remain as historically accurate as possible, Manselli stays clear of Bonaventure and his attempt to place the saint into the framework of a theology of history; departs from Celano whenever the latter twists the facts to fit Francis into his preconceived hagiographical model; eliminates any information which distorts the Poverello's image due to a view of him resulting from the internal contrasts of the order, such as found in the *Little Flowers*, or, finally, from the progressive embelishment that accompanied the formation of his image and raised it to the level of myth.

What Manselli does best — and he is superb at it — is to weave his sources into and in contrast with the tapestry of the period in which Francis lived. He begins his study by establishing the general historical and geographical

coordinates in which Francis' story was embedded, then he sets its beginnigs within the framework of Assisian society. After tracing the maturation process which led to his conversion, Manselli dissects and highlights its decisive and culminating point: the encounter with the leper. Basing himself on Francis' memory of this experience as synthesized in the *Testament* Manselli sees in this moment the wellspring from which to construct his main argument: It was not so much the concern for poverty that was pivotal to Francis' conversion but rather the comprehension of human suffering as exemplified by the leper and as illumined by the sufferings of Christ. With this newly found understanding and transformation, Francis chose to pass from one human condition and social class to another. Henceforth, he was to belong with those whom society had abandoned, a reject among rejects. His central intuition was that true joy could be found by following in the footsteps of Christ and sharing the condition of those at the bottom of the society.

Francis' change "from one social condition to another" is the leitmotif around which Manselli constructs his biography. He proceeds to demonstrate how this vision grew and found its concretization in the formation of a brotherhood; its initial approval by Innocent III; the arrival and the deep bond established with Clare; the collision between the ideal and the real as the brotherhood expanded beyond Italy to France, England, Germany, and Hungary; the dialogue with and the role of Cardinal Hugolino and the Roman curia, which according to Manselli, was "a modest one" thus lending a perhaps decisive blow to the Sabatier thesis that Francis' vision had been coopted by ecclesiastical authority; the voyage to the Holy Land and the problems which Francis encountered upon his return; and, finally, the illness of the last years of Francis' life, the stigmata and the composition of the Canticle of Brother Sun. Very helpful reflexions are added on the development of the Rules and the relationship between Francis and his writings.

What Manselli underscores as one of the most characteristic personality traits of Francis is his insistence on the power of example. In the Italian scholar's view, Francis' success in this domain was to provide the ongoing dilemma of his life and give to it its tragic dimensions: How to maintain his chosen status as a humble man at the margins of society and yet be at the head and the source of inspiration for an ever growing and powerful order. That Francis' ideal triumphed Manselli attributes to his "incomparable holiness," the tenaciousness with which he held to his vision, his exceptional organizational ability which knew how to maintain essential values and yet be flexible to adapt to circumstances. These essential values are very precise: "Passage over to the side of the unfortunate, adherence to Christ, and the religious meaning of existence with trust in God." They constitute "the perennial force" of the legacy left by Francis and its challenge to his followers of every age.

The present summary of the Manselli biography does not exhaust the complexity and richness in historical detail with which it is organized. One criticism that can be raised, and which Manselli himself later acknowledged, is the weakness of the development of Francis as mystic, as the poor man filled with awe and wonder at the mystery of the Triune God. This rather serious lacuna does not, however, take away from the value of his effort. What transpires on every page is the author's great love of Francis. Manselli died in 1984. His *St. Francis* can be said to be his scholarly testament. Every further study of the Poverello will need to turn to it as obligatory reference.

Paul Duggan is to be commended for his remarkable and faithful translation. The cover design, however, is unfortunate. It is juvenile and belittles the magnitude of the work. It is also hoped that a future edition will contain the scientific aparatus which was promised by Manselli in his introduction to the Italian edition.

Why Bother With Church: A Fresh Approach for Single Catholics. By Greg Friedman, O.F.M. Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1988. Pp. 87, Paper, $4.95,

Reviewed by Father Michael A. Taylor, OFM Conv., M.Div. Seton Catholic Central High School, Binghamton. New York.

This book deals with the relationship of the young Catholic adult to the Church, on both the local and the unversal levels. Father Friedman writes in a colloquial style, which makes the text very easy to read.

Among the specific issues Father Friedman deals with are the individual's notion of God, friendship with God and friendship with other Christians, the Church as "family," the mission of the Church and why some Catholics, specifically the young adults, might feel alienated from the Church.

Father Friedman is to be commended for his honest and forthright style of writing since he shares with his readers his own triumphs and struggles as a member of the Church and most personally from his viewpoint as a priest. Ironically, then , the only "negative" aspect of this book stems from the fact that his own experiences as a Christian and a priest are so interesting and personal that the reader sometimes has to remind him/herself of the specific topic that Father Friedman is addressing.

This book is, nonetheless, a very fine little book which does accomplish its goal of helping the young Cahtolic adult come to grips with contemporary issues. With the discussion starters and "personal inventories" at the end of each chapter, this book would be a real asset to those involved in RCIA programs.

The Story of a Life: St. Thérèse of Lisieux. By Guy Gaucher, translated by Sister Anne Marie Brennan, O.D.C. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987. Pp. viii - 228. Cloth, $13.95.

Reviewed by Peter F. Macaluso, Ph.D., Professor of History at Montclair State College, Upper Montclair, N.J., and Adjunct Professor of History, St. Peter's College, Jersey City, N.J.,

This is a definitive biogrpahy of St. Thérèse, the first major work in decades, and by the foremost authority on her life. It is based on all the Theresian writings which have taken eighty-four years to be published in France, and not all of which have been translated into English. It, therefore, contains many aspects and details of her life not found in previous works. It also contains important photographs, a chapter of the amazing story of her life after her death,

a selection of testimonies, a geneology, and a short bibliography.

This work anticipates the centennial of Thérèse's death, and in it, the author discusses Thérèse as a herald of the twentieth century and how the Second Vatican Council owes much to her prophetic intuitions. She is a teacher and "one day in the near future, might be proclaimed Doctor of the church" (p. 215). "Despite my littleness, I would wish to enlighten souls like the doctors" (p. 215).

Through her notebooks, letters, poems, playlets, and praylets, we see Thérèse living, suffering, joking, loving. Even the security of Carmel's 'desert' did not prevent her struggle with inner trials, vocational doubts, self-concern, and a sea of aridity. She laid low, assured that the sleeping, hidden Jesus was in the boat. The willpower, courage and decisiveness she showed was like a 'piece of steel,' said the late John Paul I (p. 224).

Even as she lay dying she felt the lack of sensitivity from some sisters: "Why are they speaking so much about Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus; she is not doing anything exceptional. One does not see her practicing virtue, you cannot even say that she is a good nun" (p. 194).

It was Father Alexis Prou, a Franciscan priest, and a replacement retreat master who gave Thérèse peace and hope in 1891. Later, though, when she was next to him in the sacristy. she dared not speak to him more than the one permitted conference. It was this passing priest who "launched me full sail on the waves of confidence and love which held such an attraction for me, but upon which I had not dared to venture" (p. 118). Father Prou had pointed out a little way that was very direct, very short and totally new. (Another spiritual adviser responded only once to her dozen letters sent over a year period, and her fifty letters sent to him over eight years were never kept).

> What happiness to suffer for him who loves us even to FOLLY, and to pass for FOOLS in the eyes of the world. ... Our beloved was MAD to come down on earth looking for sinners to make them his friend... What happiness that he became man so that we might love him, if he had not done so we would not have dared. (pp. 145-46)

In 1907, eighteen years before her canonization, Pius X privately called her 'the greatest saint of modern times.' By 1929 seven volumes comprising some 3,200 pages of an anthology of Thérèse's interventions were published, and now some 1,700 churches are named in her honor.

"My way is all confidence and love, I don't understand souls who are afraid of so loving a Friend" (p. 190). Her little way of full confidence and love in the ordinary, little virtues of everyday life has universal appeal. Her 'loving boldness' and 'brilliant fearlessness' has overwhelmed millions, and from the 'desert' of Carmel her *Story of a Soul* has become the cloister of millions.

Pius XI saw in her a 'Word of God' addressed to our century. She is also described as 'a shooting star in the sky of holiness' who brought about one of the greatest spiritual revolutions that the Holy Spirit has set in motion in the evolution of mankind.

In this work Thérèse emerges as a woman of great spiritual strength and creativity. Her short life was a 'giant's journey.'

Turning Points in Religious Life. By Carol Quigley, IHM, Editor, Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987, 258 pages.

Reviewed by Father Daniel A. Hurley, O.F.M., National Chaplain of the St. Bonaventure University Alumni Association, Instructor in English and Campus Minister at the University.

Here is a "how to" book on Corporate Renewal that can be of interest to members of religious orders and congregations who chafe at some actions of the "official" Church. The Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Monroe, Michigan responded along with the other religious groups of the Catholic Church to the document of the Second Vatican council, *Perfectae Caritatis*, to renew themselves, to look into their roots, to experiment" (page 7). The members of the congregation took to heart the words of the Council document: "Effective renewal and right adaptation cannot be achieved save with the cooperation of all the members." The personal renewal of the members of the congregation needed to be complemented by a corporate renewal of the Monroe IHM community. The Congregation Chapter of 1982 mandated that corporate renewal. *Turning Points in Religious Life* contains some of that renewal process, namely talks that were presented to the Sisters during the year 1984. The book is divided into two parts: Part One contains the presentations made and Part Two includes a reflection by each of the four living General Superiors of the congregation.

The four subjects dealt with in parts One of the book are: "Reflections on the History of Religious Life and Contemporary Development" by Sandra Marie Schneiders, IHM: "Toward a Theology of Vows" by Juliana Casey, IHM; "Authority in the Church" by Anthony Kosnik; and "Canonical Status" by Emily George, RSH. The last subject is followed by a response from four sisters, a canon lawyer, an associate pastor, a social scientist and a theologian.

The first presentation includes three lectures by Sister Sandra Marie Schneiders. This part of the book is extremely interesting since a knowledge of the history of religious life is vital for an understanding of religious life today. Sister Schneiders emphasizes that a knowledge of history allows for progress in thought. Without such knowledge, a person cannot understand the present or even imagine the future. A grasp of the changes in religious life that the study of history presents, she states, "helps us to realize that God alone is absolute" (page 38). Sister Schneiders' lectures lead one to the awareness of the profound change the Second Vatican Council has had on our understanding of the meaning of religous life.

As a complement to a history of the religious life, Juliana Casey's presentation, "Toward a Theology of the Vows," clarifies the radical change that the Council has had on the appreciation of the subject of religious life. "Previous to the Council, religious life's emphasis was upon perfection, sanctification of the members" (page 87). Since the Council, "religious have begun to understand themselves and their mission in terms of relationship to a world deeply in need of transformation" (page 87 - 88).

Anthony Krosnik, a priest ot the Detroit Archdiocese, deals with "Authority in the Church." Citing biblical sources, Father Kosnik declares that "the au-

thority, that the church has and experiences, must always be seen and understood in relation to its source — Jesus Christ" (pages 137 - 138). As he traces the history of the exercise of authority in the church, Kosnik shows how that exercise became more and more centralized. He claims that "the type of leadership expressed in the early church is best designated by a term which has become common in post-Vatican II terminology .... 'collegiality' " (page 137). Kosnik feels that "more recent developments give the impression that there is once again a serious attempt, at the highest administrative levels, to reinforce the hierarchical, secular, legalistic understanding of church authority" (page 161).

Emily George's article on "Canonical Status" gives an historical survey of the relationship of church law to the religious life. Her conclusions are that the church has adapted its laws concerning religious to historical situations; it has recognized the charism of religious institutes; and the church has a tendency to regulate (take control). "This process (of taking control) often was correlative with the socio-historical status of the hierarchical church itself" (page 184). One theme that runs throughout history, says Sister George, "is the bias against women in terms of jurisdiction" (page 185). A final, conciliatory, statement of Sister Emily is as follows: "given the tensions which may arise between one's congregations and church hierarchy, it is imperative that we work to identify obstacles to communication and that we use opportunities for collaboration" (page 187). The four responses to Sister Emily George's presentation seem to prefer a direction of consultation and collaboration with the church authorities to the course of a break from the church by the seeking of a non-canonical status. Sharon Holland, IHM, the canon lawyer responder, concludes: "(We wonder) whether today's religious are to become a distinct new reality; or perhaps are to foster and encourage new developments within the church, without changing our own identity radically" (pages 193 - 194).

In the Second Part of the book, the four living General Superiors of the Monroe IHM Community express their evaluation of the process of Corporate Renewal. All four women are extremely optimistic about the future of their community. The latest General Superior, Carol Quigley, IHM, the editor of this volume, summarizes this optimism. "Our future will grow out of the present as we read the signs of the times in light of our charism and the gospel, and become leaders in reconciling and peacemaking" (page 250).

Turning Points in Religious Life is a book about one women's religious congregation. It is a serious, detailed account of its examination of "corporate renewal." The contents of this book must be a source of pride and encouragement for the Monroe Immaculate Heart Sisters. This reviewer believes tht this book is a resource that other congregations of religious, both men and women, can use with great profit in understanding their role in the post-Vatican II Church as we approach the Twenty-first Century.

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FS 504	Life of St. Francis	3	M-F*	9:55-11:10	Maurice Sheehan, OFM Cap., D. Phil.
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	8:30-9:45	Romuald Green, 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 552	The Franciscan Contribution to Justice and Peace	2	M-Th	11:20-12:25	Kevin Mullen, OFM Cap.,Ph.D.Cand.
FS 518	Script. Foundations of Franciscanism	2	M-Th	1:00-2:05	Jude Winkler, OFM Conv. S.S.L.
FS 561	Development of Franciscan Person	2	M-Th	1:00-2:05	Edward Coughlin, OFM,Ph.D.
FS 500	Method and Bibliography	2	M-Th*	2:25-3:20	Paul Spaeth, M.L.S.
FS 517	Introduction to Palaeography	2	M-Th	2:25-3:20	Girard Etzkorn, Ph.D.
FS 539	Spirit. Direct. & the Franc. Tradition	2	M-Th	2:25-3:20	David Couturier, OFM Cap.,Ph.D.
FS 560	Advanced Graduate Seminar: Understanding Francisc. Art: An Introduction to Francisc. Iconography	2	M-Th	7:00-8:00 (evening)	Servus Gieben, OFM Cap.. Ph.D.

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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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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

[1]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:

An Interior Castle

JONATHAN PATRICK FARRELL, O.F.M.

Once there was a human being, just like all people with a heart and mind within the body. In the course of life's journey among trials and pain the heart said to the mind within this human being:

"Life has been so cruel at times, so harsh and so absurd; I want to withdraw from this world and to be left alone. "Let us build a place where I am safe."

The mind prompted by the intensity of the feelings in the heart, replied "Yes!" So the mind began to build as the heart was lost in introspection.

In the realm of fantasy and imagination, the mind and heart worked desperately day after day, and night after night to build a safe place deep within.

"I want a palace," said the heart impatiently.

The mind responded quickly: "Well, then, we must hide ourselves and not reveal anything to anyone except only that which we want them to see. Let us cut down all communication with the outside world so no one can reach in."

The human being soon threw itself into manual labor, domestic work and any task to keep busy so as to avoid meeting people. The human being dressed in a certain fashion to convey to the public eye an "air" of independence and control. The heart decorated many chambers within the palace which the mind had designed. Happy memories adorned one, hobbies another and intellectual pursuit still another, just to name a few. The heart was delighted and the mind satisfied its ego.

Yet unforseen forces were plotting. Events would shatter this palace within. Since the human being was so confident in fashion and manner

Friar Jonathan is a 1987 graduate of St. Hyacinth College - Seminary in Granby, Mass. He dedicated this piece to the search for God in our modern world.

many people on the outside said, "Why should I bother with that person, he seems to have it all." Still others thought, "I am going to knock that one down; how dare he hold himself in such a manner." So as the air thickened with jealousy and spite, the people on the outside not knowing what they were doing, attacked the human being. They tore down the palace ripping apart its well built walls and tearing up the images and exterior facades.

The heart was in torment and the mind was in confusion. What was intended to be a place was really a prison. The heart and mind wounded once more, fought back with angry words and violent motions. With no friends to comfort the human being, the poor person retreated again but this time into a dark cave. What emptiness!

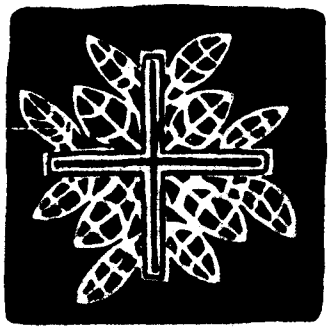
There was darkness and loneliness yet there was a little ray of light shining through all the ruins. The heart then bathed itself in this sobering and gentle light. The mind was then enlightened and started to learn. The light was God the Creator and the human being realized that he had a soul.

God then spoke to the heart and inspired the mind with tender words, words that have been written for all to hear: "In order to build you must build on solid rock and I must dwell in what is built; otherwise it is all in vain. What is build on rock will last. You did build all by yourself; apart from me you can do nothing. What you built was on sand.

The human being said, "Yes, this is true and I acknowledge what you have revealed to me but I am weak."

God then said, 'Yes, you are weak, but I am strong, learn from me... There have been many others who have built from within, great structures, like those in Avila, Siena, Norwich, Assisi and many others in other parts of the world, some known only to me... I call you from where you are now... Come let us build that Interior Castle.

So the human being reached out in faith and the work began. Ω



St. Francis and Ecology

THOMAS MURTAGH, O.F.M.

Several years ago, on 29 November, 1979, Pope John Paul signed a document proclaiming Francis of Assisi the patron saint of ecologists. Now, whatever Francis was, he was not an ecologist. Ecology is the study of the relation of plants and animals to their environment. Francis was not a student, let alone a student of science, even of the kind of science that was available for study in the thirteenth century. But it was by no means unreasonable for Pope John Paul to make him the patron saint of ecologists, for in that document he referred to Francis' "marvellous gift of fostering nature," and also to his Canticle of Creatures.

"Fostering nature" — a very apt description of what Francis did, but not all that helpful in distinguishing Francis from all the others who in one way or another have fostered or are fostering nature. Try to distinguish, just for yourself, the difference between ecologist, nature lover, environmentalist, animal lover, pantheist, animal liberationist — do you appreciate the difficulty? So, for the moment, let us leave this important question and concentrate on what it was about Francis that moved Pope John Paul to refer to his "marvellous gift of fostering nature." And let us look, not so much at the phrase itself, but at what we know from the sources about Francis' accomplishments in this area.

The Source of Francis' gift

How did Francis get this gift? The sources really tell us very little. Was he born with it? Although some authors hint at this as an explanation, there is nothing in the sources to support such an explanation. And if he

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was not born with this gift, he must have developed it during his life. And again there is very little that might indicate how this gift might have developed, although there are many and varied references to its presence.

Before his conversion Francis thoroughly enjoyed life; it was he who was the life of the party. But after his conversion he rejected life's pleasures, its good aspects, in his efforts to lead a penitential life. We are familiar with Francis' encounter with the leper, that incident that in later years he saw as the central moment of his conversion. In introducing this incident Celano writes:

> "Francis," God said to him in spirit, "what you have loved carnally and vainly you should now exchange for spiritual things, and taking the bitter for sweet, despise yourself, if you wish to acknowledge me. (2 Cel 9).

In his Testament Francis related how when he embraced the leper, "That which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body." But he did not say that he found the same sweetness in some of his other penitential practices like sprinkling ashes on his food, or fasting for most of the year, or spending sleepless nights in prayer. Some have even seen in Francis' complete rejection of the things of this world a trace of the Catharist or Albigensian heresy, which was widespread at the time, and which rejected everything connected with the body as evil. We do not need to posit a Catharist influence to explain Francis' conduct. In the traditional spirituality of his time there was acknowledgement of a two-fold path to God, the negative way and the positive way, with emphases respectively on negation of the earthly and on the positive practice of virtue. There is no doubt that Francis took the negative rather than the positive way, that he started by rejecting earthly pleasures. So there must be at least a good argument that his appreciation of the worth of created things came only when he came close to God, and saw in creation a reflection of God's own goodness. St. Bonaventure, in his *Itinerarium, The Soul's Journey to God,* wrote of how the soul may move closer to God in various stages, starting with the traces, the footprints of God that can be found in created things, and only at the last stage requiring an acceptance of the crucifixion; but at no stage does he indicate that this is the path that Francis followed.

To me a logical (even if not developmental) source was his love of Our Lord, the love that grew stronger throughout his life of abnegation. We are all familiar with how Francis focussed himself on Christ and made him the centre of his life, and strove in every way possible to be like him. If Francis thought he could find direction for his own life through anything Christ did or said, he made use of it.

Can you think of any words that have for you personally a special meaning because of how they are associated with your past experience, or with a particular person, or with your ambitions or your deepest thoughts? Such personal connotations can greatly enrich our reflections and our prayer, and can have a deep influence on what we do. Francis was well aware of how Scripture is applied to Our Lord in the liturgy, and through his reflection found a wealth of personal meaning in the scriptural phrases. Listen to this passage from the *Mirror of Perfection* (SP 118):

> Next to fire he had an especial love for water, because it symbolizes holy penitence and tribulation, and at Baptism the soul is cleansed from its stains and receives its first purification. So whenever he washed his hands he chose a place where the water would not be trodden underfoot as it fell to the ground. For the same reason, whenever he had to walk over rocks, he trod reverently and fearfully, out of love for Christ Who is called The Rock: so whenever he recited the psalm Thou wilt set me high up on a rock, he used to say with great reverence and devotion, Thou hast set me up at the foot of the rock.
>
> He told the friar who cut and chopped wood for the fire that he must never cut down the whole tree, but remove branches in such a way that part of the tree remained intact, out of love for Christ, Who willed to accomplish our salvation on the wood of the cross.
>
> In the same way he told the friar who cared for the gardens not to cultivate all the ground for vegetables, but to set aside a plot to grow flowers to bloom in their season, out of love for Him Who is called The Rose on the plain and the lily on the mountain slopes. Indeed, he told the brother-gardner that he should always make a pleasant flower-garden, and cultivate every variety of fragrant herb and flowering plant, so that all who saw the herbs and flowers would be moved to praise God.

What a marvellous passage! How an environmentalist of today would love Francis' wishes, even though he might see no sense in, might thoroughly disagree with his reasons. Look at the individual things Francis referred to: Water — and clearly a reverence for water, not for some intrinsic property, not because of its usefulness to us and the need to keep it as unpolluted as possible, but because of its connection with the sacrament of Baptism. Then Rocks, or if you like, the Landscape — and again not for some intrinsic beauty it has, or for its usefulness — whatever the arguments between miners and environmentalists, or because it has a religious significance in itself (although here we are closest to Francis' reasoning), but because Christ is referred to as "the Rock." And then Trees — to use them as firewood but not to kill the tree in the process.

When I joined the Order there was one particular paragraph in our Constitutions which I presume was based on this wish of Francis:

> Trees, whether for fruit, ornament or the convenience of the Friars, may not be cut down without the consent of the Discreets and the permission of the Provincial, unless there be question of a dead tree soon to be replaced by a new planting, (1921 Const. #324)

Anti-woodchipping groups would again rejoice, although Francis is not arguing out of a desire to preserve a particular habitat and so keep safe the ecological network that had developed, but because Christ was nailed to wood from a tree. And the Garden! To leave a place for flowers, not the specially developed flowers that we can buy down at the nursery, but wild-flowers that would bloom in their own time. Some years ago I was in Italy, and I was amazed at the way the Italians used every bit of space for their gardens. There were plots alongside the railway lines and alongside the roads; what was growing in these plots differed, although there were usually several things in each plot. In one area grape vines would predominate, in another tomatoes, and there would be beans, and other plants I could not identify, but there was one thing they had very definitely in common: every square metre of gorund was cultivated (I could tell, just from this, when we passed over the border into France!) And Francis was telling the friar gardener not to clear all the ground, but to leave a part where the wild-flowers could bloom! And the reason for this was the phrases about "Rose" and "Lily" taken from scripture and applied to Christ.

And finally in that passage we are given another reason why Francis wanted this: to encourage everyone to praise God.

As a postscript to this section, listen to Celano rhapsodizing about this aspect of Francis' character:

> A simple piety and pious simplicity! Toward little worms even he glowed with a very great love, for he had read this saying about the Saviour: I am a worm, not a man. Therefore he picked them up from the road and placed them in a safe place, lest they be crushed by the feet of the passerby. (1 Cel 80)

The bond between Francis and Creatures

There can be no doubt about the scriptural and liturgical inspiration for these actions of Francis. But there was more than this to how Francis regarded and treated creatures. Francis found joy in creatures because he saw the goodness of God in them. And there was a definite bond between Francis and creatures that was mutual, two-sided. There are

many accounts in the early biographies, but this passage from St. Bonaventure recounts several with relative brevity:

> Another time St. Francis was offered a live hare at Greccio. He put it on the ground and left it free to go where it pleased, but the moment he called it, it jumped into his arms. He held it affectionately and seemed to pity it like a mother. Then, warning it gently not to let itself be caught again, he allowed it to go free. But every time he put it on the ground to let it off, the hare immediately jumped into his arms, as if in some mysterious way it realized the love he had for it. Eventually Francis had the friars bring it off to a safer place in the woods.
>
> In the same way a rabbit which was caught on an island in lake Trasimene was afraid of everyone else, but entrusted itself to Francis' embrace as if that were its home. When he was crossing lake Piediluco on his way to Greccio, a fisherman offered him a water-bird. Francis took it gladly and then opened his arms to let it off but it would not go. The saint stood there praying with his eyes raised to heaven, and after a long time he came back to himself and once more encouraged the bird to fly away and praise God. When he had given it his blessing, the bird showed its joy by the movements of its body and then it flew off. On the same lake he was offered a live fish which he addressed as brother, as usual, and put it back in the water beside the boat. The fish played about there in front of him, as if it were attracted by his affection, and would not go away until he gave it his permission with a blessing. (LM VIII, 8)

In some ways Francis was less than an environmentalist. . . . Yet Francis was also more than an environmentalist.

If there were just one of these stories, we could say, 'Isn't it a charming story,' and never for a moment believe it actually happened. But there are several, all speaking of a special way in which animals acted towards and responded to Francis. In the above passage Bonaventure has linked a series of stories about how animals wanted to stay in Francis' company; but there are also many other stories which illustrate how animals paid heed to what Francis told them. Edward Armstrong, in his book, *Saint Francis: Nature Mystic,* dismisses these stories as inventions, making remarks like:

> The element of truth in the story is that Francis was the sort of person to whom people would naturally bring a distressed animal. (p. 192)

Probably true, but not necessarily, because thirteenth-century Italians were not the animal lovers that many twentieth-century Anglo-Saxons are. And, even if true, not enough. For me Armstrong is carrying scepticism too far. We have heard of people who have a special bond with animals, who can inspire trust in animals who are normally afraid of humans. Francis was obviously such a person.

This bond that Francis had with animals was not universal. There were some creatures with whom Francis had no special affinity. About a year before his death, Francis was living in a small cell in a friary near the Poor Clares at San Damiano.

> His eyes caused him so much pain that he could neither lie down nor sleep, so to speak, which was very bad for his eyes and for his health. A few times he was on the point of resting and sleeping, but in the house and in the cell made of mats, that had been made ready for him, there were so many mice running around here and there, around him and even on him, that they prevented him from taking a rest; they even hindered him greatly in his prayer. They annoyed him not only at night but also during the day. When he ate they climbed up on his table, so much so that he and his companions were of the opinion that it was diabolical intervention. (LP 43)

A very clear description of what happens during a plague of mice! And Francis seemed powerless against this invasion.

And there were some insects that Francis had little time for. In *The Golden Sayings of Brother Giles* we find:

> He also used to say that ants were not very pleasing to the Blessed Francis, because of their exceeding solicitude in collecting their food. (Ch. VIII)

> And when Francis wanted to rebuke "a certain brother in a certain place who never went out for alms but always ate more than several together at table," he addressed him,

> Go your way, brother fly, for you want to eat the sweat of our brothers and to do nothing in God's work. You are like brother drone who wants to be first to eat the honey, though he does not do the work of the bees. (2 Cel 75)

Not the words of one who understands the workings of the environment, the necessity of drones for the future of bees, the environmental niche that flies occupy! Yet a very moral Francis, who expects insects also to observe moral behaviour.

It is worth noting that Francis was not a vegetarian; he did not eat much meat, because he fasted so often and going without meat was part of the regimen of fasting at that time, but on occasion he did eat meat. There was one occasion recorded by Jordan of Giano when Francis was in the East, and the times for fasting were extended by the vicars he left

behind to look after the Order. When Francis learned of this, he was sitting at table "where meat had been placed before him for him to eat." He consulted Peter of Catanii, "My lord Peter, what shall we do?" Peter evaded the issue, "Ah, my lord Francis, whatever pleases you, for you have the authority." Finally Francis decided, "Let us then eat, according to the Gospel, what has been placed before us." (Giano 12) And there are his wishes regarding the celebration of Chistmas one particular year:

> When the question arose about eating meat that day, since that Christmas day was a Friday, he replied, saying to Brother Morico: "You sin, Brother, calling the day on which the Child was born to us a day of fast. It is my wish," he said, "that even the walls should eat meat on such a day, and if they cannot, they should be smeared with meat on the outside." (2 Cel 199)

The Canticle of Creatures

There was another aspect of how Francis viewed creation. The liturgy is full of psalms and canticles of praise for God, including many that call on creation to praise God. The one that comes to mind most readily is the Canticle from the Book of Daniel, the Canticle of the Three Young Men,

> Bless the Lord, all works of the Lord, sing praise to him and highly exalt him for ever, (Can. 3:35)

going through the whole list of creation, calling on all creation to praise the Lord. Francis was familiar with this, and often prayed in this way. In his *Letter to All the Faithful* we find, "let every creature in heaven, on earth, in the sea and in the depths, give praise, honour, and blessing to Him." Yes, Francis saw all creatures praising God in a fitting way, all the creatures, that is, except man; as he remarked in one of the Admonitions: "And yet all the creatures under heaven, each according to its nature, serve, know, and obey their Creator better than you." (Adm. 5) And that is probably part of the reason why Francis wanted a part of his garden filled with flowers "so that all who saw the herbs and flowers would be moved to praise God." (SP 118)

But now we come to difficulty. When John Paul II proclaimed Francis the patron saint of ecologists, he referred to his Canticle of Creatures. We would certainly expect that Francis' Canticle would reflect all that we have spoken of so far, would hopefully go further because it was written only about a year and a half before his death, when he was aware that he did not have so long to live, and so might have brought some clearer insight to his view of creation. But there is no mention of sister lark, or

brother lamb, or sister flower or brother tree. The Canticle is built around the four classical elements, earth, water, air and fire, with an introduction about the sun, moon and stars, and two bits tacked on at the end (we know the occasions when they were added) about peace and death.

We should not be surprised about the inclusion of Sister Water, we have seen the special reverence in which Francis held her. Nor should we be surprised about the inclusion of Brother Fire. There are several anecdotes about the special regard Francis had for Brother Fire; one will suffice.

> One day when he was seated near the hearth, his linen drawers caught fire the whole length of his leg without his being aware of it. He felt the heat, but when one of his companions saw that his clothes were burning and hurried to extinguish them, he said to him: "No, my dearest brother, don't harm our Brother Fire." He did not let him put it out.

This is typical of the attitude Francis took to Brother Fire; the story goes on:

> The brother ran to find blessed Francis' brother guardian and led him to the place. They extinguished the fire but against Francis' will. He did not even want them to extinguish a candle, a lamp, or fire, as one does when it is no longer needed, so great was his tenderness and pity for that creature. (LP 49)

So the presence of Brother Fire is explained and Francis also had devotion to Brother Sun, because God "through him gives light to our eyes by day," (SP 119) and in Scripture the Lord is called The Sun of Justice.

But that does not explain the inclusion of Sister Moon and the stars, of Brother Wind and Mother Earth, nor does it explain the exclusion of all the animals, especially his favourites, brother lamb and sister lark.

There is another aspect of our difficulty. Writers on things Franciscan nearly always refer (to the extent that it is virtually a truism) to how closely St. Clare followed St. Francis, that Clare was the most perfect follower of Francis, that Clare was the best exponent of Francis' teaching. Yet on this particular area of the position of creatures, and on the special relationship that Francis had with them, Clare is virtually silent. Apart from a few simple references of the type that could be expected from anyone, there is only one statement of her outlook, and that is found in the proceedings of the Cause for her Canonization. One of the witnesses was Sister Angeluccia.

> The witness also said that whenever the blessed Mother sent the lay sisters outside the monastery, she admonished them that they should praise God for every beautiful green and flowering plant they saw; and that for every human being they saw, and for every creature, always and in all things God must be praised. (Witness 14; De Robeck p. 223).

So we must look elsewhere to find an answer to our question.

When Francis wrote the main part of the Canticle (The other parts came later), he had borne the marks of the stigmata for about six months, and he had found from God an answer to his fears about the future of the Order (that the Order was God's and not Francis'). Yet he was severely afflicted with a disease that made him nearly blind and ultrasensitive to any light, and other sickness made it clear that he did not have long to live. It is from this position of pain and peace that the Canticle makes sense; pain, because it can purify, clear away the dross and the unessential, and make clear the basics; peace, because without peace of heart how could anyone who was suffering at all compose such limpid, lyrical lines. I do not claim to find in the Canticle what Francis saw in it, only a realization that when I am in a comparable situation of pain and peace I will have an understanding. Eloi Leclerc, at the end of his book, *The Canticle of Creatures*, refers to his own experience during the Second World War to explain his personal appreciation of the Canticle. It is April 1945, and he and four other Franciscans are part of a trainload of people being moved they know not where by the SS.

> Black night fills our souls. And yet, on the morning of April 26 when one of us is in his last moments and the light has almost left his eyes, what rises from our hearts to our lips is not a cry of despair or rebellion, but a song, a song of praise: Francis of Assisi's Canticle of Brother Sun! Nor do we have to force ourselves to sing it. It rises spontaneously out of our darkness and nakedness, as though it were the only language fit for such a moment.
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> At such a moment, astounding though it seems, we experience wonder before the world; we experience the sacred in the world. Such an experience is possible only in extreme deprivation of soul and body. Only in utter distress and need can we fully appreciate a mouthful of bread, a sip of water, a ray of sunlight, and now and then, like a visitor from another world, the warm greeting of a passerby. (Pp. 234 - 35)

This does not give THE answer to our question. It tells us the direction one person was looking when he found AN answer.

Francis as an Environmentalist

But we still have other questions to answer.

In the cloister of Santa Maria degli Angeli (the basilica that encloses the original small church of the Portiuncula, and also where the major religions of the world started their special day of prayer for peace), there is a statue of St. Francis, a rather special statue. Francis is standing there

with his arms folded, looking upwards, presumably in prayer, and resting on his arms is a nest, and in the nest are two doves. The special thing about this statue is that the doves are live. Now I am virtually certain that Francis never supported a nest of doves like this. And I am certain that mnany who see that statue gushingly exclaim, "How cute!" or "How lovely!", and feel quite sentimental.

In the *Fioretti* we find what is probably the best known of all stories about Francis and animals: "How St. Francis Tamed the Very Fierce Wolf of Gubbio". (Fior 21) Since the story is so well known, just a brief outline. The town of Gubbio was being menaced by a fierce wolf. Francis was visiting the town, heard about the wolf, and resolved to do something about the situation. He halted the wolf's attack on him with the sign of the cross, gave him a sermon on the evil of his ways, and persuaded him to live at peace with the townspeople. In return they would feed him. And for the next two years, until the wolf died, the pact was kept by him and the townspeople. This never happened, although there may be some trace of historicity in a bandit nicknamed "Wolf." It is the kind of story about Francis that can lead animal lovers to exclaim, "isn't he wonderful!", and feel quite sentimental.

Neither of these things, the statue nor the story, is historical. Yet both capture well what was Francis' attitude towards creatures: On the surface a mere lover of animals; yet once one looks more deeply, one finds a respect, even a reverence for animals, and a presumption of basic equality. There is an expectation that animals also have moral duties. There is a personal charism that creates a bond with animals. There is the basic conviction that God is reflected in each creature; that is why there is the basic equality; that is why creatures are brother and sister. And there is the perceived need for every creature to praise the creator.

At the beginning of this talk I issued a challenge, to distinguish between ecologist, nature lover, environmentalist, animal lover, pantheist, animal liberationist. And there still remains one question, indeed our basic question. How does Francis fit into this gallery? I offer you a framework to help in working this out, a triangle with the three vertices of God, man, and creation, a triangle whose sides represent the relationship between each pair of vertices. For an atheist the picture is simplified — to a straight line. Without God, the only relationship is between man and nature. A pantheist sees equality (in some form or other) in the two lines connecting God to man and to creation. And so he also has a straight-line picture. For those whose picture is a triangle, different views will produce quite different relationship along that bottom line connecting man and creation.

Back in the seventeenth century Rene Descartes wrote about,

> practical [philosophy], by means of which, knowing the force and action of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens, and all the other bodies that surround us, as distinctly as we know the various crafts of our artisans, we might also apply them in the same way to all the uses to which they are adapted, and thus render ourselves the lords and possessors of nature. (Leclerc, p. 11)

"Lords and possessors of nature," not an attitude that would appeal either to Francis or to environmentalists, and so an attitude that illustrates how much Francis was an environmentalist.

In some ways Francis was less than an environmentalist, because he did not have the knowledge and understanding of the interrelationship (at the natural level) between different plants and animals that distinguishes the environmentalist from the mere animal lover or nature lover. Yet Francis was also more than an environmentalist. How many environmentalists of today could we find that have Francis' charism of a special friendship with animals; and how many could honestly refer to animals as brother and sister. Yet it is mainly in what is added through the vertical dimension of the relationship with God that Francis' relationship with creation is more than what any environmentalist can find. And that, of course, is the aspect of Francis that made him a saint, and made him eligible to be appointed the patron saint of ecologists. Ω

The Butterfly

Though the butterfly
seems as delicate
as the film and
flutter of his
intrepid wings —
who wakes us from
the death of
protracted winters?
And who unwraps himself
at the first
scent of spring
to make a rainbow
covenant display
of resurrection
but he?

William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O.

Prayer and Ministry in the Light of Francis of Assisi

SHAWN REYNOLDS, O.F.M.

St. Francis of Assisi wrote and said many prayers, but as Thomas of Celano states in his classic description of prayer, he was "not so much praying as becoming himself a prayer." (2 Cel. 95) He was a man of prayer who continually searched for the God of Jesus Christ in his prayer, longing in relationship to better know this God, to be One with this God, and to know what this God wanted of him.

Through prayer, Francis came to know God as the Poor One suffering in the world in Jesus Christ, and he came to realize that in his relationship with God, he was called to join God in this. He saw God as the Suffering One who "lets Himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross," and yet the One who also raises Jesus from the dead. The Crucified Jesus is intrinsic to both the reality of the resurrection and God. This is focal in the life of Francis — that God is completely powerful in His self-emptying.

As Francis became more identified with the Crucified Poor Christ, he deeply recognized who God was — the God who suffers and brings new life, the God who takes responsibility for the world in this way through a complete taking from death itself to a complete renewal of responsibility. Francis, in recognizing this person of Jesus, risen from death, began to realize an inseparability from a new vocation in the world. Because Jesus, the Word made flesh, was responsible and active in the world, Francis journeying in His footprints was to be also. In coming to a new knowledge

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and affirmation of God he came also to a new sort of responsibility and action in his life. He knew that his walk in life was to be a constant journey from the quiet mountainside to the busy marketplace, from quiet communion with God to an active participation in His salvific cause. For union with Christ in faith means union with His being for God and for others in history.

English theologian, Simon Tugwell, says that we should not make too sharp a distinction between sanctification and mission: both have their source in a common love life given us by Christ in the Holy Spirit. This love is obtained through prayer and expressed through deeds. Heaven brought with it the peace and love of God enriching Francis for ministry. As St. Paul says, "If I have the gift of prophecy and, with full knowledge comprehend all mysteries, if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand my body over to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." (1 Cor 13, 2-3) Personal love of Christ is inherent if ministry is to be expressed in a mature way, and this maturity is fostered through prayer.

Only in sharing what God has freely given, namely His life, can individuals authentically transform their community in the knowledege which comes from God. Those maturing in an activated faith are at the very heart of social renewal, since it is through union with Christ that "we are truly his handiwork to lead the life of good deeds which God has prepared for us in advance.." (Eph 2:10) Through prayer Francis came to realize this integration of sanctification and mission, of prayer and action, being confirmed that the isolated life was not the life for him and his brothers.

Francis saw the sense of action intrinsic in community — that truth simply cannot be commnicated or appreciated unless it is received together with others and allowed to inform a life of joint action. David F. Ford states that "Prayer is first of all a recognition that we are all together being held in a fundamental relationship of faithfulness by God, and to discern the nature and quality of that faithfulness is to see how intrinsic to it is our being in community." ("Prayer and Righteous Action," p. 345) St. Paul sums up this notion of shared action and prayer as inseparable from the reality of community in 2 Corinthians (1:3-12), God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God..." It is God who gives life in prayer, that we might give life to others in need, all with the gift of His love, all in the context of us, of community. Francis realized this importance and interdependence of prayer, action, and community as he allowed the Spirit to guide him.

In coming to a new knowledge and affirmation of God, he came also to a new sort of responsibility and action in his life.

However, prayer is not necessary for action. But the character of action will be greatly affected by the way in which its hopes, freedoms, and responsibility arise. Prayer does nurture the fruits integral in Christian action. For according to St. Francis, no one could make progress in God's service without it. It will enhance greater work because one can become more sensitive to what people are really asking, not imposing upon them that which one believes they need. It is easy to understand the nurturing "womb" energy of prayer and its necessity for the active "phallic" energy of ministry. But does action influence the contemplative? Does active transmission of the Gospel have an effect on the way one prays? The answer is yes with Francis as he becomes a minor.

Francis' prayer was his expression of his relationship to his God. For Francis the essential condition for prayer was detachment of heart and mind. This he mentions in the Earlier Rule (22:26), "I beg all my brothers, both the ministers and the 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." When God calls an individual to a deeper relationship with Him, He often places him/her in a state of poverty and privation. There are many examples of this in the Bible — Abraham, Israel, and the intense example of Job.

Francis knew that he could not concentrate his attention on the affective level of being and still hope for great spiritual enlightenment. He could not attach himself to talents or possessions that would pass away, and at the same time fix all his attention on the Lord. Francis realized that detachment was an essential condition for prayer, and such a state of detachment in the heart presupposes a certain amount of privation with regard to the transient material things of the world. This privation made him open to the desire for the spiritual things which the Lord offered him in abundance. Francis knew that he could receive this abundance of heavenly riches if he was willing to look to God with "a clean heart and a pure mind" detached from that which fades away.

Simplicity influenced Francis' prayer life not for the sake of poverty

itself, but for the sake of liberation helpful to attention and concentration in prayer. For all prayer presupposes a recollection, a return to one's inward self, and therefore a detachment from the many external things upon which one may lean for greater security. As Ives Raguin states, "Simplicity of life engendered by poverty turns into an urgent invitation to give attention to the mystery, and this becomes quite naturally the prayer of simplicity in the awaiting of the Lord's coming." (*Poverty and Prayer*, p. 323) One who lives in the midst of many things can easily find it difficult to recapture the simplicity needed for prayer, the simplicity needed for a "clean heart and a pure mind." Christ wanted Martha to know this as he said, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, few things are needed, or only one." (Lk. 10:41-42) This simplification of desires, attitudes, and thoughts, Francis grasped in fact in his poverty as it influenced his prayer. When one's environment is simple, it becomes an essential element of the inward process. This element is captured in his words as found in the *Fioretti* (Chap. 13). "It (Poverty) is that heavenly virtue by which all earthly transitory things are trodden under foot, and every hindrance is removed from the soul, so that it can commune freely with the eternal God... It was the companion of Christ on the Cross, it rose again with Christ... it protects us with the armor of true humility and charity."

Poverty calls to self-transcendence by taking away everything on which one may tend to lean. It calls us not only to detachment of external things, but also from inward ones as well. Francis wanted nothing that could prevent him from being completely open to the grace of God. As he lived poverty, he saw it as the condition and sign for himself and his brothers of their openness to the mystery of God. As Francis and his brothers lived poorly, they could acquire the riches of the Kingdom.

Francis lived the ultimate form of poverty, that which gave him the ultimate form of prayer or relationship with God. It became real in his experience of journeying through life without any possessions and no longer being anything, as he was made like God. The prayer of Jesus became the prayer of Francis, and the prayer of Jesus consisted in the living out of His relationship with the Life of the Father and His heavenly riches devoid from the things of this world, and from everything worldly power can give. This was Francis goal — to become rich in the all-powerfulness of God, as God's life became his life.

Francis was a man of prayer. He was a man who found himself and his God in prayer; a man who came to know his God as the Suffering One and the One who raises to new life; a man who realized the integral dynamic of prayer, action, and community. He realized the importance of prayer to nurture and to celebrate in the spiritual journey, and yet he

also knew the affect of his poverty upon his life and prayer. Prayer celebrated his life and his life affected his prayer, and his prayer was to adore the Most High God in all his being and in all his doing. Ω

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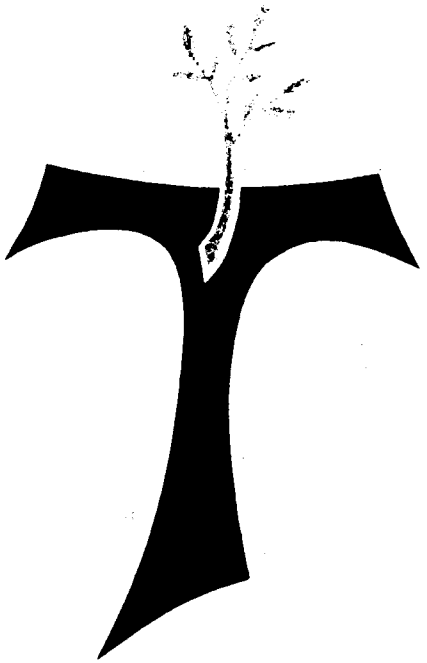

Variations

whisper of the blackbird winter awaits
the gramineae have suspended flights
you are not the silence of the stream, the murmur of the reed
I walked without trespassing on the attentive immobility
there near the linden the almond tree is yielding its joy

*
* *

your glance changes me into what I am
love is the non-return of the river longing for its source

*
* *

what I shall only be able to accomplish in ignominy
within the confines of my being bursting
I hold you in my arms in order to accomplish my death
telluric agitations of the sea

*
* *

listen to dawn resounding within me

*
* *

the spirit is brandishing its blade in my flesh

*
* *

the sea calls to me and recedes
the broken wing flutters above deathwatches

*
* *

light is shattered against the rock
the road facing the inland sea is not immobile
incantation of death which comes up from the whirlpool of mingled waters
the sea unfurls with the taste of my blood

*
* *

the hills canter in the amber beeze
I embraced your laughter in the rising sun
your laugh, the invasion of chant, the note's
unfurling
your laugh, the invasion of waters whose roaring
is the note calling itself, the continuous weave which
chants its frothy trickling shimmer

my love flutters its wings over the crest of the hills
you are the ascent sparkling its radiances toward the dark night
you are the ascent toward fluid lucidity

*
* *

you are present
the sky bows the nape of my neck
I sit waiting for the sign
you are present
daylight draws out its ellipse the city stamps its feet
you are present
I have forgotten the original lamb
silence channeled from silence
song consumed by the song
you are present
lyrics surge from nowhere
broken mirror empty glance
presence

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On the Manner in which some Friars Minor, Gathered at Monte Casale, Reflected on the Priority of "Justice and Peace"

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M.

During those days — more precisely during the six years stretching from 1985 – 1991 — there arose within the Fraternity of the Franciscan Order a lengthy, animated and many-sided but, at the same time, fraternal discussion on a "priority" of the Gospel life which their Father, Brother Francis, had left them; a priority also which of late had been given greater emphasis in the last Chapter of Pentecost. It is one which Brother Francis taught consistently. It is: "a life without property;" it is "the preferential option for the poor;" it is the "commitment to Justice and Peace."

Several brothers throughout the world had already begun to practice this directive courageously and fearlessly and to live out its consequences while others, with an equally holy zeal for the Kingdom of God and the good of the Fraternity, considered this "Priority," together with some of the things it implied, as dangerous, "liberal" and modernist. To these it seemed altogether too "political" and "horizontal." The task of discernment of the origins, the content, the purpose and the implications of the above "Priority" in the light of the Gospel seemed a difficult one. Thus it was that the Brother Minister General, in union with his council, called the General Definitorium, decided that there should be a meeting in the year 1987 of those brothers who in their "Conferences" had been given the task of introducing, patiently explaining and putting into practice the franciscan commitment to "Justice and Peace." By the grace of God such a meeting would bring all to a better knowledge of the second "Priority" adopted by the Chapter, in such a way that all the brothers, wherever the Lord might have sent them, could from then on observe "melius catholice" (Test. 34) the Rule of Francis and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus.

The author, a General Councilor of the Order of Friars Minor, is a member of the Province of Saxonia. He holds a doctorate in theology and taught at his Province's theologate before being elected provincial. His Fioretti-like reports are being published in various languages.

Many brothers had proposed to the Brother Minister that he should convoke such an important meeting in the distant Republic of the Philippine Islands so as to present to all the participants, especially those coming from Rome, the unique possibility of seeing and studying how it was possible — especially through prayer and the peaceful and peace-oriented action of the lord Bishops as also of many brothers and sisters — that "the mighty should be cast down from their thrones and the lowly be raised" (Lk. 1.52); in effect, how a more just and democratic government should be established for the benefit of the poor.

Others among the brothers proposed that the meeting should be held in the American Sub-Continent so that they could see and behold with the eyes of the poor the conditions of life there as they had an opportunity of doing during the famous meeting at Bahia in the year of the Lord 1983, and of following the example of so many Cardinals, Bishops, theologians and Basic Ecclesial Communities. All this group had for years now begun to be "contemplativus in liberatione" and "liberans in contemplatione". Many brothers and sisters in the faith were in no doubt about the fact that through the "praxis liberadora" on the part of these local Churches many branches and new fruits had blossomed on the tree of the Church and likewise on that of the Fraternity; so much so that other local Churches and Fraternities who had not yet come to experience this praxis and contemplation were surprised and amazed.

Having heard all of these proposals the Brother Minister decided to hold a meeting of the delegates of the "Conferences" as also the members of the General Definitorium at Monte Casale on the Italian peninsula, in the very place, that is, where Brother Francis had taught his first companions the Gospel manner of living with the poor, the marginalized and even with robbers and bandits in an attitude of christian peace and evangelical justice.

Thus it happened that the above-mentioned brothers duly joined one another in the famous hermitage of Monte Casale to be mutually evangelized and to teach one another what a life of "strict observance" should be today in accordance with the second "Priority" of the last General Chapter.

* * *

Having assembled in Monte Casale and having contemplated on and for a goodly period called upon God who, according to the teachings of Brother Francis is also named "Peace" and "Justice" (cf. A1D), they began to read in silence that well-known writing (cf. LP 115; Flor. 26) in which our Founder clearly teaches that the brothers should behave towards all in a fraternal manner and without prejudices, that the poor and thieves have a right to share our goods, and that it is through respect and justice

that a solid base for lasting peace is built. For it may be well to recall that the brothers who lived in Monte Casale in those days dedicated themselves exclusively to the "contemplative dimension." However they felt very perturbed and disturbed by some thieves who lived in a nearby wood and who from time to time approached the convent to beg for alms. Unfortunately they had also stolen from some people who were passing through the wood on their way to bring food to the brothers of Francis. These brothers, being very angry with the thieves, upbraided them for their manner of living. They gave them a few dry crumbs of bread, adding sundry pious and severe counsels as to how they should change their detestable way of life.

The story goes on to say that on his arrival at Monte Casale Brother Francis proposed an "alternative" manner of action towards those poor thieves. He insisted that the brothers should always offer them the very best bread and the best wine that they had available, with great confidence in the Lord who is the Giver of all good things. They should give them other dainties also, all of them sweetened by sentiments of respect, of solidarity and of justice. Because, continued Francis, only by sharing, by compassion and by a genuinely christian humanity can thieves be brought to conversion. And so it happened that once the brothers had first of all been won over to the practice of justice and peace, then the thieves, touched to the heart by the example of the brothers, opened themselves to the Word of God and were converted. Some of them even entered the Fraternity.

For a long period of time all the brothers allowed the message conveyed by this story to penetrate their hearts.

* * *

Forthwith the brothers assembled in Monte Casale, moved by holy zeal and the reading of the Sacred Scriptures, began to interpret the narrative in the light of their own experiences, helped by modern "social science." By this means they hoped to gain a clearer vision of their commitment in favour of Justice and Peace according to the mind of Brother Francis.

First to speak was a certain brother Peter from a region in France where he had laboured together with many other brothers of St. Francis as a simple workman in a factory. He gained his livelihood by the work of his own hands and in this way shared the life of the labour force as well as the lot of the unemployed when he was out of work. With evident emotion he told them how throughout the whole of human history the "working class" had been abused and "marginalized" by unjust and discriminatory treatment at the hands of the powerful. The result was that, whether due to indigence, lock-out or unemployment, to low wages or

all that today goes under the name of "unjust structures," the poor had been reduced to misery, desperation and, at times, to "revolution." He urgently requested all the brothers, wherever they might be, whether in hermitages, in small fraternities, in parishes, in General Curias or in more "committed" fraternities, to throw open their hearts and their houses to the poor and the marginalized. In this way might be fulfilled the mandate of the meeting in Bahia which laid down that all the brothers should take up a position in favour of an "integral salvation and liberation." This should indeed involve much prayer but it should also involve personal and concrete support of trade unions and all other initiatives suitable for the promotion and protection of the dignity and rights of man (cf. "The Gospel Challenges Us," 31).

Another brother, a native of a country belonging to the Old Continent, a man trained in the modern sciences but at the same time very devoted to the things of God, had meditated upon and then duly "analyzed" the occurence at Monte Casale after the following manner: Without mincing words he declared that the thieves mentioned in the text were those who today are the victims of an exploiting class. This brother went on immediately to say that this statement did not imply that he wished to be the defender or protagonist of a certain atheistic social theory which sprang up in German lands at the end of the last century and which had been rejected several times by the Roman "Dicastery" which defends the purity of the faith. The brother went on to say that in order to overcome and finally eradicate such idolatrous and abominable "ideologies" together with their lamentable consequences, it was essential to eliminate their causes and their "fundamentum in re;" in other words, the injustices within social groups and within nations, by introducing that kind of fraternity and justice which are the visible and tangible signs of the Kingdom of God. He added that unless there is justice for all there will never be peace in this world. He ended his remarks by recalling that the Lord Pope, in his innumerable letters to the nations and his frequent pilgrimages to those places where the Lord appears miraculously in the poor, had never ceased to proclaim and to recall this doctrine: "Opus Justitiae Pax." All the brothers meditated on this important testimony for a long time.

* * *

Next, another European brother intervened to state his objection in a respectful but nevertheless very clear manner. He said the Lord Pope had forbidden by virtue of holy obedience all bishops, priests, brothers and sisters from participating in the rough and tumble and the vices of human politics. He further recalled that all the brothers were obliged to proclaim and to live out the preferential option for the poor in the silence of their hearts and in penance rather than by wordy declarations or by

showy demonstrations. Further, he emphasized that the same Lord Pope in his letter to the last Chapter had pointed out that poverty ought to be part of the life of the same Friars Minor before they began to proclaim it to others. Finally he declared his conviction that people in general and the poor in particular need to be freed not so much from "unjust structures" as from their own sins.

At this point a brother from Africa intervened to enlighten the assembled brothers concerning his interpretation of the events of Monte Casale. His understanding was that Brother Francis, by means of supernatural love, of his own conversion and his "mystical" predilection for the poor and marginalized, had created a new reality, one which, however, implied "political" consequences. Or was it not, rather, a healthy and very necessary form of social politics which Brother Francis had elaborated by means of love, namely, the freeing of the thieves from their poverty, their margination and their isolation in the forest, bringing them back again to society and in this manner contributing to the construction of a more just society and consequently a more peaceful one? This brother maintained the thesis, a daring but brilliant one, that the commitment to justice and peace is an expression of faith in God who creates, transforms and perfects his creation, a creation always rooted in divine mystery but one which always carries with it concrete attitudes of liberation, even with respect to what may be justly called "social sin."

Those who had heard the two foregoing interpretations did not wish to contradict the one or the other, seeing that each one seemed to justify itself.

Then the brother who came from Central America wished to round off these points of view. He said he was convinced that he could apply the franciscan lesson of Monte Casale to entire communities of his vast Sub-Continent. Before undertaking his journey he had passed by the city which bears the name of Our Most Holy Redeemer, SAN SALVADOR, in order to pray at the tomb of that archbishop cowardly assassinated by some enemies of the poor at the moment in which he celebrated the Holy Eucharist. He related how the simple people of those regions had already canonized Bishop Oscar Arnulfo and proclaimed him martyr and protector of the poor. The poor now held his tomb in veneration as also the tombs of some friars minor who had been assassinated for the cause of the faith and their public stand in defense of those who suffer; so much so that before the tomb of the blessed Romero there were more people to be found in fervent prayer to the Lord of Life than were to be seen in so many churches and sacred places in the city of Rome. The brother went on to say that in modern times entire nations have become the innocent victims of the greed and the warlike intentions of a few powerful individuals. Was it not true, he exclaimed, that at the meetings of Medellin and Puebla the bishops had solemnly proclaimed that "the rich are becoming every day richer and the poor every day poorer"? Is it not, perhaps, a hitherto unheard-of-reality that the Lord Pope had confirmed such a statement? The brother ended in tears maintaining that it was encessary to speak of "social sin" and to evangelize not only people individually but "sinful and unjust structures" as well. Only when the rich, under the influence of such an integral evangelization relinquish their privileges, their arms and their protective barriers, and share the goods of the earth with everyone, restoring to each one his dignity and his rights, only then shall there be true peace. "That is my reading of Monte Casale today."

* * *

There was another period of respectful meditation on what had been said, and of humble prayer. Then another brother from Europe expressed the desire to speak. He is the one who represents those regions and countries which lie to the east. He began by thanking everybody for the solidarity and help which the brothers of other parts of the world had given to these Provinces in difficult moments known to all, particularly in moments of persecution and penury. Nevertheless he was constrained to fraternally reproach some brothers from regions which lie towards the west for their imprudent, and, he would say, "precipitate" dialogue with the dominant ideologies not only in eastern countries but also with "virulent" ones in other parts of the world. It is impossible, he held, to trust in the proclamations of peace made by the powerful in the so-called "socialist" countries, because they do not recognize God nor do they not grant any freedom to the Church.

These distinctions were not underestimated by the brothers, for they corresponded to the truth. However, another brother, this one from the Far East, wished to submit to the judgment of all his vision of what according to him should be the authentic manner of dialogue. In this context the brother recalled not only the gesture of Francis with the so-called "thieves" but also the eloquent gesture of the Lord Pope in Assisi on 27 October of last year when, humbly confessing his faith in Jesus Christ, he had offered to "saracens and men of different faiths" his friendship and christian hospitality, and had opened up to all without distinction a dialogue free of prejudices, as well as praying with them all for peace in the world. Was not this, asked the brother, a truly prophetic gesture? Is it not also our duty and our salvation to see in all men and women of good will, in all races, religions and convictions the good and positive worth which God, the Lord of all, wishes to foment in all people at all times, and not only in christians who many times in history have not known how to fulfil the commandments of the Lord?

And so the brother from Asia expressed his amazement at the fact, that — according to some news reports published in the Bulletin *Fraternitas* of the General Curia — several European brothers had recently declared their intention of electing as patron of "Justice and Peace" John of Capistrano, a holy man but unfortunately a no less belicose man. For it was a matter of common knowledge that this famous brother, in accordance with the spirit of the time, had distinguished himself more by the fact that he had organized punitive missions and crusades against the Muslims, the Turks, the Jews, the Utraquists and the Hussites than by the sweetness, spirit of meekness and peace-making of his Father Francis in Monte Casale. He underlined the fact that it was not for nothing that by a Bull of the Curia of the Lord Pope, John of Capistrano had been proclaimed patron of military chaplains. Therefore no better patron of the second priority and of active non-violence was to be found than Brother Francis himself, "for the glory of God and the good of all humanity."

Finally the brother from the northern portion of the Americas decided to give his contribution. He said, first of all, that it was a deep conviction of his and of several other brothers from those territories that from the contemplation of the Word made flesh and the conversion of the heart to the Lord of life there would and should emerge visible and unmistakeable gestures against death and in favour of life and peace. And he pointed out one example: Many brothers and sisters of those regions and the custom of coming together in prayer and severe fasting at those places where the powerful were constructing and testing very powerful arms destined for intercontinental wars, nay even for interplanetary wars. These arms, he said, are an insult to God and are the cause of death to many poor people even here and now. For even before they are set off, the money spent on their production should be considered as stolen from the poor, many of whom are dying of hunger and illness. Public expressions of protest such as those taking place in the Nevada desert, for example, should not be considered in any way "political." Rather they are a public act of faith in God and at the same time a faithful following of Brother Francis who, in his Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples, had made an appeal to the sovereignty of God and to the value of all created things, particularly of human life. So with the same mentality with which Francis had offered bread, wine and cheese freely and gratuitously to the brothers thieves, so also ought we, brothers minor of today, contribute to the construction of a new society and of a new "global sociopolitical order." So this was definitely his reading of the episode of Monte Casale: The poor then and now are not thieves but rather the victims of cultural and economic dependence. They have a right not so much to alms as to the goods of others and to our love. Brothers, said he, let us begin!

Once again all remained in silence and in prayer. They gave thanks to the Lord for having shown them the holy mandate which verily he had given them, namely, to follow Jesus poor and crucified in affective and effective solidarity with the poor of all times. And since the commitment to the second "Priority" of the six-year period had by the help of all been clarified in such a wonderful way, they thought it inopportune to approve new laws and directives. For they said that they had already been given sufficient norms in the last Chapters and Plenary Councils. Rather they simply and unanimously enjoined on brother Gerard, the one who in these days is the "coordinator" of all the matter dealt with, that he should continue his work "in the spirit of Monte Casale" and be assured of the support of many brothers in the Provinces and Vice-Provinces.

With that the brothers closed this fruitful meeting with a prayer which the Lord had inspired them at that moment to say in honour of the "Marian Year" recently proclaimed, and for their whole mission:

"Hail Mary, Mother of God and of the poor, pray for us, sinners and faint-hearted, so that we may trust in the Spirit of the Lord now while peoples are suffering and striving for justice, and also at the hour when they shall attain justice so that all of us may live in peace. Amen."

And the brothers returned to their respective fraternities to put into practice all that they had heard and seen.

For the praise of Christ. Amen.

Haec omnia vidit, audivit et fideliter conscripsit Frater Hermannus Transalpinus, tempore Quadragesimae A. D. 1987.

Book Reviews

A History of the Jews. By Paul Johnson. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1987. Pp. 644. Cloth, $25.00.

Reviewed by Peter F. Macaluso, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History at Montclair State College, Upper Montclair, N.J., and Adjunct Professor of History, St. Peter's College, Jersey City, N.J.

Paul Johnson, author of the classic best seller, *Modern Times*, has written a provocative *A History of the Jews*. The force of this book comes from his narrative skills and his response to the question of whether human history has a purpose. Indeed, the book jacket declares his response. "No people has ever insisted more firmly than the Jews that history has a purpose and humanity a destiny" (p. 2). There is a providential theme to this book in which the author indicates how a disproportionate small group of people maintained its identity, rituals and ethical visions and influenced the course of western and world history.

The book is divided into seven parts: Israelites, Judaism, Cathedocracy, Ghetto, Emancipation, Holocaust, and Zion. There are a prologue and epilogue, glossary, source notes and index.

A History of the Jews has been described as the best of its kind in the English language. Paul Johnson is one of the leading journalists in Britain whose invigorating style is often brilliant. He writes with great sensitivity, balance and fairness.

Judaism gave the world ethical monotheism and the ideas derived from it; the divine origin of law and the notion that man is made in God's image. Johnson also says that to the Jews,

> ... we owe the idea of equality before the law, both divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person, of the individual conscience and so of personal redemption; of the collective conscience and so of social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal and love as the foundation of justice, and many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind (p. 585).

Mr. Johnson's account of the holocaust is an excellent summary, as is his rendition of other complex periods in Jewish history. He says that if the earliest Jews were able to look at Jewish history, nothing would surprise them. "They always knew that Jewish society was appointed to be a pilot-project for the entire human race." (p. 586). His work ends with the hope that just as Israel survives today, we too can overcome the threat of nuclear holocaust.

A Man and His God: Contemporary Male Spirituality. By Martin W. Pable, O.F.M.Cap. Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN, 46556. 1988.

Reviewed by F. Edward Coughlin, O.F.M., Ph.D. (Catholic University of America), Director of Ministries, Holy Name Province; Summer Professor, the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, NY.

"Looking everywhere but in" is fast becoming a classic description of modern men. The line is taken from Warren Farrell's social commentary of the last few decades in a book entitled *The Liberated Male*. His more recent work is entitled *Why men are the way they are*. In both works Farrell attempts to speak about men's experience of social pressure, conflicting role expectations, identity issues and relationship needs in our contemporary world.

Martin Pable, O.F.M.Cap. — teacher-counselor-pastoral minister and retreat master — has listened to many men speak about their needs, conflicts and personal difficulties. Men had also expressed to P. their need to make sense out of their lives, to find deeper meaning in their lives and to cultivate a deeper relationship with God. Contemporary male Spirituality: *A Man and His God* was written by a man for men who are searchers, for the wives and families of men who are searching or who may be lost within themselves, and for any woman or man who may be trying to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with a contemporary male.

In a short and very readable volume, P. has attempted to set the experience of contemporary males in the context of faith and God's vision of human life and meaning. Reaching beyond, perhaps more deeply within men's experience of need than Farrell and others, P. offers a definition of spirituality as a way of seeing and believing that demands a vision of life that can guide a man's decision making and behavior. This is P's attempt to offer men "a faith that could pull their lives together (59)."

P. offers five short chapters to assist men in assessing the assumptions and social arrangements of their lives. In this context, he addresses a man's five basic needs — self esteem, work and leisure, relationships and individuality, ongoing growth and development. P. articulates each need in the context of the diverse yet common experiences of the men who have spoken to him. After connecting each need to a core dimension of faith, P. identifies some practical ways for "seekers" and others to make sense out of their lives, to work toward a more human and integrated way of being in the world today.

Male readers will find themselves gently invited to look at their experience. Wives, families and friends may find some assistance in understanding the often unarticulated and confusing inner questions and anxieties of the men in their lives in these pages. Priests and other pastoral ministers will find themselves alerted to the spiritual and ministerial needs of men. P's emphasis on experience and numerous practical suggestions may serve as useful guides for counseling and program development.

P. writes for the everyday man. The man who is searching, sometimes without realizing it, for a center. Concrete examples and the variety of practical suggestions for living a faith vision that

is rooted in the real personal issues of men is a real strength of this book. Presuming neither a great knowledge of theology or spirituality, this volume will invite men — and those who try to love them — to reflect on their experience of need and find some helpful direction.

The author has made a conscious effort to assist men in ways that many others have already attempted to provide guidance and assistance to women in making sense of their lives. For those who come in contact with this book, the title will cause many to question and wonder about its content. For P. these reactions and responses are among the signs of the spiritual journey awakening. Hopefully this book will find its way onto coffee tables, into magazine racks and into the hands of men who are looking for something more but are not sure what that more is.

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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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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

[1]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 on Comfort

Dr. DIANE D. GAUTNEY, Ed. D.

Most of us initially experience receiving comfort from our mother and our father. Ideally, that experience was that our father was a wise and understanding person whom we could depend upon to help us formulate a plan of action and to set limits that would keep us safe and protected. Our mother could be depended upon to be patient, receptive, listening, loving and nurturing.

Eventually, we reach that point in our growth where we are able to make choices born more of internal rather than external values and influences of early experiences of comfort become integrated into our self and become a part of ourselves that we can call on when we need comfort. These parts are what I call the Mother and the Father Presence.

As adults we are constantly confronted with change in our lives. Some are major and easily recognized but most are subtle and become part of our daily existence. For example, we lose our dreams of what could be but will never be; we lose the fantasy that we shall one day go somewhere and accomplish something; and there are the additional griefs and losses in our relationships with others. These constitute the mournings of our life that assail us. It is no wonder that we seek special people and places where we can go to for comfort. However, one of our greatest challenges seems to be in the daily comforting of ourselves.

Comfort seems so elusive in our struggle to cope each day. We work long hours; we make responsible adult decisions; yet we frequently find ourselves at the end of the day feeling like a tired and cranky child. Often we seek to pacify this child within who says, "I want what I want now; I want my strength back right now... with perhaps a martini or a dish of ice cream!" Sometimes on top of everything else there are others who are looking to us for the little strength we have left.

If you replace the word comfort with the word strength, you may

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Dr. Gautney, Ed. D., is staff psychologist at Villa St. John Vianney Hospital in Downingtown, PA. She has drawn from her own professional and personal experiences in composing this reflection.

begin to have a clearer idea of what the exerience of comfort is to our daily struggle. Webster defines comfort as anything that eases grief or sorrow or makes trouble easier to bear. The derivation of the word is from the latin "comfortare" which means to strengthen. We seek to restore the strength that has gone out of us in facing the multiple responsibilities of each day but we may no longer have a loving mother to fix us a delicious snack or a wise father who would say that drinking isn't good for us.

At times we all long to be cared for by a wise father and a nurturing mother. One such way of providing that care is to reach for the Father Presence within ourselves when we come home after a draining day. We could discipline ourselves to set limits by saying no to excess food, drink or further involvement with others. This enables us to bypass quick fix comfort and to gain long term strength. Additionally, this creates the opportunity to call on our Mother Presence to do something positive, nurturing and loving for ourselves e.g. a hot bath, a walk, some relaxing music, prayer). It is in fact these two presences that we seek when we reach within to care for ourselves or seek that comfort from others.

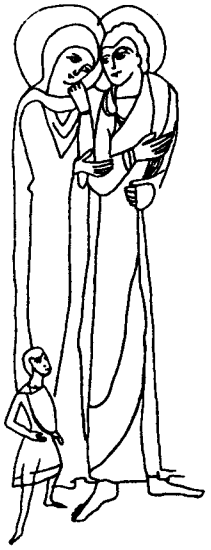
It seems that both the blessing and the promise of the Mother and Father Presences in our life are encapsulated in the Beatitude, "Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted." Blessed are they who are willing to confront in themselves and others the plains, losses, changes, and conflicts of life, for they shall be comforted by a mother/ father presence.

The gospel provides several images that confirm this blessing and promise. In the Garden of Gethsemane (Mathew 26:38) Jesus seeks the comfort of His comrades. He says: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death.... please watch with Me." After praying He returns to find them (Matthew 26:40) sleeping... "Why are you sleeping?" In Matthew's account Jesus asked the apostles to watch and pray with Him where He finally finds comfort is in the Father's Plan (Matthew 26:42) "... Your will be done."

Not only is the failure of Jesus' comrades redeemed by the presence and comfort of the Father's will but later by the presence and comfort of His mother (John 9:25) ... "Standing by the cross of Jesus was His mother." Mary's presence was silent, steadfast and faithful. The scene of Mary standing beneath the cross encapsulates the image of one who has been willing to enter into the painful losses of both her life and her Son's life. Perhaps she had dreams for herself, for her Son, illusions about how things would turn out. As she stood there she must have reflected on the times when she wondered whether she would have the strength to withstand the criticism and doubt of trying to follow the will of God for her life.

Jesus fulfills the blessing and promise of the Beatitude by giving His mother to the disciple whom he loved. (John 9:27) "Mother behold your

son. Son, behold your mother." His actions seemed to suggest that if you will mourn with Me and Mine, I will give you comfort by providing people to love and protect you; however, the image seems to call forth an even deeper promise. If you will enter into the process of mourning and confronting, I will make you a comfort to others. The reward of that commitment is twofold. Not only does Mary continue to be personally loved and protected by Jesus on earth through the person of John but she is also comforted by the peace and strength of knowing she is fulfilling her Father's will. Equally, her strength is promised to be two fold. First, she is a person whose example sets a course for others to follow. Secondly, she is Mother to the Church and is the vehicle through whom God our Father may extend His beatitudinal promise to each of us who would have the courage to pick up the cross of the multiple mournings in living each day. He promises that he will provide comfort... the comfort that there is a vision, a plan for your life. He also promises to send Himself through the person of others. It is these two sources of comfort which enable each of us as His sons/ daughters to face our personal mournings each day of our lives. □



Concerning Nonviolence and the Franciscan Movement

Friar ALAIN RICHARD, O.F.M.

Within the Franciscan spiritual family, there is no lack of persons who are sensitive to social and political injustice and violence. Nevertheless, because of the means employed in struggles, many of these hesitate or are repelled from expressing solidarity along side the victims.

Many brothers and sisters, like me, have found themselves ill at ease with certain petitions, demonstrations or strategies for combatting injustice and violence. But it is out of the question to condemn those whose conscience has pushed them to concrete solidarity with the victims of injustice, when they use verbal violence and manipulation or even when they have rcourse to arms.

Following others' example, I have been led to deepen my practice of gandhian nonviolent methods, imbued with the Gospel of the Beatitudes and the example of Christ. After that, the importance of entering more deeply in a more extensive nonviolence was felt. In quite varied cultural, social and psychological contexts, I have discovered many reactions which are similar to mine. I have had to understand *the connections which exist between nonviolence with religious or humanistic motivation and the Franciscan way of taking the Gospel seriously*.

The following pages are nothing more than a summary sketch of those aspects of ganghian nonviolence which, I believe, ought easily to be recognized by Franiscan men and women *as forming part of that spiritual heritage which lives within them*.

A native of France, Alain Richard joined the Order of Friars Minor in 1947 after completing studies at the Institut National Agronomique de Paris. For twenty years he was involved in various non-violent struggles against the sale of arms and the extension of a military camp. Besides helping to create the network of fasters with the International Fast for peacemakers, he was a part of the first team of Peace Brigades International in Guatemala. Fr. Alain is now a member of the Pace e Bene Center in Las Vegas, a franciscan service in non-violence.

This article has been translated from the French by D. Pablo Stanfield, S.F.O.

Together Jesus' example, his precepts and counsel, in relation with nonviolence, constitute an inspiration or a direction often called *evangelical nonviolence*. Thus whole, coming from the Gospels, per se and alone *has not given birth to an instrument of action* for struggling against injustice and violence. Across the centuries, inspired by the Gospel, some christians have given magnificent witness, but more often of the order of "pacifism" or of "resist not evil."

Unfortunately many contemporary Christian authors use the terms "nonviolence" and "evangelical nonviolence" incorrectly, often in a sense of pacifism, even of mealymouthed timidity. In fact, the word "nonviolent" appeared in the West following the actions of Gandhi and does not trnslate his "invention" of the civil reclaiming of truth: satyâgraha. One recent author (W. Wink) prefers to utilize the expression "Jesus' third way" in order to avoid the ambiguity of the "NON" in the term "nonviolence."

When I speak of action, of struggle, I often use the terms *Gandhian nonviolence,* because this offers a coherent tool for acting, precise and elaborate in its main lines; at the same time it is inspired by a spirit which the Gospel has helped to form. Some places I use the phrase *nonviolence with a religious or humanistic base;* here gandhian priciples are generally respected but the concept is broader.

Some persons have developed a so-called *pragmatic or tactical nonviolence*. Its contours vary according to the leaders and the struggles. This kind of nonviolence makes reference generally to Gandhi, but it does not demand of those who follow it certain religious or humanistic conditions which Gandhi requires.

Yet others sometimes refer only to behaviors which they call nonviolent even when their origin is either prior to Gandhi or when they are the kind of "positive resistance" from which Gandhi separated himself.

In the course of this essay, we will say how we see the pragmatic current of nonviolence in relation to religious or humanistic nonviolence.

1. FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF NONVIOLENCE ATTRACTIVE TO FRANCISCANS

• 1st — *Struggle undertaken with gandhian nonviolence presupposes deep compassion:* compassion for the victims but also for those who, because of their passions or blindness, impose upon others sufferings of violence or injustice.

a. *These two faces of compassion* come from the convictions —that the evil (violence, injustice) we combat dwells also within us.

We offer it our complicity, sometimes in small ways, sometimes in deep involvement.

—that the good which we recognize in ourselves also exists in our adversaries, but in an imprisoned state. This goodness, the divine presence in an adversary, is waiting to be liberated in order to come out.

The most impressive leaders of nonviolence: Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., César Chavez, Danilo Dolci... have lived out these two faces of compassion with such extreme intensity and honesty that it has brought them opposition from within their own ranks.

You can see that living these two dimensions of compassion at the same time avoids all condescension or arrogance during confrontation. The nonviolent combatant is placed in the truth of what s/he is in the deepest parts of the self. One is animated by the divine which renders one capable of loving and searching for society's well-being. However, it also makes you an accomplice — however subtly — of the evil which you are fighting among the agents of violence and injustice. There are neither GOOD nor BAD persons. There are beings who are divided. Some of them at one moment serve an injustice; they are actors of violence. The others are also divided in their being, tending to be servants of Justice and Love.

This double compassion rejects Manicheism, whether philosophical or only strategic. In the latter case anyone who uses a manicheistic framework mobilizes the combatants' energies in his camp to slander the opposition, painting them as evil, perverse, incapable of changing, unworthy of any respect whatever. Naturally, at the same time those who struggle against injustice are the Angels of Goodness, Guardians of Right, Defenders of Liberty...!

This rejection of Manicheism has been and continues to be one of the indispensable bases of all nonviolent struggle which is more than pragmatic. Quite happily a number of the pragmatic nonviolent struggles follow the same lines, at last at the beginning. But without a clear religious or humanistic reference, it is often impossible to maintain such a refusal to divide the world into "the Good" and "the Bad" for the duration of combat.

This respect which nonviolence with a religious or humanistic base has, I believe, ought to appeal to Franciscans. Did not Francis invite his brothers and sisters to recognize how evil is deeply rooted in them as well, and at the same time to recognize that at the root of all good is God. God is the origin of the good which arose in their own lives perhaps against all their expectations, just like that which appears in others' lives, also perhaps against all expectation.

Let's remember that in our times Manicheistic frames of reference are extremely widespread. Every Western movie is an example. Each of the dictatorships which plague the world is built on such a viewpoint: whether

they are based on right-wing or left-wing ideologies, or on religious dogmas or nationalism, it is still the same Manicheism. All totalitarianism, local, national or international, sets forth before its oppressiveness a Manicheistic description of the groups involved. And has there ever been a war or crusade that was conducted without the same effort to denigrate the adversary? The Anti-Communist Crusade and the Anti-Capitalist Struggle are not outside this scheme of things. This fatal attempt at destroying the truth of matters cannot give birth to true Justice: it is the seed of other wars.

b) *The roots of compassion* which extends to the violent as well as the victims, to the oppressor as well as the oppressed, to the torturer as well as the tortured, can vary a lot according to individual religious aproaches.

For Gandhi, compassion is intimately rooted in reverence for God present in every being, who is called to liberate the divine within him or herself. Among other readers of nonviolence, it is rooted in the love of Christ for all and in his summons to us to love our enemies.

Contemporary Christians have the new theological approaches to the theme of the "suffering of God" — a consequence of His compassionate love — to help them. After a centuries-long eclipse, this theological current is recovering importance. For a hundred years it has been developing, stimulated by the incalculable, atrocious sufferings of the two World Wars and the Post-Wars. During this latest period, the conflicts and the slaughter, tortures and massacres... and the millions of refugees driven from their lands, have given a hallucinatory face to the contemporary world's Justice(!) and Peace(!).

In the face of these injustices, this cruel and anti-evangelical structural violence, as well as characteristic brutal violence, how can God not be affected in his passionate love? The idea of an impassive God which has dominated centuries and centuries of theological reflexion is no longer supportable for believers. The victims are above all the little people, the weak and poor! The moral degradation of those who cause injustice is so colossal! Because of his love for the other, "God lets Himself be affected by others' suffering."[1]

As for St. Francis, we know of his delicate compassion for the poor, the despised, the sick. We know his great compassion for those, Brothers or not, who were slaves of evil (or Evil One). His visit to the Crusaders and the Sultan are a characteristic example of it. His compassion is always connected to the suffering of the Christ who marked him with the Stigmata.

Let us not try to force St. Francis into the theopathic current. Nontheless, his desire to unite deeply with the feelings of Christ and allow himself to be invaded by his suffering, it seems, opened the door so that Franciscan men and women could enter God's suffering more easily. *To let ourselves*

be inhabited a little by that suffering of the Father and the Spirit, just as we are by the sufferings of Christ Jesus. Stirred by God's compassion, our own compassion will be formed in his image.

Wounded to the core of our love both by the suffering of so many innocents and at the same time by the slavery in which the authors are the beneficiaries of the structures of injustice or those who commit specific violent acts, how could we put off *working with passion* for our brothers and sisters?

Such compassion can not be limited to a "little" prayer or an intention added to the "Prayer of the Faithful." It is not just a heart's sigh, a less pious thought. It is a wound in the depths of one's being by means of an encounter with the Suffering God. Not just like Jacob's wound, on the hip, but a wound of love which suffers because of the Loved One. For in refusing to respond to Love, the beloved is deprived of Life. To be wounded in the depths of oneself is a precious grace. One must refuse the temptation, perhaps offered by one's friends, to forget, to be content with easy measures, or to apply pious rationalization.

From such a wound, action for evangelization and reconciliation with God arises. But from the same process springs forth also the desire to place oneself beside the victims of violence and injustice *in order to make their sufferings stop and at the same time end God's suffering*.

Let those who seem to be so comfortable with cruelly savage violence as well as with structural violence consider well what that means about their relation to God. And if they interpret the actions of activists as mere running-around or bad breeding, let them ask themselves about the purity of their intentions in judging.

• 2nd—*The power of love, the dynamic core of nonviolence*

Without compassion in both directions, both for the violator and the victim, there is no Gandhian nonviolence, much less evangelical nonviolence. We must understand that compassion will be shown both directly for the oppressor as well as the oppressed.

Gandhi sought also to "unite in one teaching the precepts and counsel of nonviolence, of Buddhism, Jainism, and the Sermon on the Mount, because their agreement on this topic had profoundly moved him."[2] Therefore he employed the Christian vocabulary and spoke of the "power of love." This way he separated his satyâgraha (i.e. the civil claim of Truth, or unwavering grasp on Truth, or Truth Forced) from passive resistance. This latter, however effective, is rather negative, though it was practiced for thousands of years. Gandhian nonviolence often is confused with it unfortunately. That is why Gandhi pointed out, "satyâgrah is as far from passive resistance as the North Pole is from the South."[3] It was obvious!

Nontheless the confusion persists.

Thus the compassion of which we spoke above must be expressed in an adequate manner by incarnate love, strong and intelligent, not naïve, nor silly.

a) *This love is respectful and uses no tricks*. That includes refusing the use of words or actions which might incite the adversary, the one committing violence/injustice, to develop a more and more aggressive stance. One of the goals is to lead the adversary to "disarm." Action must be open, without trickery — which does not mean without inventiveness.

Don't be fooled! Anyone who organizes a nonviolent action should not be so naïve as to think that one action and the nonviolent activists' power of love will be able totally in a moment to disarm the adversary from within and without. Especially if the adversary is part of a structure of violence or the objective reasons for continuing the violence are dynamic like economic interests or self-love.

We are talking about making it possible for the adversary to make a change in policy since the prevailing forces will have come to the side of the nonviolent camp. It is necessary for the adversary to feel and know that he is respected, even loved, even though he is but the representative of impersonal strucutres and anonymous interests.

We live in an ever more impersonal world. But as long as the decisions are not *entirely* the work of computers which suppress all human intervention, the psychological reactions of those who make the decisions will still play a considerable role. How much aggressive behavior comes from fear or the feeling, valid or not, of not being respected or esteemed, or even of being tricked? This points up the importance of the Gandhian requirement of respectful and open love. Total love which can go to the elimination of hate. A love which is born of a relationship with the divine.

So active nonviolence aspires to find as close a balance possible between:

—paying attention so that at any moment the adversary and his collaborators can clearly tell that they are respected, even deeply loved, even while their actions are resisted diligently;

—and making evident the evil: what is the injustice or violence which is taking place? Who helps it? For it is a necessary step to point out the evil, *both* to live in the truth *and* to open *as well* the eyes of the undecided bystanders or collaborators of oppression, such as those who simply carry out oppressive orders.

b) *This love perseveres*. Without perseverance can we speak of love? It would be only a momentary sentiment. Brazilians call nonviolence "Permanent firmness."

Solidarity persevering in opposition to evil while loving for the persons involved is both a sign of responsible, compassionate love and at the same time the indispensable prerequisite for establishing a favorable unity of forces in the long run. It is this which demonstrates the pureness of the cause and of the means of struggle. This is what permits one to create a public opinion favorable to the nonviolent, sapping the moral support which the violent usually have at the beginning.

This favors considerably the entry of the undecided in the nonviolent struggle: it helps the conversion of some of the collaborators of violence, and whether in the heart or the mind of the main creators of injustice, it starts to cause cracks—doubts about the justice of their cause, or at least about the possibility of winning if they persevere in their recourse to violence.

There are hundreds of historical examples. Personally I can witness to the positive results of "persevering" actions in which I have been involved.

c) But we cannot forget that "patience defines voluntary suffering."[4] Voluntary suffering is there, always offered to the nonviolent to test their search for truth and their love. Furthermore, the expression of the love which is most likely to attract a number of sympathizers for the struggle against the injustice/violence, and at the same time to undermine support for the violent live along the supporters of the injustice is *the voluntary acceptance of becoming a victim of the violence:*

—whoever submits to suffering instead of trying to avoid it demonstrates that his or her strength does not reside in brutal and unjust means nor in a merely passive resistance. His strength is in the freedom and love which lead one, freely and without hate, to suffer this violence. By this means one introduces the germ of destruction of the violence. Such behavior will only be fruitful if it is carried out at the right moment in a combined strategy.

—anyone who has not been obliged to submit to violence accepts either to share the fate of those with whom s/he is in solidarity or else to suffer new consequences of this violence.

You certainly remember in the film *Gandhi* those men who go up to the entry of the salt depot and are immediately clubbed by the English soldiers; the next row arrives just as the preceding row falls. A test for satyâgrahis of readiness to accept death if necessary! At the same time the British power's injustice and cruelty became more evident.

To accept voluntarily to be the victim of violence makes it more necessary to free oneself of all hate. Of course this goes hand in hand with the rejection of whatever vengeance.

"The pursuit of truth does not admit ever to inflict violence, rather that [the adversary) be shown his error through patience and sympathy."[5]

"To our fiercest adversaries we say: 'We shall counter your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering. To your physical force we will respond with the force of our souls. Do to us what you will and we will continue to love you... throw us in prison, and we shall love you still. Send your Klansmen into our communities to perpetrate violence at midnight and leave us half dead; we shall still love you. But be assured that we will lead you to exhaustion by our capacity to suffer.' "[6]

To be ready to give one's life rather than take another's always has a considerable impact, if love and freedom have been served by a combined strategy, developed intelligently. Has not every human being been moved by the example of Christ who offered himself freely, refusing to let his life be defended by the sword, even refusing to defend himself before the Tribunal?

How can the brothers and sisters of the Stigmatized One of Assisi, those who are engaged in living a kind of gospel life, not be moved by this faith in the power of love expressed by the voluntary acceptance of suffering or death so that others might live or be liberated from suffering? Did not Francis invite his brothers not to "dispute" about truth, but to live according to the truth of the Gospel of Love? Did not he himself cross the lines of the Sultan's armies, against all prudence, confiding in the power of love and his evident material weakness?

This, it seems, is more than necessary to attract Francis' brothers and sisters to enter a method of struggle based on the strength of a frank, respectful persevering love, ready to suffer and, if necessary, to offer up its life.

• 3rd — *Nonviolent struggles are best pursued when the nonviolent are poor.*

To live in solidarity with those who are oppressed, ruined, despised, voluntarily to accept to suffer and be ready to offer one's life presupposes beings who are poor and free.

Free — as much as one may be — of a thousand and one little fears: the body's fear which does not know how the adversary's hatchetmen are going to react, and doubts its own capacity to control itself so that it does not respond instinctively to violence with violence; the fear of having to suffer; fear before conflict which seems to last forever and demands the mobilization of energy for a long time; the fears of a spirit assailed by doubt which magnify the danger; fear of double agents who might infiltrate into the nonviolent ranks and be right there at your side; fear of agents

- provocateurs; fear of breaking the law; fear of the consequences of arrest; fear of loss of reputaiton, etc...

Free also of more important fears: fear when facing threats or more direct possibility of death; fear that the love which gives us strength might vanish and lead us to fall away, and then hate or violence would come back on us in force and triumph.

Some of these fears are vanquished little by little in training. Others are diminished only by going deep within oneself. But many of them are surmounted more easily and evanesce if the nonviolent are poor. Poor, not only poor in spirit — surely a necessity — but materially poor: with *such few belongings and so few privileges that one no longer fears losing them*.

Gandhi formed his activists in the harsh discipline of his ashram where his companions lived a poor life, ready to go wherever the need appeared: mobile and poor, beings free to combat injustice.

This poverty of goods, this refusal to look for Power and Privilege, conditions for nonviolent struggle, should they not make nonviolent struggle attractive to Franciscans?

Many of St. Francis friends, Hindus, Buddhists, nonbelievers, and Christians of other confessions, have often asked of me how it is that the Franciscans have not massed to the ranks of nonviolence; those who follow the example of a man radically poor in goods and power? Those who are believed to be trained by spiritual discipline, released from fear by their poverty and their love, free for the Kingdom's emergencies?

Why *don't* the Franciscan brothers and sisters flock to the ranks of nonviolence? It is also the question of the young, men and women, who join our old Orders. Thank God there are nonviolent Franciscans, from Buenos Aires to Manila, from Santiago, Chile, to São Paulo, from Guatemala to the USA, from France to Sicily, from Germany to the Netherlands... and I've left many out. Nonviolent women and men, lay and religious, appear little by little; but almost all of them have sprouted in the soil of a poor life lived with the poor... which means they are still only a handful!

Even more than merely cerebral or emotional compassion, ***is it possible that the fear of being poor with the poor is the greatest obstacle to participation in a nonviolent combat?***

"If we jump into such a combat, we're going to lose the [financial] support of our friends" — "We're going to lose our privileged fiscal status" — "we'll lose our respectability, our good name" — "some of the faithful will leave us, and we must be for everyone" — "and if we go to prison, we won't be able to continue our work, our ministry"... (no more than Christ: He had to stop his preaching and his thanksgivings [Eucharists]...

after the first one... in order to go to prison and to the Cross, voluntarily!) "What if... What if...!"

"Hail, Queen Wisdom... Lady Holy Poverty, may the Lord protect you with sister Holy Humility. Lady Holy Charity, may the Lord keep you... All of you, Holy Virtues, may God keep, He from whom you come and proceed. (Sal Virt 1-4)

Once more, in the film *Gandhi*, remember when Gandhi was brutally expelled from a first-class compartment in South Africa. He had counted on his impeccable suit, his starched white collar and his Letters as an English attorney for respect even as a man of color. In fact, you have seen, he was left pitiful, brushing his suit off and adjusting it after having been tossed forcefully onto the platform. Each time he appears with more modest clothing. Upon returning to Bombay, he accepts a certain style. But his dress continues to simplify in direct proportion as his life is lived among the poor. Deciding to travel third class, he cannot maintain a natty first impression. When he has become "that half-naked fakir" that Winston Churchill tried to mock, he offered hardly any exterior threat to the English enemy. One could try to make him appear with only those ridiculous baggy drawers, but Gandhi's determination, his total rejection of violence and his transparent love had become a force, redoubtable in itself, and even more so sustained by thousands of fellow citizens for whom the Mahatma was a Light. It would be sufficient for him to fast only 24 hours to make the whole British force in the Indies tremble.

The Power of voluntary poverty!

The extraordinary Power of absolute rejection of physical Injustice!

How can that fail to make a music, at first sweet but then irresistible in Franciscan hearts? So irresistible that they will join the hard and loving struggle which can topple the Oppressive Powers without destroying what is human and human beings.

II. PUTTING IT INTO ACTION

- 1st — We live in a time when nonviolence at last has gained the trust of persons who up till now did not believe it. Before long we are probably going to see an incredible development of these fields of activity. From now on, many action projects will be blocked by a lack of qualified nonviolent activists.

- 2nd — At the same time, within the Christian churches and in several other religions, there is developing a conscience of demanding a remedy for the great local and world injustices. The prayer meetings at Assisi and

Kyoto demonstrate that religions perceive more and more their leading role in the work for Peace.

A significant example is Armand Veilleux, one of the most remarkable personalities of the monastic world, specialist in St. Pacomius, who on opening the sessions of the American Benedictine Academy with a treatise on the "Stages of Conversion" did not hesitate to say:

"We live our monastic conversion in a concrete world *in which one of the manifestations of the power of evil is the enormous disparity between the rich and the poor* (rich nations and poor as well as rich and poor individuals inside each nation). The principal consequences of this are starvation and war."

And later:

Many of St. Francis' friends, Hindus, Buddhists, non-believers, and Christians of other confessions, have often asked of me how it is that the Franciscans have not massed to the ranks of nonviolence.

"God's Kingdom preached by Jesus implies a transformation of the whole structure of society, *and the individual conversion of the heart has sense if it is a small constituent part of that grand and profound transformation*. This transformation of the Kingdom, just like individual conversion, requires a radical break. The Kingdom is not the fruit of evolution; it is shattering. It is not simply spiritual, but implies a complete revolution of the structures of the old world. This is why it is presented as good news for the poor, light for the blind, healing for the crippled and deaf, freedom for the captives, liberation for the oppressed, pardon for sinners and life for the dead. (See Luke 4, 18-21; Matthew 11, 3-5). Such a Kingdom is not of the other world, but this world transformed and renewed."[8]

In the Franciscan orders, there has been no lack of calls these last years, both from the men's and the women's branches. The Declaration of Salvador de Bahia for the OFM and that of Garibaldi for the OFM Cap. shine light on the direction to take.

• 3rd — It is not enough that believers notice their vocation to participate in the transformation of the world, they must still have at their disposition *a tool for doing it*, in perfect unity with their beliefs and their

conscience. Gandhian nonviolence seems to me to be that instrument, a profoundly spiritual tool, at the same time efficient for resolving conflicts and injustice. Besides, unlike violent solutions, it eliminates many of the germs of conflicts yet to come.

• 4th — Addressing my words to the Franciscan family, I have made reference to those bases of nonviolence which, in my opinion, ought to entice believers in Jesus Christ involved in an evangelical life style.

Do not deduce from this that the only nonviolence that I believe possible is religious-based, or based mostly on Christianity. I am placing myself at the level of the proper motivation for those to whom I speak. Certainly it is possible to participate in nonviolent struggles and actions which have humanist or other religious bases. It is more frequent in the countries where religious connections are predominant or at least respected. In western countries, with few exceptions, only prophetic or warning nonviolent actions can have such a base. These, therefore, are most necessary since many warning actions are required before a struggle, properly called, can have any chance of success. It is one of the steps in the construction of converging forces. Believers are specially well placed to attempt to warn other believers by means of a language which is familiar to them and for motives which they can espouse.

But to refuse to join united actions because the other participants refer to the pragmatic type of nonviolence would be to affect a purism which might become a flight from responsibility. Some places in coalition actions there are supple structures which let each group (affinity group of 10 to 50 persons who know each other well and have an ideological, psychological or religious affinity. But there can even be broader bases.) have a certain freedom of action within the common struggle. That means that no one should be stopped by actions in which there are developments which might not set one completely at ease...

• 5th — Finally I must say a few words about nonviolent techniques themselves. There is a limitless number of them. To pretend that none of the known techniques is adaptable to a particular case is to refuse the common experience of living in a group, the power of creativity and the power of compassion. Experience proves the opposite: these last few decades have seen new nonviolent techniques develop, especially in dictatorial countries, whether communist (Poland, Hungary, USSR, Czechoslovakia) or capitalist (Latin America, Philippines, South Africa). An immense field is open to the creativity of those who are filled with the spirit of evangelical or gandhian nonviolence.

A discipline which is also a nonviolent technique merits special mention:

fasting. Several years ago we invited the brothers, sisters and friends of St. Francis to pay attention to the political or social power of a true fast, not just hunger strikes, which are a better known technique.

A religious fast can be part of a nonviolent strategy while at the same time being an astonishing tool for spiritual deepening if it is seen from the perspective of union with God and not as a strictly ascetic practice. It means then to enter into the truth of our lack of real power before gigantic evils. It means to open up, by voluntary acceptance of our bodily weakness, *to the Power of God* which is capable of transforming us and of producing the conditions for social change. God can change the adversaries' hearts and make us see how we can collaborate in the requisite transformation by taking the necessary risks.

There is still a lot to do in order to spread more widely this means of struggle so appropriate to the little ones (minores) before God, if they truly want nothing more than to be little ones before Him.

To summarize:

a) One may expect that soon there will be more believers ready to engage in conflicts for Justice and Peace.

b) They have at their disposition gandhian nonviolence, whose essence is resolutely spiritual and in harmony with the Gospel which contributed to its invention.

c) Nonviolence could bring much more constructive solutions to a host of local conflicts (neighborhood problems, workplace disputes, minorities, homeless — the untouchable outcasts of the western world). These small sized conflicts are excellent for first steps in nonviolence.

d) It is urgent to research *how to apply nonviolence to that "enormous disparity betweeen the rich and the poor."* I suppose that Franciscans, following Vinoba Bhave in India, should have, more than many others, an extreme sensitivity to this question: the poor suffer more and more around the world.

e) Pragmatic or tactical nonviolence is going to develop considerable independent of all clear reference to humanism or religion.

f) But for success in united nonviolent struggles, it is indispensable that groups with religious or humanist reference be present and active in them. The problematic of power and love and the religious reference of compassion alone can develop, in my opinion, all the potential of the nonviolent movement which otherwise would lose one of its building blocks, obvious from its birth and throughout Gandhi's life.

It is important only that religious or humanist based groups be attentive not to fall into the snare of totalitarianism or that which is the same as elitism.

In the 13th Century, the prohibition against carrying arms made to the Third Order Franciscans and other similar groups, should have dismantled, one would suspect, some structures in which elegant and glorious killing was a common behavior.

In our century, after the Quakers, several protestant peace Churches (Mennonites, Brethren and later the Church of the Nazarene, etc.) have been resolutely active in direct nonviolence; happily they bring an important number of activists to the organized struggle against injustice and violence. At any rate, in every corner of the world one is short of nonviolent activists filled with the evangelical spirit, experienced in the discipline and techniques of gandhian nonviolence.

Will the Franciscan Movement and the several orders which form its most important elements know how to meditate on the themes evoked above? Will they know how to unite solidly with this technique which with its gospel spirit would permit them to avoid both the present bloodbaths and those which threaten on the horizon, as well as the self-destruction of Humanity by superbombs or by lack of respect for the laws of ecology?

We speak of Francis as a man of Peace! And we draw from that some vanity!

"We should be ashamed, we servants of God. For the Saints have acted. But us, we tell what they did, trying to win honor and glory." (Adm. 6,3)

Will we know how to free up an important number of Franciscan men and women for the ministry of nonviolence? And so they can attack both the sin of the disparity between rich and poor countries as well as Humanity's runaway suicide with nuclear arms and the ongoing destruction of Mother Earth?

Will we know how to include training in the spirit and techniques of nonviolence in our "cycles of formation"? Will we know how to hold up in front of the Powerful, at the side of the Poor, counting only on the power of God among us?

In a word, will we know how to deliver, living and bearing Life, the Spirit of Francis, our beloved older brother, to save our brothers from spiritual and bodily death?

May the day-workers of Chicago's industry,

May the poor, the oppressed, and the tortured in Guatemala and El Salvador,

who have taught me to listen to the cries of God today, help you also.

And now that some of them are dead, may they intercede for all of us!

May our brothers and sisters, murdered because they were beside the Poor, vigil over us and guide us! □

Endnotes

[1]Among the best-known in this current are: Jürgen Moltman, C.S.Sing, K. Koyama, F. Verillon, S.J., W. M. Thompson, Monika K. Hellwig. We suggest publication of the brief monograph by Jean-François Beaudet, Montreal, on "God's pathos as a foundation for a theology and practice of nonviolence." [Le pathos de Dieu comme fondement d'une théologie et d'une praxis de la non-violence.]

[2]Olivier Lacombe: *Gandhi, ou la force de lâme*, p. 42.

[3]*Report of the Indian Congress, 1920*, Ch. 4.

[4]Gandhi. N.B. The word "patience" comes from the same Latin root *pati:* to suffer.

[5]Gandhi: *Report of the Indian Congress*, chapter 4.

[6]Martin Luther King, Jr.: *The Strength to Love*, p. 72.

[7]Emphasis mine. The original appeared in *The American Benedictine Review*, 37 (1986) 34-45 ; and in French in *Vie des Communautés réligiouses*, Montréal, Jan., 1987.

A Journey of Faith: The Seven Joys of Mary

FR. THOMAS BOURQUE, T.O.R.

The Franciscan Crown

The *Franciscan Crown* is a seven-decade rosary which appeared sometime during the fifteenth century. It is believed that Saint Bernardin and other Franciscan Preachers promoted the devotion.

The *Francisacan Crown* consists of seven decades of Hail Mary's, each preceded by an Our Father and followed by a Glory Be. The *Crown* recalls the seven joys of Mary and how she responded to the grace of God in her life. It begins with the sign of the cross which is then followed by the seven decades, each consisting of one Our Father, ten Hail Mary's and one Glory Be. At the end of the seven decades, there are two additional Hail Mary's, bringing the total of Hail Mary's to seventy-two, in keeping with an old tradition that Mary lived seventy-two years. The *Crown* is concluded by praying one Our Father and one Hail Mary for the intentions of the Pope.

The seven joys of the *Franciscan Crown* are:

First Joy	The Annunciation
Second Joy	The Visitation
Third Joy	The Nativity and Adoration of the Magi
Fourth Joy	The Presentation
Fifth Joy	The Finding in the Temple
Sixth Joy	The Resurrection and Appearance to Mary
Seventh Joy	The Assumption and Glorification of Mary

The confused history of the *Franciscan Crown* often makes it difficult for one to understand how such a devotion began. Although there are many different legends and stories told about its origin, it is the beauty and power of this devotion which continues to challenge many individuals

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to deepen their faith in Jesus and his Church. The *Franciscan Crown* truly captures Mary as a faithful disciple of Jesus and invites each individual to deepen his/her faith and hope in Jesus.

A reflection on the *Franciscan Crown*, entitled, A JOURNEY OF FAITH: THE SEVEN JOYS OF MARY, is presented for your prayerful reflection and meditation. The reflection studies each of the joys of Mary by beginning with one's openness to Scripture. As the joys of the *Franciscan Crown* are pondered, one is invited to listen to the Word of God and to be open to the gift of the Holy Spirit. For each joy, a gift of the Holy Spirit has been given for study and reflection. These seven gifts challenge each individual to live a grace-filled and moral life. They allow one to reflect on the grace and strength Mary had in responding to her call and relationship with God. The reflection offers questions for meditation and ends with a prayer taken from the prayer of the Church.

A JOURNEY OF FAITH: THE SEVEN JOYS OF MARY

THE FIRST JOY: THE ANNUNCIATION — FORTITUDE

Isaiah 7:10-14
Luke 1:26-38

Reflection: At baptism we are all called by name to give flesh to Christian values and beliefs. In responding to the gift of baptismn, how have we dealt with becoming a disciple of the Lord? What is our relationship to God, Church and others? How do we respond to the invitation to build up the Body of Christ?

Why can living according to Christian values be a lonely and frightening thing?

Name people and events in your life which have helped you live out your faith commitment.

Prayer: God our Father, your Word became flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary. May we become more like Jesus Christ, whom we acknowledge as our redeemer, God and man. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.[1]

THE SECOND JOY: THE VISITATION — COUNSEL

Luke: 39-56

Reflection: Mary's response to God was the powerful prayer of the Magnificat, the joyous acknowledgement of God's goodness within her. What is our response to God?

What are three positive qualities with which the Lord has blessed you?

Whom do you turn to for counsel and friendship in your life?

Prayer: Eternal Father, you inspired the Virgin Mary, mother of your Son, to visit Elizabeth and assist her in her need. Keep us open to the working of your Spirit, and with Mary may we praise you for ever. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.[2]

THE THIRD JOY: THE NATIVITY AND ADORATION OF THE MAGI — FEAR OF THE LORD

Luke 2:1-20
Mathhew 2:1-12

Reflection: In reflecting upon the role of Mary as a woman of faith, we learn that she accepted the will of the Father and all that went with that responsibility.

How do you respond to the will of God in your life?

Imagine the emotional turmoil Mary experienced at the time of Jesus' birth. She turned to God for strength. Where do you turn during those periods of emotional turmoil in your life?

Prayer: God of love, Father of all, the darkness that covered the earth has given way to the bright dawn of your Word made flesh. Make us a people of this light. Make us faithful to your Word that we may bring your life to the waiting world. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.[3]

THE FOURTH JOY: THE PRESENTATION — WISDOM

Luke 22:22-35

Reflection: As Mary and Joseph presented Jesus to the elders of the Temple, they once again displayed their love and faithfulness towards God.

As you were presented by your parents to the Lord in the Sacrament of Baptism, your parents also displayed their love and faithfulness towards God. How do you express your love and faithfulness towards God?

How do you share wisdom with others?

Prayer: All-powerful Father, Christ your Son became man for us and was presented in the temple. May he free our hearts from sin and bring us into your presence. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever Amen.[4]

FIFTH JOY: THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE UNDERSTANDING
Luke 2:41-52

Reflection: This event was probably a frustrating and stressful experience for both Mary and Joseph. The happiness of finding Jesus was lost when Mary and Joseph could not comprehend his explanation.

When do you most often lose sight of Christ within your life? How do you seek to understand the wisdom of God and the will of God?

What are the five qualities you appreciate about your parents and their love for you?

Prayer: Father, help us to live as the holy family, united in respect and love. Bring us to the joy and peace of your eternal home. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.[5]

SIXTH JOY: THE RESURRECTION PIETY AND LOVE
Luke 24:1-11
Mark 16:1-8

Reflection: The ordeal of seeing her only Son die a criminal's death was undoubtedly a traumatic experience for Mary. She drew strength from the Father's love and realized that Jesus would conquer death through the power of God. Mary received grace and love from God who gave her a reason to hope and a reason to live.

From where do you draw your strength?

Does the gift of the resurrection truly give you a reason to hope and a reason to live?

Prayer: God our Father, by raising Christ your Son you conquered the power of death and opened for us the way to eternal life. Let our celebration today raise us up and renew our lives by the Spirit that is within us. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.[6]

SEVENTH JOY: THE ASSUMPTION KNOWLEDGE
Revelation 21:1-6
John 11:17-27

As Mary experienced the call from God, we also need a deepening conviction and eagerness to hear God's call in our lives and respond to the call. It is important to trust God enough to allow ourselves to respond freely and generously as Mary did.

Are you as eager to hear God's call as Mary was?

How are the fruits of the Holy Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, serenity) growing and effecting your relationship with God and others?

Father, you have given us the mother of your Son to be our queen and mother. With the support of her prayers may we come to share the glory of your children in the kingdom of heaven. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.[7]

Endnotes

[1]Opening Prayer Annunciation. *The Roman Missal*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1974. ICEL.

[2]Opening Prayer. Visitation. *the Roman Missal*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1974, ICEL.

[3]Alternative Opening Prayer. Christmas-Mass During the Day. *The Roman Missal*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1974, ICEL.

[4]Opening Prayer. Presentation of the Lord. *The Roman Missal*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1974, ICEL.

[5]Opening Prayer. Holy Family. *The Roman Missal*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1974, ICEL.

[6]Opening Prayer. Easter Sundays. *The Roman Missal*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1974, ICEL.

[7]Opening Prayer. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of All Creation. *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co, 1988, ICEL.

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The Portiuncula Stone

When he came to this place — an ancient chapel
in ruins, the place he would come to call
"Little Portion" — it seemed that the weed-choked
ground issued light and all the forest became still.
It seemed that this portion would be multiplied,
would become the ample portion of many.
Yet
it was dreary at first when the companions arrived —
there is no emptier place than a forgotten church.
For with the stones and crumbs of mortar,
its prayers and blessings lie scattered about.
Like stringless harp, this place awaited its
David to give it a new voice of praise.

And so it happened — a brown and wiry hand,
his hand, stretched out and wrapped about me.
Rock-hard and earthy, I became in his grasp
a noble thing, lighter than air, an Ave —
an exultation of praise for the Virgin.
He slammed me into place and my heart
rang out as I crashed against the other stones.
A paean of angels answered in chorus, a new song
to God in his glory and to the Handmaid of the Lord
in all her virtues.
In time, countless pilgrims
would crowd this small church. Their basilica
would reach up around it, enfold it as the forest had
as though it were a fragile thing and inglorious.
Such is the impertinence of time and good intentions.
I still sit in the wall where he put me,
tiny but tough, a creature of that day
when the ragtag band rebuilt the church, and then
the world, with the architecture of simple faith.

And remember, he loved me too, though cold and lowly.
Once, coming into a clearing his followers saw him
preaching in an empty rock-strewn field. "Who
are you speaking to?" they asked, "For no one is here."
And he said, "Even the rocks are in need of salvation!"
My brothers and sisters, listen to my voice
beyond the centuries: Who could not love such a man?
Who could not love the Savior he loved?

Justin Carisio, S.F.O.

Chapter of Mats: Historical Perspective

F. EDWARD COUGHLIN, O.F.M.

Contemporary interest in gathering of all the brothers in a province of the Order centers on retrieving the primitive ideal of revitalizing the common vision of Gospel life in fraternity and minority and maintaining the internal unity of the itinerant brotherhood through personal contact and the sharing of experiences in mission.

In the year 1216, James of Vitry wrote:

> "Once a year, to their great benefit, the members of this order came together in a determined place, to sup together and to rejoice in the Lord."

Cajetan Esser, commenting on the words of James, writes:

> "Such yearly chapters provided a happy reunion for the friars who were otherwise scattered throughout the whole of Italy. During these reunions they experienced in joy a sense of their oneness and community, and, through the meal they all shared in, a sense of belonging together. The days of chapter became a happy means of manifesting outwardly the bond of brotherhood which inwardly welded them into a community."

Esser's comments accurately reflect Thomas of Celano's description of the early rhythm of life among the first followers of Francis (1 Celano: 29-30). Celano tells us that when their number had risen to eight, Francis called them together and told them many things concerning the Kingdom of God, contempt for the world and the dangers of self will. Francis then sent the friars into various parts of the world. After a short time, Celano indicates that they would come together and give

> "an account of the good things the Lord had done for them; and, if they had been negligent and ungrateful in anyway, they humbly begged and willingly received corrections and punishment from their holy father. For thus they had become accustomed to act when they came to him..."

There are only sketchy accounts of the regular gatherings of all of the friars between 1208 and 1221,[1] the chapter traditionally referred to as the Chapter of Mats. Despite the lack of much detailed information, the sources clearly indicate that the early gatherings of all the friars served the important functions of affording the brotherhood an opportunity to celebrate who they were, share their experiences of life and faith with one another, pray with one another, and as the unique circumstances of their individual lives might demand, seek encouragement, advice or correction. These gatherings of all the brothers served the important function of renewing and revitalizing the friars' vocation so that, as Holzapfel put it (147), "each friar with the blessing of his beloved father [Francis], went his way along the road pointed out to him."

Iriarte reports that the Pentecost Chapter of 1221 was the last to be attended by the whole fraterity. The number of friars and the distances to which they had been sent made the gathering of the whole fraternity an impossible ideal. The Rule of 1223 (Chapter 8) mandated a Chapter of ministers. The Minister Provincial was then to decide, if he wished or deemed it expedient, to convoke a Provincial Chapter. The circumstances and necessity of the historical development of a different kind of chapter gathering for the friars can easily be understood. The development was, however, not without its consequences. The limitations and implicaitons of this development become increasingly clearer. For example, Chapters after 1240 become increasingly legislative in focus and limited in terms of who could participate. □

[1]For example: R. Brooks, *Early Franciscan Governance*, Cambridge U. Press, Appendix 1; C Esser, *Origins of the Franciscan Order*, 1970, Franciscan Herald, p. 71ff, H. Holzapfel, *The History of the Franciscan Order*, 1948, #36, p. 147ff; L. Iriarte, *Franciscan History*, Ch II, Franciscan Herald,, 1982, p. 15ff.

This document is based upon a discussion entitled "Chapter of Mats, Historical Perspectives," requested by the Holy Name Province Chapter of Mats Publicity Committee. Participants in the discussion included C. Harkins, O.F.M., D. Monti, O.F.M., R. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., and E. Coughlin, O.F.M. A videotape of the full discussions is available from the Committee. Holy Name Province will convene a Chapter of Mats in June of this year at Siena College, Loudonville, New York.

Franciscan Praises to Mary

Fr. JUDE M. ROCHFORD, O.F.M.Conv.

My dearest Mother, Mary, spouse of the Holy Spirit and bearer of Christ to his people on earth, help me to understand and believe this "good news".

Through my Franciscan vocation I am like you, Mary, but through my own fault I am only a sinner.

As a follower of Francis of Assisi, every day I wear my Franciscan garments bound with a knotted cord. They remind me of my vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience not with fear or shame but in a blessed hope and joy.

Virgin Mary, Holy Temple of God, you gave birth to the Holy of Holies. Light a glowing candle of piety in the sanctuary of my soul. May I pray with a burning faith. Illumine my soul from the shining candelabra of eternal light. With the incense of the altar make my soul fragrant. Enrich it with the Bread of Propitiaiton. Remind me daily that the priestly Word and Eucharist is your Son's gift to me.

In my Franciscan labours, mirrored in the Gospels and sanctified by my Rule and Constitutions, give me a will that no routine can dim; quiet determination in disappointments; a humility that no fame can confound; a smile as radiant as you are, the Morning Star; the simplicity of a Brother Juniper; and in my service to others the charism to be myself. Inspire me to bring peace and joy to the ambitious, the blind and retarded, the leprous and selfish, and those knowing only brazen gods, because I myself am all these. Encourage me in Bethlehem's poverty, in Egypt's silence, in Nazareth's labours, and in Calvary's redemption.

My dearest mother, Mary, you are our Lady of Consolation. Direct me to be a comforter and consoler of the afflicted. You are the Olive of Mercy. Lift up my arms and hands to pour healing oils of your Son's mercy upon the open wounds of sinners. You are the Ivory Throne of Solomon. On the dais of your immaculate fortress I place my innocence and purity. You are our Lady of Angels. As Francis, my father, restored San Damiano, guide my living faith to rebuild your Son's Church.

Fr. Jude is stationed at the Conventual Franciscan Friary in Livingstone, Zambia. He teaches at the interfranciscan House of Studies which is located in that city.

O holy poverty, our Lady of the Poor, espoused by Francis and beloved by Clare, the advocate of the Poor, help me to disengage from this world. May I love more fully evangelical lowliness to caress and touch the crucified Christ, your Son, in the poor, in the marginal of my horizon, and in all creation. May I, a minorite, always sing your praises.

Mary, my special Rose and Fragrance of Lebanon, through you I offer myself to your Son, Jesus. May you, Mary, the Immaculate One, always intercede for me, a Franciscan pilgrim, journeying to the new Jerusalem.

My dearest mother, Mary, lead me to your Son, Jesus, the divine mystery of life, light and love. Amen. □

Book Reviews

The Maternal Face of God. By Leonardo Boff, O.F.M. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987. Pp. 278. Cloth, $16.95.

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

Word has it that this book is hot in theological circles. Graduate students at various schools of theology find that it sparks lively discussion and provides support for certain feminist perspectives. Readers attracted to a Jungian outlook on reality also find rich material in the text. For all these reasons Boff's work deserves a careful study. It also deserves a careful study because it generates some questionable theological propositions.

Faithful in his own commitment to scholarship Boff moves with painstaking precision through an outline of his method. This section will not be attractive to the reader who seeks quick spiritual insight. It is impressive to the scholar. The first two major sections of the text concentrate on a philosophical and theological analysis of the feminine. In this section Boff also provides a thorough investigation of epistemological obstacles to an analysis of the feminine and phenomenological analysis of the present situation.

This analysis is critical for Boff as he proposes that "the fundamental mariological principle must reside in the feminine" (p. 11). That is, the feminine constitutes the basic anthropological category for the systematization of "the Marian facts and events that theological reason can detect, all about Mary that our faith confesses" (p. 11). The Brazilian theologian develops this method to arrive at the most radical question, the "rock-bottom premise" of the feminine which alone allows one to do justice to the Marian truths of faith. The deficiencies of previous approaches and the demands of the contemporary historical context require the use of the feminine as "sufficiently rich and entirely new" (p. 18).

While one might argue about some of the particular points in Boff's consideration of the feminine from the phenomenological and philosophical categories, one cannot argue about his overall insight. One can only be impressed with the depth of his knowledge covering a wide expanse of literature. And to a certain point the same may be said of his theological meditation on the feminine.

However, it is precisely at this point that this reviewer finds Boff falling short of the careful scholarship which marked the earlier portions of the study. And, it is this same lack of precision which marks the second half of the text.

In order to uncover how the feminine constitutes a path to God and how God employs the feminine as a path to humanity Boff offers this preliminary hypothesis. (Preliminary in the sense that he admits it is an initial consideration in need of further reflection and refinement.)

> The Virgin Mary, Mother of God and of all men and women, realizes the feminine absolutely and eschatologically, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit has made her his temple, sanctuary, and tabernacle in so real and genuine a way that she is to be regarded as hypostatically united to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity (p. 93),

As one finds the masculine immediately divinized in Jesus with the feminine indirectly divinized, so one finds in Mary the immediate divinization of the feminine with the masculine indirectly divinized. The Word divinizes the masculine while the Spirit divinizes the feminine. Citing Luke 1:35, the Annunciation, Boff argues that in the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, "Mary is assumed by the Holy Spirit, and thus elevated to the level of God (p. 101)."

Employing this same basic premise Boff moves through the remainder of the book offering a reinterpretation of many traditional Marian beliefs. The chapters on Virginity and Liberation are the best and well worth reading even without plowing through the details of methodology. Remaining sections, at least at first glance, may well seem to be little more than other contemporary expressions of the tradition.

Boff claims that his premise has an initial foundation in the traditional beliefs of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. These dogmas stand as the concrete expression of the "collective unconscious of the Church" (p. 101). Boff believes that a reinterpretation of these dogmas, in line with the category of the feminine, can "deliver Mariology from exacerbated Christocentrism" (p. 103).

Should any dogma of Christianity not be Christocentric? That is the root question which Boff fails to address adequately. The failure to raise that question constitutes the most serious flaw in his work.

In developing a reinterpretation of Mariology Boff portrays Mary as the "new human being par excellance" (p. 109). What then can the Christian believe about the fullness of humanity in Jesus? Is Jesus not the paradigm of human existence? What is the relationship between Jesus and the Spirit? What is the nature of the inner Trinitarian dynamic?

One can see that Boff appears to be aware of such questions. The awareness can be detected in his claim, "The Spirit in spiritualizing Mary is mediator together with the Son, who 'verbalizes' Jesus of Nazareth" (p. 181). Boff contends that "The reduction of salvific mediation solely and excusively to Christ's mediation curtails our understanding of the mystery of God and of the human being" (p. 181-182). To claim that insistence on the sole mediation of Christ arises from culture with a profoundly masculinizing tendency does not suffice as a reason for this conviction. Can faith conviction, while admittedly influenced by culture, be reduced to culture?

In this theological meditation on the feminine Boff proposes, "it is not theoretical argumentation that results in the marginalization of women. It is women's concrete, historical marginalization that results in the argumentation" (p. 73). Unfortunately Boff participates in a similar scheme, only it is the underlying truth of the tradition which is marginalized. Wanting to make a profoundly liberating statement about God and about women Boff constructs a theoretical argument to support his preordained conclusion. It is similar to the way in which Jung values the Catholic dogma of the Assumption because God can now be complete as quaternity rather than imperfect trinity. While the articulation of truth must be made in relationhip to the demands of culture, the truth of Holy Being also stands outside of culture, fully immanent and fully transcendent. □

Books Received

May, Gerald G., M.D. *Addiction & Grace*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. viii-200, including Index. Cloth, $16.95.

Mays, James L. *Harper's Biblical Commentary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. 1325 plus color maps. Cloth, $32.50.

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Clare Among Her Sisters. By Rene-Charles Dhont, O.F.M. Translation in 1987. $9.00 plus postage.

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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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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

[1]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:

Why Guide Pilgrims in the Holy Land?

RAPHAEL BONANNO, O.F.M.

In normal times about one and a half million visitors come yearly to the Holy land. There are a couple of thousand Jewish guides for them, only a small handful of Arab Christian guides and for the English-speaking pilgrims, only four uf us friars. Fr. Peter Vasko, Fr. Godfrey Kloetzli, and Fr. Stephen Doyle are tull-time and yours truly is part-time.

The statistics show that of the 400,000 English-speaking, we friars can attend yearly only about 4,000 people. That leaves about 396,000 tourists and pilgrims for Jewish guides, who usualy are very courteous and competent but who can not be expected to transmit a Christian faith experience. *Non dat quod non habet*. The manifest need is for more friars as pilgrim guides. Because the friars maintain the shrines of our Lord's life, they are in a special position to explain them to people who come. Every shrine would need one or two English-speaking friars for this purpose but only a very few shrines have them. Beyond this, pilgrims expect the friars to accompany them on pilgrimage, to walk with them, to pray with them. And so the friars have done for 650 years, since the Pope gave them the mandate of the Holy Places in 1342.

Other friars attend the Spanish, Italian, French, German, Polish and other language groups but our focus here is on the needs of the English-speaking pilgrims. Many of them come here only once in their lives. They have saved for and dreamed of this experience for years. They forever remember its impact, long, long after they have boarded the plane for the return home. They often write thanking God above all and also the guide for the graces received.

For three years now I have been guiding pilgrims part-time aside from my ordinary duties of editing *Holy Land* magazine and other books and

Fr. Raphael, former Commissary of the Holy Land in Washington, D.C., now edits Holy Land *magazine and publications in English, in Jerusalem.*

translations on the Holy Places into English. My contact with American, English, Irish, Scottish, Indian and South African pilgrims has been a strong moment of evangelization. To help them read the scriptures with new eyes, to strengthen their faith in the Incarnate Son of God, to pray with them for their loved ones back home, to listen to their reactions to the Holy Places themselves, to help them through the usual confusion of Crusaders, Mamelukes and Byzantines — it is all part of being a Franciscan pilgrim guide.

For some reason the job of guiding is looked down upon. The image is conjured up of a robot reciting his explanation of a site like an audio-cassette; very mechanical and less than human. That image is not true. The guide adapts the explanation to the interests of each group. Military people may be interested in some great battles won and lost in the Holy Land. women generaly are more interested in small, homey details of ancient houses and family life. English interests are different than South African interests, and so it goes. I do not recall giving any two groups the exact same pilgrimage. Not only do the groups change but the guide changes also. He deepens his knowledge of the places by personal study and up-dating or he uses new modes of prayer that have been suggested by the pilgrims themselves. For example, there was the group that liked to recite the decade of the Rosary at each Holy Place and very easily dedicated it to mysteries outside the usual fifteen, like the Transfiguration or the Marriage-feast of Cana. No problem, as long as God was praised.

Another image of the guide is a gypsy living out of a suitcase. A friar-guide has his home community from which he sets out and to which he returns. His apostolate is an extension of the brotherhood at home. That's a friar's life. This is true not only of pilgrim-guiding but of any apostolate.

If these images are caricatures, what is the real essence of the Franciscan pilgrim-guide? Personally I believe he is first of all an evangelizer. The Gospel he tries to live personally is the same Gospel reflected in the Holy Places. It is the same "Good News" the pilgrim wants to hear again in the very land where it was first proclaimed. The guide tries to give the pilgrims a prayerful, Gospel experience. That is what they seek with varying degrees of fervor and that is what he can give with diverse levels of impact. The rest depends on God, working through the grace of the place.

This article has presented only one facet of our Franciscan life here in the Holy Land. But it is one that may appeal to some young men, or friars, or sisters who feel called to evangelize in the Holy Land. The need is clear to all concerned. I feel sure the Holy Spirit will inspire people to fill the need in the months and years to come. □

Contemplation in the Franciscan Tradition

SR. CLARE ANDREW D'AURIA, O.S.F.

Part I — Mirror of Truth and Love

Even as I begin to share these reflections with you, I am struck by the irony of the fact that I am recording these reflections on an audio tape. I say ironic because, although you will be hearing a faceless voice, and I realize that kind of listening can be difficult, much of what I want to say to you about the contemplative experience in the Franciscan tradition is that it has very much to do with face-to-face, eye-to-eye and heart-to-heart encounters. This is true, I believe, because the Franciscan tradition is, in all its facets, identifiably Incarnational. Francis experienced God's goodness as having its most sublime expression, not only in the spoken word, Who existed with God from the beginning, but more significantly, in the Word-made-Flesh, Jesus Christ, the Image of the invisible God: Jesus — who could not only be heard, but who could also be seen and touched. The realization that the Word became flesh permeated Francis' whole life. And he would admonish us, I believe, as Anthony DeMello does in one of his beautiful stories in *The Song of the Bird,* to "stop our frantic efforts to change flesh back into words" (p. 25). So contemplation in the Franciscan tradition is first of all a "fleshy" experience, that is, it is the gift and privilege of sharing our humanity with the humanity of Jesus. Thus the irony of this audiotape for, although the spoken word has its own power, the enfleshed word has the power of love. My prayer then for each of us over these days is that we can experience the loving presence and power of that eternal and enfleshed Word, whose coming in time we celebrate during this season.

Sister Clare delivered this talk as part of an end-of-the-year retreat for sisters of her Congregation, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. She serves as Provincial Councilor and is director of the lay associates program. Formerly, Sister Clare taught English and also was stationed at the San Damiano Retreat Center in Aston, Pennsylvania. She has studied at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, New York

These year-end retreat days are indeed made for celebration. They are for us to remember and thus to celebrate all that our life with God has been. In his video presentation on Evangelical Life which each of us saw this past fall, father Joseph Chinnici, O.F.M., defines contemplation in the Franciscan tradition as the enjoyment of God. I would expand that definition just a bit and say that contemplation is looking intently on the face of God and enjoying, truly delighting in what I See. More accurately, I think, contemplation is the experience of looking at God looking at me with delight and with love. This was the source of Francis' joy and certainly this is cause for the most joyful of celebrations. Father Chinnici also shared with us that, in the Franciscan tradition, there is no dichotomy between action and contemplation. Such a vocabulary does not exist for us. Our lives are contemplative simply because we are human. We are made for contemplation. We have contemplative moments at prayer, contemplative moments with our sisters, contemplative moments in ministry, and contemplative moments at leisure. For us, contemplation is not restricted by time or space. We can pray always, as Francis tells us in the Rule, because we can see always the face of God made visible in Christ. And we can become what Celano tells us Francis became — "himself a prayer" (2 Cel 95).

It is these two aspects of the Franciscan contemplative experience, my being face-to-face with God, and my seeing the face of God at all times, everywhere and in every place, that form the foundation of Saint Bonaventure's mystical treatise on contemplation. ***The Soul's Jouney Into God*** — in its Latin title, ***Itinerarium Mentis in Deum***. I would like to reflect with you over these days on some of what Bonaventure has to tell us in this work, not only about Francis' contemplative journey, but more importantly, about our own. Although this work is complex in its density, the vision that Bonaventure has to share with us about the contemplative journey is profoundly simple. I believe, then, he would encourage us to begin simply and spend some time reflecting on a symbol that he himself uses throughout almost the entire work — one that carries profound implication for our own understanding and experience of the contemplative life. That symbol is the mirror.

Mirrors hold a strange fascination for us. I think this is true for two reasons. First, the mirror is one of the few instruments we have that enable us to see ourselves face-to-face. Second, the mirror allows us simultaneously to look at what is behind us while fixing our gaze on what is in front of us, all the while remaining stationary ourselves. Bonaventure also knew this strange fascination for mirrors. In fact, the Latin word he uses for the verb contemplating is "speculation" which has its root in the Latin noun "speculum" which means "mirror". Bonaventure saw in the

experience of the mirror a symbol he could use to explore and explain the two aspects of the Franciscan contemplative experience that I referred to earlier. First, he says, that contemplation has very much to do with being face-to-face with myself and, in that experience, being face-to-face with my God and delighting in that encounter. Second, than contemplation is very much an experience of the present moment in which I view the past with gratitude and the future with hope because all creation that is mirrored in them reflects the face of the one Bonaventure calls the "Eternal Art," Jesus Christ himself. In this reflection, then, we will focus on ourselves as the mirrored image of Christ and, in the next reflection, on our world as the mirrored image of Christ.

Perhaps, you could take a mirror in your hand and look at yourself, either now as I am speaking, or during some quiet time over these days. For better or for worse, mirrors allow us to see ourselves face-to-face. Depending on the quality of the mirror itself, on how well it has been cleaned and polished, and on the amount of light which illumines its surface, the mirror will reflect our image back to us more or less accurately. We use mirrors to see for ourselves what others see of us. Mirrors highlight our defects close up — a blemish, a hair that's out of place, a crooked pin — and they allow us to correct these defects so that our image will be more pleasing. Sometimes this process can become very time-consuming, as all of us can recall from our younger and not-so-younger days. When I look back, for example, at Novitiate days, at my frustration at not being allowed to have a mirror, I wonder if the restrictions had less to do with controlling vanity than it had to do with simple economy of time. In my family, for instance, my sister Rosemary holds the Guiness world record for time spent in front of a mirror. She became notorious for being late for every major family event, including her own wedding. My father always contends that if every mirror were removed from her house, Rosemary would begin to be on time. He's probably right; and his frustration, I believe, stems not only from his impatience with lateness, but more importantly from his awareness that Rosemary is so much more than what she apears to be in a mirror.

No matter how accurate a mirror is, then, it can reflect only so much. And worse it can reflect a very distorted image if I believe that what I see in a mirror is what others get, or if I believe that what I see in the mirror is what I get or is all of who I am. This kind of distorted image was the tragic experience of the vain and wicked queen in the story of ***Snow White***. Who of us can forget her penetrating question, "Magic mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?" Her insecurity would not allow her to view herself as she really was, so she dealt only with the

image in the mirror. And, what made matters worse, was that she dealt in comparisons: "Who is the fair*est*?" When one day she asked the question and was answered, not by her own image but by the image of Snow White, the results were devastating. Because the queen never truly believed in her heart what the surface of the mirror had repeated, that she *was* the "fairest," the vain queen's fair face became so distorted by jealousy that she turned herself into the image and the reality of a wicked witch.

If I believe that what I see is all I am or that what I see is indeed not fair enough, then I have used the mirror wrongly. I have failed to remember that the mirror always reverses the image it reflects. I have failed to remember that with poor lighting or with poor polishing, even the best mirror will reflect a poor image, and that even with the best polishing and the best lighting, a poor mirror will reflect a poor image. Each is necessary for an accurate image. And for Bonaventure, the quality and the polishing and the light are all necessary if I am ever to see myself or my God or the world around me in a contemplative way.

According to Bonaventure, both a good polished mirror (that is, the gift of our human life) and sufficient light (that is, the gift of God's life) were given by God in the initial creation of Adam and Eve. Using the creation account from the Book of Genesis as a seminal text, Bonaventure tells us in Chapter 1 of *The Souls Journey* that, "In the initial state of creation, [we were] made fit for the quiet of contemplation" (1:7), that is, not only were we made in the image and likeness of God, but we were also made to see, *to contemplate* ourselves this way. Before the Fall, he tells us, we mirrored the Trinity itself in our rational gifts of memory, understanding, and will, while in our body-spirit person, we mirrored the face of the Word-made-flesh, Jesus Christ. But something happened to distort that image. Something happened to mar the quality of the mirror and to dim the light which had illumined its surface. That something is sin. Our sins, Bonaventure explains in Chapter 3, "interpose themselves like clouds" between us and the rays of truth and light coming to us from the Sun/Son Jesus Christ (3:3). Having thus turned away "from the true light to changeable good," we become, he says, "bent over" with the weight of sin (1:7). Able only to look down at the ground, we can no longer stand upright to look into the mirror of ourselves. Our bent bodies themselves block the light and, thus "blinded," we sit in "darknes" (1:7). Resenting this view of ourselves as darkness and dust, we try to recreate ourselves in our own image. The mirror, now broken by sin, highlights only our defects, so we use it to correct them cosmetically. And in the vicious cycle that ensues, we begin to think that what we see or what others see is really who we are. We lose the ability to be truly human because we have lost the ability to be truly contemplative.

How then, we wonder, can this initial gift of creation be restored? How can the mirror be repaired? How can it be cleaned and polished again? How can its surface be illumined again? Bonaventure says in Chapter 4 that, "When one has fallen down, one must lie there unless someone lends a helping hand to that person to rise" (4:7). That one who bends down to our fallen humanity to lift us up to be face-to-face with him in love is Jesus Christ. He repairs the mirror. He cleans and polishes it. He restores the light. He accomplishes all this because he is, in truth, both mirror and light, the "image of the invisible God," as Paul tells us in his letter to the Colossians (1:15).

This is the experience of conversion. This being lifted up is what it means to be redeemed from sin and filled with grace. Whatever and whoever God uses as the instrument of this lifting up, as the instrument of this conversion experience — and each of us knows our own — we know that it is somehow an experience beyond mirrors. It is rather a face-to-face experience — an experience of the eyes. For the eyes of one who loves us not only literally reflect our image back to us, but they also hold that image in love. They hold us in a place that is beyond the external frontier of ourselves that even the face limits: a place that is deep and mysterious; a place so dull of light that it is darkness; a place where the heart dwells; a place where the multiple faces of who I am can smile at being revealed in the mirror of love. This is contemplation: looking into the eyes of the God who looks on me with love, who holds me in love, and who mirrors me back to myself in love.

To begin to understand what it means to be lifted up in love so that I am face-to-face with my God, I need first of all to get in touch with my own experience of face-to-face encounters. Such encounters can take on many forms. We all know the experience of being in a group of people, perhaps at a break time during a meeting. We sense someone staring at us, and we feel uncomfortable. To be stared at by another is to be looked at in a critical way. It is to experience being to some degree known, without in any way being loved. We also know what it is like to be looked at peripherally, perhaps by a stranger. Such side glances also make us feel uncomfortable. To be viewed in such a furtive way is to be the object of someone else's curious interest or perhaps passing attraction. It is to experience being, in some superficial way, loved, without in any way being known. Each of us can also recall an encounter with someone with whom we have a history, someone perhaps from whom we have been estranged, or with whom we have come into conflict. We know how it feels when we look at such a person and she turns her face away from us or, with eyes cast down, refuses to return our gaze. We also can recall

times when we have turned our face away or refused to look into the eyes of another. To refuse to see or to be seen at all is to experience rejection: I am neither known nor loved.

Finally, each of us, I hope, can also recall the face of someone we love and whom we know loves us. We know how it feels to look with love on the face of another; to gaze long and longingly into the eyes of another; to have that loving gaze returned; to be present to the other in this silent mutual exchange that is beyond words and certainly beyond mirrors. This is the contemplative gaze: to see and to be seen in such a way that I experience being fully known and unconditionally loved.

This last encounter, of course, is how God contemplates us. This is how Christ looks on us when he lifts us out of darkness and illumines our minds and hearts to see in the mirror of who we are His own image and likeness. This is how the mirror is transformed into the eyes of Christ so that we see ourselves in the brightness of His face. And Jesus has so many faces that we can easily find our own in His. As he lifts us up and holds us in the mirror of His eyes He does not stare at us in critical judgment. He does not, with furtive glance, toy with our affections. Nor does He ever, with eyes cast down, reject us as if we were a burden he were forced to carry. No. With arms outstretched, full face, He gazes on us with the eyes of unconditional love. Knowing us as we are and loving us as we are, he contemplates us and, in his gaze, we are freed to stand upright and become contemplative again.

Such a face-to-face encounter with our God made visible in Jesus Christ is truly a contemplative moment. This is what Francis experienced in his face-to-face meeting with the leper in the early days of his conversion. This is what he experienced towards the end of his life in his face-to-face meeting with the Crucified Seraph on LaVerna. This is why he was able, as Murray Bodo tells us in *The Journey and the Dream*, to love "everyone with his eyes" (p. 30). This is what Bonaventure describes as the face-to-face "enjoyment of the highest good," when one is lifted up "not by an ascent of the body, but of the heart" (1:1). We cannot be contemplative unless we allow God to contemplate us. For unless, as Bonaventure says, "the mirror of our soul has been cleaned and polished," we cannot "raise [our] eyes to the rays of Wisdom [that is, to Christ] reflected in its mirror" (Prologue: 4).

As I experience ongoing conversion, then, I become more and more contemplative. I can return to the mirror of myself and see revealed there more and more clearly the image of the "fairest one of all": Christ Jesus himself. I will then, as the Letter of James advises, not be afraid to look

into the mirror at the face I was born with. I will not look at myself and then go off and promptly forget what I look like (James 1:23-24). I will no longer practice "custody of the eyes" with myself. I will rather see the face of Christ mirrored, as Bonaventure says, in the "sanctuary" of my own heart, and I will find my freedom in that contemplative gaze (3:1). For in Christ's love, the mirror of distortion is transformed into the mirror of truth, and it is that truth which makes us free.

Knowing us as we are and loving us as we are, He contemplates us and, in His gaze, we are freed to stand upright and become contemplative again.

We long for this transformation, for the contemplative moments that lead us from glory to glory. Like Paul we know that "Now we see indistinctly as in a mirror," and we long for the intimate moment when "we shall see face-to-face," when "I shall know even as I am known" (1 Cor 13:12). Like Moses who used to speak with God face-to-face, we plead, "Let me see your glory." Show yourself to me, my God, in the mirror of myself — as you really are, and not as I diminish you. And we long for the moment when God responds as He did to Moses. "I will make all my beauty pass before you, and in your presence, I will pronounce My name, 'Lord' " (Ex 33:18-19). This is the great revelation: to hear the name is to see the face. What is known in the name are the faces of God: tenderness, compassion, mercy, justice, faithfulness, and love. And these are my faces. These are your faces. This is what I see when I look in the mirror at the face I was born with. This is what I see when I contemplate myself in the loving eyes of Christ.

So we pray with the Psalmist:

> One thing I ask of the Lord; this I seek:
> To dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
> That I may gaze on the loveliness of the Lord and contemplate his temple....
> Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks; your presence, O Lord, I seek.
> Hide not your face from me; do not in anger repel your servant.

We pray with Bonaventure that we might enter into ourselves and in that mirror, see God through ourselves as through an image. And we become convinced as John of the Cross was:

> When you are looking at me,
> your eyes conveyed your grace into me;
> this was because you loved me,
> and my eyes, seeking your image,
> have the right to adore what they found in you.
>
> Do not spurn me,
> For if you originally saw black in me,
> you may now look at me,
> having already looked at me
> and bestowed grace and beauty on me. Amen.
>
> (Loew, 187)

I would like to begin by praying with you Bonaventure's opening prayer from *The Soul's Journey Into God*. We talked previously about how important light is to the accuracy of the image reflected in the mirror, and in this sharing we will be talking more about that light, and about the significance of illumination to the Franciscan contemplative experience. In this prayer, Bonaventure asks for such illumination as he begins to write this *Itinerarium*. Let us pray with him:

> I call upon the eternal Father through His Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, that through the intercession of the most holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of the same God and Lord Jesus Christ, and through the intercession of blessed Francis, our leader and father, that He may enlighten the eyes of our soul to guide our feet in the way of that peace which surpasses all understanding (Prologue:1).

It is well for us to pray this prayer during this season in which we celebrate that moment when, as Saint John tells us in the Prologue to his Gospel, Light penetrated darkness forever. What we want to reflect on today is what Bonaventure has to say about the gift of that Light and about the power it has to illumine reality so that we can journey contemplatively through our own looking glass into a world of mirrors, each of which somehow reflects the face of Christ. For to live in the darkness of sin is to see the face of Christ, but fail to recognize Him.

We recall from our previous sharing, Boanventure's insistence that "unless the mirror of our soul has been cleaned and polished" (Prologue:4), we cannot make the "ascent of the heart" (1:1). We talked about how the quality of that mirror is restored when we are lifted up in that contemplative moment when we see ourselves in the eyes of Christ's love and,

as Paul says, "experience that love which surpasses all knowledge" (Ep 3:19). Once we have experienced this face-to-face encounter with our God, we become contemplative again. We see ourselves and our world as mirrors reflecting back to us the face of Christ. We see the world, that is, everyone and everything in it, in such a way that we know it fully as it is and love it unconditionally as it is. We are then impelled, as Saint Paul says, to share with the world the gift we have received: the light shining on the face of Christ. This, I believe, is the contemplative call: to illumine our world with the light which has illumined us. It is to this task, this ministry, if you will, that Saint Paul calls us in his Second Letter to the Corinthians. In this passage from chapters 3 and 4, Paul contrasts the ministry of Moses and the Old Covenant wth the ministry of Christ in the New Covenant; he says,

> If what was destined to pass away [that is the Old Covenant] was given in glory, greater by far is the glory that endures [that is, the glory of Christ.] Our hope being such, we act with full confidence. We are not like Moses, who used to hide his face with a veil so that the Israelites could not see the final fading of that glory. Their minds, of course, were dulled. To this very day, when the Old Covenant is read the veil remains unlifted; it is only in Christ that it is taken away. Even now, when Moses is read a veil covers their understanding. "But whenever he turns to the Lord, the veil will be removed." The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. All of us, gazing on the Lord's glory with unveiled faces, are being transformed from glory to glory into His very image by the Lord who is the Spirit.
>
> If our gospel can be called "veiled" in any sense, it is such only for those who are headed toward destruction. Their unbelieving minds have been blinded by the god of the present age so that they do not see the splendor of the gospel showing forth the glory of Christ, the image of God. It is not ourselves we preach but Christ Jesus Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "let light shine out of darkness," has shown in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us (3:11-18, 4:3-7).

This is what the call to contemplation means: it is God's desire to love us and to reveal the glory of His face to us, "earthen vessels" as we are, so that we in turn might share with others the love and glory we have seen in the face of Christ. This is our truest ministry as we journey along.

But what happens if that contemplative moment never comes, if we never allow ourselves to be freed again for the "quiet of contemplation?" Then, I think, our journey becomes like the journey of Alice in Wonder-

land who, when she passes through the looking glass, plummets through a dark hole into a prison of meaningless reversals. In this "wonderland", she sees that time pressures the white rabbit, and side glances become the faceless grin of the Cheshire cat. She experiences celebration which become "un-birthdays," as tea is continuously poured out and into forever empty cups. And finally she meets the Queen of Hearts who, by a whim of her fancy, transforms the world around her, not by the contemplative gaze of love, but by controlling stare of the tyrant. She neither knows what is nor loves what is, so she paints white roses red, bakes bitter tarts, and uses gentle flamingos as mallets in her brutal game of croquet. In short, she makes creation into her own image and likeness.

As we know from the story, Alice wakes up and, as it were, passes back through the looking glass before any of these conflicts are resolved. However, despite the somewhat unsatisfying ending, the story makes its point: to walk such a purposeless and meaningless jorney of reversals is surly not the contemplative way. Yet my guess would be that each of us, at some time or other, has walked this frantic way, a way along which time, productivity, and control are the guideposts setting our directions. And if we never allow ourselves to be seen in the eyes of Christ's love, we will continue to walk through "wonderland" and never really pass through the mirror of His eyes and journey to the center of His heart where our own hearts dwell.

But how does this contemplative moment happen? Bonaventure says that for each of us it occurs uniquely. What is constant, however, is that the moment is an experience of *illumination* when, having looked at God looking at me, I become like the one who looks on me with love and yet I remain myself. I then see everything as a reflection of His love. I see all created and uncreated reality as a mirror reflecting the light shining from the face of Christ. Depending on the instrument God uses to illumine my mind and heart, to recreate me as contemplative again, Bonaventure says that the degree of light differs. Now Bonaventure, like any good medievalist, favors order, division, and hierarchy. However, what is significant for us and for Bonaventure, I believe, is not the degree or brightness of the illumination or any evaluative kind of judgment that might imply, but the fact that we *are* enlightened to see in a new way. Not to be illumined in any way is what is tragic. It is to be bent over and blinded in darkness. What is even more important for us to realize is that each experience of illumination is a gift and, as such, has its own beauty because everything, as it is, mirrors the face of Christ if I have the eyes to see.

Bonaventure says, then, that there are "stages" of illumination, and to concretize this understanding he develops the symbol of light, he says that we can contemplate God through the material world, in our own

souls, and in the Unity and Trinity of the Godhead. These three ways of experiencing the contemplative moment, he says, correspond "to the threefold intensity of light during a single day: The first [seeing God in the material world] is like evening; the second [seeing God in the human person], like morning; the third [seeing God as God], like noon" (1:3). Dusk, dawn, noon. Each has its own beauty: each one is necessary to complete the cycle of day and night. All are moments of illumination — all contemplative moments.

Bonaventure says in Chapters 1 and 2 of *The Soul's Journey* that the "whole material world [is] a mirror through which we may pass over to God, the supreme Craftsman" (1:9). When we see God mirrored in the material world, it is like seeing God in the light of dusk. Dusk is an in-between, twlight time when the world is misted in lavender and rose. The shadows it creates are magical, not fearsome, for they move across the earth quietly and peacefully, punctuated only by the sounds of a world falling into sleep. This moment is full of mystery and, in its dim light, we can see the face of Christ mirrored in material creation.

All of us, I am sure, have had such contemplative moments — with nature, for instance. Last fall, I spent some time in the Franciscan Ritiro in Allegany, New York. I arrived on a snowy November day, two weeks before Thanksgiving, harried from having walked the "Alice in Wonderland way" for quite a while. The morning after I arrived, I took a walk in the snow around the grounds of the motherhouse. The Ritiro wall cast a shadow along the path surrounding the house. Now that I think of it, I was somewhat "bent over" as I walked. Suddenly, I saw a purple flower peering back at me. It had struggled its way out from behind the wall and from under the crusted snow and stood there bravely against the wind, smiling at me. When I bent down to look at it more closely, I realized it was an anemone, frozen in lavender beauty. In that moment, I knew God had given me a special gift, and I had a peace and a certainty that all would be well.

When I reflect on that experience, I know it was an experience of light, and I believe I saw the face of Christ mirrored in that flower: the face of courage and the face of fragility. What struck me most forcefully, I think, was not only that both faces could exist in the paradox of that flower, but also that both could smile at me in peace and certainty. Bonaventure says that this kind of illumination is dusk, *only* dusk, and yet how bright is the shadow it casts: how clearly it reflects back to me the face of Christ and my own.

In Chapter 1, then, Boanventure encourages us to be enlightened by the "splendor of created things." He begs us, "Open your eyes, alert the ears of your spirit, open your lips, and apply your heart so that in all

creatures you may see, hear, praise, love and worship, glorify and honor your God" (1:15). And in chapter 2, he encourages us to be grateful "to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has transported us out of darkness into his marvelous light" (2:13). On this contemplative journey, all creation becomes a sacramental presence, mirroring Christ to us because in his pattern every creature is made. To walk this way takes time. One cannot be pressured like the white rabbit always being late for a very important date. Our task as we walk along this way is to take the time to reverence each creature and through our human consciousness, to allow it to enter our hearts. For we are the "bridge," Bonaventure says, linking the material world with the spiritual world, and, as such, we have the sacred responsibility of transforming matter and bringing it back to God. Material creation that comes from God and is a "vestige" or footprint of God must be brought back to God through the instrumentality of the human person. Taking the time to carry our world in this way is one of the most precious gifts that we, as women, can give to our world and to ourselves. This is why we labor in our world: to consciously serve creation by bringing it back to God. Only the contemplative person can work in this way because only the contemplative sees clearly the relatiionship between the created world and its Creator. So we journey through a true wonderland of mirrors, praying always.

As we move from the material world into what Bonaventure calls the "sanctuary" of ourselves, we see the face of Christ mirrored even more clearly (3:1). We spoke of this experience in great detail in our previous sharing. What we may need to focus on now is the obvious truth that, if we who have seen ourselves reflected in the eyes of Christ are called to reveal that light in our own eyes, every other human person has been loved in the same way and has the same call. This realization Bonaventure says in Chapters 3 and 4, is like waking up with dawn. How often have we used the phrase, "It finally dawned on me"? When we see God mirrored in ourselves and others, it is like seeing God in the light of dawn. Dawn is the moment of new beginning when light pierces darkness, spilling orange and yellow into the morning sky. As at the dawning of time, fire again meets water and life begins. The world awakens and the face of the earth glows as it radiates the warmth of the sun. In the glow of its light, I can see the face of Christ mirrored from my own face and from the face of all my brothers and sisters. Because each of us has somehow seen God face-to-face, we in turn can radiate from our own eyes "the glory of God shining on the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6).

This is the light the Israelites see when, after "Moses entered the presence of the Lord to converse with Him," they "noticed how radiant the skin of his face had become" (Ex 34:30, 34). For in this moment Moses

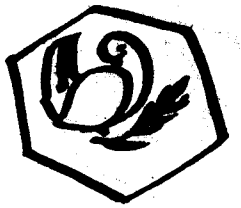
is *illumined* and writes on the tablet the words of the covenant. This is the light Peter, James and John see when Jesus is transfigured before their eyes, and "his face became as dazzling as the sun, his clothes as radiant as light" (Mt 17:2). For in this moment Jesus is *illumined* and sees Himself as a reflection of his Father — God's image and likeness imprinted at the center of his heart. He knows himself as the "beloved" one, not for what he has done or will do, but simply because he is. This is the light that, Bonaventure tells us in his *Major Life of St. Francis,* the friars see when Francis returns from his experience on LaVerna. For in this moment Francis is *illumined* and understands "that, as Christ's lover, ... he was to be totally transformed into the likeness of Christ crucified, not by the martyrdom of his flesh, but by the fire of his love consuming his soul" (13:3). Radiant like Moses and like Jesus Francis realizes that "he could not conceal" this experience even though he wishes to. He is told, significantly I think by Brother Illuminato, that "at times divine secrets are revealed to you not for yourself alone but also for others" (13:4). Realizing the wisdom in Illuminato's words, Francis, like Moses and like Jesus before him, returns to ministry. He comes down from the mountain and begins again to serve the lepers.

Each of us is called in this way to mirror the light shining on the face of Christ and to recognize and affirm that light as it is mirrored by others. This is our ministry: not the frantic activity of the Mad Hatter who continuously pours tea into forever empty cups, but the sitting at table that gives us the time to truly break bread with one another and, like the Emmaus disciples, to recognize Christ in that experience.

And yet Bonaventure says, even such dawning radiance, in which I see God through myself and through others and in which others see God through me, is still seeing God *only* in "an obscure manner" (3:1). For the person whose heart is illumined in such a way that it becomes "the house of God... inhabited by divine wisdom," Bonaventure says, invariably high noon must follow dawn (4:8). When we somehow see God directly in the Unity and Trinity of his own Being and Goodness, it is like seeing God in the light of noon. This is the time when mirrors are useless, the time when mirrors, attracting the direct rays of the sun, reflect only blinding darkness. Such darkness is very different from the darkness I experience when I am "bent over" in sin. This darkness is the moment when I glimpse God as God is. I can say only that I know such moments happen, but I cannot describe or explain them. Bonaventure says in chapter 5 that in this experience we seem to see nothing. We fail to realize he says, "that this very darkness is the supreme illumination of our mind, just as when the eye sees pure light, it seems itself to see nothing" (5:4). This is the experience described by the writer of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

This is the experience which the great mystics recount. Yet Bonaventure insists that God desires this for each of us if we are willing to go beyond mirrors into a world of "superluminous darkness" (7:5) to behold, instead of mirrors Christ Himself "hanging upon the cross" (7:2). "To transcend and pass over not only the sense world but even ourselves," is truly to let go of all control: to stop painting white roses red (7:1).

"In this passing over," Bonaventure continues, "Christ is the way and the door" into the house that is lit, not by the light of day, but by rooms full of fire (7:1). "This fire is God," Bonaventure says, "and his furnace is in Jerusalem, and Christ enkindles it in the heat of his burning Passion" (7:6). But we know, as God told Moses, that "no one can see the face of God and live" (Ex 33:20). So Bonaventure tells us that, if we desire to see God face-to-face, we must pray for "darkness, not clarity, not light, but the fire" (7:6). Bluntly he says that we must choose death. At the end of *The Soul's Journey Into God,* he says to us, "Whoever loves this death can see God because it is true beyond doubt that 'one will not see Me and live.' Let us, then die and enter into the darkness; let us impose silence upon our cares, our desires and our imaginings With Christ crucified, let us pass 'out of this world to the Father' so that when the Father is shown to us, we may say with Philip, 'it is enough for us' " (7:6). We know, of course, as Bonaventure does, that it is more than "enough." More than enough for Moses for Jesus, and for Francis. The light shines on in darkness. The Word became Flesh and we have seen His glory, filled with enduring love. In contemplation this love looks on us and we return the gaze in wonder at a God who is so humble as to become one of us so that we might be always face-to-face with Him in love. This is the wholeness, the completeness, the union for which each of us longs when, completely one with God, we are completely ourselves. □



Living the Gospel Today After the Example of Francis & Claire

THADDEUS D. HORGAN S.A.

One of the amazing graces that has flowed from the promulgation of the Revised Third Order Regular Rule and Life has been the extensive reflection by our Sisters and Brothers on what it means to be a franciscan in the context of our modern world. Our greatest vocational challenge, as it has been in every age, is to witness to the fact that "the Lord alone is God." (Reg. Tor 9:29) Our special witness as persons committed to total and continuous conversion of heart is to show that people need God, and that God still loves the world. We live in an era of purported self-sufficiency. It is a time when many people do not feel a need for God. In western Europe and North America some regions are described as "Post-Christian" and huge segments of the population are called "unchurched" or not religiously affiliated. After some new reflection on what God's grace did to Francis I found I had to ask myself new questions. Too often for me Francis' being led by the Lord to true faith, to conversion of heart and to the gospels as a way of life had been narrowly viewed in the context of a personal conversion experience.

In preparing this talk I found myself asking: why did God call Francis, and so many others, to replace the "spirit of worldliness with the spirit of the Lord," the theme of both his Letters to the Faithful. This is the theme of the prologue to both today's Secular Franciscan Rule and the Third Order Regular Rule. Was not Francis' call for the sake of renewing the church, for reinvigorating it with ever-new life in the spirit, and for making it a leaven of renewed vitality for the world? This is what is implied by that teaching of the Second Vatican Council which calls the Church

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Fr. Thaddeus Horgan, S. A., delivered this address at the Assembly of TOR Franciscan General Ministers/Superiors in Assisi at Pentecost of this year. A member of the editorial board of **THE CORD,** *Fr. Thaddeus is currently assigned to the Bishop's Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs in Washington, D.C.*

"a kind of sacrament" in the world. The Church, living people, efficaciously manifests and nurtures the realization of God's rule and reign over all when its members live the faith with truly converted hearts. In this light, it is obvious our franciscan vocation may not be viewed merely personally. It has to be viewed ecclesially. Whatever is viewed ecclesially has to be seen, in turn, globally. The Church's mission is universal.

You and I, because we are in the Third Order, or Penitential tradition of being franciscan, have to grasp this aspect of our vocation as so many of our sisters and brothers have. Franciscan penitents, whether religious or laity, have always been in the world except for those few called to contemplative life of prayer for the world. Our witness to true faith and conversion of heart by living evangelical life manifests one way in which the body of Christ, the church, is built up for the sake of extending God's Kingdom. In view of the obvious needs of our world, namely peacemaking, concern for the poor and marginalized, and the care of creation, we can say that the extensive reflection by Third Order Religious Franciscans since 1985 truly is an amazing grace.

We are gathered here today in the seven hundreth year of the church's formal recognition of the Third Order Regular by Nicholas IV. This gathering, I feel, manifests the constant renewing gift of the Holy Spirit. It urges us to ask how are we concretely witnesses to peace in our own living of the gospel and its call to conversion of heart. How are we peacemakers? Who are today's wolves of Gubbio, or contesting Mayors and Bishops of Assisi, or waring Sultans and Crusaders who need to experience God's incontestable witness to peace by today's Francis-inspired followers? We are moved to ask how and why we concretely should choose to be with and not just be of service to today's unwanted or perceived leprous people. We express concern about how our lifestyles can manifest true gospel values particularly to developing peoples and nations torn by extreme socialist or capitalist ideologies. We challenge ourselves with today's use and abuse of creation to live "relationship" which Francis poetically heralded in the *Canticle of Creatures*. We dare again to proclaim that all reality has a destiny and dignity in God because all of creation is for Christ.

Aware of our real word we know our own need to recapture Francis' vision of life based on faith. Pausing to recapture this is perhaps our greatest challenge. Those of us from Western Europe/North American cultures may find this terribly difficult. Our world does not tell us so much "to live," but to produce, to organize, to plan, to marshal energies and to be busy about getting tasks done. Those of us from the developing nations are often lured more by greed than by progress, and by grasping power than by promoting harmony. Being franciscan, however, calls us

all unequivocally and primarily to a gospel lifestyle in which work and ministry are but a part. For most of us this fact probably means we have to look again at "following Christ after the example of St. Francis." We need to be reflective. I suggest that we need to be more contemplative too in order to be renewed. If we become authentically renewed, then through us God's goodness can touch our world!

Reflection taught St. Francis to be turned to God with all his energies, personality, and abilities, and to be totally open to receive God's goodness. If one word could summarize Francis' faith in God, it is "goodness." The first writing about Francis, the *Sacrum Commercium* tells us that his closest followers deeply appreciated this. Allowing self to receive the goodness of God was the active experience of "true faith" for him. Biblical reflection led Francis to know God as One Who wills only good for all creatures, but especially for men and women. Francis wanted his followers to be filled with this faith. The second article of the Third Order Regular Rule and Life explicitly summons us to this true faith and its consequent, conversion of heart. God's goodness can be viewed superficially and in a limited way, limited to God's gifts received from and through creation. While this certainly is true, it is much less than Francis' total perspective on the goodness of God. For him Christ alone is God's total gift to people and the manifestation of God's goodness given to us. Creation itself is appreciated only through the gift of Christ. By focusing on Christ one comes to know the real purpose dignity, and wonder of all creation. Franciscan writers refer to "the absolute primacy of Christ" in the thought of Francis. His method of teaching was not exposition and explication but his own lived experience which burst forth in the *Canticle of Brother Sun*. That magnificent piece of poetry has authentic meaning only to the extent that we understand it in the light of Christ who reconciles all and everyone with God, each other, and all reality. This perspective on Christ deepened in Francis, and in Clare, as their reflective meditation gave way to contemplation.

The principal document of the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, echoes Francis' hope for his followers. It urges all religious to "consider that through them, to believers and non-believers alike, the Church truly wishes to give an increasingly clearer revelation of Christ" (LG #46). St. Paul in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians succinctly states this revelation:

> For God has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of the divine will, according to God's purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to *unite* all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Eph. 1:7-10).

Francis' and Clare's focus on Christ penetrated the very mystery that is God. In God's inner life Christ makes all reality coherent. Francis read, for example, that Johannine biblical text where God is simply described as love. Being a lover, he appreciated what this meant. Within God, life is relationship. His declaration that God was "Abba" for him before the Bishop of Assisi was a confession of this faith. He first discovered Abba through reflection. Through contemplation Francis and Clare experienced God as Abba, the real, loving, relational, and compassionate source of all being, all life, and all energy even that yet to be realized. Divine love not only has a source, but also an object. The object of God-Abba's love is God-the eternal Word and all who are in Him. The living love and eternally nourishing life within God is the maternally nurturing Holy Spirit who births Christ in our lives. (Ep. Fid. II).

Love, as we know from human experience, externalizes itself. Creation then, from the franciscan perspective, is God's love extending beyond God exploding into being as creation. Genesis speaks of the apex of creation, man and woman. They are formed from the dust of the earth to the divine likeness, male and female. In this they reflect God because of their capacity to love, to be mutual, to be one. St. Paul, quoting the canticle of the apostolic community, expresses this revelation of true faith this way: "In Him everything in heaven and on earth was created, things visible and invisible ... all were created through Him, all were created for Him" (Col. 2:15-16).

The Johannine Gospel's prologue puts it this way:

> In the beginning was the Word; the Word was in God's presence and the Word was God; the Word was present to God in the beginning. Through the Word all things came into being and apart from the Word nothing came to be. Whatever came to be in the Word found life, life for the light of all people (Jn. 1:1-14).

Christ then, is the reason for creation. For Francis and Clare Christ is still more. All of creation, but notably men and women, are meant to be filled with God's love. If all by creation are in Christ then all are destined to be in Christ eternally! As that other canticle of the apostolic community points out, "... God chose us in Christ before the world began to be holy and blameless in his sight, to be full of love; God likewise predestined us through Jesus Christ to be God's adopted children..." (Eph. 1:4-5). This is humanity's intrinsic dignity: all are meant to reflect God's life of love. This faith in Christ especially caused Francis and Clare to respect and love other men and women and to focus franciscan lifestyle concretely on "fraternity," on the consciously lived awareness that Christ became our brother to show us the way to God.

In their love for God in Christ enlivened by the Spirit they found they could vividly love others. This capacity to love enables men and women to be the icon of God in this world! This is why God made them stewards of the earth and creative cooperators in discovering God's goodness in creation and in relationships. People can love as God loves. This makes it possible for us to care for the earth and for one another, to preserve the integrity of all creation, and to share the good things of the cosmos justly and equitably. It was Francis' and Clare's contemplative stance before God and God's creatures that made them seraphic, or filled with wonder, praise and adoration. It equally made them seraphic in their atittude toward people and toward all creatures, living and inanimate. Both Francis' Rule of 1223 and Clare's Rule give primacy of place to this contemplative posture. Without contemplating God's goodness in creation, and in re-creation through Christ, the true dignity and worth of all peoples and creatures, not only can, but frequently has been lost. Activity apart from contemplation is totally contrary to an authentic franciscan spirit.

Lack of love, or selfishness, distorts the purpose of creation, leads to its abuse, and results in inequities that excite people to react. This in turn causes domination, and suppression, and violence. How far that is from God's purpose in creating! Men and women were created for God's glory (Is. 43:7). When the phrase "God's glory" is used, often it is misunderstood. Somehow it suggests that God is self-centered. But God is love. And "glory" refers to God's own inner divine life! To be created for God's glory, then, is to be destined to share God's life. The familiarity of God with Adam and Eve was intended to prefigure their destined eternal intimacy in God. Only in God are men and women fully alive. St. Irenaeus centuries ago put it well when he noted that God's greatest glory is men and women fully alive!

The very way God made man and woman reveals that design. First of all, we are mystery as God is mystery. A wonder of life is the surprise and joy of discovering giftedness, abilities, and capabilities in us, in others, in the earth, and in the cosmos. Since the dawn of the ages, and from our birth, they have been with us; yet they may not be perceived, or they may be underdeveloped. Development, human and technological, is possible because we, and the universe, reflect the mystery of God's glory. Another wonder of creation is to come to appreciate the intrinsic value of everyone including the self. Instinctively I am aware that I cannot stand alone. Behaviorists would say that we are social beings. Theologians would say we are made in God's image, capable of love. Each of us is God's work of art, created in Christ, to live the good life that God intended form the beginning for us to live (Eph. 2:10). Each of us is distinct, but

we share a common humanity and are incomplete without one another. God is one; each Divine Person is distinct; the three Persons uniquely are God together. We are male and female, complementary beings not made to be competitive, but like God, mutual and meant to be fruitful.

Franciscans are especially called to witness to this as Francis' (Reg. TOR 20) and Clare's guidance on fraternity notes (Ref. Cl. 10:5 and Test. Cl. 18). Through us "all should be moved to peace, goodwill and mercy because of our gentleness." We are called to be peacemakers in our fraternities. We are called to be peacemakers in society. We are called even to let the earth literally be at peace because of our care. All this is so because all creation's destiny is in God. But we can be none of these unless our being is rooted in God's goodness through contemplation. When that becomes the reality of our living, then the deeds that manifest God's Kingdom (Matt. 25:34 ff) flow into concrete expression.

There is no "apostolic activity" that can specifically be called franciscan. To be a franciscan is a way of life, the way of Jesus as He is portrayed walking this earth in the gospels. Flowing from this style of life are the deeds of the Kingdom. They witness to the fact that we reject domination and violence; that we reject cruelty and war; and that we reject greed and wasteful consumption. Positively these deeds declare our belief that Christ is our brother and brother to all. Therefore we are for those who lack the necessities of life. We actually do what Francis did and "opt for the poor" and the marginalized. We enter into solidarity with the sick, the underprivileged, and the handicapped because Christ in and among us cares for them. We visit the imprisoned, clothe the naked, counsel the fainthearted, and educate the ignorant to manifest the compassion of God revealed to the world in Christ by the Spirit's power. For others these may be careers or professions. For franciscans they are the deeds of Christ, our brother, touching all. They manifest that God still loves the world, and the world still has a destiny in God. In our lifestyle, in which these deeds are in part, we show that the Lord alone is God.

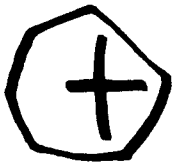
Today a special concern for franciscans is the unity of the Chruch, the unity of all Christians and the unity of the whole human community. Because of our belief about God and creation (Rom. 8:19-22 and Rev. 5:9-10), we accept responsibility to give shape to the "new creation" (Rev. 21:1-7) which will come about when all are one in Christ. A fragmented church and christian disunity express the opposite of the reconciliation Christ's body, the Church, must proclaim and witness to. Diversity, a franciscan characterisic, can not be allowed to be divisive. God loves it. God has made so much of it. Unity with diversity is the sign of the Kingdom that outshines all others. It reflects God, one yet triune. It corresponds to the sentiments of the heart of Christ as He entered into

His passover through death to new life. He prayed "that all may be one... that the world may believe" (Jn. 17:21). For franciscans this should be a passion.

A passion is a movement of the heart, arising from the center of our faith-filled being, taking us beyond desire to a gospel lifestyle which should witness to the inner unity of the Church. This state of being one in turn promotes unity among divided Christians. Christian Unity, as Christ's own words reveal, prefigures the unity of all humanity. This passion for unity filled Francis' spirit as we read in the last part of Chapter 23 of the Rule of 1221. So too should it fill our hearts.

It will, I believe, if we take to heart what we Franciscans said in 1982 to the rulers of peoples when we adapted Francis' letter of 1220 with the same title. Let us not adapt it, but adopt it:

> Keep a clear eye toward life's end. Do not forget your purpose and destiny as God's creature. What you are in God's sight is what you are and nothing more. Do not let wordly cares and anxieties or the pressures of office blot out the divine life within you or the voice of God's Spirit guiding you in your great task of leading humanity to wholeness. If you open yourself to God and the divine plan printed deeply in your heart, God will be open to you.
>
> Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received — fading symbols of honor, trappings of power — but only what you have given: a full heart enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice and courage.
>
> Embrace the God of us all and God's Word wherever it surfaces. Imitate God's preference for the poor and powerless. Enter into the divine plan of liberating all peoples from everything that oppresses them and obstructs their development as human beings. Do not grow tired of working for peace among all people.
>
> Help remove unjust social structures and patterns of exploitation. Uphold the rights and dignity of the human person. Foster the creation of a society where human life is cherished and where all peoples of the planet can enjoy its gifts, which God created for all, in a spirit of love and justice and equality.□



Wisdom From a Caterpillar

I'm a lowly caterpillar but by-and-by
I'll be a very beautiful butterfly,
though I'm considered of humble origin
I'm destined one day to shed my fuzzy skin,
I have fourteen legs and must crawl on the ground,
I long for the day when I can flit around,
Then I won't need these jaws to chew and to chew,
I'll sip nectar from the flowers wet with dew,
Then I won't have fourteen segments, I'll have three
And with delicate wings I'll fly gracefully.
Friend, you too will rise one day, transformed and free,
In heaven, good people will be lovely to see.

Sr. Mary Gemma Brunke, S.C.

A Letter from St. Francis on the Eucharist

HARRY AVELING TSSF

In its original form, this letter from St. Francis of Asssi was addressed to "the clergy," and was concerned with the better care of chalices, altercloths and corporals used at the celebration of the Eucharist, as well as with the reservation of the consecrated elements afterwards. Francis' concern reflected that of the Lateran IV Council of 1215.

Today, we are conscious that, not only the clergy but the whole people of God celebrate the Eucharist together; all are, in different ways, ministers of the Eucharist. We also perceive that each individual, and the world itself, is a sacrament, revealing God. The Eucharistic vessels are more than metal and linen.

My version of Francis' letter has tried to allow for both ways of seeing. Francis' letters speak from their time to our situation.

Let us consider
we who are ministers of the Eucharist
the great wickedness
and ignorance
    many display
toward the most Holy
    Body and Blood
    of our Saviour Jesus Christ
and toward the words
    which bring him physically
    among us.
(It is the word
    which consecrates
    His body.)

Fr. Aveling is chaplain of the Institute of Technology and college of TAFE in Swinburne, asutralia. He is a member of the Third Order of the Episcopalian Society of Saint Francis.

Truly
we have
nothing
and
we see
nothing
of THE MOST HIGH
in this world
except His Body and Blood
His names and words
through which we were created
through which we were brought
from death to life. (1 Jn. 3:14)

Now
all who deal
with these holy mysteries
should realize
the shameful condition of the objects
we use for the sacrifice
of the Body and Blood
of our Lord.

They should see
how often He is left lying
in dirty corners
carried about unworthily
eaten in sin
and given to others
without forethought.

His names and His words
are trodden
underfoot
because animal man
does not recognize
the things of God.

Has His love
no effect on our hearts?
Daily
our Lord
places Himself
in our hands
Daily
we touch
and eat
Him.

Don't we realize
what we should be
if we are to receive Him
into our hands?

We should repent
remove this fault
(and all the others)

at once.

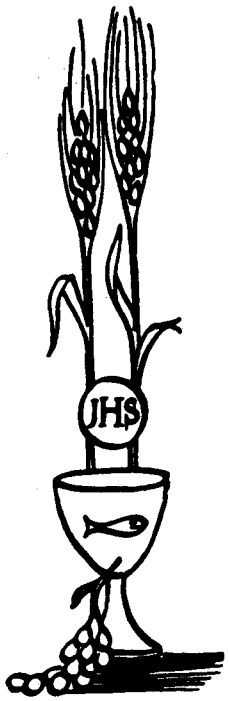
Wherever we find
the most holy Body
of our Saviour Jesus Christ
ignored
we should retrieve Him
and set Him
in some more precious place.

Wherever we find
His names and words
abandoned
we should take them
and put them
in some more perfect place.

We know we are required to do this
because our Lord commands it
and so does the church.

And we know that if we do not
our Lord Jesus Christ
will demand an account of our deeds
on Judgement Day.

Please copy this letter
and observe what it says.
Know that the Lord will bless
those who do what I write.



Book Reviews

Called to Life. By Congar, O.P. Yves. New York: Crossroad, 1987. Translated by William Burridge WF. Pp. vii-148 pp., cloth, $12.95.

Reviewed by Fr. Kevin M. Tortorelli, O.F.M., Director, Classics program, Siena College, Loudonville, N.Y.

With the apparent exception of chapter 5, all the chapters of this book have been previously and separately published and have been brought together to form the present book. In the Introduction, Janine Feller has drawn together several reflections of Fr. Congar on the nature of prayer ('Let God be God') and its several kinds (liturgical psalmody, intercessory, petitionary, prayer for unity and the prayer of the Communion of Saints).

The psalms (chp 1) present God as living and true in terms of human need, hope, joy and distress. As a Christian one prays the psalms from within the attitude of Christ the Servant which, as my own attitude as well, makes the psalms my personal self-expression before God. Chapter 2, "listening and seeing," weaves a rich biblical tapestry of various insights but at its conclusion I found myself asking for a more satisfactory, perhaps a more systematic account of the unity of these two senses. By contrast, chapter 3 is a commentary on the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum) which aims to help one read the Bible intelligently and from within the Church at prayer. This chapter is quite good for parish or catechetical bible courses especially so in an age of biblical fundamentalism and televised preachers. Chapter 4 is a meditation on transcendence as evoked by the divine call and issuing in an attitude of free dependence in relationship with others. Fr. Congar sets this idea over against both the radical autonomy of Sartre and Camus and against the overstimulation of modern culture. He makes a good case for transcendence in its contribution to the human quest for conscious interiority.

The axis of the text and its point of transition seems to lay with chapter 5 where Fr. Congar develops the sacramental notions of mystery and encounter in terms of openness and the experience of surprise. Here there is a gentle and winsome focus on attentiveness and hospitality in daily affairs as the humble stuff on which the Holy Spirit operates. Encounter discloses a quite cheerful freedom to respond in faith, to make the most of the terms of the encounter.

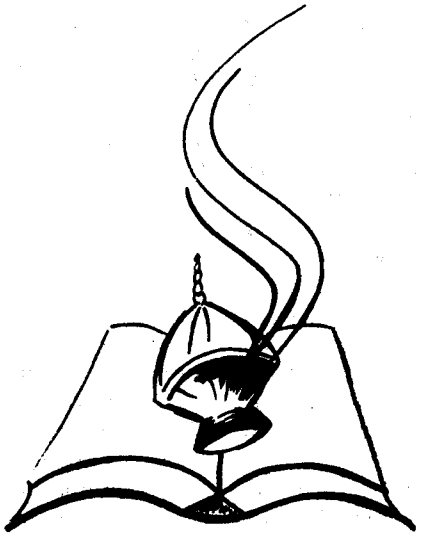
Surely the meditation on the Holy Spirit (chp 6 and 7) is a compendium of pneumatic theology as Fr. Congar traces how anthropology, ecclesiology and pneumatology interrelate. His historical overview is masterful as is his discussion of charisms as the term that best expresses the juncture of anthropology, ecclesiology and pneumatology. Here is a great learning

lightly worn. To this doctrinal juncture Congar comments on the personal experience of the Spirit who "carries me beyond myself, even despite myself, clean contrary to the being of flesh and blood that I am..." (p. 75), the Spirit who is the great interior witness.

The next four chapters form a unit devoted to the nature of the Church. The "Zacchaeus" ecclesiology (chp 8) of Vatican II and the compendium of sacramental theology (chp 9) in terms of word, sign and faith are especially fine presentations of classical Catholic theology in the postconciliar age. The nature of "salvation" which the Church exhibits as the public form and sacrament of this salvation is at the heart of a discussion (chp 10) on liturgy, its nature, and its relationship to charisms. Fr. Congar addresses various issues of practical concern such as spontaneous eucharistic prayers, community praying of the Consecration, how much variety and difference within the congregation may be tolerated, how far should liturgy be acculturated without being secularized, and, finally, the ecumenical dimensions of the Eucharist. Liturgy, finally (chp 11), is a primer of doctrine in the form of divine praise and divine action in our regard.

My favorite chapter concludes the book and its very title "Heaven, the world's burning bush" (chp 2) discloses the union with God to which we are called and its terms among which is the fact that "love never ends."

Several misspellings are regrettable (eg., superceded, p. 66; "wordly" should read "worldly", p. 77); but the book is very helpful as thoughtful, scholarly, brief presentations of important issues in fundamental and doctrinal theology. □



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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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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
[1]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).

Letter of St. Bonaventure to the Poor Clares of Assisi (1259)*

In Christ Jesus to the beloved daughters, the Abbess of the Poor Ladies of Assisi of the Monastery of St. Clare, and to all the Sisters of the Monastery, Friar Bonaventure, the Minister General and servant of the Order of Friars Minor, health and the grace to follow the Lamb wherever He goes with the most joyful virgins who are prepared for the wedding of the Lamb!

Beloved daughters in the Lord, I have recently come to understand through our very dear Brother Leo, who was the companion of the holy father during his life, how as spouses of the eternal King you strive to serve in all purity the poor Christ crucified. This has given me a very great dedication and I wish to urge you that you follow in the footprints of your most blessed Mother, who was taught by the Holy Spirit through the medium of the little poor man St. Francis. Thus you will follow with great care in the way of all her virtues and you will desire "to have nothing else under heaven" except what this Mother taught. It was the point of all her teaching that you desire Christ and Him crucified (I Cor. 2:2). When you go forth in pursuit of the fragrance of His blood, dear daughters, as your Mother went forth, you will lay hold of the mirror of poverty with great valor. You will grasp the example of humility, the shield of patience and the title of obedience. In this manner, afire with divine love, you will give your heart entirely to Him who on the cross offered His heart to God the Father. You will be clothed with the light of the example of your Mother and you will, with all sweetness, be set aflame with everlasting desires, spreading the fragrance of all virtues. So may you be for

This letter is found in the Opera Omnia *of St. Bonaventure, Volume 8, 473b-474. It is presented here in translation from the Latin by David Temple. O.F.M., member of the Editorial Board of* **THE CORD**

Christ, the Son of the Virgin and the spouse of prudent virgins, a true fragrance for those who are being saved and for those who are not (II Cor. 2:15)!

So, with dispositions that endure, be on the alert! Stand bright with the spirit of devotion, so that, when the shout goes up that the bridegroom has come, you may go forth in all fidelity to meet Him! The lamps of your souls will be filled with the oil of charity and joy so that, when the foolish virgins are shut out, you may enter with Him to the nuptials of eternal joy. There Christ invites His spouses to recline at table with the angels and the elect. And He will pass in and out to serve them the bread of life and the flesh of the Lamb that has been slain and the fish that has been roasted on the cross, prepared with the fire of love with which He has loved you so ardently. And He will give you to drink of this wine, and those who are most dear to Him are inebriated with a marvelous sobriety. There are times when they enjoy great but hidden measure of sweetness which is reserved for those who fear Him. Without ceasing they look upon Him who is fairer in beauty, not only beyond all the sons of man, but also for surpassing the thousands of angels. Indeed, the angels desire to look upon Him who is the brightness of eternal light and the splendor of the glory of paradise.

It is to Him, dearest daughters, that you cling always and forever as to our highest good. And, when you see fit, I beg you to commend me, a sinner, to His clemency, which is so great that we cannot fully say what it is. I ask you to beg insistently that, by his mercy, I may so direct the course of my steps, for the glory and honor of His wondrous name and for the salvation of the little flock of Christ which has been committed to me. □

Pilgrims in the World, Close to God's People, Inspired by Clare

FR. DARIO PILI, O.F.M.

The aim of this outline of a reflection is to consider how nuns dedicated to contemplation as followers of our Mother Saint Clare, the little plant of Saint Francis, can share in the lives, the hopes and the sufferings of mankind.

These comments are born out of the conviction that, in the very choice of a life as distinctive as the contemplative life, the followers of Saint Francis must, like him, experience a deep and positive love for God's people. They, too, must take up the "cross" of humanity.

The Decree "Perfectae caritatis" n. 7, which deals with institutes totally dedicated to contemplation, states that "the members of these institutes are concerned with God alone."

Whatever can it mean to be concerned with God alone?

So that this "concern with God alone" may not be used as an excuse for any kind of laziness, mental or otherwise, the expression and its purport need to be rightly understood.

It means to be concerned with God as contemplatives, as persons alive to his mystery, and therefore "following him in his movement." The great "movement" of God was and is Christ — so that in contemplating Christ, looking at him, listening to him, we contemplate God. But the "movement" of God is also history — this happening, this humanity, this person!

This article, translated from the Italian by Sister Agnes van Baer, O.S.C., first appeared in Forma Sororum *Volume 24, 1987, 16 - 29. The author, Fr. Dario Pili, O.F.M., is stationed at the General House of the Order of Friars Minor. He serves as secretary for matters dealing with Poor Clare Nuns.*

And so, what is the "screen" on which we can contemplate (be concerned with) God? Surely it is the word of God, the Bible.

The Bible is the "communication" of God to man. To comprehend it we must listen to it from the beginning, follow it closely, even through its most difficult passages, right to the very end: from the first word of the book of Genesis to the last word of the Apocalypse. Only through a close familiarity with Sacred Scripiture can we come to know God. Studying the Old Testament in the light of the New, we can pick out the footprints of God.

A good preparation is necessary in order to take in all its meaning; but even the most simple person can read the whole Bible in such a way as to make it her own. To devote time to reading the Bible, to study it and meditate on it is the delightful activity of the person totally dedicated to contemplation.

But is the Bible the only source of the word of God? Yes, if by other sources we mean alternative or rival ones. But if, on the other hand, we refer to intermediary sources or those that flow from that one Source, then we can say that the "movements" of God which help us to know him are to be recognized also in that true word of God which is history in its day-by-day unfolding.

So, just as we pose the question of a "spiritual" reading of the Bible, we pose the same question of a "spiritual" reading of history and of each single day: the reading of a contemplative, contemplative reading directed towards knowledge (and adoration) of God, not "recreational" reading.

This leads to the question of the relationship between *contemplation and information*. Should information within the monastery (understood as a positive and prudent use of the means of social communication) be seen simply as a concession to "relaxation," as a concern not to appear completely out of touch, or would it be seen rather as a real sharing in the mystery of God and the mystery of humanity in so far as the latter is the "movement" through which God makes himself known?

Precisely from a desire to be concerned with God alone, the contemplative will surely be compelled by love to be seriously concerned about people: in order to learn to contemplate God alone, but on the wide screen (audio and visual) of his revelation, and in order to make sure that the fruit of this activity of contemplation (i. e., wisdom, a sense of God and a sense of history, present and future) *is firmly grounded in reality*.

The same n. 7 of "Perfectae caritatis" which unreservedly acclaims the choice of Institutes totally dedicated to contemplation also states quite forcefully that their way of life should be revised in accordance with the .... aforesaid principles and criteria of up-to-date renewal, without detriment to their withdrawal from the world and the essential practices of the contemplative life.

Obviously then, there are some fixed points (the sign of "separation from the world and the safeguarding of *the essential practices of the contemplative life*"); but the perspectives of renewal can be wide open.

In the service of contemplation

This dedicated concern with God alone is to be lived out within certain conditions which are widely known and which "Perfectae caritatis" specifies as solitude, constant prayer, and willing (Latin "alacer") penance. These are "condition," "environment," even "instruments"; but they are not contemplation.."

a. What can be the nature of this *"solitude"* which, on the face of it, can hardly be a real value? For God said: "It is not good that man should be alone!" And besides, even within monasteries no one may go her own way apart from the community!

Therefore, a cult of solitude or a spirituality of solitude arising from or favouring a certain tendency to introversion, or fostering a dubious preference for individualism, could not be a genuine monastic spirituality nor a genuine contemplative spirituality. A contemplative living in community who has chosen to share her life with her sisters does not have the option of being introverted, individualistic or anti-social.

This solitude (again, an instrument and environment for contemplation) is something much deeper. It is a returning to one's own heart, to one's own conscience where God is always waiting. Oneself and God; and that is enough. This solitude can also be called Desert. Indeed, it is just this solitude that we sometimes do refer to as Desert, not without a certain ambiguity. It does, however, afford us the opportunity of taking stock of ourselves, of examining our daily lives in relation to God and in his presence.

But what actually is a desert? It is a vast and lonely expanse, fascinating to behold, but inhospitable and risky to enter. Because in the desert there are no tracks and even our footsteps disappear if a gust of wind comes up, we are made aware of our littleness, of our inability to help ourselves. It is only God who saves us.

Certainly from this experience of solitude stems the need for a "set of norms" to coordinate the life of a monastery. The monastery will never be the village square at the time when people go walking. But neither

will solitude ever be reduced to a fixed set of norms regulating a so-called "well ordered" monastery.

b. Another "condition" for a life of contemplation is *silence*." And silence would certainly be one of the moments of this desert-solitude. It is the moment of listening: What is God saying? What is he saying to me? How does God see this problem? One's being becomes absorbed in thought and in listening—and this beyond ordinary human mediation. For contemplation goes beyond study, beyond exegesis, even beyond what we call "spiritual reading." Silence—for the purpose of listening—is that moment in which God has "led you into the desert," and "speaks to your heart"; and he will not necessarily say to you what he has said to the author of your favorite book.

Just as in the case of solitude, the demands of silence call for an appropriate set of norms. But we also need to keep in mind that a monastery in which solitude and silence were only norms, or principally norms and hardly contemplation (or desert-listening) would run the risk of creating a cold and alienating atmosphere. No hour of the day or night has the right to do violence to the spirit by damaging the psyche. Contemplation is *concerned with God;* therefore, it means *attention* to him, and should not become a dangerous *vacuum*.

c. Should *"constant prayer"* also be considered as a condition, a setting and instrument for contemplation? More accurately, it can and should be a *guida* to contemplation and a moment of contemplation. As we have seen, "Perfectae caritatis," referring to institutes totally dedicated to contemplation, speaks explicitly of constant prayer as one of the essential characteristics that demand fidelity. This constant prayer certainly includes specific acts of prayer—Eucharistic liturgy and liturgy of the Hours—which set the rhythm of the day. But these acts or actions do not of themselves define or constitute or express a contemplative life. They do if they actually *do;* they express it if they actually *express* it.

Contemplation will always be "desert-listening." Prayer is continually being deepened and validated by its relation to contemplation if we really want rightly to be called *contemplatives*. That does not in any way mean that "the desert" is incompatible with praying, or that listening is incompatible with the singing or speaking of "the word." But the common mistake of seeing a value in a great accumulation of "prayers," without any inner reality of contemplation, should be avoided.

The obligation highlighted by this consideration is obvious, and concerns the way of praying, of chanting the psalms, of singing. It concerns instruction in how to read the Bible; familiarity with and assimilation of the psalms; the right use of time; overall, in a proper ordering of commitments

in terms of priority in deference to the contemplative dimension of the life of the monastery. Such an evaluation could perhaps lead to interesting, even surprising conclusions: a monastery unreservedly open to the life of contemplation would inevitably also be a monastery rich in .... material poverty. For clearly there is no contemplation without poverty.

d. The final condition for a truly contemplative journey is *"willing penance*." The spirit and the forms of penance are clearly enunciated in the apostolic constitution "Paenitemini"(Paul VI; 17.11,1966). What is implied is an all-inclusive asceticism which involves an effective sharing in the life and the sufferings of Christ, and at the same time brings about a steady growth to maturity measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ. Also implied is a physical asceticism that fills the self for its journey; and this, of course, includes external facts of penance.

But it can happen that penance becomes isolated from real life; that is, one can become so caught up in acts of penance as to evade the real challenges of life: life is in its daily unfolding, life as relationship, as diligence, as work. Life according to the spirit is not an accumulation of good works; it is a continual conversion.

It can also happen that penance becomes isolated from the very contemplation towards which it should be oriented. True penance gives to the individual that equilibrium and spiritual agility which are prerequisites for contemplation; it enhances the capacity to "be concerned with God alone."

It is this abiding presence of God which keeps us constantly aware of the purpose of the things we "do." Without this awareness, our life bcomes weighed down with "things." But our forward thrust comes from a clear perspective on life. Without knowing where to go, we would be continually going around in circles.

Enclosure: value and limitations of a symbol

Enclosure could appear to be a considerable hindrance, if not a total barrier, to a discussion on dialogue and communication between contemplatives and the world. It could limit the concern of contemplatives to prayer for the world or interest in it "from a safe distance." But at this point we could usefully reflect on the formative purpose—formative for "the main concern" which is with God—of enclosure. Our conclusions, in which we must be consistent, should not become unfriendly or indifferent to people. But neither would they be purely sentimental.

The enclosure, whether it is regarded under the aspect of doors closed or not closed, or as an area within which the life of a monastery evolves,

is meant to serve as a symbol. This is time not just in an "aesthetical" sense but also in a "sacramental" one—as a symbol which not only signifies but also brings about the reality it signifies, and which therefore becomes both an ascetical instrument and a desirable goal. (There is an enlightening comparison to be made with the seven Sacraments.) Symbol and reality are intimately bound together; the question is, to what point can they be bound together, and how much room is there for divergence between them?

a. When we begin to analyze the sign, we are at once struck by an extremely interesting phenomenon: *the door of the enclosure which is opened only from the inside*. This recalls another story-symbol, that of Noah's Ark, which was closed from the outside. It would have been impossible for anyone suffering from claustrophobia to go outside the Ark for a change of air. Outside were the high waters of the flood, and therefore great danger.

In the enclosure the door opens from the inside; it is possible to go out. So the person inside is not there because she is surrounded by dangers, but because she has good reasons for being there and for not wanting to go out.

Thus the enclosure already stands out as a sign of freedcom, of a choice of life freely made and freely lived. (If, on the other hand, an enclosure encouraged a lack of freedom or failed to promote freedom, as though once the door was closed the key had been thrown out the window, its symbolic function would be inauthentic; and the world would be justified in no longer understanding it.)

Art. 49, I 3 of the new Constitution says: "Let the Sisters bear well in mind the lesson of history: a decline in the religious life in the Order of Saint Clare has nearly always begun with a neglect of the laws of enclosure, with which is associated a break-down of religious values." The next statement, that "the observance of enclosure is in some way the measure and the paradigm of contemplative religious life," is somewhat startling. "Measure" and "paradigm" it may well be; but in what sense? The laws of enclosure are neglected when something vital has already broken down within the life of the individual sister or of the community. And when is it actually neglected? When a sure spark of intelligence suggests an appropriate flexibility, possible for all even though is pleasing to a few, or when the norms are distorted beyond their precise and legitimate scope?

The norm is just a guide to the reality; but the reality is much more challenging than the norm, because it is based on the true point of reference: the person's complete freedom for *contemplation*, which is the real value expressed by the symbol.

Another sign of the enclosure is that it does not so much restrain a person within her "cell" as *outline a space*, large enough and diversified enough for a whole community: church, bedrooms, workrooms, garden, fields — *for a living and moving community*. It marks the boundaries of a "city," an autonomous city which contains within itself its own means of subsistence, according to the expression of Paul VI (quoted also in "Venite seorsum", V): "a small ideal society in which at last prevail love, obedience, innocence, freedom from material things and the gift of using them wisely, the primacy of the spirit and the peace of the Gospel."

This picture of Paul VI, with its very meaninghful idealism, symbolizes the whole functioning of the monastic city, straining forward towards Utopia. The reality is no more than what it actually is; but the forward tension is undoubtedly a great moral, intellectual and spiritual force. I believe that the enclosure is paradigmatic in preciscely this way: through its indication of the threshold of a Promised Land towards which one hastens without turning back. More than any other city, it is the city of no return; yet not a dead end which cuts short the journey, but a wide open area — for running on.

If the reference to Noah's Ark may be considered in reverse, as it were, the journey of the People of God towards the Promised Land is being actualized by "the space of the enclosure" rightly understood: as a decisive forward journey sustained by faith in the promise of the Lord. There is

no reason for turning back because we are celebrating the march towards the land of promise. Therefore I would not see the enclosure as a symbol of Gethsemane, the enclosed garden of Christ's agony (even though the journey of the People of God is also marked by times of suffering that lead back to Gethsemane and by "serpents" which point to the cross on which Christ was crucified), but rather as a changing season taking on a new apearance from day to day.

c. If it is understandable why there is no reason for leaving the enclosure, it may be more difficult to see why there are no keys for entering it. Art. 52 of the new Constitutions states: "The law of enclosure also forbids anyone of whatever condition, sex, or age to enter the enclosed area of the monastery, except in cases provided for by law." The right understanding of this prohibition has to be found in the logic of the sign. And the sign indicates that there should be no compromise, no confusion between Utopia and pseudo-Utopia, between running on and giving up through weariness, between going forward and turning back, between taking on a commitment and going back on a commitment, between the zeal of love and indifference. It is the world that is confused about these issues.

Enclosure expresses only the sign of entering and remaining. It does not recognize as a positive sign that of entering and leaving; it recognizes what is enduring, not what is intermittent. Eternal life and the Kingdom belong to those who, having put their hands to the plough, do not turn back. Substantially, then, the sign of enclosure is a positive sign, a clear statement of values—and this especially in the new legislation.

d. But the fact that the signs are predominantly signs does not mean that they do not really affect the life and the spiritual orientation of the nuns. On the contrary, their prophetic value (and what value could they have if it were not prophetic?) resides in the capacity of the nuns to give substance to the signs by their lives. Keys, doors and grilles should be signs—in the old language if you like—of a journey towards that interior freedom of one's whole being, towards that alertness and joy of living integrated by the love and praise of God, which are of the essence of a monastic and contemplative life.

The enclosure, then, is assuredly a form of asceticism, whose meaning must be well understood, lest we run the risk of seeing it as an outmoded symbol and come to despise it. This understanding generates asceticism; and asceticism frees the heart for contemplation.

However, the signs must be purged of any negative aspects (relics of a culture that has had its day):

— "heavy" grilles that suggest a joyless penance;

— a "hiding instinct" coming from an aversion to or a fear of being seen;

— the creation of an air of mystery: a nun in half-

— a pseudo-mysticism: .... the falling of the

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of the cultural advancement that can come from
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But before speaking about specific possible
tance of Federations (in plain words), belonging
is a criterion for testing the validity of the effects
and practice of enclosure:

— Does the attitude that sees membership
as an option denote an authentic concept of free
denote slavery to the past and nothing more?
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c. If it is understandable why there is no reason for leaving the enclosure, it may be more difficult to see why there are no keys for entering it. Art. 52 of the new Constitutions states: "The law of enclosure also forbids anyone of whatever condition, sex, or age to enter the enclosed area of the monastery, except in cases provided for by law." The right understanding of this prohibition has to be found in the logic of the sign. And the sign indicates that there should be no compromise, no confusion between Utopia and pseudo-Utopia, between running on and giving up through weariness, between going forward and turning back, between taking on a commitment and going back on a commitment, between the zeal of love and indifference. It is the world that is confused about these issues.

Enclosure expresses only the sign of entering and remaining. It does not recognize as a positive sign that of entering and leaving; it recognizes what is enduring, not what is intermittent. Eternal life and the Kingdom belong to those who, having put their hands to the plough, do not turn back. Substantially, then, the sign of enclosure is a positive sign, a clear statement of values—and this especially in the new legislation.

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The enclosure, then, is assuredly a form of asceticism, whose meaning must be well understood, lest we run the risk of seeing it as an outmoded symbol and come to despise it. This understanding generates asceticism; and asceticism frees the heart for contemplation.

However, the signs must be purged of any negative aspects (relics of a culture that has had its day):

— "heavy" grilles that suggest a joyless penance;
— a "hiding instinct" coming from an aversion to or a fear of being seen;

— the creation of an air of mystery: a nun in half-light behind the grille;
— a pseudo-mysticism: .... the falling of the grain of wheat, etc.

Why refuse the genuine witness of an open smile and presume that an impenetrable "turn" will witness just as well?

e. .... All of this is especially important because the signs of enclosure, which certainly remain valid in the new legislation, all seem to be *signs* which express and emphasize communion with the world rather than a state of being "incommunicado." It is a question of ensuring that grilles, doors, fixed partitions etc. are arranged, of course in keeping with the traditions of the individual institutes," but also with attention to "the varied circumstances of time and place" "Venite seorsum," VII, 4).

And here we touch upon an "ascetical" aspect of the question which concerns the entire community of the monastery, an asceticism that will sharpen our critical faculties to read traditions with real discernment. Are we meant to "read" them or just "swallow" them? Because also involved here is the question of "sensitivity" to the "voice" of time and place. A person whose ears are full of history will have difficulty in listening to the time and the place.

It is basically a matter of spiritual freedom—freedom from custom, from "what has always been done"—the humble yet courageous effort to share, in our littleness, in the supreme freedom of Christ, who exhorts us: "you have heard that it was said to them of old; .... but I say to you...." Pharisaism came to grief on that "it was said;" Christianity flourished on "but I say to you."

f. But where the sign-system of enclosure or, more broadly speaking the culture of the enclosure, adjusts its focus and therefore its perspective is not only in its relation to the world but also in the new possibilities and new forms of asceticism which are available within the monastic world itself, as in the area of contracts between the individual monasteries for various purposes, such as continuing formation. One thinks, for example, of the cultural advancement that can come from the forming of Federations. If these cultural stimuli can become a reality, there will undoubtedly be new initiatives affecting the lifestyles of the member monasteries.

But before speaking about specific possible initiatives, the full acceptance of Federations (in plain words), belonging or half-belonging to them) is a criterion for testing the validity of the effects of a certain attitude to and practice of enclosure:

— Does the attitude that sees membership of a Federation merely as an option denote an authentic concept of freedom of spirit? Or does it denote slavery to the past and nothing more? Would it not be a more authentic sign of maturity to welcome the intentions of the Church which

urges communities to federate? (PC, 22). What is the deep-seated reason behind wanting to see one's own monastery as a "continent" rather than as one of the islands of a national group? Is it spiritual self-sufficiency rather than openness to communion with others? Could the real reason possibly be some form of frustration or mental laziness?

— Is a community which considers egress from the monastery for the purpose of attending courses of permanent formation as the cause of or occasiosn for dissipation perhaps making an indirect statement about its own limitaitons: a lack of understanding of the mind and intentions of the Church? Immaturity of the sisters? In which case, if the pedagogy of the cloister does not promote maturity, what positive value can it have? What awareness of the Church does it have if in practice, albeit unintentionally, it distrusts the Church? What concept of freedom does it have if it uses it simply as the freedom not to act? These are all questions of asceticism. Could they perhaps help to check the spiritual health of a community?

Contemplation: "non-interference" and "interference" by the world

Up to this point our reading of the enclosure has dwelt mainly on the "negative" aspect of the external signs which express it. But more important is the positive aspect dealing with its purpose, that is, with the *contemplation* it is meant to foster: in the cloister as contemplatives, in the cloister for contemplation.

a. The "world" can interfere in a negative way with the contemplative orientation of the monastery; and so it is right to ensure appropriate "withdrawal" and "solitude," that regular "going apart alone into the mountain" of Jesus when he wanted to speak with the Father, or listen to him, or think of him. It will be this same desire to meet the Father that will guarantee our fidelity to enclosure with its appropriate signs. But the real "*raison d'être* of enclosure is contemplation. We could well recall the words of St. Benedict to the monk who chained himself to the wall of his hermitage in order to safeguard his fidelity to the Lord; "Let Christ be the chain which binds you." If Christ holds you "captive" you will need no chain to bind you. Perhaps it is even more pertinent to recall the words of Blessed Camilla Battista da Varano to a vicaress:

> Happy is the servant and spouse of Christ who chooses his loving heart for her perpetual choister, because within it is the burning furnace of divine love, where whoever is willing may be burned and consumed and reduced to ashes through asceticism of the heart and seared under the all-powerful hand of God. Thus will the sincere person find peace of mind and that constant spiritual joy which binds her in love to her most dear spouse, Jesus Christ crucified.

> Within this divine crucified heart is the vast sea, without beginning or end, of the divinity, where she may bathe, wash, be cleansed and baptized to her heart's content, because this divine water will wash away all the impurity and filth of sin and grant her such a sweetness and fragrance of serahic love that the most blessed Trinity will take great delight in her.
>
> This loving, burning divine heart is the shcool of divine wisdom which teaches silently the ways of righteusness–to flee the evil of sin and choose the gifts of grace.

There is no doubt that this yearning for the purest mental prayer should be protected against human encumbrances. So we sincerely believe that nothing should be allowed to interfere or put a blinding veil between us and the mystery of God. And this is the basic reason for some of the detailed norms like those conerning the use of radio, television and certain types of newspapers (VSS VII, 10-11).

The norms signify not so much a warning against impending danger as the necessity of an appropriate recollection of mind and, even more, a refusal to let extraneous opinions, interpretations or images supplant our contemplative "eye" or, worse still, supplant the object of our contemplation. These are realistic and comprehensive norms, yet our grasp of them is in direct proportion to the degree of maturity of the community and its members.

On the other hand, that some charity which leads us to contemplate God with the attentiveness of wholehearted love should also draw us closer to human beings ... then history ... then problems, etc. Their searching, their need for communication. Humanity today is also an history instrument of the revelation of the mystery of God. The contemplative is "mindful" of others not only in order to bring them comfort but also because she sees in others the image of God, a witness to the wisdom of God: attentiveness to others as part of the search for God, and therefore true contemplation.

b. And so on this score the "interference" of others in the life of the contemplative is entirely positive. But how does this human interference occur? It occurs through the means of social communication, in the need to talk to someone, to question the prophets, in the need to experience something of the life of a prophet, in the need to be welcomed. *It means good news, hope and light for others if the contemplative shares new insights about God, for they will then understand God better, think about him and adore him more, love him more.*

From such a need for communication and from such an aptitude for communicating and being informed, which are "signs of our times," what revision could occur in the monastery's channels of communication?

— What will hospitality entail in the light of this?
— What form will the guest area take?
— And the parlour?
— What possiibilities suggest themselves for unused sections of monasteries?
— Or for monasteries which are of a merely devotional interest?
— How to become good news for today? Language of today? These are important and urgent questions.

In this way the enclosure becomes—apart from its valid literal meanings, but in full harmony with its contemplative thrust which takes into consideration the signs of the times — not a dividing wall nor a great barricade, but rather a "Welcome" sign between the world and the desert where a person can meet the contemplative, where the contemplative who is intimate with God can speak to this person, with words of comfort, motivation, encouragement, salvation. In this way the contemplative reaches that *perfection of charity* which is the greatest charism and which gives its value to contemplation.

Cf. Paul, 1 Cor. 13:P
"If I speak in the tongues of men and angels ....
if I have prophetic powers ....
if I understand all mysteries ....
if I have all faith ...." □

For Clare

in clear wonder
watch silent summer dew
still my bower wall

Bernard Kennedy, O.F.M.

Clare

Hidden in the shadows
of San Damiano,
spent her jars of
precious nard
witnessing to the
Passion.
Daily she recited what
Francis carried
after worm met seraph
in the cocoon of La Verna,
and was given
bloody wings,
to flutter and spatter
forgiveness
for two more years.
But she lived on
and on
and on,
bereft
of the comfort
of communion
with her twin flame.
Did she long to
set the world afire
with her preaching?
This was not given.
Did she ache to part
with the convent garden
and bear the Child
and Master Healer
into the world?
This was not given.
Hers was the "better part,"
(Francis would have consoled
her again and again).
She was to sit
at the Lord's feet,
at the foot of His cross,
drinking in every
word and sigh.
She was the
enduring oil lamp,
now eternal flame.
She was the seed
fallen to the ground
of the cloister garden,
blooming sturdily
and now
evergreen.

William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O.

Saint Clare of Assisi: Parish Ministry and the Grieving Church

SR. FRANCES ANN THOM, O.S.F.

The church and monastery of San Damiano stands slightly below the hill town of Assisi in Italy in the shadow of the Umbrian hills. Those very hills where Francis and Clare romped, picked flowers and laughed the free laugh of childhood. Today we revere this area for nourishing the lives of these two great saints but we often mistakingly think that they were quite different from us. In this age of so-called new ministries in the church, we think we have come some giant steps from our founders and foundresses in our labors for the Lord. However, if we look closely at their works we find that even in their thirteenth century milieu they, too, were serving as ministers; they, too, aided the sorrowing and the grief-stricken. More importantly, however, they too, received ministry and grieved.

It is a bit more simple to see these ministerial aspects in the life of Francis since he was free to roam about, enter into the homes and lives of other persons, whereas Clare is always seen as shut away from the evils of the world living in a cocoon-like state as if this were the only way for a woman to acquire sanctity. While the church required this enclosure of her and all women of her day, we know that Clare adapted her life style to serve as a twin counterpart to what Francis and his followers were doing. She, it is true, longed to walk among the poor and the lonely and expressed her desire to be a missionary and to suffer martyrdom. As Clare learned during her rather expansive lifetime, martyrdom comes in different forms and hers seemed to be that she would remain behind after Francis had departed from this life; that she would watch as the friars

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struggled through many changes and many splits in the Order; that she would be called the true follower of Francis and many of the friars would seek her counsel.

Clare's life of ministry in the church was actually very simple. That was her lifestyle — to remain as quiet and simple as possible in the midst of an aggitated society; to be a type of beacon for others to see. Even though the sisters were not visibly present except for the externs who went into town for provisions, the town knew they were there. So, instead of Clare going into the town to answer distress signals as a parish minister might do today, the persons who were in distress would come to her. We understand that Clare was a good listener and also gave some very sound advice. Her deep life of prayer and contemplation opened up the avenues of wisdom, peace, etc., which are gifts of the Holy Spirit. One of the greatest contributions to parish ministry, however, was the reflection of this ministry within her own community.

Clare's monastery has been referred to as a church within the church. Inside those very austere-looking walls lived women whose whole lives were dedicated to the service of each other as well as the service to the outside world. They knew that they had to perfect their lives of charity, generosity, service, dedication and even obedience to each other in order for their prayers for the world to be effective. The whole process, a lifetime process, of loving oneself and loving the other in the same manner was intensly practiced within San Damiano. There were actually three dimensions to this process in the monastery: the development of loving oneself, the same development of loving the other sisters (neighbors) and the development of the type of all-encompassing prayer to show love for those all over the world. By this lifestyle the sisters were able to touch some hearts and minds with grace, and for those who were not touched they were able to make up what was lacking in them. In return for this labor of love, the townspeople ministered to the sisters at San Damiano by supplementing their meager produce from the garden and giving donations to the extern sisters and the friar questor who came into town. If Clare and her sisters received more than was actually needed, it was immediately sent out to be given to the poor.

Clare's ministry to others is rather unique. Along with her patient listening to visitors, consoling them and encouraging them, we must recall that there were two attempts at besieging the city where the timely prayers of Clare and her sisters are recognized as being the saving grace for the town. The most spectacular of these two is the one in 1240 when the barbarians were coming to besiege the monastery. At that time Clare was very ill and was confined to her section of the dormitory, but she asked two of the sisters to support her and take her down to the refectory

door. She also requested the small box or pyx with the Blessed Eucharist to be brought down and placed before the door. There she prostrated herself and asked her sisters to join her in prayer for themselves and for the town which would next fall prey to the Saracens. We know the miraculous results of her great devotion and faith — both San Damniano and the town were spared.

Clare's ministry did not end there. Many miracles of eyes, throats and minds are attributed to her prayers and the making of the sign of the cross. She also seemed to continue to minister with weather since the time when God asnwered her prayers to have roses on the bushes in mid-winter. Perhaps the most startling of her achievements in prayer is the vision of mass at Christmas in 1254 when she was ill and unable to attend. It was then that God pitied her and showed his great love for her by allowing her a complete visual and audio presentation of midnight mass. It was from such great devotion that her ministry to others flowed.

The work of the Poor Ladies was basically for the churches in the immediate area. The Pope had begun the Eucharistic Crusade and this included cleaning up some of the churches which were not too well cared for. The Eucharist, too, had not been receiving the reverence it required, so Francis and his followers went into the area churches and literally helped to sweep them. This was not always appreciated by the local pastor, but Francis' adherence to the Pope's directives was unswerving. Clare and her sisters aided in this crusade by making new linens for the churches in the area. Their role in the actual making of altar breads is not certain although the majority of Poor Clares today either make or distribute them in remembrance of Clare's devotion to the Blessed sacrament and for a part of their livelihood.

Francis' prophecy about holy women coming to live at San Damiano had come true and he himself had spent time with them not only as spiritual director, but learning from them and wondering at the grace of God in their lives. Francis had humbly asked Clare's advice on matters concerning himself and often sent friars to seek her counsel. The Bishop of Assisi and two of the Popes visited her to discuss matters concerning the spiritual life. During the canonization process Clare was referred to as a candlestick of holiness burning before the altar of the Lord.

Following Clare's death we do not have any real details of how the other sisters felt. We can presume that Clare was very much missed by them and that they had to go through a grieving process much as we do today. They, at least, had each other to lean on, to talk about their loss and we know they did not remain very long at San Damniano but moved into the protection of the city walls. No doubt she was their strong support just as Francis had been to his friars. Following the death of Francis we

can recall that beautiful letter written by Bro. Elias re: the loss of their father, who was their protector and guide. He speaks of them as being orphaned and I imagine that the Poor Ladies had the same feeling about the loss of Clare.

But what of the feelings of Clare and the Poor Ladies on the death of Francis. Francis had been at San Damiano shortly before his death where he had become seriously ill and had written that beautiful Canticle of Creatures. Although San Damiano had been the place of his first encounter with the Crucified, he longed to die at the Portiuncula where his Order had its origins, His wish was to be granted, but he promised Clare and her sisters that they would see him again.

On the upper floor, or the upper church in the basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, there is a fresco by the school of Giotto which portrays Francis' body on a stretcher outside the church of San Damiano. Surrounding his precious body are various dignitaries from the town, armed soldiers, and many townspeople. The whole scene is a depiction of Christ at various points in his life. There is a Zacchaeus figure in a tree, the soldiers are carrying torches, and Francis lies on the stretcher bearing the marks of the sacred wounds. From the doors and even windows of the pictured monastery, the Poor Ladies are coming forth to look at their spiritual father for the last time. The one prominent Poor Lady who depicts Clare is standing over the body and has placed her hand in the wound in his side, representative of the small plant which she named herself. As unrealistic as the portrayal is in the light of monastic enclosure, the real spirit of love and devotion comes through very strongly. The question is, how did they handle the grief of the loss of one they so loved. Clare, in particular, must have gone through all the normal feelings of grief. She who was able to console others must have needed human consolation too. I like to think that Clare's mother, Ortolana, who had entered the Monastery, was still living and would have been a great source of comfort to her as well as her sister Agnes.

The ministries which we label today as specific areas of work for the church have always existed and have especially existed in the lives of the saints. The ministries may not have been as obvious as they are today but wherever there is suffering, wherever there are persons in need, there will be those among us who will sacrifice, will console, will bind up the wounds and among these heroes and heroines I am happy to say that even an enclosed religious person may be such a caregiver. In fact, it seems to be an integral part of Franciscan living to go forth to minister to the needs of society in its present form; possibly even the very heart of the charism left us by Francis and Clare.

In the Square

In the square
I imagined her there
girlishly giggling,
surreptitiously peeking

from behind the crowd.
I turned my eyes seeking
a glimpse of you in the Umbrian
plain like she did that long

night when her shorn hair became
a declaration of intent.
Uneasily I know what she meant
for each shor-shock of hair

was a fine thread of love.
In the paved square
I clasp an imaginary hair
in my hand knowing where

so much of love's intent began.

Seámus Mullholland, O.F.M.

Prayer in the Letters of Saint Clare

SISTER FRANCES TERESA, O.S.C.

While this is now fairly widely accepted that Clare, in her own way, was a great a mystic as Francis, it still remains quite hard to come at her actual teaching on prayer or the spiritual life. Yet to read her letters with this in mind is to touch the edge of a garment of powerful experiences upon which the letters both reflect and comment. To a notable degree her life and thought seem to be immersed in the vision granted to Francis, and yet, at the same time, wholly her own. The simple, basic insight which she and Francis shared was the centrality of the Incarnation. This was the goal, the context, the reason and the explanation of everything. Within this ambience of totality, they saw our spiritual thrust as having, so to speak, three colours through which we might pass one at a time, or, like three coloured spotlights, all at once. These colours can be gathered under the headings of Conversion, contrition and Communion. Without digressing into how these headings may relate to other, more familiar ones, it can be tentatively suggested that they hang together in this way:

Conversion	or the Purgitive Way	marked by vocal prayer
Contrition	or the Illuminative Way	marked by meditation
Communion	or the Unitive Way	marked by contemplation

That is the ground plan. In order to come at Clare's teaching, I have quarried in her wrings and in Scripture as she uses it. Most of the passages from Scripture are passages which Clare herself quotes.

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Conversion

'In the beginning of my conversion' is a phrase used by both Francis and Clare.

> At the beginning of her conversion, she (Clare) together with her sisters, promised obedience to the blessed Francis.

she says in her Rule (1,4). This conversion consisted in a marked change in their way of life, literally a turning around, a change of direction, and one to be maintained even under duress and struggle.

> Who would not dread the treacheries of the enemy of mankind who through arrogance of momentary and deceptive glories, attempts to reduce to nothing that which is greater than heaven itself. (3 LAq 20)

Because of this treacherous enemy, whom we all carry within us, conversion is marked by discipline, asceticism, and even austerity, which are partly directed at freeing us from the magnetic tug of false gods, and partly directed at enabling us to become autonomous, self-governing in the right way, so that we are able to say: This I will do, and to implement our choice. Asceticism enables us to enter and to remain upon the way of purgation. It is the ongoing process of subduing ourselves in order to reach the chosen goal, a slow re-focusing of our lives:

> by humility, the virtue of faith and the strong arms of poverty, you have taken hold of that incomparable treasure hidden in the field of the world, and in the hearts of men, (Mt 13,44) with which you have purchased that field of Him by whom all things have been made from nothing. (3 LAq 7)

It is also marked and encouraged by the promise of the first part in the phrases:

> when you have loved Him ... then you shall be chaste
> when you have touched Him ... then you shall be pure
> when you have accepted Him ... then you shall be a virgin (1 LAq 8)

Just as these phrases of Clare are characterized by a very tough honesty about the realities of human love, so our prayer at this stage is confrontation every bit as searching and intimate. Through our personal interaction with Christ, she is saying, we become capable of the union to which we have been called. We are confronted by the truth in dialogue with God made man, Jesus who

> for the sake of us all, took upon Himself the Passion of the Cross and delivered us from the power of the Prince of Darkness to whom we were enslaved because of the disobedience of our first parents

says Clare, (1 LAq 14) rather freely quoting Hebrews. That same verse begins with the classic longing of the converted person: Let us not lose sight of Jesus. At this relatively early stage in the spiritual journey, Clare was aware of the possibility that we can lose sight of Jesus, that our choices have to be ratified again and again until they penetrate our whole being.

> When you haved loved him ...
> when you have touched him ...
> when you have accepted him ... (1 LAq 8)

The burden of this thought is not a denial of human love but a delight in the great paradoxes of God's love for us and its immense creativity. It suggests that Clare had explored the whole mystery of sexuality very fearlessly and that her own experience of denial and self-discipline had led her to that point where her love for Christ transcended her own sexuality, so that she really understood and lived the fruitfulness of celibacy. The touch of Christ which she speaks about does not make us pure as if in contrast with the 'impurity' of human love-making, but rather to touch Christ is to be purified — and the purified person is the pure person. Similarly, his love chastens us in our unlovingness, and this leads us to the freedom of disciplined loving which is properly called chaste; and the complete acceptance of him makes us virgins, just as innocence is not so much a condition of our lost childhood as the goal ahead of us to which we all must come, drawn by him who said

> Behold, I make all things new. (Rev. 21, 5)

Our contribution is to offer our innate chaos to be ready to let go of all that served us before, since that knowledge is now no longer of any service, for

> She who loves temporal things, loses the fruit of love (1 LAq 25)

not because there is anything wrong with temporal things — Francis and Clare were no Manicheans — but simply because temporal things and the fruit of this love are in two wholly different lanes of reference.

> Therefore, be strengthened in his service and make progress from good to better. (1 LAq 31, 32)

This stage in our prayer journey is characterized by vocal prayer, by

dialogue, by what Ignatius 300 years later was to call colloquies, speaking with Jesus. In this dialogue we begin to speak the truth about our poverty, we start to shed the roles and personae, the masks and defenses which we have learned to interpose between us and reality or between us and ourselves. Into this painful experience of loss, poverty and negation the Spirit begins to pour his gifts

> so that people who were in utter poverty and want and in absolute need of heavenly nourishment, might become rich in him by possessing the kingdom of heaven. (1 LAq 20)

Although the language is feudal, I believe the thought is contained in Genesis Ch. 1, God creating out of nothing, and our need to move willingly into that condition of our nothingness with all its paradoxes. We are so imprisoned in illusion that we have difficulty even in moving into being nothing, even though that is all we are. At this stage in our conversion, our thinking is so off-beam that even though we can, and do, may and must, rejoice in being children of God and dear to Him, yet we almost wholly misunderstand what this might mean; we are trapped — enslaved is Clare's word — by all our illusions and posturings and escapes and follies.

Thus we begin, after our conversion has started, to see how unconverted we are and how much we need Jesus to

> deliver us from the power of the Prince of Darkness to whom we were enslaved. (1 LAq 14)

The truth will set you free, said Paul, and this profound psychological law begins to operate in us through the grace of conversion. This leads us to acceptance of ourseves as sinful and yet as loved by God. This is the beginning of the long, slow, process of identification with Christ to which we are all called. God shared our humanity, says one of the oldest prayers of the Mass, in order that we might share in his divinity. Clare expresses it in this way:

> O blessed poverty
> who bestows eternal riches on those
> who love and embrace her. (1 LAq 15)
>
> Be filled with a remarkable happiness
> and spiritual joy. (1 ALq 21)

Contrition

As I understand her, Clare sees each of these three stages — Conversion, Contrition and Communion — as going on all at once, or rather, conversion

keeps on deepening in us and so we mature into a more and more penetrating contrition and are led further into communion. Even in the deepest — or highest — union, conversion and contrition must have their place, and in fact, it seems, they become stronger and more apparent, even as our joy deepens:

> like another Rachel, always remember our resolution and be conscious of how you began. What you hold, may you always hold. What you do, may you always do and never abandon. (2 LAq 11)
>
> Go forward, securely, joyfully and swiftly,
> on the path of prudent hapiness,
> believing nothing,
> agreeing with nothing
> which would dissuade you from this resolution
> or which would place a stumbling block
> for you on the way. (2 LAq 13, 14)

To keep the eyes fixed on Christ was, for Clare, the one, sure way. She remarks rather dramatically (3 LAq 27, 28):

> How many kings and queens of this world let themselves be deceived! For even though their pride may reach the skies and their heads through the clouds, in the end they are as forgotten as a dungheap!

Contrition, said St. John Climacus in the 3rd century, is a wounding of the heart for the purposes of self-conquest. Conversion leads to asceticism and sorrow for sin, in order to lead us to freedom. As we learn to love God, we learn too, to understand that he himself is

> eternal glory — blessed life, (1 LAq 18)

but we also, in this phase of our contrition, begin to realize that identification with Christ means fellowhsip with his sufferings; even more, we slowly begin to realize that his sufferings are deeply to do with us, in that they are because of us and that they are for us to share. This is our calling, as it was Christ's:

> He became contemptible for you — despised, struck, scourged and then died. (2 LAq 19, 20).

Out of meditation on the passion of Jesus and out of a long, silent staying with Mary at the foot of the Cross, we learn to mourn the ungodliness within us. It is in this bitter, painful place that we

feel what his friends feel
as they taste the hidden sweetness
which God has reserved
from the beginning
for those who love him. (3 LAq 14)

You have held fast to the footprints of him
to whom you have merited to be joined. (LAq 7)

Staying with the pain of the Cross, and the pain of ourselves, our prayer quietens and deepens, has fewer words and more presence. Gradually the centre of our contrition shifts, from our badness to God's goodness, from our pain to the pain of the world, from our bitter need to our God-given poverty, to which, Clare says

God promised the kingdom (1 ALq 18),

not because, capriciously or sadistically, he only gives prizes when we are sufficiently humiliated but because the cosmic dislocation which we call the Fall, has ieft all our values out of tune. The road of return to truth is signposted by humility and poverty, and when we recognize the truth of ourselves, then we have a foundation upon which to base our recognition of the truth of God; we can enter the kingdom, we can begin to learn more about the third state, contemplation, the unitive way, communion.

What a great and laudable exchange! To leave the things of time for those of eternity, to choose the things of heaven for the goods of the earth, to receive a hundred-fold in place of one, and to possess a blessed and eternal life. (1 LAq 30)

Communion

Everything, for Clare, is focussed on union with Christ:

I will run and not tire,
until you bring me into the wine cellar,
until your left hand is under my head
and your right hand wll embrace me happily,
and you will kiss me with the kiss of your mouth. (4 LAq 31, 32)

The essence of communion is to be drawn into the life of the Trinity, to become the silence into which the Father speaks the Word. This Word is the incarnate Word; and the identification with Christ means that he becomes incarnate in our lives.

Transform your whole being into the image
of the Godhead itself,
through contemplation (3 LAq 13)

and particularly through the contemplation of, and in union with, Christ, the mirror. Like Teresa, Clare insists that no matter how 'high,' how mystical, how unitive our prayer becomes, at no time can we enter into prayer except through Christ, the mirror without blemish.

Look upon that mirror each day,
and continually study your face within it,
so that you may adorn yourself within and without. (4 ALq 14)

Strive to become, she is saying, what God wants you to be, and for this Christ is both the mirror in which we see ourselves (and thus are helped to look honestly at the blemishes) and he is also the example of the perfect mirror, one which reflects no blemishes.

In these writings of Clare we do not find any instruction about the nuts and bolts of prayer — no hints for the distracted, no guidance about the use of the mantra, no information about non-discursive meditaiton. What we do find is an overwhelmed awareness of the presence of Christ, apprehended — even comprehended — by her whole self.

You will hold him by whom all things are held together. (3 LAq 26).

Across these letters, spanning 15 years, from when she was 41 until just before her death at 56, we can see and map a developing ardour and intensity, as Clare herself matured in the spiritual life. To read the first letter (1234) and then to read the fourth, written 15 years later, is to experience a definite shift from the edges of an overwhelming love to its incandescent heart. The whole tone and mood of the fourth letter is that of someone immersed in love, wholly unafraid of love and completely committed to love. She herself is our instruction on communion.

This vision is the splendour of eternal glory (4 LAq 14)

and like Teresa after her, Clare insists that at no time can we enter into this glory except through Christ. At the surface of the mirror without blemish (Wisd. 7.26) she tells us to look at, look into, the humman life of Jesus, while

in the depths of the same mirror, contemplate the ineffable charity (4 LAq 23)

that is, the love which burns within the Godhead. For Clare, we are all called — like Francis — to love and imitate Christ, the Way, so that we too learn to see the world, not from the foot of the Cross but from the Cross itself. We see what Christ sees. This is the approach to the beginning of union. Prayer is the summons to fellowship with Christ's sufferings because it is a summons to glory. Christ humbled himself to share our humanity so that we might be made sharers of his divinity. □

Book Reviews

Christ Encounters. By Gloria Hutchinson. Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN. 1988, pp. 126. $6.95.

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A Journal Retreat, Christ Enncounters, welcomes you to enter into a 30-day retreat. The book is divided into three parts: Seeking Guidance, Seeking Growth and Seeking Glory. The format for each day is similar. A Scripture consideration is presented for the retreatant to ponder. Questions on the reading follow, and the final step challenges one to write how the reflection will be lived that day. Sufficient space is provided for writing. As I studied the readings, I noted that they move from an encouraging Christ to a persistent Christ to a crucified and glorified Christ.

Part I starts with the practical question: "What do you want?" (Jn. 1:35-40) Part II ends with "Do you suppose I am here to bring peace on earth?" (Lk 12:49-53) Part III ends with "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into His glory?" (Lk. 24:26)

For the sincere beginner, the process may take longer than the author suggests. Since it is difficult to find a director, the journal based on the Gospel is an excellent substitute. I recommend that you stay with the process, even if it takes more than 30 days. I am sure that your staying with the discipline of being faithful will lead you from your head to the heart of Christ.

Part II, Seeking Growth, points to a path where guidance is to be tested. No longer a tenderfoot, now is the time for action. Test yourself and ask, "What have I done for my enemies lately?" Jesus never gives up. St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians urges: "On each of us God's favor has been bestowed in whatever way Christ alloted it. These gifts are to be used to knit God's holy people together for the work of service to build up the Body of Christ until we all form the perfect Man fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself. Then we shall no longer be children, we shall grow completely into Christ." (Eph. 4:7, 12-15)

Guided and grown, Part III, Seeking Glory, is the epitome of a life of prayer. The price is high: Renunciation of persons, places, and self. "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me." (Lk. 9:23) The total price is suffering.

Chapters 21 - 30 bring you face to face with Christ asking you: "Do you want to be well again?" "Can you drink the cup that I must drink?" "What shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour.' " "Had you not the strength to stay awake one hour?" There are no easy answers to these questions. They have been heeded by many followers of Christ, and today, it is your turn to answer Him. Gerard Manley Hopkins, in

a poem found on page 84... "Wonders how his suffering could be any worse if Christ were his bosom enemy instead of his beloved friend."

Life to be fully lived is found in a personal encounter with Christ. While we realize that Jesus is always present with us, it is well to remember that each one must move ourselves in His direction. Recall how the woman suffering for many years, took the initiative to touch Jesus' garment. Power went out from Him in answer to the woman's faith. Christ expects us to use our gifts to make decisions. In Luke 12:57, Jesus asked the crowd, "Why not judge for yourselves what is upright?"

To reach the Glory is the desire of every person. The way to the Father is Jesus. He beckons, encourages and generously gives the needed strength. St. Paul's word is a faith journey to the glory we seek. "Be kind to one another, compassionate, and mutually forgiving, just as God has forgiven you in Christ. Be imitators of God as his dear children. Follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you. He gave himself for us as an offering to God, a gift of pleasing fragrance." (Eph. 4:32-5:2).

Christ Encounters invites you to come apart with the Rabbi from Nazareth and risk the consequences. "The entire meaning and content of the Bible is to be found, say the Apostles, not in the message about Christ, but in an encounter with Christ." (*Opening the Bible*, Thomas Merton). For those who are seeking Christ, this book is worthwhile. Buy it and spread The Good News.

St. Francis of Assisi and Nature. By Roger Sorrell. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, Cloth. n.p.

Reviewed by Daniel Havel, Honors Undergraduate, St. Bonaventure University.

The most prevalent conception of St. Francis of Assisi is that of the humble, brown-robed lover of birds. Of course, every once in a while, an artist portraying Francis might venture beyond this image and add a few non-feathered friends next to the same endearing friar, but the association is nontheless the same: Francis is intimately linked with nature.

Yet the question needs to be addressed as to what is the historical basis for understanding the relationship Francis had with the created world. Roger Sorrell's book, *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature*, provides a well developed analysis of this very question.

Sorell insists that Francis must be seen as a man of his times. He was a medieval man through and through and one must refrain from projecting 20th century ideals onto him. As such, Sorrell portrays Francis in the context of the various medieval traditions out of which he arose: ascetic, eremetic, chivalric, and biblical, to name a few.

Sorrell points out that Francis' originality springs from his literal interpretation and implementation of various medieval traditions. He maintains that the Sermon to the Birds marks a pivotal point in the saint's relationship with the rest of creation. For Francis preached to the birds out of a literal regard for the evangelic and ascetic thaumaturgic tradtions and by the birds' reaction he was made aware of the special, God-given relationship between himself and the created world which reflected the restoration of primal innocence. Francis had, as it were, stepped back into Eden before the fall.

According to Sorrell, the Canticle of Creatures is the synthesis of Francis' insights and experiences as regards the interrelationship between humanity and the rest of creation. From the fact that it was written in the vernacular, Sorrell concludes that the canticle was meant to propagate Francis' idea of humanity's reconciliation with both Creator and creation.

Sorrell's book is an excellent source of information for both scholars and non-specialists alike who have an interest in St. Francis and nature. It is well-referenced with tables and annotated notes and contains an ample bibliography useful for more detailed study. The text itself is clearly written and is filled with interesting and helpful extended quotations. I recommend this book for all those who are forever intrigued by the Poor Man of Assisi and the non-human friends he called his brothers and sisters. Those interested and involved in ecology will find it especially valuable. In sum, this is an important book for laying to rest the many misconceptions currently held concerning Francis' social relationship to nature.

Shorter Notices

Julian Davies, O.F.M.,
Associate Editor

I Am With You Always. Reflections on the Church Year. By Fr. Berard Doerger, O.F.M. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1988. Pp. 144. Paper, $5.95.

This helpful book is divided into eight chapters. The first introduces the Church Liturgical Year, explaining its rationale and the connecting parts, as well as the restoration brought about by Vatican II. Subsequent chapters give the background to the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Sundays of Ordinary Time. The concluding chapter is devoted to the Liturgy of the Hours, and explains, using the Instruction to the Liturgy, the purpose of that prayer in general, and in regard to each of the hours.

The author is not just a reporter of historical facts, but a spiritual guide. He writes in a clear and succinct style. All religious and priests, all Christians profit from this book, which is inexpensive enough to be generally available and given as a gift.

Francis of Assisi. By Liwayway A. Arceo. Quenzon City, Phillippines, Claretian Publication, 1989.

This brief novel about Francis was an award winning book in the Phillippines where it was first published in 1987. It doesn't read like a novel to me, but rather a series of vignettes highlighting Francis' vocation, the start of the Order, the vocation of Clare, the Missions, the Third Order, the Stigmata and Death of Francis. The text is enhanced with some drawings. The author has a remarkable fidelity to history and capturing what is essential in only a few words. *Francis of Assisi* won't make anything written obsolete, but it can be a useful starter for aspiring Franciscans, or refresher for veterans.

Clare and Francis

PAUL SABATIER

To her his appeals were like a revelation. It seemed as if Francis was speaking for her, that he divined her secret sorrows, her most personal anxieties, and all that was ardent and enthusiastic in the heart of this young girl rushed like a torrent that suddenly finds an outlet into the channel indicated by him. For saints as for heroes the supreme stimulus is woman's admiration.

But here, more than ever, we must put away the vulgar judgment which can understand no union between man and woman where the sexual instinct has no part. That which makes the union of the sexes something almost divine is that it is the prefiguration, the symbol, of the union of souls. Physical love is an ephemeral spark, designed to kindle in human hearts the flame of a more lasting love; it is the outer court of the temple, but not the most holy place; its inestimable value is precisely that it leaves us abruptly at the door of the holiest of all as if to invite us to step over the threshold.

The mysterious sigh of nature goes out for the union of souls. This is the unknown God to whom debauchees, those pagans of love, offer their sacrifices, and this sacred imprint, even though effaced, though soiled by all pollutions, often saves the man of the world from inspiring as much disgust as the drunkard and the criminal.

But sometimes — more often than we think — there are souls so pure, so little earthly, that on their first meeting they enter the most holy place, and once there the thought of any other union would be not merely a descent, but an impossibility. Such was the love of St. Francis and St. Clare.

But these are exceptions. There is something mysterious in this supreme purity: it is so high that in holding it up to men one risks speaking to them in an unknown tongue, or even worse.

This page from Paul Sabatier's Life of Saint Francis *translated by Louise Seymour Houghton (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928, p. 148) is described by the late scholar Raoul Manselli as one of the most beautiful and delicate of that contraversial biography. He feels that besides offering a moving insight into the relationship between Francis and Clare, it reveals Sabatier's deep and humble respect before a reality of exceptional quality.* **The CORD** *is grateful to the Macmillan Publishing Company of New York for generously granting permisison to reprint this inspiring passage.*

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The Knight-Errant of Assisi. By Hilarin Felder, Capuchin. Reprint. $7.00 plus postage.

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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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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

[1]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).

Shame on You: Insights into Francis and Conversion

GUY FRANCIS NOONAN, T.O.R.

Whenever one mires down in a willful attempt to master life, the strongest feeling encountered is loneliness.

(Gerald May)

For the person... who appropriates to himself his own will and thus exalts himself over the good things which the Lord says and does in him ... it is necessary that he bear punishment.

(Francis of Assisi, Admonition II)

These words are written within a mysterious exchange. They are birthed within grace and sin, redemption and despair. There is nothing novel about this state. It is our great heritage: Desiring wholeness yet knowing incompletion. Wanting the One yet feeling divided. Loving togetherness yet choosing isolation. Standing up, yet stooping at least invardly in shame. Our condition. Our original condition. 'Original grace' and 'original sin.'

"Adam." "Eve." We name in them our tension. Their tale is our own, a way of making sense of our great struggle: Bliss and wholeness; fear and brokeness. It is hard to face, and so often times we cover up the nakedness of our long, inherited, generational shame. Maintained from branch to branch on our family tree, the trees in our social forest conspire together to block out light and overwhelm with one shared shadow of shame.

Shame is cyclic. It feeds upon itself as in a shame-bound family. It is insidious, deadly and dull. It lies dormant in most of our understandings; it robs us of our true self and lets a false self reign; it stifles spontaneity under cover of enforced conformity.

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The Franciscan Institute
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Shame is shame-*bound*. Deviations are disliked and walls of outer standards become the unbroken rule. One's name comes from without, not within, and inner, personal dignity is sacrificed for the outer group. One must be very strong to resist this and not get caught within a cycle of addiction to conformity and control.[1]

Shame indicates power given to an oppressive extra-personal source. As such, we have allowed it to distance ourselves from an inner harmony, the undivided, pre-rational self which is our core. Symptomatic of our state, we have lost the personal art of play. Not play as pure frivolity, but that which is authored by earnest participation and expression from within rather than motivated by the need to perform for an outside source.[2] Our shame has divided us within ourselves and our world and calls for redemption by an inter-personal source. A source which re-unites that which is broken, a source which turn things around with our collaboration. This Source we call God.

Shame relates to an unachieved fantasy ot ourselves, a fantasy based on other people's standards. Yet it is rarely played out in healthy ritual or behavior. Instead, we rely on pride, an external manifestation to cover-up a psychic/spiritual nakedness within.[3] We grandiosely take on more and more an outer mask to cover up inadequacy within. And so we are never really free because we are excessively dependent on another's admiration. Also, because our self-respect is dependent on qualities, functions, achievements and expectations that can suddenly fail and over which we may have little or no control.[4]

This situation is present in all ages, though the issues differ from time to time. Not only is coping with it a part of our own social fabric and personal growth toward maturity, but it has been formative of major figures along the way. Francis is one such example. His medieval town was not only enclave of party, friends and chivalry but also autoclave of stricture and control. The 'fama publica' (public face) ran wide and deep. It arranged citizenry in caste and maintained strong social control. Nobility, merchants, lower class and poor; all had their function and status within the whole. 'Fama publica' tended to want to know, if not to control and to oversee, people's behavior in its totality. ... A dialogue that could have its peak moments... it could also show pitiless ferocity when someone erred."[5]

All the components of a shame-bound system were intact: Self as part of a larger city-system with only vague boundaries of healthy individuality; perfectionism of behavior and dress within an assigned/inherited level of caste; shame, despair and discouragement for striving to break out; rigidity to expectations; alienation and distant relationships rather than repair and

resolution; outer images and control of self rather than wholeness and integrity within.[6]

Albeit a town of delight for Francis, Assisi also breeds a heritage of shame. Yet somewhere deep within Francis' own being was given the grace to break out. He does not simply cope; he also grows. A divine spark deep within (the True Self) would not be stifled and a growing consciousness would not be put to rest. Right within the wound of shame was found healing grace. Francis' new journey would begin with conversion within himself. On this journey he accepted the call to acknowledge a dialogue with aspects of himself that had been cut off and caused a separated self.

This dialogue, what we authors call 'CONVERSION-WITH,' is a theme of this edition of **The Cord.** Francis accepted the call to bring together 'split aspects' of himself. Within his conversion process we see him become the great collaborator, maintaining a dialogue with all the aspects of himself and his world.

The fruits of this exchange have made him a hallmark of our history in Christ: Within him we see the supportive power of God's reign ('symbolein': bringing together) rather than the oppressive power of brokenness ('diabolein': that which is broken). First the grace of awareness and of emptiness; a desert experience. His friends report that distant far-off look from time to time. Then, an 'emerging consciousness' followed by slow, progressive mounting until a bursting forth of change, insight and union within his self and all his world. His Being becoming...

Two events might serve as symbols of this process of emerging self. Francis' unlikely embrace of the leper and his choosen nudity. Both show dialogue within himself and beyond himself, and both set the stage for dialogue with other creatures and all created life.

Strikingly dramatic in terms of public fame was his association with the lepers. It is therein that Francis testifies that God inspired him to enter the life of Penance and new awareness. The inner and the outer transitions are obvious in the words themselves:

> The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin doing penance in this way. While I was in sin [static state], it seemed very bitter to me [old awareness] to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me [inner process] among them [outer process] and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them, that which seemed bitter [old awareness] was changed [illumination] into sweetness of body and soul [union]; and afterward I lingered a little and then left the world [climax of inner/outer movements and transition].[7]

It seems that it is not poverty which is the hallmark here. Rather, the striking inner and outer movement: Inner, away from conformity to the

public's expectation; outer, a passage from one prescribed condition to another equally proscribed. The unheard of acceptance of his own place with those whom society had abandoned. The entrance into the midst of the excluded ones.[8] And the cause? 'Conversion-with.' Dialogue with hidden aspects of the self and with hidden, discarded others — members of a state wherein people could not hide behind their pride.

Spiritual authors have often spoken of the dangers of pride; it is one of our capital sins. Yet, pride is superficial and only a symptom of a deeper root which needs be tapped if spiritual growth is to be realized along our journey-way. For this reason, Francis' nudity is important for ourselves. It clearly symbolizes his breaking free of an outer source of shame.

A shaming father, frustrated of the fama publica goals which he strived to instill within his son, brings him before the square in ultimate test. 'Here, perhaps' says he, 'I will finally break his spirit and bring him to his/my/our senses.' And Francis, for his part, removes himself from the caste of father's jurisdiction, sheds the garments of his proud status to the ground, encloses himself within a new mantel of meaning and repudiates his past. His actions before the doorway of the Church symbolize transition, movement from a status which was externally secure, though grandiose, to a different dimension. He enters a 'penitential' state, one which no longer hides behind the symbols of the fama publica but becomes free and more spontaneous along the way.[9]

This is no easy passage for Francis or ourselves. Ego wants walls to shore it up. Indeed, we often will use anything we can find to mortar up our shaky understructure. Power, prestige, compulsions to distract, anything to take off the weights that sit within. Even religion itself can militate against the True Self coming forth.

Sea walls are instructive. We design and erect them because they seem to offer us control. High enough, deep enough and wide enough they will hold the water back. And so they do... for a time. But eventually the very form which served as friend becomes our foe. Water from the depths meets our resistence. It is held back and yields a little, but only to return with twice the force. Turning in upon itself the water's waves increase in quantum leaps. Churning sand and shell and any other life, nature seeks her rightful place. Over shore and over dunes, beyond the originally endangered, depth levels-out the surface we protect.

And yet we persist. We prefer our walls, our divisions, our dualistic states of mind wherein we think we have control. We build up ourselves, and in doing so, we separate ourselves from other creatures and persons like ourselves. We think that this is the way of Spirit, but the best of our tradition says it is not:

> We are being called to die to safe, conventional, protective piety; to dependencies, to spiritual immaturity; to the cult of safety first. Much in our religious life is geared to safety, not to sanctity, for sanctity involves danger, involves launching out into the deep, facing the wilderness, the dark-night and the perils...[10]

This is not our usual choice, and here we are in marked contrast to Francis. Raised behind Assisi's walls, he confronts himself, his fears, his delays. Francis comes to terms with shame and thus is truly able to become a 'minor' friar. He is able to give up the useless, superficial defense of pride since it no longer serves him well. The word-made-flesh breaks through and becomes his constant theme. Kairos force is needed to break the restrictive orbit gone awry.

Despite outer forces which intensify shame, a healthy human state displays things the other way around. Our spirit-flesh has a center and its gravity is God. Though we are not God, God and our True Self gracefully collaborate as one. But this True Self is gift and it eludes us well despite our outer pretense of personal control. The Christ event proclaims our True Self's struggle to come through:

> The central truth is that God is in the human story, that there is only one story: so it is God who was born and suffered in the flesh for the salvation of humankind... The incarnation, in Christian theology and spirituality, is not simply an event but a process, 'a dynamic principle of transformation ... an action, an operation ... which continues without ceasing.'[11]

We see this in Francis' writings, particularly three: The Admonitions (an exaltation of the 'lower' way to God), The Canticle (a song of the 'natural' way to God) and the Testament (his remembrance of his own powerlessness and what the Lord gave him as gift). Within these three can be stitched his theology of incarnation.

In Admonition Two Francis asks the friars to deepen their consciousness to understand that 'appropriation' is inappropriate! He calls to mind minority and exhorts against an outer manner which suggests autonomy and 'exalts himself above the good things which the Lord says and does in him.'[12] Herein Francis strikes at the roots of idolatry and grandiose pride. He understands that the will-to-power runs riot and overcomes the delicate balance between dominion and harmonious service-with others and the earth. He insists that the friars understand that the other creatures of the earth are more true to their nature and have more insight regarding their role within the whole. 'All creatures serve, know and obey their creator better than you.'[13]

As the old Adam figures in the negative role of appropriation, the new

Adam/Christ is paradigm for Francis' way. He insists that Christ's is way of insight into life, that in-appropriation is appropriate (Admon 4 & 6), that flesh and Spirit must come together as True self (Admonition 12). And in Admonition 5 Francis tells us that this is the way of Christ. "Be conscious O man of the wondrous state in which the Lord God has placed you, for he created you and formed you in the image of his beloved son according to the Body (Flesh/spirit as one), and to his likeness according to the Spirit."

Francis' insight matches our own down deep. We know from the depths of life's experience that it is the subtraction of self-definition that leads to true unitive experience[14] with self, others and nature as a whole. Superficial appropriation is inappropriate for who we are:

> We know that the personality of man is a far deeper and mysterious thing than the sum of his conscious feeling, thought and will: that this superficial self — this ego of which each of us is aware — hardly counts in comparison with the deeps of being which it hides.
>
> Since normal man is utterly unable to set up relations with spiritual reality by means of his feeling, thought and will, it is clearly in the depth of his being — in the unplumbed levels of the personality — that we must search, if we would find the organ, the power, by which to achieve the mystic quest. That alteration of consciousness which takes place in contemplation can only mean the emergence from this 'fund or bottom of the soul' of some faculty which diurnal life keeps hidden in the deeps.[15]

Self differentiation begins at birth. We feel and see and experience the world around. At first all seems one, but gradually the hardness of the crib and the softness of the flesh instruct that boundaries exist. Concretely we categorize the world. One thing takes on where another leaves off, faces come and go and inspire humor or horror depending on how they fit within our infantile ranking and perception. Within this cradle are nurtured self-definition and self-image (body, will, desire, mind, relationships), the offspring of differentiation to the 'nth' degree.[16]

But we are duped and dupe ourselves, for while it is true that a sense of individual boundary is essential for the self, the true self does not thrive *statically* in IT-self. Rather, we are related to other selves in dialogue of exchange and breakthrough which leads to love:

> Exchange is what life and being *are*, and to prevent it is to turn the universe back on its course, a concept to examine in the nature of evil. But if it is true that to block Exchange is to contradict the very nature of reality, then it is no wonder that, eventually, something has to break.[17]

This dialogue of relationships is a core truth for all created life.

This dialogue of relationships is a core truth for all created life. Differentiation, subjectivity and communion must co-exist and inform one another.[18] It is the fundamental law of nature and of health:

> Willingness implies a surrendering of one's self-separateness, an entering-into, an immersion into the deepest processes of life itself. It is a realization that one is already a part of some ultimate cosmic process and it is a commitment to participation in that process.
>
> In contrast, willfullness is the setting of one's self apart from the fundamental essence of life in an attempt to master, direct, control or otherwise manipulate existence. More simply, willingness is saying 'yes' to the mystery of being alive in each moment. Willfullness is saying 'no,' or perhaps more commonly, 'yes, but.'[19]

We know our basic needs, yet we go another route. But Francis, in his *Canticle*, sings of resolution of this conflict. He heralds the good news of accepting one's own humus and thus allowing one's creature-spirit to come full flower. The kenotic Christ is his example and his power. After years of struggle, conversion and a giving up of self, we are given insight into Francis' consciousness and our own life too.

Self-image in any dualistic sense completely disappears. Control is yielded. From first stanza of the text Francis assumes the role of creature: 'No man is worthy thee to name.' After proclamation of praise, Francis, distinct yet one in God, joins the other creatures in communion. 'Praise to you, My Lord, with all your creatures,' and the litany is chanted forth. This is no mere projection of nature as reflection of the self or as decorative embellishment of human life. It is 'conversion-with.' It is not simply a tool by which to contemplate the succession of his inner states. Nature has its own mission within his song: To open a way for him that lies outside and beyond him and ultimately to Being in its fullness. ... Francis' communion with nature is, first and foremost, the expression of profound detachment from himself.[20]

But the paradox is that this humble route in fact exalts him and fulfills him on his quest:

> Self-determination and self-assuredness are highly esteemed as signs of ego strength. ... [Yet] self image is the creation of a dualistic state of mind, and

> it is always accompanied by images of the world. 'I' creates 'you,' 'self' creates 'other' and 'subject' makes 'object.' Simply, if one side of such duality disappears, the other must as well. It might be tolerable to see oneself changing within a world that is constant and sure, or to envision oneself standing on stable bedrock while the world changes around one. But in searching for the ultimate constancy of life, one has to sacrifice *both* self and world. This makes willingness extremely difficult.[21]

Francis' song is a ballad of willingness and the transformation of his soul and all its symbols. Through almost playful lyrics he succeeds in descending into his own archaic depths where irrational forces dwell.[22] Holiness and play overlap, as do imagination and faith.[22] Reality is incarnational and the unifying inner principle is the great, redemptive, loving Word of God. And within the Spirit of this love, one giant conversation within himself, with other persons and other things.

Such a stance of faith is of great importance if we are to view humanity and the material order in a way that can lead to the sanctification and transformation of all.[24] Such faith is a created life. Francis' text was himself and his world, all ordered pages of one 'Divine Reading' beyond his own control and summarized in Christ. Differentiation: God – us. Subjectivity: God and us. Communion: God/us, Jesus, The Christ!

It is not possible to belong to the universe, to participate in its vital flow, if one is either being controlled by or trying to control it. There is no hope of realizing unity in an atmosphere of either submission or mastery."[25] Francis knew this and leaves a Testament to the insight. All of life is gift: The Lord gave him penance. The Lord gave him faith in churches and in people. The Lord gave him brothers [and sisters] along the way. The Lord gave him the insight to not mire down in a willful attempt to master life with its consequent loneliness. Rather, while uniquely himself, he was one subject within a great conversation and communion was the gift.

In this edition of **The Cord** many authors have come together to highlight this communion. The Word of God in Francis inspires us to see that conversion is not simply an inner state. It is a dialogue, and exchange, with inner and outer dimensions both.

And so, *Sister Rachel West* shares with you her insights regarding what is necessary for a cooperative society. She addresses 'Conversion-with Society' and the dualisms which frustrate our progress toward unity and truth. She exhorts that dominative patterns of behavior must be examined at their root and that subordination of women to men or any other caste is oppressive of the incarnate process of God's Word and plan.

Father Alan McCoy addresses conversion-with and for the poor. His unique twist is a focus on 'Conversion-with the Middle Class.' He shares

with us insights that affect the friar and the sister who work and live among the middle class themselves. Depth conversion to an option for the poor will only come when the middle class experience *with* the poor and are led through this experience to challenge root causes of poverty and oppression. Ultimately, the result should be mutual respect for the poor as co-authors who have the right to shape their own destiny.

Sister Elsie Silva, OSF, shares insights on conversion-with the marginalized. Redeemed within this process are our stereotypes, prejudices, expectations, and judgments as to what constituted 'success.' Those *with whom* we serve can teach us determination, courage, mutual concern and trust in God. This is especially true because those whom we have helped to marginalize live within their own powerlessness which leaves ample room for God!

Final word regarding our process for this edition itself. These articles represent the cooperative efforts of the Peace and Justice Committee of the Franciscan Federation. Individually we wrote, subjectively we shared with one another at two meetings to review our drafts, and in communion we offer these insights. Our hope is that all of us, in reflecting and observing these things, will be filled with the blessings of the Most High God, the Beloved Son and the Spirit.[26] □

Endnotes

[1]Merle A. Fossum and Marilyn J. Mason, *Facing Shame* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1986), p. 35.

[2]Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, (Beacon Press, 1955), pp. 4, 6.

[3]Fossum, *op. cit.*, p. vii.

[4]Alice Miller, *Prisoners of Childhood: The Drama of the Gifted Child*, (Basic Books, 1981), p. 42.

[5]Raoul Manselli, *Saint Francis of Assisi* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1985), p. 26.

[6]Fossum, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

[7]Regis J. Armstrong, OFM, Cap., and Ignatius Brady, OFM, eds., *Francis and Clare. The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), "The Testament" Nos. 1 - 3 (adapted).

[8]Manselli, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

[9]Johan Huizinga, *pp. cit.*, p. 141.

[10]Kenneth Leech, *Experiencing God: Theology as Spirituality*. (Cambridge: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 159.

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 239.

[12]Regis J. Armstrong, OFM, Cap., and Ignatius Brady, OFM, eds., *op. cit.* "Admonitions of Saint Francis," II: 3, p. 27.

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 239.

[14]Gerald G. May, M.D., *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology* (Cambridge: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 43.
[15]Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, (New York: New American Library, 1974), 52.
[16]Gerald G. May, *op. cit.*, p. 106.
[17]Rosemary Haughton, *The Passionate God*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 47.
[18]Thomas Barry, "Twelve Principles for Understanding the Universe and the Role of the Human in the Universe Process," (New York: Riverdale Center of Religious Research,), Notes.
[19]Gerald G. May, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
[20]Eloi LeClerc, OFM, *The Canticle of Creatures, Symbols of Union: An Analysis of Saint Francis of Assisi*. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970), p. 217.
[21]Gerald G. May, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 104.
[22]Eloi LeClerc, OFM, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
[23]Johan Huizinga, *op. cit.*, p. 141.
[24]Kenneth Leech, *op. cit.*, p. 251.
[25]Gerald G. May, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

And Now the Dance Continues

My attempts, at first, were clumsy,
Ill-timed and often unfeeling.
Concentrating more on form than content
I soon became disillusioned and bitter.
And though I kept up a brave front,
My house was crumbling from within.
But I did not know, how could I?
That I was not alone nor abandoned.
And being guided, none-the-less,
Toward a grace-filled moment,
A meeting of the mind — nay — the depth
Of my being, where form does not
Matter but only the sharing
Of presence: yours and mine in harmony
With the world about and within.
And now the dance continues.

Fr. Charles Wible, OFM Conv.

Conversion with Society: *"It shall not be so with you"*

RACHEL WEST, O.S.F.

In the face of the number and complexity of obvious social ills, the conversion of society seems an overwhelming task. Certainly it seems too great for one individual, even for a great many individuals working together with a common goal. One needs some focus, some way to connect all the problems, to enable one to see how their interrelationships ensure that the work of conversion undertaken in open area of societal problems will assist in the solution of problems in other areas as well. Such a focus is even more necessary to enable one to see how personal conversion is integral to the conversion of society.

Similarly, reflection on root causes of the more pervasive and insidious ills of society — racism, classism, sexism, nationalism — leads one to seek a single paradigm applicable to some degree to all of them. Immediately obvious is the relational pattern inherent in each one — a pattern which involves dominance of one being — individual, group, or state — over some other entity possessing characteristics (physical, mental, economic, social, political) which in some way depart from norms established by the "dominator." Alternate patterns of relationship between persons, groups, or states may be described with such words as "cooperation," "collaboration," or "solidarity." One who seeks to convert society must somehow try to find the means to move social structures in the direction of such

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descriptive terms, each of which symbolizes in its own way the essential "oneness" of the human beings who invent social structures and systems.

Some contemporary scholars, many of whom describe themselves as "feminists," believe that they have found a unifying term or model for dominative relationships in the concept of "patriarchy." Because patriarchy is an historical reality which did not and does not exist in every culture and society, many of these scholars believe that its continuing dominative patterns can be changed or transformed. Indeed, it can be argued that the very attempt to transform patriarchal structures through collaboration (women and men acting together as brothers and sisters, partners and friends) achieves the desired "social conversion." The process is itself the goal.

It is important to note here that persons who believe in the existence of patriarchy within social structures and its broad applicability as a paradigm of dominative relationships are not, by any means, all angry, "radical feminists." They are, however, all people who have noted the destructive patterns which have marked relationships between men and women and between groups characterized by terms commonly applied to either men or women. Their numbers include many Christian feminists (both women and men) whose conviction that patriarchy as a pattern of dominative relationships must be denounced as contrary to the Gospel is matched only by their love for the Church Christ founded.

Defined in its narrowest form, patriarchy refers to the arrangement of society characterized by domination of the male head of the family over dependent female and male family members.[1] As such, some historians conclude that, within western civilization, patriarchy came to an end in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the grant of civil and economic rights to women. Defined in a broader way, however, by modern feminist scholars, patriarchy refers to the structural and societal domination of males and what have been defined as "masculine" characteristics over females and what have been defined as "feminine" characteristics.

Patriarchal modes of thought, those which evolved over time within patriarchal cultures as narrowly defined, are characterized by dualisms which are pitted against each other: male/female; spirit/nature; heaven/earth; light/dark, etc. Invariably, the second part of the duo is associated with what is inferior and deserving of manipulation or destruction, and, modern students of patriarchy have shown, also invariably, it is associated with women's myth and reality as distinct from the myth and reality of men.

Some people now believe that it is the existence of patriarchal patterns of behavior within basic social institutions which is responsible for the exploitation of the earth and its resources, for "war mentality" and its tragic consequences, and for the failure of attempts of global cooperation.

And, some believe, its destructive patterns not only pre-date class, race, and national divisions, but furnish the evils of classism, racism, and nationalism with their necessary symbolic rationale and vocabulary. In her pathbreaking work, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, the historian Gerda Lerner shows how such symbols are articulated in Aristotle's *Politics* and other sources of Western thought. Aristotle, whose thought has so heavily influenced western philosophers, argued persuasively that the division of humanity into two categories (male and female) possessing two quite different sets of characteristics — those of the male fitting him to rule and those of the female fitting her to be ruled — justified men's dominance, not only over women, but also over other men who possessed (or who were said to possess) characteristics associated with the feminine. Thus the strong could (and should) dominate the weak, and those who had possessions and political/social power should dominate those who had none.[2]

The cultural historian and theologian Thomas Berry lists "four patriarchal institutions that have governed western history... the political empires, the institutional church, the nation-state, and the modern corporation. ..."[3] Each of these institutions is characterized by the domination of males; valued characteristics of each (power, strength, conquest, dominion, etc.) are those ordinarily associated with masculinity. Exceptional women who have assumed positions of power within any one of them have had to accept the prevailing philosophy or ideology set by males, together with a masculine management "style," if their rule was to be accepted within the institutional system.

According to Berry's analysis, each of these institutions is also characterized by patterns of thought which result, not only in the domination and oppression of women, but in the domination and exploitation of the resources of the planet as well. Symbolically, women are identified with the earth, and in patriarchal systems, both women and the earth are "fair game." "As these establishments endure," Barry states, "the consequences of their exploitation may soon be akin to nuclear winter. Their patriarchal plundering processes are devastating the natural systems of the planet."[4]

What does the harsh and pessimistic exposition of the prevalence and effects of patriarchy have to do with personal and societal conversion? A great deal. If life is to continue on this planet, if a major portion of that life is not to be destroyed by the devastation of war or the consequences of a "nuclear winter," and (on a more local and personal level) if we are to find creative solutions to society's daily problems of crime, homelessness, and poverty, we must examine the roots of these problems. If patriarchy (or, at least the dominative patterns of behavior which it represents) is at their root, then we must examine it. Further, we must seek,

not just passing solutions, but genuine transformation of the ideologies and patterns which underlie the problems.

Such transformation calls for reflection upon and analysis of the reality of patriarchy and the patterns of dominative relationships it represents as they exist in all social structures. It calls for individuals interested in transforming these structures to reflect upon the hold patriarchy has on their own thoughts and actions. It calls also for reflection on the connection of this undertaking and the message of the Gospel.

Gerda Lerner distinguishes between the terms "oppression," and "subordination" of women within patriarchy. She rejects the former term as too "subjective" in its focus on the "victimization" of one group (women) by another (men). While not denying that, in many cases, women as a group have indeed been both oppressed and victimized, Lerner shows

Franciscans should always stand as a counter to societal relations based on dominance.

convincingly that "women, more than any other group, have collaborated in their own subordination through their acceptance of the sex-gender system".[5] Subordination is a more "neutral" term when referring to the status of women within patriarchal systems, and it includes all forms of relationship between women and men within patriarchy — not least those which women have entered into voluntarily for protection and privilege.

This distinction is important, because it points to an essential element of "conversion" from a society characterized by structures of domination to one marked by cooperation and collaboration, particularly between women and men. If such conversion is to be accomplished, it must be undertaken by both dominator and dominated, by both women and men. To consider one sex, class, race, or nation the victim and another the "oppressor" is an error which leads, almost inevitably, to the desire on the part of the "oppressed" or allegedly "victimized," simply to reverse roles, to become the dominator rather than the dominated. Conversion from patriarchy does not mean, and can not mean, conversion to matriarchy (rule by women or the assumption that feminine characteristics are somehow superior to those deemed masculine). In reality, in a sexist, or classist, or racist, or nationalist society, all are "victims" of the oppressive structure. There are no real winners; all are losers.

Conversion from patriarchy to collaboration must, then, be undertaken collaboratively — that is, by women and men acting together. For Franciscans, the call to conversion from patterns of domination to patterns of collaboration and solidarity with ALL persons is a call to fuller realization of the brother-and sisterhood with each other, with all creation and with the Incarnate Christ which Francis understood so well. Francis' recognition of the interrelationship of all creation, of his solidarity with the least as well as the greatest, is, I believe, the Franciscan gift to the world and the church. Francis grasped, in an especially insightful way, the meaning of Jesus' words to his disciples: "The rulers of the world make their authority felt. *It shall not be so with you*." (Mk: 10:43) Because of this particular Franciscan call to conversion/collaboration, Franciscans should always stand as a counter to societal relations based on dominance. Ideally, relationships among male and female members of the Franciscan family should stand as models of that equality and mutuality so needed in the conversion of society.

On a personal level, conversion to solidarity with and for all demands that one examine the ways in which patriarchal models of dominance govern our thoughts and behavior in many not always obvious ways. The words of one feminist writer are instructive: "For me, to be a Christian is to become aware of the degree to which I am a participant in structures of oppression, structures of race, class, and national identity. As a woman, I am oppressed by the structures of patriarchy. Yet as white, I benefit from the oppression of other races. As a person whose economic level is middle-class, I am both victim and victimizer of others. As an American, I live within a nation whose policies are economically, politically, and environmentaly disastrous for far too many of the world's people."[6]

Such recognition of one's own complicity in maintaining the dualisms which are at the core of patriarchy is a necessary first step toward conversion *with* society. It is not always easy to recognize this complicity. Women may fail to recognize the ways in which their failure to assert their own personhood and dignity, perhaps in the guise of maintaining a false idea of "femininity," has contributed to masculine domination. (Writers on the topic of women's spirituality suggest that while, for men, the root sin may be that of pride, for women the basic sin may be its opposite — a false humility that denies one's full human dignity).[7] Men may fail to recognize that becoming a full human being means recognizing and affirming within themselves and others traits they have often rejected as feminine.

In another vein, recognition of the pervasiveness of patriarchal patterns of thought should lead Franciscan men and women to read the Franciscan sources with a more critical eye. A "wise" reading of these sources demands careful reconstruction of the historical past in the full realization that most

have been handed down to us in the context of a patriarchal system characterized by dominative relationships between men and women. Such reconstruction should have as its aim the exploration of the entire scene in which the documents were written — to discover both patriarchal and non-patriarchal elements. A fuller exploration of the sources can help us to learn from the past, not only what was "wrong" or oppressive to women within the era in which Francis and Clare lived, but also how these individuals managed, despite their cultural milieu of patriarchy, to attain quite amazing insights regarding such concepts as "discipleship of equals," and sister/ brotherhood. To fail to read the Franciscan sources with such a critical eye is to be a Franciscan "fundamentalist." Fundamentalists are hardly astute guides for positive social change.

Finally, we must work to counter, both ourselves and within all social structures, including our Church, those destructive elements of patriarchy which still remain. To denounce such patterns of dominative relationships can demand much courage, but it is an eminently Franciscan work.

Endnotes

[1]Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1986), pp. 238-39.

[2]Ibid., pp. 207-09.

[3]Thomas Berry, "Our Future on Earth: Where Do We Go From Here," in Anne Lonergan and Caroline Richards, ed., *Thomas Berry and the New Cosmology* (Twenty-Third Publication: Mystic, Connecticut, 1987), p. 105. See also, Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (Siera Club Books: San Francisco, 1988), pp. 138-62.

[4]Ibid., p. 106.

[5]Lerner, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

[6]Sharon D. Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation* (Orbis: New York, 1985) ix.

[7]See Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J., *Beyond Anger: On Being a Feminist in the Church*. (Paulist Press: Mahwah, N.J., 1986), p. 49.

La Verna

seraph love burns
crossing over human dreams
seared in blood white light

Bernard Kennedy, OFM

The Franciscan Conversion With the Middle Class

ALLAN McCOY, O.F.M.

A Franciscan, a follower of Francis of Assisi, who as Dom Helder Camara says is rash and brave to bear such a name[1] must always make choices suitable to each age, namely "How do I live as a Franciscan today, and how do I minister now as a follower of the Poverello?"

This article will attempt to address both these questions. My ministry as a Franciscan entails an ongoing personal conversion in which I hopefully accompany those to whom I minister.

To respond to the call for the Church in the United States, to give special attention to the African Americans and the new immigrants in our midst, it will be very important to look to the Catholics as represented in the post-immigrant Church. Much of our church structure and active membership reflects our middle class society. In view of this and of the great potential of middle America to help those struggling as a result of the injustices of the past and present, it can well be said that the proximate concern of the U.S. Catholic Church today should be the conversion of the middle class[2]. Conversion is an ongoing process and to stress the need for conversion of an adult Catholic does not reflect on the basic goodness of the person. Each of us is in continuing need of conversion, a turning more completely to our living God. And this is true even of those who have reached a high stage of holiness. Our efforts for our personal conver-

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sion and for the conversion of those to whom we minister are to enable us all to become more truly Christian.

The initial call that Franciscan women and men received is one that usually found them in the middle class in our country. In responding to that call to become truly lesser sisters and brothers one realizes that there is need for much progress if one is to become a full Franciscan, a follower of the "poor little brother." Hence there is need for us to accompany our middle class Catholics on their journey of spiritual growth.

Today the Church acknowledges its call to a loving, preferential option for the poor.[3] In examining the path that leads to true solidarity with them, I have found two articles to be especially helpful. One is "Spiritual Growth and the Option for the Poor", by Albert Nolan, O.P. in Maryknoll's World Apostolate Bulletin, Nov. Dec. 1985. The other is by Theodore Wiesner, C.M., "Experiencing God in the Poor," in Spiritual Life, Winter 1987. Although we describe stages of growth, we are not to take these in too rigid a fashion so that we would have to go through exactly one stage after another. Rather, these are to be seen as a model, so that we can see experiencing God in the poor as a process of spiritual growth. The one really bad thing that can happen is that we get stuck along the way.

The First Conversion

The first stage of conversion in our relationship to the poor and the oppressed responds to the reality that to be truly Christian one must come to accept Christ in them. It is a conversion which calls for true compassion, an appreciation of their needs and a sincere desire to do something about the situation. This calls us to direct aid. The biographers of St. Francis bring out clearly that his first conversion was toward the poor and suffering Christ in the poor. Even in his youth, he saved cloth from his father's store for the needy. After his conversion, the poor and the poor Christ were for him one and the same person. He was affectionate and gentle in a special way for the least of persons, the lepers. He began to live with the lepers, caring for them, healing their wounds, feeding them, denying himself to serve them, even to the point of kissing them on the mouth. Even before he changed his social status, he had begun to live for the poor giving them food and money.[4] He never forgot the poor in later life, even giving the only copy of the New Testament, used for the meditation of the brothers, to a poor woman with this comment: "The New Testament commands us to help the poor, I believe that God values more our giving alms than our reading."

Are there poor in our country today? This is seriously challenged by some who seem not to be able to open their eyes to reality. There are

an estimated 20 million hungry, 60% of them children. Between 1977 and 1986 the number of poor people in the United States increased from 24.7 to 32.4 million. Estimates of the homeless range from half a million to four million.[5] In 1987 33% of the homeless population were families with children. 1/5 of all children live below the poverty level and nearly 25% of all children under the age of six are poor.

This first stage of conversion takes place when we come to experience the plight of these poor in our midst. This can be through direct contact or through someone bringing us a clear picture of what is happening in the lives of our brothers and sisters. We see the homeless, those who do not have food, sufficient clothing, basic medical care, — and with God's grace, our response is one of true compassion, actually suffering with them. We accept the call now to make every effort to make sure that their basic needs are taken care of.

The Catholic Church in the United States has outstanding examples of such a generous response of direct relief throughout the country. The Franciscan centers of direct relief in the United States give eloquent testimony of Franciscan involvement at this level, and witness to the fact that we have brought many of our middle class people to be co-workers with us in this direct aid. The cities of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Milwaukee, Phoenix, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Stockton and many others can testify to the work of the Franciscans, secular and religious, involved in such direct aid. Many of our people continue to edify us in their generous response to the evident needs in their midst. There may be a struggle in the minds of some as to whether the poor are truly "deservng", but the great majority of our middle class Catholics respond well when they have come into contact with Christ in the poor. Our centers for daily meals, our food depots for families, clothing depots, shelters, free clinics, all demonstrate a truly Franciscan awareness of our call to help in this way and to engage others to whom we minister to assist.

Hopefully this conversion will bring us and our people to a more simple life style and a stance against the consumerism of our country, which devastates our brothers and sisters throughout the Third World. At this point we have all of us to reflect seriously on our experience in such service, and we must pray with our people for a heart that is truly one of compassion.

The Second Conversion

When we come to realize that in spite of all our efforts in direct aid, the poverty and oppression which we face are not decreasing, but in fact

steadily increasing not only here at home but world wide, a second conversion can take place. We come to acknowledge with Mother Teresa that "this (our efforts to feed, clothe etc.) is not the answer." Everything that we are doing must be supplemented by efforts to change the sinful societal and political structures that account for the situation. "... among the actions and attitudes opposed to the will of God, the good of neighbor, and the 'structures' created by them, two are very typical: on the one hand the all-consuming desire for profit, and on the other, the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one's will upon others."[6].

We come to see that our efforts to help the poor and suffering must be supplemented by efforts to change the societal and political structure that accounts for the situation. Surely the sin involved reflects personal sin, greed and pride as Pope John Paul II points out, but does exist in itself and must be addressed. Once our eyes are opened to the reality of the causes of poverty we see the exploitation of people and of whole countries for economic or military advantage over others. Poverty now becomes a matter of injustice and oppression, and not just an unfortunate but unavoidable situation. Poverty is a structural problem, a problem of unjust and oppressive institutions and systems, and we are part of it.[7] This is a time of great difficulty both for the Franciscan sister or friar and for the entire middle class people we may serve and who are engaged with us in direct aid to the poor. If our spiritual life is truly centered on finding God among the poor, this experience of structural sin can bring real anger, anger against the rich, the politicians, against governments for their lack of compassion, for the policies that cause poverty and suffering. The anger may be justified, but what of forgiveness of enemies? Surely we are never allowed to hate. At this time we and our people may falter, give way to a certain paralysis, retreat from the fray. Or we may enter into activism and find ourselves exhausted, burnt out. Here is where we must have great trust in God leading us through, and with hope in His promise of the Kingdom.

Among the serious obstacles to this second conversion are the vestiges of the Puritan or American myth, absorbed by our Catholic immigrant peoples, which have perdured to this day. The myth would speak of the early American Puritans (and then later other European immigrants) as God's chosen people, called out of 'corrupt' Europe, crossing the Reed Sea (the Atlantic Ocean) and coming to the promised land. Here they met the peoples of the land who were obstacles to their progress, and would have to be removed or put on reservations. The myth brought with it the concept of manifest destiny in such a way that it would push our pioneers all the way to the Pacific Ocean, taking almost half of Mexico eventually. In the dream of Thomas Jefferson the destiny of our people

was to take over the entire hemisphere. In many ways this has been accomplished. Our political and economic dominance of the hemisphere is a known fact. To the South, we the neo-colonizers have replaced the original colonizers. The United States has come to feel that somehow we are to direct the lives of all in North and South America.

The initial call that Franciscan women and men received is one that usually found them in the middle class in our country.

Even though the myth has collapsed in the minds of many of our dedicated religious leaders and others, it has still a great hold on those who would turn to a certain fundamentalism for security in this time of great change. Along with the myth there has been a tremendous growth of individualism and of the independent stance, rejecting any concept of true interdependence with other nations, especially with those who are considered below us financially and culturally.

In facing up to the challenges of this second conversion we are in danger of alienating many of our good, middle class people. Without compromise we have to bring true Christ-like love to the situation and try to understand their predicament when faced with this challenge to so many things taken for granted in our society, a call to reject the consumerism, the competition that drives us on. And it is true that many a benefactor may drop out of the picture once we face up to the need for structural, political change. But as God leads us through this stage we enter into a genuine dialogue with those we serve, namely the poor and oppressed. We will continue to simplify our life-style, even as we engage in the struggle for social change, through boycotts, and political action.

There is another very trying discovery that comes at this time, a discovery important for both ourselves and our middle class Catholics. The poor and oppressed must and will save themselves, hopefully assisted by us. Here we have to come to grips with genuine humility. A shock comes when we realize that the poor know better than we what to do and how to do it, in face of this challenge for structural change. It is a gradual discovery that social change can come only from the poor, the working class, the Third World. We must learn from them, learn the wisdom of

the poor.[8] They know better than we what is needed and they, only they, can in fact save us. This realization can bring a severe crisis. We can discover, experience God acting, and God's presence in the poor not merely as an object of compassion, not merely seeing the face of Christ in their suffering, but discovering in the poor, God saving us, God acting and speaking to us today.

Humility will bring us to search with the poor and the oppressed for the answers. This second stage is often accompanied by a great deal of frustration. Caution must be taken not to burn out. There will probably be antagonism on the part of those who do not understand what we are trying to do. Dom Helder Camara reflects on his own experience as he tries to face structural change. "When I feed the hungry poor, they call me a saint, but when I ask why are they hungry, they call me a communist."

St. Francis' working with the poor, his identification with them, did not lead him to organize them. The possible consciousness of his time did not place the question in political and social terms, as we do today, and as we must in our consciousness. But he achieved an incomprehensible liberation with and for the poor. Francis saw that he was to remain in the world with them, and not retreat to hermitages or convents. This attitude of Francis implies a protest, and act of love, a protest against a society that expels the poor from its midst and hides them in inhuman places outside the mainstream of life.[9]

Examples of our working with the poor today are seen in our middle class people joining with us in groups of poor organized for basic justice, groups such as UNO, neighborhood groups, base communities in theThird World. Our Franciscan formation could well prepare us for such participation, giving us something very valuable to share in our ministry with the middle class.

The Third Conversion

The third conversion is a true solidarity with the poor and oppressed, a living out of the truth expressed by St. Paul that we are all one in Christ Jesus, even slave and free. (Gal. 3) It means we are not merely doing things for the poor, not even just doing things with them, but that we have truly become one with them, one of them. This solidarity, becoming one with all God's people and in a special way with the suffering, must be the goal of anyone striving to respond to Christ's invitation to really see Him in the poor, and to see the poor in Him. Pope John Paul II in his letter "Solicitudo Rei Socialis" stresses the fact that the nations themselves are called to solidarity among themselves. Actually all Christians

have received a special call to be witnesses to the world of this urgent call of Christ.

Francis identified with all the poor, did not feel good seeing someone poorer than himself, and this not because of vanity, but because of a feeling of the deepest compassion. And if it is true that he was content with an extremely miserable and threadbare tunic, he many times wanted to divide it with another poor man. Francis essentially abandoned his social class, the dominant order of his day; he left the society of the maiores, as they are called and decidedly wanted to *be minor*.[10]

One might well speak of a night of faith, a night which follows our experience of working with the poor, an experience that may well be romantic. And one must go through this night in order to become truly one with the 'little ones'. In our contact with the poor and oppressed we come to realize they too have 'feet of clay.' They often disappoint us. They show the same faults we have seen in our own milieu. They are not always the Christ-like figures we imagined them to be. They can be as selfish and greedy, as lacking in commitment and political insight, as weak and sinful as their middle class brothers and sisters. We reach a crisis of disappointment and a crisis of belief. How do we find Christ in them when these faults emerge? But Christ did identify Himself with them, even though they were sinful and had 'feet of clay.' He can say that he was in prison and we visited *him*. He identifies not only with the innocent.

In our first conversion there is need for deep love and this must deepen as we progress. In the second conversion hope is called for urgently. And here in this third conversion our love and our hope must be accompanied by an ever greater faith. We need to pray earnestly for great faith in the word of God, realizing that we can accept God's presence in our midst. Together with our middle class Catholics we must beg for the faith to accompany us on our journey.

We thank God for the many blessings that have come to our post-immigrant Catholic Church in the United States. We are privileged to call them to journey with us as the Lord calls us to these three conversions. Looking back on the process, we see the need for the four steps urged by Bernard Lonergan: experience, understanding, judging, deciding. Experience is so important that all our pastoral activity must be in the context conducive to helping our people experience their oneness with all God's people, especially his 'little ones.' After that experience there is need for understanding through an analysis of the causes of the poverty and needless suffering experienced locally, nationally and internationally. Next, the process of discernment as to what should be done and how, and this followed by a grace-filled decision to actually take the steps that are necessary so that eventually we can become truly one in Christ. □

Endnotes

[1]*Through the Gospel with Helder Camara* (Orbis: New York, 1987), p. 59.
[2]"The Church in the United States as Prophet", unpublished manuscript of John Grindel, C.M.
[3]"Letter of Pope John Paul II to Brazilian Bishops," *L'Osservatore Romano,* April 28, 1986.
[4]*St. Francis,* by Leonardo Boff (Crossroads: New York, 1985) pp. 53ff.
[5]5 Cf. *Rachel and Her Children,* (Crown Publishers: Kozos).
[6]Pope John Paul II, *Solicitudo Rei Socialis* n. 37.
[7]Weisner, op. cit. p. 216.
[8]Nolan, op. cit. p. 3.
[9]Boff, op. cit. p. 76.

Conversion with the Marginalized

ELSIE SILVA, O.S.F.

Conversion is an on-going, life-long process. Although for some it may be initiated by a particular event or inner experience, metanoia or change of heart continues throughout life. Conversion is a learning of what St. Paul means when he says, "It is not I but Christ who lives in me." Gradually, our hearts open up, emptying themselves of their own ideas, dreams, desires, hopes, plans, and preferences. Also gradually, often imperceptibly, these empty spaces are filled with the love of God which allows the ideas, dreams, desires, hopes, plans and preferences of Christ to become our own. We learn to look beyond the obvious in situations, persons, encounters and to find the deeper meaning. We begin to live day by day waiting on the Lord to show us that which through our own efforts we have failed to understand. Love becomes the measure we use to decide our responses, actions, and commitments.

Our attitude toward life changes. We no longer need to feel in control of everything but are willing to allow God to lead us. As love of God and of God's people grows within us, it impels us to go forth to persons and places we might not have chosen earlier on our spiritual path. We begin to listen more carefully and understand more clearly Jesus' words: "How blessed are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs." (Mt. 5:3) "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me." (Mt. 25:40)

The followers of Francis have an especially powerful example of this conversion process. Allowing the love of Christ to transform his heart,

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Francis was empowered to embrace the leper. He understood that Jesus identified himself with the lowly of this world and that in lovingly serving these little ones, the outcasts, he would be serving Christ. He, therefore, chose to live as the poor, as a minor, and to spend his time with the rejected, the marginalized, allowing them to be his teachers in the meaning of minority. So crucial did Francis consider this attitude of minority that he wrote: "They (the brothers) should be the lesser ones and subject to all who are in the same house." (RNB VII, 1) "And they must rejoice when they live among people [who are considered to be] of little worth and who are looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside." (RNB IX, 1)

Those who followed Francis were never to take the stance of superiority, considering themselves greater than others thought to be less knowledgeable, less educated, less spiritual, lacking in power or wealth or social skills, weaker in character or health or morals. They were to share the lives of the rejected by society and to offer hope through their joy and love as they worked together, brothers and sisters.

This attitude of minority also includes mutuality. Once we recognize that we are not superior to the marginalized, we see that it is not a matter of those who have been helping those who do not have, but rather of human beings sharing what each is able to share. Our process of conversion becomes a conversion with the marginalized, a walking together toward God that again and again calls us to a change of heart as we, so frequently imbued with middle class values, enter a world alien to us — a world inhabited by the destitute, the addicted, the street people, the prostitutes, the drug dealers, those in and out of jail, the psychologically unstable, the mentally deficient, those with AIDS, all the throwaways of our society who range from runaway, troubled children through the poor elderly.

Conversion-with begins as we face our stereotypes regarding the marginalized. Living in a world in wich mass media, movies, and literature have influenced our perceptions, we have formed images of who these people are, how they act, and why they are that way. Serving the marginalized, we begin to encounter individuals who defy being placed in the categories our minds have created. We meet street people who, although they work, cannot save enough money to rent a room, but who have too much self-respect and pride to take any monetary help. We encounter children who are drug dealers in order to help their families financially. Slowly we realize there is no one profile for a person who has become marginalized. Some are selfish, cruel, thoughtless, and violent. Many are kind, courageous, cooperative, and determined to better their condition. Some are noble, loving, generous, and holy. All are human beings with strengths and weaknesses and with a need to be loved and

accepted. Causes leading to their present situations are likewise multiple with each person having his or her own particular set of reasons and circumstances. The Christ in each person comes forth through a unique personality and a unique history.

Our assumptions and opinions about life and about what constitutes a good life may also be challenged as we see that much we take for granted is not as universal as we had thought. We may assume that living on the street is the worst that can happen. For some, however, being confined in a room and/or having freedom curtailed is a much greater horror than the dangers of the street. We often think of family as the biological family, but discover that for those who have little or no connection with the biological or adoptive family, family may be the ones who have helped them on the streets.

Conversion-with begins as we face our stereotypes regarding the marginalized.

Our process of conversion-with also leads us to face our prejudices. Our hidden biases emerge as we face fear, mistrust and suspicion of another because of his/her race, language, culture or customs. Extreme physical illness or moral deprivety may arouse our repugnance. We may have difficulty dealing with those involved in pimping, drug dealing, or sexual abuse. We may have to struggle to find Christ in these people who arouse fear or horror in us, and only by allowing God to empty us of these feelings will our hearts be open to the truth of God's presence in them.

As we serve our marginalized brothers and sisters we find ourselves having to examine our expectations. We may expect gratitude, cooperation, and courtesy which are not present. We may demand an interest in and acquiescence with our efforts that are not be given. To let go of expectations and disapointments, to put aside the hurt and pride, to see Christ in those who may seem to ignore or reject our efforts to help — all this is a strugge as we strive to empty our hearts so that they can be filled with the unconditional love of Christ.

Another area in which we may experience conversion with the marginalized is our judgments of others. We have opinions as to what the poor and outcast need or should do, but often those we serve do not agree. We may find ourselves acting as their superiors and imposing our solutions on them for their own good. We may judge them as lazy, incor-

rigible, stupid, or hopeless when they do not cooperate with our plans for their betterment. We may get angry because the street person we wish to place in a shelter refuses to go. We may feel indignant because the youth for whom we found a minimum wage job rejects it and remains on the streets prostituting or selling drugs. We may forget that the marginalized have a right to make choices for themselves and so insist on the wisdom of our approach. To remain open to them, loving and accepting, respectful and attentive to their needs, waiting for their time of change and growth requires a letting go of our judgments in order to allow our hearts to change.

Judgments may also arise regarding the lifestyle of some of the marginalized whose way of life may deviate from our values. This can raise numerous issues, evoke self-righteousness, and produce censure, sometimes very subtle, of the persons involved. Imperceptibly a judgment that such people are not worthy of our help or our interest or our love may arise. To achieve a balance of acceptance and love of these persons with their continued destructive behavior is a process in which we struggle to live Jesus' words, "if you want to avoid judgment, stop passing judgment." (Mk. 7:1)

Closely related to our judgments of others is our judgment of success. Service to the marginalized may make us aware of our need to feel successful. We may discover our service is not as selfless as we had thought because we look for results to help us feel that we are doing something worthwhile. We may find there is a real attachment to success within us and that we measure our success by the success of those whom we serve. Since what we considered success in the past does not occur frequently, we may become discouraged and angry and judge ourselves as failures. We may blame the marginalized for their inability to achieve their goals and feel disappointed in them. If we do not allow ourselves to release the standards and opinions we have regarding success, burnout will be the consequence. If, however, we learn to look for the small triumphs that the simple and humble achieve, our concept of success will change. We will recognize the success in holding a job for three months, in staying off drugs for a month, in maintaining proper hygiene for a week. When we allow ourselves to be with the marginalized in their small triumphs, we encourage them to continue their attempts to change their lives for the better and open ourselves to a change of heart.

As we experience with the marginalized and learn to be with them, allowing them to teach us and challenge us to change, we may find that some of their attitudes are those we would like to incorporate in our lives. We see areas within us that can grow through the development of the qualities we see in our brothers and sisters. One such quality or attitude

is the importance given to maintaining human dignity. There is a great sense of dignity in some of the marginalized. There are those who while living on the streets still find ways to keep themselves as clean as possible and to look neat. There are the poor elderly who remain in their apartments, fearful but proudly independent, often hungry but holding on to the right of being able to choose how to live. As we become more mindful of the human dignity of the marginalized, we also grow in the awareness that dignity is sometimes violated, often with good intentions.

Courage and determination are qualities also present among the marginalized. Buffeted by life and frequently rejected by those who should be loving and helping them, some of these people courageously refuse to stay down. There are the prostitutes who decide to testify against their pimps in order to protect others, even though it means endangering their own lives. There are the young people who decide they want to make a better life for themselves and so choose to stop selling drugs, thus risking reprisal or death at the hands of the dealers. The lives of the marginalized can challenge us to put our own difficulties in perspective and to learn from the lowly, rejected ones what it means to persevere in the efforts to better ourselves and our lives in the midst of great obstacles.

Another quality of some of the marginalized is the concern they can show for each other. Having little or next to nothing themselves, they will share with others who have less. There are street people, who seeing others who are new and fearful on the streets, will take them under their wings, showing them where to go, sharing what they have, warning them of potential dangers. There are those suffering from AIDS who, filled with their own pain, still make time to reach out to others who may be sicker or more frightened or more alone. As we put aside our notions of superiority and of being the ones who give, we begin to recognize how much these poor give to us and how their unostentatious giving encourages us to give more fully of who we are and not just of what we have or can do.

The marginalized sometimes display a firm faith and a childlike trust in God. Pushed to the edges of society, they turn to the One who is power and strength. There are the youth who live on the streets and who at night before attempting to sleep ask God's protection for themselves and their friends, feeling it is the only real defense they have against the dangers of the night. There are the addicted who realize only God can save them and so live day by day trying to overcome the temptation of drugs through prayer and reading the bible. Knowing their littleness, these people can turn to God in simplicity, not concerned with theology but filled with the knowledge that God cares for them and is active in their lives. It is this awareness of God's love which enables them to continue trying daily to survive the difficulties and dangers of living on

the edge of society and to hope that something better can happen in their lives. As we look to these little ones of God, we are called to examine our lives and hearts and to see whether our trust and faith is as firm.

Entering the world of the marginalized is entering a world of powerlessness. The poor frequently have no power. The causes may be multiple but the end result is the same: both in society and frequently in their personal lives, powerlessness dominates. If we listen to them, we begin to understand what it is like to be invisible to others, to not matter in society, to live judged negatively, to have others make decisions for our lives without consulting us, to be considered worthless or lazy or crazy, to see no future because all our efforts meet with a wall placed there by society, to want so much to better ourselves but to find every effort fails because we do not have the inner or outer resources to support us. We experience powerlessness as again and again we are unable to offer the assistance needed, we give all our energy and effort to have it thrown back in our faces, as we work for months on a project only to have it fall apart in one moment. We find that we have to give up our illusions of power and ability to save others from themselves and from society. Faced with our powerlessness, once again we learn that it is only God who can bring about the changes within ourselves, within the marginalized, within our society that will produce a world in which each sees the other as a sister or a brother and so is willing to work to insure that each has what she or he needs to live a fulfilled life.

Serving the marginalized never allows us to forget the powerlessness of being poor and rejected, weak and simple. In them we discover the crucified Christ, sometimes obvious, sometimes disguised under the mask of anger, hate, violence, addiction, dirt, or bizarre behavior, yet, always there, suffering in them, experiencing the powerlessness of being nailed to a cross of pain and rejection. As we allow ourselves to enter into this mystery and into the process of conversion with the marginalized, our hearts are transformed in ways never even imagined from hearts of stone to hearts that are loving and free of judgments, joyful in being little ones who look to God for all and who recognize in other little ones who are outcast by society brothers and sisters with whom we are one in Christ. □

little poor man
knight these quiet salt tears and
minstrel now my heart

Bernard Kennedy, OFM

Book Reviews

Religious Life According to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law. By Elio Gambari, S.M.M. Translated from the second Italian edition, updated according to the New Code of Canon Law. Daughters of St. Paul. Boston, MA, 1986. 669 pp. Cloth, $25.

Revewed by: Fr. Vincent B. Grogan, O.F.M., J.C.D. (Catholic University). Canonist for Holy Name Province, Judge of Metropolitan Tribunal of Archdiocese of New York.

You might catch the text of a particular document pertaining to religious life in the local Catholic press or in a news service such as *Origins*. You might even read pertinent excerpts of a document or an interpretation of it in the secular papers. But where to find the various post-Conciliar decrees/ papal exhortations integrated into a logical whole or unit, with their practical ramifications for the contemporary religious? This book provides the answer.

The very title alerts the reader to the major thrust of the opus: *Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law*. The latter can be understood only with an awareness of Perfectae Caritatis *and* the myriad official pronouncements that guided the renewal of religious life up to the Code's promulgation in 1983. The author also includes references to a post-Code document: Pope John Paul II's letter to religious during the jubilee year of redemption, "Redemptionis Donum" of March 25, 1984.

In the Preface, Gambari clearly sets forth his purpose: "I have proposed to outline the teaching on religious life within the framework of ecclesiology, in the light of Sacred Scripture and the Second Vatican Council, commenting on the canonical norms which guide institutes and their members." He then proceeds to highlight the various perspectives or dimensions to be included in his treatise on religious life: theological, spiritual, apostolic, ecclesial and canonical/ juridical. Notice that the author himself places the canonical aspect last. Hence, this is not a dry, legalistic commentary on the canons for religious of the 1983 Code, intended for jurists; rather, it is an all-encompassing discussion of religious life in light of Church documents (which, of necessity, include the pertinent sections of the Code).

The author emphasizes repeatedly the strong *ecclesial* dimension of religious life and the role of the Church vis-a-vis religious. The Church not only accepts the vows of a religious but presents these vows to God. Also, the pastoral activities of the religious institutes assume a clearly ecclesial perspective and must be harmonized with the ministry of the local church. Gambari goes so far as to say that religious cannot place themselves or be placed on the margins of the life of the diocese.

In a similar fashion, Gambari makes the point vehemently that it is the very nature of *being* a religious that must take precedence over any and all apostolic endeavors. Interestingly, he clarifies that it is the call from God that consecrates one as a religious, not the

profession of vows. The latter is the juridical and ecclesial response to the divine call. He then continues, relating the three vows to the Gospel counsels and, significantly, to the beatitudes.

Quite logically, the author treats succinctly the genesis of religious life within the Church and the variuos manifestations or forms that religious life has assumed through the centuries (monastic, contemplative, conventual, apostolic) and even concludes his book with an expose on secular institutes, a product of the twentieth century.

This reviewer found the treatment of the following to be particularly helpful: priesthood within religious life; lay religious in a clerical institute; the purpose of common life (not for the smooth and efficient exercise of an apostolate that would not otherwise be possible on the individual level, but for the sanctification of the members); the role of superiors in mediating between God and the individual religious (the divine element, if you will, is not found in the content of a directive nor in the motives supporting it, but in the very authority itself of the superior); the individual but also social value of an atmosphere of silence in religious houses (the religious find God, discover themselves and prepare to meet God in their brothers and sisters).

The book is enriched by an abundance of footnotes, many of which contain references to pertinent articles and studies on various aspects of post-Conciliar religious life. The topical Index is of value, as is a list of certain canons of the 1983 Code and the pages which discuss each of them.

Gambari is well-qualified to author a book such as this. The holder of a doctorate in both canon and civil law, he has focused much of his ministry precisely on religious life. For several decades, he was a staff member of the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes and also served as a peritus on religious life at Vatican II. In recent years, he has assisted several religious institutes in the task of renewal.

The author makes a few points that, I think, are arguable. For example, he maintains that the three counsels, professed in a stable manner, can be found in the Gospels. He holds, too, that the establishment of a religious house in a particular area is tantamount to a kind of "incardination" into that diocese (my quibble is with the use of the canonical term "incardination" to depict the relationship of the house to the diocese). Moreover, certain topics were not addressed as completely as they might have been, at least from the standpoint of American religious life, such as the need for psychological formation vis-a-vis the vow of chastity, and the tension between dialogue and religious obediednce.

Technically, a few defects surfaced. For instance, there is a consistent mistranslation from the Italian of the phrase "depends on" — it comes out "depends from"; Signatura is spelled Segnatura; the date of publication of the Instruction *Renovationis Causam* is January 6, not June 6, 1969. And there seems to be an historical error particularly of interest to Franciscans: the author states that Francis obtained approval of his Order in 1219; this actually occurred in 1209.

If one is seeking a book that provides an overview of the theological, ecclesial and canonical underpinnings of contemporary religious life, then this is it. I recommend the book as a respected and valuable addition to your personal and/or house library.

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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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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

[1]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:

The Question of Stigma
"Tell the truth and shame the devil"

SR. ROBERTA CUSACK, O.S.F.

Yesterday I attended a well prepared program on HIV psychosocial assessment and intervention. Very heavy stuff! And I must say it has given an interesting light to the matter of Francis' stigmata, and the marks we all bear, hopefully in the Name of Christ Jesus.

A very large part of the first day was devoted to the stigma, associated with people having AIDS. In fact, the entire first morning was entitled "STIGMATIZATION." I immediately began to draw parallels from my own experience, at the same time thinking with St. Francis, and the lepers of his day and ours. After journeying through conceptual considerations, various dimensions of stigma, and reactions to stigma by others, we were encouraged to enter into our own story and name some of the stigmatization we have struggled with or perhaps deal with some of the marks we are presently bearing.

Too often the stigmatization which might be so very negative, damaging and very generalizing derives from those most intimate in our lives, our parents, family members, loved ones, the order, or community, or parent community, the institutional people. Supposed friends. How often we declare those bearing the stigma in our all wise opinion as "deserving of what they get," morally corrupt, all wrong, possessing no truth. We

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might even find special companions on the journey, lifetime faithful friends fearful of our contact lest perhaps our sin, our thinking, our behavior, our urgency to move on in the conversion experience — it all might be infectious. After all, the most harmful kind infect silently and might be universally fatal. Or perhaps we experience ourselves ostracized by the system and therefore socially stigmatized as we mingle with today's leper.

I have very recently lived through the most interesting, soul-searching, life-giving, and significant experience in my personal journey of faith. This has not been without its marks, a real stigmatization of a sort, which are almost daily catching up with me via old friends in the Franciscan family, people who write or call, whose paths intersect along the journey, or those who come for time and space here to Little Portion. It's amusing to pick up the attitudes from those who once appeared to share your thinking and values, but who somehow have swung into a very opposite, safe and secure mode. I often wonder has the stigma, my stigma, the marks I bear become too much for these to carry with me?

Last summer while visiting my younger sister and her dynamic clan of nine grandchildren in California (one of my annual high energizing experiences) I soon became aware that the little ones were being challenged very frequently by their grandparents to "TELL THE TRUTH AND SHAME THE DEVIL!" This dare has continued to echo within me. How far we adults have removed ourselves from this ideal, so often letting ourselves be backed into spiritual, emotional, or psychological corners in agreement, perhaps allowing ourselves to stay smug in our shame and guilt. How frequently we shake our heads at the network of dependencies and co-dependencies we eventually develop in our communal relationships, which unintentionally but inevitably grow into a horrendous dysfunctional group situation. We find ourselves avoiding imposed or possibly stigmatizing circumstances in order to circumvent the shame or guilt which is the punishment experienced in the vicious game of such a tangle.

Now on the bright side we might also use our experience of being stigmatized to understand someone else's situation. For we have all carried the marks of some type of branding. We might know of it as shame, guilt, alienation, a label of outsider or recipient of an attitude of tolerance or condescension. Hopefully, we also know the experience of "telling the truth and shaming the devil" regardless of the cost as the result of trusting the Spirit within and then making a responsible decision in truth. Hopefully, we also have experienced all kinds of freedom that comes from being an "outsider." For in this freedom we are enabled to let parts about ourselves show; parts about which we feel a new sense of gratitude, new discoveries, new awareness, new truths, new pain, new joys, new relationships. All of this enables our own "compassion for the passion" in another.

So what are the stigmas of our lives? What are the stigmas of our Franciscan history and our personal history? As individuals and as the family of Francis have we always "told the truth and shamed the devil"? or have we conformed to the expectations of peers, of those who might show displeasure or be threatened by another view, another insight, another style, another color, another price, another idea, another lifestyle? What can I do and how can I be to enable people to live a fuller and more meaningful life in the family of Francis, in my immediate community, in the world of God's creation? Now, "tell the truth and shame the devil."

How refreshing it is to reflect the summary of our Franciscan charism in the Legend of Perugia, #43, "We are the minstrels of the Lord, whose duty it is to uplift the minds and hearts of people and move them to spiritual gladness." How enriching, affirming and challenging that our founder, St. Francis, did not specify or write in the details for us. How wise was Francis in trusting the Spirit in the hearts of his brothers and sisters.

Now, "let's tell the truth and shame the devil." We all have our blemishes and scars; some upfront and many many hidden ones. Are we able to look each other in the eye or does shame cause us to disown and turn our faces away? The Buddhist's have taught me the wisdom of eye-contact which is so very healing. Especially the eye contact with the creature we greet in the mirror each morning. How do we greet our own person? Now, "tell the truth and shame the devil." Yes, it's easier to deny, but we can never move on and grow if we use "distancing" behavior toward our very self.

Wouldn't it be great if we could live with the transparency my sister encouraged in her grandchildren? I sense this is all Jesus is inviting us to become in his simple but wonderful interchange and frolicking with the children in his journey. Wouldn't it be great if we could be that upfront, and not wait for a crisis? Wouldn't it be great if our limbic system were heeded and respected as a barometer for our balancing needs? Wouldn't it be great if we let God speak for Godself and we really did live with the freedom of becoming our very best selves as we encouraged each other long life's pilgrimage to do and be the same? Wouldn't it be great if what happens inside us was as important as what is happening outside? Wouldn't it be great if we allowed each stigmatized person the same power we give to ourselves or equal to that power we assign to others in our religious and social systems?

"Tell the truth and shame the devil!" Is my Franciscan life-style helping me to arrive at that kind of honesty, that kind of wholeness, which urges me to become my very best self, to be more balanced and free, to be the

most beautiful person I might become? Or do I allow the imposed stigma to hinder my process and progress? Do I permit the threat of stigmas to paralyze the possibility of movement?

There is a sense of rebirth which happens for people with AIDS, people like Francis of Assisi, people like the lepers, people like ourselves, if we let it. It seems to me that even working with such people bears the so-called "courtesy stigma" enabling us to cut through the nonsense of our lives and forcing us to be more honest and free. Much of salvation history and a sense of rebirth and conversion happens out of being faced with questions raised by people bearing marks or stigma. Perhaps bearing the stigma, the marks of our Lord Jesus Christ, isn't so bad after all. "Tell the truth and shame the devil!" □

AIDS: An Invitation to Diminish Suffering

VICTORIA MASTERPAUL. O.S.F.

AIDS, the all-too-familiar acronym which literally and clinically stands for "acquired immune deficiency syndrome," in reality represents an immensity of suffering that defies full expression by even the most articulate and erudite of persons.

It began during the summer of 1981 when young homosexual men in Los Angeles, and later New York City, were dying of illnesses previously observed in patients who were immuno-suppressed by radiation and chemotherapy. Researchers discovered that, in these cases, a type of white blood cell, the T4 helper lymphocytes, essential for adequate immunological response, was being attacked. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, labelled this new disorder a syndrome, rather than a disease, because it is, in fact, characterizind by a cluster or combination of diseases related to the suppressed immune system. The two most frequently occuring AIDS-related complications are *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP), an opportunistic infection caused by a protozoan parasite, and Kaposi's sarcoma (KS), a form of cancer that, under ordinary circumstances, is rare in young male adults.

The majority of persons with AIDS (PWA) have contracted the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) via sexual contact; however, it is also transmitted by sharing contaminated needles, by tainted blood transfusions and blood derivatives, and transplacentally during the first trimester of pregnancy and childbirth.

Sister Vicki ministers as Patient Representative at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center in Camden, New Jersey. She generously granted us permission to reprint this article which first appeared in Review for Religious *July - August 1988. We believe that our* **CORD** *readers will be inspired by Sister Vicki's deeply felt franciscan insights which powerfully call us to examine and, if necessary, to reshape our attitudes toward victims of aids. We thank all of our franciscan sisters and brothers who in ministering to those who suffer from this devastating affliction awaken us to the inexhaustible and unique love discovered and lived by Francis of Assisi.*

Although the early cases were cited primarily in the homosexual and intravenous drug-abusing populations, and the largest percentage of cases remain in these two groups, it was soon evident that AIDS was not limited to these sectors. *Blind to age, gender, race, vocation in life, place of residence, or sexual orientation, AIDS is not only "a gay disease."* It is a *human* disease deserving at least the same measure of care, compassion and scientific expertise as any other disease.

The Center for Disease Control has predicted two significant shifts relative to this syndrome which have widened its boundaries considerably: first, it is moving into smaller cities, into rural areas, and into other regions of the United States so that within five years approximately eighty percent of all cases will be outside California and New York; secondly, the virus is being transmitted more and more through heterosexual contact. CDC also has estimated that by the end of 1991 the total number of cases in the United States will reach 270,000, with 179,000 deaths, and that the number of deaths for 1991 alone is projected at 54,000, a figure roughly equal to the American death toll in the entire Vietnam war. The syndrome has not remained within the confines of the United States. It has moved across Africa, up and down the Americas, across Europe, and is knocking at the door of Asia, menacing the entire globe.[1] Other epidemics have caused more deaths, thus far, but AIDS, is unlike anything mankind has faced before. No other plague has spread so far so fast, or stirred such frantic worldwide reaction. Dr. David Baltimore, the Nobel Prize-winning biochemist, stated: "There is no question that AIDS will be with us as a severe medical problem of world-wide proportions well into the next century."[2] Given this staggering pandemic profile, it is conceivable that very soon millions of Americans will know someone personally who succumbed to the illness.[3]

Those who suffer from this devastating affliction go far beyond those diagnosed with full-blown AIDS. There are those who have AIDS-Related Complex (ARC), living in constant fear of developing AIDS; there are the "walking wounded," those who test HIV positive and are terrorized by each common cold and each bead of perspiration; there are the "worried well," those in high risk groups, and those who have received blood transfusions or derivatives prior to 1985, all of whom need education, counseling and emotional support.[4] There are the grief-stricken and bereaved who have already lost their loved ones and are struggling to recover not only from their loss, but also from the day to day pain of having lived with this relentless attacker. There are the health care-givers who work daily with these patients and their families, and suffer from their own form of AIDS: Anxiety, Isolation, Drain and Stress.[5] There also are (religious) sisters and brothers who are involved in AIDS ministries and have

been forced, in some instances, to face their own conscious and/or unconscious fears. This is borne out by the words of Jim Nieckarz, a Maryknoll priest — words that express painful soul-searching and courageous admission:

> "... as I listened, and waited, I discovered my own fear of death and dying, my own fear of AIDS, my own fear of being labelled and tarred with the same brush, my own homophobia. I had been suppressing fear for over three years. Suddenly when I was able to speak the monster's name, it began to melt away. The process is still unfinished, but I am aware of my feelings and fears at a more conscious level.[6]

Perhaps until now we have been able to view the AIDS nightmare as someone else's tragedy or misfortune, but how long can we ignore its farreaching destruction? The fact that AIDS has impacted our sisters and brothers with whom we share membership in the human community, and thus, in the body of Christ, leaving that body impoverished, weakened and maimed, calls each one of us to spiritual and moral accountability.

Moral theologian, Eileen Flynn, states: "... the Church, through its preachers and teachers has the means to define and shape an attitude of concern and compassion for persons with AIDS."[7] When I read this I was reminded of the often-repeated sentiments of one of my professors, the late Father Eric Doyle, an English friar. A brilliant historian and theologian, a dynamic teacher, and an irrepressibly witty personality, Eric was, first and foremost, a vibrant Franciscan, fully alive and in touch with humanity in its truest sense. A gentle person of strong convictions on divorce themes, he spoke often with impassioned enthusiasm regarding the role of religious women and men in the Church. I could not help wondering, if he were here today, what he would have to say about our role in this crisis. The following is an excerpt from one of his theology lectures which I offer as an expansion of Dr. Flynn's promise, and also as one of the core messages of this article:

> "The vocation of religious women and men in the church involves as indispensable, an amount of self-giving demanded by this form of Christian discipleship. If we (religous) have no word for those who seek the living God, in the imperfection of human history, then where will they go? Who will give fish instead of snakes, eggs instead of scorpions, and bread instead of stones to those who are searching for peace, equality and compassion in a truly human community? To the end of time the religious life in the Church will remain the guardian of Gospel wholeness, and in each age the Church will be only as alive as her active and contemplative congregations are alive in her."[8]

It is not my intention or purpose to suggest anyone leave his/her present

ministry to commit one's self to daily, direct, hand-on care of AIDS-sufferers and their families. I do believe, however, that *whatever our primary ministry, religious women and men, we are vested with the responsibility and empowered with a measure of ability to open our hearts and minds to this crisis, and to be a strong presence of hope, healing and reconciliation for those who have AIDS and ARC, for their loved ones, and for their caregivers.*

Regarded as "the lepers of our times," they have met with every type of rejection imaginable. There are those who vociferously proclaim that AIDS patients should be banished as lepers once were banished. "The exiling of lepers is part of our Catholic past, but if we are true to the nobility and virtue which are evident in our tradition and the scientific knowledge of the twentieth century, we will not treat AIDS patients as we once treated lepers."[9]

Because AIDS is associated with stigmatized groups such as homosexuals and lesbians, intravenous drug-abusers, prostitutes and prisoners, it has spawned a secondary plague as fatal as the primary affliction: a wave of hysteria characterized by discrimination, ostracism, homophobia, prejudice and even acts of violence. The problem of discrimination and hostility is not confined to homosexuals. Healthy siblings of children with transfusion-associated AIDS have been excluded from nursery schools, and litigation in many states attests to the rejection faced by hemophiliacs with the syndrome. Also, organizations and families offering refuge to these patients have been targets of bomb threats and vandalism.[10] Recently I read of a monastery in northern California which was refused service by some members of a local volunteer fire department because two infants with AIDS were sheltered and cared for there.

At the time of diagnosis parents and siblings often face a dual discovery: the realization that their son/brother will die a difficult and premature death, and also the fact that he is homosexual. This heartbreaking revelation is, for some, impossible to face and they abandon him at a time when he is crying out for acceptance, love and encouragement. One mother of a young man who died of AIDS expresses poignantly and forcibly:

> "Daily life with AIDS does not fit into words as easily (as the clinical facts) ... it is not easy to watch your son waste away in front of your eyes. Peter's daily physical erosion was my emotional erosion. I can use words like fear, panic, despair, anger, frustration, horror and hysteria and still not describe my feelings adequately. He has the support of a loving family... they all came to visit and helped care for him, and when he died we were all around him. I have seen other AIDS parents die terrifying and lonely deaths, rejected by their families when they most needed them, merely because they are homosexual. I feel anguish for them and I am angry at their families... a son is a son, no matter what... I believe that 'gay' is a tragic misnomer."[11]

Despite the knowledge that AIDS is not spread through casual contact, there remain those who make decisions and choices which further alienate and isolate its victims. The fact that persons are well-educated and informed about the syndrome does not always erase their fears and/or prejudices. There are physicians and dentists who, despite their learning and commitment to healing, have refused to treat AIDS patients; there are nurses who have shown them coldness and indifference and given them only the absolute minimum of required care; there are dietary personnel who have left their meals on the floor outside their rooms, rather than serving them their trays personally; there are landlords who have evicted them without notice; employers who have terminated them without opportunity for discussion; there are insurance carriers who refuse them coverage; and the final atrocity, funeral directors who will not accept their bodies for embalming or burial, or if they do, overcharge grossly for their services.

Those who treat AIDS sufferers so poorly and discriminatively, and also refuse to associate with their families and caregivers, often staunchly defend their position by judgment that the syndrome is a clear sign of divine retribution. This cruel indictment is so demeaning of our gentle and merciful Lord who spoke his harshest words to the self-righteous. Rather, Jesus invited his disciples again and again to have mercy towards one another.

The Church's love and concern for the sick, which is rooted in Christ's concern for them, is expressed so naturally and graciously in the sacrament of the anointing. In the Introduction to the Rite of Anointing and Care of the Sick, the meaning of sickness and pain is drawn from the Lord's saving presence in the world: "... they (Christians) ... know that Christ loved the sick and that during his life he often looked upon the sick and healed them... Sickness, while it is closely related to man's sinful condition, cannot be considered a punishment which man suffers for his personal sins." (Jn 9:3)[12] Jesus' power over pain, sickness and disability testifies to the inauguration of the Messianic age. "The Christian — the Church — must not contribute to breaking the spirit of the sick and weakening their faith by harshness."[13]

Quite some time ago I viewed a film on AIDS in which the young man suffering from the illness stated: "The trouble with some religious people is that they think God reacts the way they do." I do not remember much else about that movie, not even its title, but his words haunted me in that they seemed to reflect his special need to be understood and welcomed

by someone representing the Church, but rather, he must have encountered disdain. Often this type of rejection, coupled with paralyzing fear, recurring guilt and demoralizing physical debilitation, render the patient so emotionally vulnerable that he/she is driven to contemplate or commit suicide.

The person with AIDS, usually in the prime of life when stricken, very often fears being totally dependent more than he fears death. The syndrome forces the patient onto a proverbial roller-coaster, bringing with it a new set of burdens daily: the fear of one's sexual orientation and/or drug habit being discovered; the fear of being misjudged as a member of one, or both, of these high risk groups; the fear of losing one's friends; the fear of disfigurement from the wasting element of the disease, or from Kaposi's sarcoma; and the fear and concern for one's parents and siblings and how they will cope with the impending suffering and death. One young man wrote:

> "Mom and dad have held me closer learning of my lifestyle and state of health, and I am so fortunate and grateful for having such wonderful parents. They truly epitomize the phenomenon called 'unconditional love.' Deep down inside I knew that their learning who the REAL ..... was would never pull us apart. Now I feel so much closer to all the family since there are no longer any secrets or hidden skeletons, and no more shame. But I am so concerned about mom and dad... they have been raised to be stoic and find it difficult to express their true feelings. My mission will be to try to uncover the heavy lid that stifles their expression. It is important to me that now, more than ever before, they are honest with their feelings and communicate them to me. And it is important to me that during this difficult time for all of us, they vocalize and express their pain, tears and joy. I don't want to be jipped out of either emotion... I don't want to be protected from the bad and the sad, for it's all integrally related to the happy and the glad."[14]

The August 10, 1987 issue of NEWSWEEK presents an incredibly personal and visually-stirring lead article, "The faces of AIDS". It is a photograhic journal of a single plague year, a gallery of 302 men, women, and children ranging in age from a child of one year to a widow of eighty-seven, with the mean age of thirty-six. Beneath each photograph is a two line summary of the person's background, and the manner in which he/she contracted HIV. "Taken together they form a mosaic portrait of the face of AIDS in America."[15] It is virtually impossible, I believe, to read and reflect on this journal, (as well as the article which follows it),[16] and remain untouched by the pain it conveys.

A sizeable majority of those shown in this story are male homosexuals which points out the significant impact of the syndrome on this particular

community. Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, in his pastoral letter to the church of Chicago, states: "It is indeed a community of grief. This grief is intensified for some because they feel alienated from the church ... With vigor and clarity we must proclaim the love of Christ and his church for every individual so that this message can be heard by members of the homosexual community and the broader community."[17]

I was involved in an encounter which, although brief, bore out vividly the pain and alienation experienced by groups of homosexuals. I met two young men on the medical center elevator seeking directions to a patient's room. The patient — (I will call him Mark) — was twenty-seven years old, tall, dark, and certainly at one time, very handsome. But now he was suffering from several AIDS-related complications which left him comatose, blind and wasted to skeletal proportions. He lay there totally unresponsive and could be mistaken easily for a corpse. His friends had travelled to New Jersey from California to visit him. After a few moments at Mark's bedside, one of the visitors came out to the corridor. When I remarked that it must be so difficult to see Mark in this condition, the young man's reply stunned me. He said, "Sister, you may not believe this, but Mark looks good in comparison to our other friends who have died, and we have lost so many to AIDS." The remainder of the conversation further reinforced the isolation and rejection often associated with the lifestyle and the illness. I asked Mark's friend if he would like to wait and see his family. His reply was gentle but deliberate: "They do not wish to meet us, and that is all right... we wanted to see Mark once again before he dies, and our plane leaves for San Francisco in a few hours." Mark died three days later.

I have looked to Francis of Assisi's life and writings for inspiration and assistance in making some sense of this tragic crisis, and also for direction in responding in a Christian manner to its devastation. I have turned to Francis, not simply because I am a Franciscan, but more purposefully because I believe that his life speaks a meaningful, (and imitable) message to the epidemic and to those who suffer from it.

Often referred to as "everyone's saint," Francis' life has influenced persons from all traditions and disciplines. He has been a model and "hero for cardinals and hippies, environmentalists, artists, peacemakers and poets."[18] What in Francis' personality attracts them? Many of his biographers point to his genuine humanity as being the source of his magnetism, a humanity that drew its life and strength from his oneness with the God-Man, Jesus. Francis did not credit himself with his ability to draw followers. In fact, he does not call attention to his leadership by using the term *followers*. Rather, as recorded in his *TESTAMENT*, he

says: "And then the Lord gave me brothers."[19] This very brief declaration speaks volumes about his recognition of God as the motivating force behind his actions, decisions and choices.

"Francis belongs to that rare group of holy men and women who become more human through their holiness. Mahatma Gandhi, Dag Hammarskjold, Helda Camara and Mother Teresa of Calcutta in our time are new examples of this same process. They all prove the principle that grace does not destroy but perfects nature."[20] The dynamic of Francis' holiness was his total commitment to the person of Jesus Christ, the most truly human being ever to have existed, and the embodiment and presence of God's love, forgiveness and mercy to all humankind.

Francis was able to look beyond weakness, neediness, imperfection and sinfulness to the person, always trying to see Christ in that person and event.

At a Pentecost Chapter in Assisi, Francis spoke words to his friars that are astonishingly timely, vital and valid in the face of the AIDS crisis, and which, I believe, encircle all the stages and dimensions of its pain:

> "Since you speak of peace, all the more so must you have it in your hearts. Let none be provoked to anger and scandal by you, but rather may they be drawn to peace and good will, to benignity and concord through gentleness. We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way. Many who seem to be children of the Devil will still become Christ's disciples."[21]

This passage re-echoes, for me, the proclamation of the Messianic era (Is. 61:1-11) and also captures the essential spirit of reconciliation and evangelization that should characterize our lives and ministries. I believe, too, that it offers several applicable parallels to the present AIDS situation, and that these are evident in the reflections that follow. I invite you to ponder these words with me, line by line. It is my hope that, given your individual gifts and imaginative powers, as well as the unique operation of the Spirit within you, these reflections will awaken further inspiration in the heart of each of you.

Since you speak of peace, all the more so must you have it in your hearts.

Francis recognized that words, to have true meaning, must flow from a sincere heart and also be fruitful of appropriate deeds. (Mt 7:16-18) Although his sensitivity to others showed definite preference for the lowly and outcast of medieval times, he remained open, and at home, with all people. "He went unhesitatingly to Pope Innocent, became Cardinal Ugolino's friend, and crossed the Mediterranean to bring the Good News to the Sultan of Egypt, whose respect he won by his own great nobility of spirit."[22] His relationships and communications were always conducted under the sign and greeting of peace: "God give you peace." However, this greeting was not, for him, simply a rubrical gesture. He gave his salutation its full biblical and evangelical significance in that the peace he desired for each and all is "the divine favor, forgiveness, a return to grace, the recovery of divine friendship: in short, a complete reconciliation with God."[23]

A firm believer that peace in one's own family is the direct result of deep inner peace, and the indispensable condition of making peace with those outside the family, and among nations, Francis saved the best of himself, so to speak, for his brother friars. He reached out to each one with reverent care and patient tolerance for their individual history and uniqueness. To paraphrase Chesterton, Francis saw not the mob but the man. He "wittingly... recreated the type of warm, compassionate Christian community that existed in the church during the time of the apostles. To a thirteenth century Church grown cold... he restored the appealing concept of caring community."[24] Francis was able to look beyond weakness, neediness, imperfection and sinfulness to the person, always trying to see Christ in that person and event.

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 gentleness.

"Francis demonstrated with his life that, to be a saint, it is necessary to be human. And to be human, it is necessary to be sensitive and gentle."[25] Thus his gentleness was a far cry from sentimentality, lack of conviction, or self-centered subjectivity. His was an other-centered gentleness nurtured by his inner strength and his constant struggle to embrace the shadows in his own life. He was not without failure in taming his anger and his tendency towards eruption of that anger. So that "he was not non-violent out of impotence."[26] Rather, his gentleness, non-violence and lack of condemnation were the fruits of his desire to situate himself in the dynamics of Gospel values and choices. Like Jesus, he was a bearer of goodness, magnanimity and mercy, rather than malice, selfishness, accusation or any other forms of control, manipulation or oppression.

There is not one of us, I am sure, who has not been provoked to frustration, hurt and rage by an experience of feeling personally demeaned, or by our compassion for those who suffer alienation, rejection or persecution on a wider scale. Francis, in these or similar situations, emerges as one who frees his sisters and brothers in Christ from this pain and suffering through his reverence and care for them, the source of which is, again, his rootedness in the person of Jesus, the Suffering Servant.

We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way.

The finer you tune an instrument, the more delicate it must of necessity be. The more sensitive a person is, then, the more will that person usually suffer physically, psychologically and spiritually. Francis was no stranger to suffering in any of its guises. During his lifetime he had experienced setbacks and desertions, betrayals and isolation, as well as both physical and emotional illness.

The son of Pica and Pietro Bernardone, a cloth merchant, Francis interpreted literally the Lord's command to him: "Go and repair my Church," and began to restore half-ruined churches around Assisi. His father, extremely infuriated that his son was squandering his hardearned money on dilapidated churches, and dismayed at the change that had come over Francis, summoned him to appear before a civil court. But Francis appealed to the Bishop of Assisi. In the public square there, in the presence of the Bishop, his parents, and a crowd of townspeople, he renounced his father and stripped himself of his clothing, in so doing declaring to the crowd that he was beginning a new life, a life in which God was to be his father. In the words of another Franciscan, Murray Bodo:

> "Francis *is* the son of Pietro Bernardone, and no decision to call only God his father can change that. The placid son of God is also the volcanic son of Bernardone... neither man is given to hesitation and timidity, neither is guarded of his feelings; both are dramatic, violent men... a whole other story is contained in his relationship with his father and the ineffectiveness of his mother's place between them. Everything that Francis' mother and/or father did for him only left him feeling emotionally abandoned by them. His mother was too weak to provide a buffer between Francis and his father's wrath, and his father refused to listen or even try to understand. All Pietro could do was curse, and all Francis could do was counterattack with rejection... It is not hatred that moves Pietro to curse his son, but love. Because he is not open to anything but his own image of what his son should be and his own plans for him, he is filled with frustration and rage that Francis, in becoming his own man, in growing up, as he should, is bringing shame on his father who loves him. Pietro has been publicly disgraced by his son's behavior, and he cannot understand how Francis could do this to him. Francis, for his part, sees how imprisoned his father is by respectability and the need to preserve appearances at all costs... In rejecting his earthly father Francis simultaneously embraces his heavenly Father, thus escaping the terrible trauma of complete alienation, of not belonging anywhere, of being alone. Francis' new identity comes from God."[27]

There is no historic evidence that Francis ever was reconciled with his father after the dramatic scene of public renunciation. This must have been one of the most, if not the most, exquisitely painful areas in his lifetime.

Francis never enjoyed robust health. Throughout the year 1224 he endured a long, debilitating and depressing illness which at times, painted a picture of behavior akin to madness; he was misunderstood and alienated by a group of his brothers who wished to break away from him and from his ideals; and he struggled again and again with his own temptations, to the point, at times of doubting the Lord's call.

These personal experiences of suffering sensitized Francis to all types of human frailty and it was thus that he believed that "the evangelical brotherhood had to reflect the tenderness of God for all those whom life maltreats. That is why he inserted in his rule: 'Whosoever will come to the brothers, friend or foe, thief or brigand, let him be received with kindness.' "[28] Is it any wonder, then, that he challenged his friars to heal the sick, to bind the bruised, and to reclaim the erring?

Many who seem to be called children of the Devil will still become Christ's disciples.

An exceedingly fastidious person, Francis abhorred those miserable outcasts of medieval society, the lepers. Their affliction was viewed to be related to their sinfulness, and thus they were judged to be suffering what they deserved. Because of this they were exiled to hovels outside the city gates. Francis found the sight of lepers repulsive and nauseating and just the thought of coming face to face with them terrorized him. He tells us in his *TESTAMENT:*

> "This is how the Lord granted to me, Brother Francis, to start out on a life of penance: When I was in sin, I found it an exceedingly bitter sight to see lepers. Then the Lord himself brought me among them and I treated them with compassion. When I came away from them, what I had found bitter was changed to sweetness of soul and body."[29]

One of the most popular and frequently recounted stories about Francis is his encounter with and embrace of a leper. While riding near Assisi

he came upon a leper standing in the road. He dismounted, went over to the leper and kissed him. Then, having mounted his horse again, he turned to bid him farewell, as he rode away, but the leper had disappeared.

There have been countless and diverse interpretations of what truly happened when Francis, contrary to all his former behavior and inner disposition, embraced the leper. Some choose the more obvious moral: "The leper was Christ... and he learned at first hand that what is done to the least, the outcast, the most despised, is done also to Christ."[30] Others believe that Francis was healed in this incident, rather than the leper, and that the leper was the enfleshment of the Gospel challenge, for him, and therefore the minister of God's grace.[31] Whatever the interpretation I believe that this change in Francis'attitude towards lepers is among the greatest victories of grace in his life, requiring that he overcome not only his physical loathing and overwhelming fear of the leper, but also that he overcome (and embrace) whatever he loathed and feared in himself. And Francis' own words, as spoken and cited above from his *TESTAMENT*, make it clear, without a shadow of a doubt, that it was the Lord who brought him among the lepers, and I believe it was the Lord who changed what he had formerly found bitter into sweetness "of soul *and* body".

There is another story about Francis, not so widely known, which points out his lack of condemnation and judgment. It takes place within the context of Stephen of Bourbon's account of a visit Francis once made ot Lombardy:

> "Being in a district where a local priest was living with a woman, he was asked by a strict Manichaen christian: 'If a priest keeps a concubine and so stains his hands, do we have to believe in his teaching and respect the sacraments he administers?' Instead of replying, Francis went directly to the priest's home and he said:[32]
>
> > 'I do not really know whether these hands are stained as the other man claims they are. In any case, I do know that even if they are, this in no way lessens the power and efficacy of the sacraments of God... that is why I kiss them out of respect for what they administer and out of respect for Him who delegated his authority to them.' "[33]

Father Eric Doyle describes this incident as "one of the most wonderful stories ever related about a holy man in the history of any religion."[34] Francis, a passionate man, was motivated by his self-knowledge of those strong passions, to reach out with delicate compassion to the accused priest. Father Eric continues:

> "We would admire him if he had refused to make any comment; we would be impressed if he had gently reminded the questioner not to judge, so that he would not be judged himself. But there is much more here than this, far more, in fact, than tolerance or forbearance. Francis' reaction was entirely positive. He looked for what was obviously good in the man, found it and emphasized that. What he did shows that Francis was utterly without self-righteousness."[35]

Both these stories portray Francis' embracing the *apparently sinful*. And both stories point out vividly his cognizance that Jesus could only be found in the *living flesh* of his sisters and brothers, thus he situated himself on these two occasions, and several others, in contact with all "lepers," whether in body or social condition. Like Jesus, he understood so keenly that whatever our "age, gender, race, vocation in life, place of residence, or sexual orientation,"[36] we all, at some time in our lives, miss the mark and make less than the better choice. But, so in touch with Lord's tenderness and mercy, Francis had no doubt that even those who *appear* doomed to eternal punishment, would, in fact, be invited by Jesus to share his Dwelling Place. Thus it was, that the "Sun of Assisi," as Dante named him, made the face of Christ appear as a beacon illumining the way and rescuing those who were lost and struggling painfully to find the way in the darkness of despair.

Does not Francis' Pentecost plea turn brokenness into wholeness, alienation into reconciliation, stigmatization into mercy, and self-righteous judgment into an assurance of salvation? And if this message was operative in us, would it not illume the way for many afflicted by the AIDS pandemic? "The death of Francis was not the death of his inspiration or his charism."[37] Hopefully they are alive in us, and in the Church, by the operation of the Spirit within us. Hopefully we reflect Francis' strength — a strength that was at the very heart of his gentleness. Yes, I truly believe that Francis' Pentecost invitation to his friars — *and to each of us* — if heard and heeded, possesses a strength capable of giving *life* to a new AIDS acronym: *A*n *I*nvitation to *D*iminish *S*uffering! Will you accept the invitation? □

Endnotes

[1]Donald C. Drake and Loretta Tovani, "AIDS: A Day With a Global Killer," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 22, 1987, 1-A.

[2]Tom Morganthou, "The AIDS Epidemic: Future Shock," *Newsweek*, November 24, 1986, 39.

[3]*Ibid*.

[4]"We must Examine Our Own Prejudices," *Catholic Health World*, November 1, 1987, 3:21, 9.

[5]Jean-Marie Ake, RN, MA, CNA and Lori M. Perlstein, RN, MA, CGRN, "AIDS: Impact on Neuroscience Nursing Practice," *Journal of Neuroscience Nursing*, December 1987, 19:6, 303.

[6]Jim Nieckarz, M.M., "What We Must Learn From AIDS: Our Fragile Brothers," *Commonweal*, July 12, 1985, CXII:13, 405-6.

[7]Eileen P. Flynn, *AIDS, a Catholic Call for Compassion*, Sheed & Ward, 1985, 91.

[8]Excerpted from a theology lecture presented by Eric Doyle, O.F.M., given on July 15, 1977 at St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, New York.

[9]Eileen P. Flynn, *Ibid.*, 59.

[10]Chwee Lye Chng and William Meyer Roddy, "Ethical Implications: Screening for and Treatment of AIDS," *Health Education*, August/September 1987, 4.

[11]Barbara Peabody, "Living With AIDS: A Mother's Perspective," **American Journal of Nursing**, January 1986, 46.

[12]Eric Doyle, O.F.M., *St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood*, Seabury Press, New York, 1981, 148.

[13]The Most Reverend John R. Quinn, "The AIDS Crisis: A Pastoral Response," *America*, June 21-28, 1986, 154:24, 504.

[14]Excerpts quoted, with permission, from a personal letter to Victoria Masterpaul, O.S.F., author of this article.

[15]Peter Goldman, "The Face of AIDS, *Newsweek*, August 10, 1987, 22.

[16]James Hurley, "I'm Dying — AIDS Is Your Problem Now," *Ibid.*, 38-39.

[17]Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, "The Church's Response to the AIDS Crisis," *Pastoral Letter to the Church of Chicago*, October 1986.

[18]Roy Gasnick, O.F.M., "Francis of Assisi's Advice on Rebuilding Today's Church," *Catholic Update: Special Issue Marking 800th Birthday of St. Francis of Assisi*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1981, 1.

[19]*Ibid.*

[20]Eric Doyle, O.F.M., *St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood*, Seabury Press, New York, 1981, 34.

[21]"Legend of the Three Companions," *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis* (hereafter referred to as *Omnibus of Sources)*, ed. Marion Habig, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1973, 1601-02.

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[23]*Ibid.*, 165.

[24]Roy Gasnick, *Ibid.*, 2.

[25]Leonardo Boff, *St. Francis: A Model for Human Liberation*, Crossroad, New York, 1984, 19.

[26]Bertrand Duclos, O.F.M., "Francis, Image of Christ," *Concilium*, T. & T. Clark Ltd., Edinburgh & Seabury Press, New York, 49:9, 1981, 52.

[27]Murray Bodo, O.F.M., *The Way of St. Francis: The Challenge of Franciscan Spirituality for Everyone*, Image Books, Division of Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1985, 55-58.

[28]Bertrand Duclos, O.F.M., *Ibid.*, 51.

[29]*The Rule and Testament of St. Francis of Assisi*, A Translation with an Introduction by Eric Doyle, O.F.M., Canterbury, 1974, 47.

[30]Eric Doyle, *St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood*, Seabury Press, New York, 1981, 11.

[31]Jay Pinkerton, O.F.M. and Marie Puleo, O.S.F., Co-Directors of Lazzaro Center, Excerpted from Letter of Co-Directors, *The Pilgrim: The Newsletter of Lazzaro Center*, Vol. 1:1, Advent 1987, 3-4.

[32]Eric Doyle, O.F.M., *Ibid.*, 18.

[33]*Omnibus of Sources*, 1605-06.

[34]Eric Doyle, O.F.M., *Ibid.*

[35]*Ibid.*

[36]Reference to Victoria Masterpaul's words on first page of this article, *AIDS: An Invitation to Diminish Suffering*.

[37]*Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis*, Approved on December 18, 1982, Commentary on Article 32, 55.

Thoughts of a Pilgrim

Why this journey filled with strangers, tongues,
tastes unfamiliar to my midwestern palate? Why come
so far and for what purpose? Pilgrim, what seekest thou?

Signore — Gesu! Christo — You, I seek. Knowing not the
way, I cling to Francis, Clare, and those who follow them.
Visiting shrines, caves, sanctuaries, holy mountains,
I reach back into the centuries and touch the places
hallowed by those who passed before.

Lovingly cared for, reverenced, filled with holy memories,
these Italian by-ways elicit faith and new commitment.
Each segment of the journey reaches deeply into the
recesses of my heart and fans anew the fire that
lies smoldering there.

Grazie!!!

M. Lonan Reilly, OSF

Conversion with our Sister, Mother Earth

MARGARET PIRKL, O.S.F.

"Conversion witht the earth" ... what does it mean? Conversion for the sake of the earth would be easier to explore. Yet the title as it stands sugggests the earth's influence on us and her involvement in our "turning" or "changing." That point, I submit, is important for us Franciscans.

Everyone of us, at one time or another, has stood transfixed at the sight of a glorious sunrise and received a surge of strength and light for the day. Or we have heard the storm wind high in the trees and felt connected with the deepest forces of the universe within and without. We have drawn in a breath of surprise and delight at the rich color of an autumn maple leaf gracing our path or at the fragile beauty of a single snowflake caught on our dark coat sleeve. We have all experienced the earth in moments like these, moments of recognition and union. We have spoken beautiful words and created moving prayer services around earth themes. Since summer 1988, we have witnessed enormous media coverage of environmental problems. Yet, as a species, we humans, capable of knowing union with the earth, have moved forward with industrial technology and lifestyles that are harming the planet, sometimes irreversibly. Even though we love the earth and we acknowledge that her predicament is deteriorating to a dangerous degree, we seem unable to change. Why?

Fidelity to our experience of earth is integral to our conversion with earth and it helps us to live well in the present and to choose wisely for the future. Particularly relevant for the unfolding of this statement are the attitude of Francis of Assisi toward earth and its implications for us

Margaret Pirkl, O.S.F., is a member of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Rochester, Minnesota. She is especially concerned with our religious responsibility for the earth's future. Coming to this concern from the academic area of physical science and from a deep love of the Franciscan tradition, she believes that we hold an irreplaceable gift for our age in Francis' attitude toward earth.

in the present-day ecological crisis. Consideration of Francis' relation to our Sister, mother Earth, will help us to learn from our planet and respond to her in ways conducive to both her health and ours.

Francis' attitude toward earth's creatures has been universally acknowledged as unique in its compassion, emotion, sensitivity, and courtesy because it was basically a loving attitude of a brother toward his brothers and sisters. In his spiritual journey, Francis' conversion both affected his attitude toward all creatures and was affected by them. We have abundant evidence that in minority and fraternal love he, more than most, experienced mutuality in his conversion with all members of the earth family. Flowers, lamb, robbers, swallows, cricket — all were "Brother" and "Sister" to him.[1]

Francis' "Canticle of Creatures" reflects an attitude that came from a well-integrated recognition of his own creaturehood, had its basis in deep union with all of creation, and saw human beings as part of the earth family, not separate from it. This attitude, which I claim was different from one of stewardship, permeates the Canticle. Francis' relationships with creatures sprang from a mutuality that had to do with giving and receiving at the same level. He talked to them about God, they talked to him about God; he taught them about simplicity, they taught him about simplicity; he freed them, they freed him. This was something quite different from caring for something he dominated. He seemed to know creatures directly; his contemplative soul recognized them and enabled them to recognize him. Thomas of Celano's description holds a key to understanding this mutuality:

> [Francis] called all creatures *brother* [or *sister*], and in a most extraordinary manner, a manner never experienced by others, he discerned the hidden things of nature with his sensitive heart, as one who had already escaped into *the freedom of the glory of the [children] of God.*[2]

Francis' great love for God spilled over into his relationship with creatures not only because he saw them as gifts from a loving Creator but also because he perceived their intrinsic worth and sacredness. The Canticle is an integration of praise of Creator and praise of creature. "Praised be you, My Lord, through Brother Wind, through Sister Water, through Brother Fire, through our Sister, Mother Earth. ..."[3] His insight into creatures as good in themselves enhanced and was enhanced in a profound way by his deep love of Jesus. Francis was overwhelmed with gratitude when he reflected on the Architect of Earth becoming a Child of Earth, and he knew well that this mystery made holy everything of earth. I believe Francis had special entrance into the mystery that links the crucified and risen Jesus and the incarnate Logos, the creative Word. It

is possible the main reason Francis was fascinated with Brother Fire, Sister Lark, and Sister Water and saw each as a revelation of the Divine was his personal experience of its Designer present in his heart. Francis understood in a unique way that only in this formative presence can the creature be what it is. As a mystic, Francis knew firsthand that "Christ is the first-born of all creatures" (Col 1:15b) and that "Christ fills the universe in all its parts" (Eph 1:23). His intimate love for Jesus the Christ and his affectionate love for individual creatures were as one. We cannot separate out the one without doing violence to the other. It is this union of loves which Max Scheler, in his important book, *The Nature of Sympathy,* saw realized in Francis — the coming together of a "non-cosmic personal love of Jesus" and an "animistic sense of union with the being of nature."[4] In response to those who ask why Francis was not considered a pantheist, Scheler says:

> In this sense [of Nature being a manifestation of God's glory], even for [St. Francis], Nature is not an immediate object of identification with a life universal either dissevered from God as Spirit, or actually equated with Him...; for Nature itself is but a symbol and a parable, as the "Hymn to the Sun" makes sufficiently clear.[5]

I believe anthropologist Loren Eiseley experienced a bit of what Francis enjoyed. After a night of wakeful searching for a miracle of meaning, Eiseley found himself face to face on the seashore with a baby fox who had not learned to fear:

> Yet here was... the wide-eyed, innocent fox inviting me to play, with the innate courtesy of its two forepaws placed appealingly together, along with a mock shake of the head. The universe was swinging in some fantastic fashion around to present its face, and the face was so small that the universe itself was laughing.
>
> It was not a time for human dignity. It was a time only for the careful observance of amenities written behind the stars. Gravely I arranged my forepaws while the puppy whimpered with ill-concealed excitement. I drew the breath of a fox's den into my nostrils. On impulse, I picked up clumsily a whiter bone and shook it in teeth that had not entirely forgotten their original purpose. Round and round we tumbled for one exstatic moment. We were the innocent thing in the midst of the bones, born in the egg, born in the den, born in the dark cave. ...
>
> ... I had seen my miracle. I had seen the universe as it begins for all things. It was, in reality, a child's universe, a tiny and laughing universe. ...[6]

Is it true that for the one who identifies as a member of the earth family almost anything can happen? "... Unless you become as little children..."

Eiseley's experience, his miracle, came about because of his sincere sense of mutuality with the little fox. In this, it was a Francis-like experience. Was it a case for conversion with the earth? I think it was because both Eiseley and the fox moved toward the freedom and meaning for which all creatures are waiting (Rom 8).

Even though we may not dare hope for such high degree of mutuality in freedom, we can know that our sister, Mother Earth, is teaching us and calling us through our experience of both her gifts and her suffering. If we truly see and hear her and are faithful to what we see and hear, we will change, we will know conversion with her. Examples of balance, moderation, community, self-education, and self-healing abound in her structures and her processes.

Consider, for example, Brother Beaver working out of his instincts. If his home becomes uninhabitable, he will build a dam rather than find a deeper water hole elsewhere so that he does not disturb a part of the wilderness hitherto untouched. He laboriously hauls logs over great distances so that he neither interferes with his food source and the immediate landscape nor endangers his home site by erosion due to absence of trees. Rather than cutting down trees indiscriminately, the beaver selects trees in a way that does not upset the balance of nature.

How about humans? When one home becomes unsuitable we abandon it for another. Cost-efficiency and labor-saving are criteria which govern much of economic development. And we often drain our natural resources to the last dregs. It seems obvious that the earth's way in Brother Beaver is relevant to us today.

Another member of earth's family who invites us to turn to her way is Sister Alder Tree. Alders fix nitrogen by means of their roots, as much as 175 pounds of nitrogen per acre per year. Through networking of roots, they provide fertilizer not only for themselves but also for adjacent trees (not always alders) and other plants. Underground root connections stabilize trees and help to prevent their being blown over; they also allow water and nutrients to move to the individual tree in most need, as if out of a sense of community. Alders contradict the general notion that plants are self-serving, independent, and competitive when it comes to survival. They provide convincing evidence that plants can live out cooperation in community by supporting, feeding, and helping each other.[7] Sister Alder's call to conversion with her is gentle: where there is isolation put community and where there is competition put collaboration.

Incentives to change also come from our experience of the earth's travail. Not only are the ways of Brother Beaver and Sister Alder endangered but the very existence of these creatures is threatened. For the

first time in human history we are affecting the planet as a whole in a destructive way. We are literally changing her chemistry, upsetting delicately balanced systems, extinguishing species — all at rates to which earth's myriad families cannot adjust quickly enough to insure their survival. Earth is letting us know that the entire geosphere, the biosphere, and humankind are moving together toward much more serious trouble than most of us know now. Some populations have come to experience the extremes. Worldwatch Institute estimates that already 10 million persons, "environmental refugees," are fleeing from lands no longer habitable.[8] While scientists do not claim the ability to predict exactly what will happen on a large scale if present patterns continue, they do offer some astounding and sobering trends.

We humans are harming Brother Air. The fragile ozone "layer," about three kilometers thick at altitudes of 12 to 25 kilometers, is actually composed of only six to seven molecules per million air molecules; yet, this bit protects humans, animals and plants from harmful ultraviolet solar radiation. Due to certain chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), widely used in foam insulation and packaging, coolants and solvents, ozone is depleted to an alarming degree; at times the "hole" in the ozone layer over Antarctica exceeds the area of North America. Ozone depletion caused by CFCs near the earth at present probably will not be detected for another six to seven years. As we reflect on the data, shall we muster the will to change so that we do not disrupt further Brother Air's ordered ways and cause harm to ourselves and others? If ten million persons in the United States sought out biodegradable foam cups or paper cups made for hot beverages, they would contribute significantly to ozone's survival and to the health of all on earth.

We humans are violating Sister Water. Precious groundwater comes from springs and wells to quench our thirst, to cleanse, to share its transparency and lowliness. Up to the present age our planet's water cycle involving land, sea, and air has kept a balance; it has renewed and purified earth's fresh water supply by providing rainwater that moves to replenish the aquifers after filtering through overlying earth. Now hundreds of millions of tons of poisons are yearly making their way through soil and rocks to violate this groundwater. In some cases over many years, they enter even the deepest major aquifers. Herbicides, pesticides, industrial toxic wastes, household wastes, seepage from landfills, ashes from waste incinerators — all contribute to invisible deadly contamination of the gift Francis once called precious and pure.

In 1984, the Worldwatch Institute indicated that if overall water pollution is not reduced or adequately treated it could make a fourth of the

Francis' relationships with creatures sprang from a mutuality that had to do with giving and receiving at the same level.

world's supply unsafe by the year 2000.[9] This projection is in itself a call to change. We hear the call of Sister Water in aquifers and lakes and rivers as well as in the living creatures deprived of safe drinking water. Can we respond by conversion with her and participate in her patient purifying processes by refusing to contribute to toxic wastes and by not using lawn fertilizers that poison her?

We humans are enraging Brother Fire. Fire in the quiet form of heat is useful and necessary in moderate amounts and in natural balance and is healthful to living creatures. However, an extreme of too much or too little upsets natural processes and life patterns. Although controversial in the minds of some experts, today's question of the greenhouse effect and possible resulting climate changes became very real to millions in the sizzling dry days of summer 1988. As a very result, more of us have become familiar with some of the facts related to global warming: the five warmest years of this century have occurred in the last decade; the agent most responsible for warming of the atmosphere is carbon dioxide (CO_2); the two chief sources of CO_2 are the burning of fossil fuels and the removal of forests which use CO_2 for photosynthesis; the level of this heat-absorbing gas is increasing in the lower atmosphere in an unnatural way.

Very small variations in the earth's average temperature over a relatively short time cause a large-scale disruption of the existing conditions.

> A temperature increase of 1 degree Celsius per decade in mid- to upper [north] latitudes translates into a shift in vegetation zones of 60 - 100 miles northward. Terrestrial ecosystems cannot migrate that fast. ... Biological diversity, already being reduced by various human activities, may be one of the chief casualties of global warming.[10]

Another consequence of temperature increase is the rising level of the seas as glaciers and polar ice caps melt. Some say the level could rise by as much as a meter if the earth's average temperature increases by 3 degrees Celsius by the middle of the next century (a reasonable forecast if present air pollution continues); this would cause catastrophic flooding of low-lying lands adjacent to the oceans and seas.

We are challenged to hear this warning from Brother Fire and take action at a rate sufficient to ward off major global catastrophe. Are we willing to carpool, to use mass transit, to move toward an alternative to our petroleum economy?

We humans are raping our Sister, Mother Earth. In return for giving us life, security, nourishment, and growth, our earth is suffering terrible violence at our hands. The rapid destruction of rain forests is one example of unabating abuse, due largely to a widespread attitude of domination on the part of us humans.[11] Last April, Brazil announced measures intended to slow the destruction of its Amazon forest. Presently, however, in the name of development, about 75,000 square miles of tropical trees are cleared every year — an area almost the size of Kansas. At this rate, the earth's rain forests will be gone in thirty to forty years. And with them will go millions of exquisite creatures, most of whom we will not have the opportunity to know. The habitats of nearly half of all plants and animals, known and unknown, are being bulldozed or burned. These are the most diverse ecosystems on earth, coming from billions of years of evolution, and humans are presuming the right to do away with them in a few decades.

How urgent is earth's plea for our response! In the face of so much death, can we have the will for hope? Can we "choose life that we and our descendants may live"? (Dt:30:19) For the sake of our children, as well as for the sake of exquisite creatures we may never know, can we take action to save the forests? As citizens we might urge our elected officials to support life-giving international efforts toward alleviating destruction of forests everywhere. In this country, are we wlling to save trees by cooperative efforts in recycling paper? The typical family can preserve a healthy medium-sized tree by the paper it saves for recycling over three months or less.

God comes close to us through our memories of perhaps very few unitive moments with the Divine; what is expected of us is fidelity to the memory of those moments. We are being asked to live in right relationship with all creatures and their irreplaceable revelation of the Divine and to be faithful to our experience by remembering. As we hear the call from earth to conversion with her in her gifts and hear God through her, I believe our first response is to be one of wondering and remembering. A few years ago, Garrison Keillor said, "Caring about the world does not begin with fear or morbidity, but with fascination." Learning how we might change according to the earth's ways requires first that we watch her ways and marvel at them, that we hear her music and revel and dance in it, that we sense her sacredness and reverence it. Whether it be in

snowflake or crocus, in lazy summer clouds or spiral conch or brilliant autumn maple, earth in her beautiful creatures is cause for celebration, awe, and joy — in us as it was in Francis. Whether it be in Brother Beaver or Sister Alder, Brother Wind or Sister Water, earth is patient teacher for us, her children, inviting us to live as part of her family according to her natural rhythms.

In the present suffering of our Sister, Mother Earth, however, we hear a call to conversion with her that is more than a gentle invitation. Thomas Berry says it well:

> What is clear is that the earth is mandating that the human community assume a responsibility never assigned to any previous generation. ... In its prior period the earth acted independently as the complete controlling principle; only limited control over existence was assigned to ourselves. Now the Earth insists that we accept greater responsibility, a responsibility commensurate with the greater knowledge communicated to us.[12]

Accepting greater responsibility means changing our lifestyle. To change a lifestyle is difficult. We all participate in our society's wasteful ways more than we care to admit. And we need help to bring together in our lives the profound and the ordinary, the theoretical and the practical, the mystical and the mundane, the prayer and the action. Tapping the treasure we have in Francis' life will provide that help.

If Francis were here today, aware that we human creatures are injuring our home, our planet, sometimes to the point of irreversible damage, I believe he would find creative and loving but uncompromising ways of insisting on our ecological conversion, conversion with Sister Earth, which is a call to serve God by living in union with God's creation. Our will to act is crucial; it is the test of faithfulness to what our remembering hearts dictate out of our experience of earth, our experience of Francis, and our experience of God. We can almost hear Francis saying, "Let us begin, for up to now we have done very little."[13] □

Endnotes

[1]See *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. Marion Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972): LP 51, 1C 77-79, LP 90, 1C 59, LP 84, and others.

[2]1C 81.

[3]See the "Omnibus", p. 130, n. 1, and *Francis and Clare: Complete Works*, trans. Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., and Ignatius Brady, OFM (Ramsey, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1982), p. 38, n. 5.

[4]Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy* (London: Routledge & Degan Paul, Ltd., 1954), p 87.

[5]Scheler, p. 89.

[6]Loren Eiseley, "The Innocent Fox," in *The Unexpected Universe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1969), pp. 210-11.

[7]Robert Swain, "Notes from the radical Undergorund," *World Monitor*, November 1988, pp. 16-18.

[8]Jodi L. Jacobson, *Environmental Refugees: a Yardstick of Habitability*, Worldwatch Paper 86 (Washington, D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, November, 1988), p. 6.

[9]Sandra Postel, *Water: Rethinking Management in an Age of Scarcity*, Worldwatch Paper 62 (Washington, D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, December 1984), p. 19. The scarcity of water in large sections of Asia and Africa due to topography and climate can in some places be called a water famine due to natural causes. Major aspects of this problem are separate from the mismanagement resulting in water pollution. See pp. 6-11 in this Worldwatch Paper.

[10]*State of the World 1989: a Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress toward a Sustainable Society*, ed. Lester Brown and others (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989), p. 10.

[11]As is often the case in "development," the poor and the indigenous suffer because of deforestation, either because their own livelihood is wiped out by "economic progress" or because the land they clear for growing food quickly is eroded or loses valuable nutrients. Generally, these people know how to promote forest renewability even as they use the trees. To treat the relationship betweeen the poor and today's ecological problems would require another article. Here, I refer you to: Alan B. Durning, *Action at the Grassroots: Fighting Poverty and Environmental Decline*, Worldwatch Paper 88 (Washington D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, January 1989).

[12]Thomas Berry, "The Ecological Age," *Earthscape: Transitions toward World Order*," Whole Earth paper 12, Global education Associates, East Orange, New Jersey, 1979), p. 11. This essay also appears in Berry's *Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), pp. 36 - 49.

[13]LM IV, 1 (adaptation).

Book Reviews

Harper's Bible Commentary. Edited by James L. Mays *et al*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988. Pp. 1344. Cloth, thumb-indexed, $34.95.

Reviewed by Bonaventure F. Hayes, O.F.M., S.T.L., M.L.S. Assistant Professor of Sacred Scripture and Library Director, Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora, NY.

Anyone who wants an in-depth commentary on a particular passage of Scripture knows better — or, at least, ought to know better — than to turn to a one-volume commentary on the whole Bible. Yet one-volume commentaries on the Bible serve many legitimate needs, e.g., getting the general sense of a passage or an idea for preaching or preparing to lead a Bible discussion group. *Harper's Bible Commentary* (HBC) is such commentary and as fine an exemplar of this genre in English as this reviewer has yet seen.

HBC is a composite work by more than eighty members of the Society of Biblical Literature, the principal association of biblical scholars in North America. The editors have chosen the authors well and have evidently given them great leeway in going about their task. HBC was planned and written as a complement to the one-volume *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (to which there are numerous cross references), published a couple of years back; therefore, the reader should not expect to find a multiplicity of thematic essays on biblical themes alongside the introduction to and commentary on the various books of the Bible here in contradistinction, for example, to the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* (which, by the way, is in the process of revision with publication of the revised edition projected for late 1990). This does not mean, however, that there are no appended essays in the HBC. There are, in fact, several. Five longer essays at the beginning of the volume deal with the theory and history of biblical interpretation, the literary and historical contexts of the biblical writings, and the biblical writings in the context of the communities that accepted them as sacred writings. The biblical books are divided (not, it seems to this reviewer, totally satisfactorily) into seven groupings, and each of these has an introductory essay, most of which concentrate on matters of literary interest. Finally, the individual commentators were allowed to insert excurses in the form of brief essays in the midst of their commentaries; there are nearly three dozen of these rather unevenly strewn throughout (e.g., eight in Jeremiah, but none in Exekiel; four in Matthew, but none in John). In additional, these 1344 pages contain a small biblical atlas and gazeteer, black-and-white as well as colored photos, tables, charts, diagrams, and brief — perhaps, too brief — bibliographies at the end of each essay and commentary.

It is important to note that the commentary sections do not contain a verse-by-verse commentary, but focus rather on the text passage-by-passage. For a commentary of this size, scope, and purpose this is undoubtedly a decided

plus: there is no undue atomization of the text where the forest gets lost for the trees. The commentator on the Song of Songs, however, has forsaken even a passage-by-passage approach and has put in its place a three-page discussion of poetic types, themes, motifs, contexts and interrelationships. This strikes this reviewer as hardly adequate in a commentary even of this limited scope.

As in the case of the excurses, the introductions to the individual biblical books vary considerably in length and subject matter, some barely adequate (e. g., Matthew), others quite well done (e. g., Romans and I Corinthians). Having spot-checked much of the commentary for those books of the Bible he is more familiar with, this reviewer found no glaring inadequacies and much that was genuinely illuminating and stimulating (cf., e.g., the commentary on Acts). The approach of the various commentators and the quality of their contributions vary considerably, as is to be expected in a composite work such as this.

This volume is not aimed at the biblical scholar, but rather the educated 'lay' reader; teachers of scriptures, nevertheless, can learn much from it as well. At its very reasonable price one can hardly afford not to buy it — provided one has a genuine need for such a volume.

Books Received

Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap. Regis. Ed. & Translator. *Clare of Assisi*. Early Documents. New York, Paulist Press, 1988. Pp. 345, inc. Indices and Bibliography. Paper, $12.95.

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Byrne, Dom Francis. *The Narrow Gate: Aspects of Prayer, People of Prayer*. Spectrum, Ltd., 1987. Richmond, Australia. Distributed by Meyer, Stone and Company, Bloomington, IN. Pp. ii-87. Paper, $8.95.

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Endoes, Richard. *AD 1000: Living on the Brink of the Apocalypse*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xvi-228, inc. Bibliography & Index. Cloth, $19.95.

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Gilles, Anthony E. *The People of Hope: The Story Behind the Modern Church*. Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1988. Pp. xvii-205, including Index. Paper, $7.95.

Green, Garrett. *Imagining God: Theology & the Religious Imagination*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. x-179, including Indices. Cloth, $22.95.

Hanson, Paul D. *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. xi-564, including Indices and Bibliography. Paper, $18.95. This is a paperback edition of a work reviewed in **The Cord,** Vol. 37, (1987), pp. 188-89.

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Jones, Alan. *Passion for Pilgrimage: Notes for the Journey Home, Meditations on the Easter Mystery*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. x-187. Cloth, $15.95.

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King, Martin Luther, Jr. *Trumpet of Conscience*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. Pp. xii-78. Paper, $7.95.

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Martini, S.J., Carlo M. *Through Moses to Jesus: The Way of the Paschal Mystery*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1988. Pp. 123. Cloth, $4.95.

Mathson, Patricia. *Pray & Play: 28 Prayer Services and Activities for Children in K Through Sixth Grade*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1989. Pp. 128. Paper, $7.95.

McCabe, OP, Herbert. *God Matters*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987. Distributed by Meyer, Stone & Co., Bloomington, IN: Pp. 249. Paper, $22.95.

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Swenson, Rev. Roger A. *Prayer and Remembrance*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1989. Pp. 189. Paper $.95.

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The Knight-Errant of Assisi. By Hilarin Felder, Capuchin. Reprint. $7.00 plus postage.

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NOVEMBER, 1989

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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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

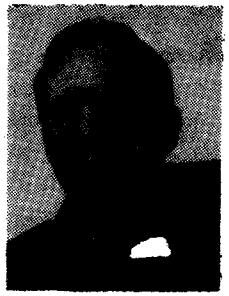
[1]I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

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).



Chapter of Mats — A Personal Perspective

In May, F. Edward Coughlin shared with readers of **the CORD** a historical perspective on the chapter of Mats concept: a fraternal gathering of all the friars to share their life and ministry. This June we in Holy Name Province had our chapter of Mats at Siena College, and about ⅔ of the Province showed up for at least some of the sessions and almost half being there the full 3½ days. Many friars expected little, and not many thought it was important as the regular Chapter which had suggested it — at the Visitator's request, I for one was wondering what could justify the time and money that would go into it, and when the idea was first broached expected perhaps 150 friars to show — folks who kind of go to everything.

I and lots of friars were most pleasantly surprised. We were surprised not just by the numbers who attended but the over-all program — a program the style of which can and should be duplicated by communities who want to help themselves move into the 1990's. We remembered the history of the Province — in a multa-media presentation, we celebrated Golden Jubilee, and Solemn Vows, we shared in small groups what our best and worst feelings were in ministry, we listened as friars gave workshops in their expertise — computers, Ministry to Adult Children of Alcoholics, AIDS Ministry, Marriage Encounter, and what turned out to be our most popular "The Big Bang" Theory of the Origin of the Universe, and its relevance to God. We also played — with an evening of entertainment the likes of which many of us hadn't experienced since our days in formation when self-entertainment was an art form.

It was great to speak to friars you hadn't seen in five or ten or twenty years, and great to experience that so many care about Franciscan life. The afterglow of this Chapter of Mats will last for some years to come, and even if it didn't change anything — it wasn't supposed to — it certainly was a morale booster for most of a Franciscan Province. If your group hasn't had one lately, give it a try.

Fr Julian Davies

St. Bonaventure University

THEOLOGIA CRUCIS: Luther and Francis in Convergence

WILLIAM J. CORK

It may appear that no two figures in the history of the Christian church differ from one another as much as Martin Luther and Francis of Assisi. And perhaps it is as difficult to imagine the Poverello arguing the intricacies of the *communicatio idiomatum* over a stein of beer as it is to imagine the hot-tempered Reformer cuddling a newborn lamb. Nevertheless, there is a point where Francis and Luther may indeed be seen to "converge" (to borrow a bit of contemporary ecumenical jargon). That point is the cross of Christ. It may be said with little exaggeration that no two men in history have been as absorbed with and driven by the remembrance of our Lord's humiliation as these two friars. Their conclusions frequently differ, yet each is guided by the conviction that God's fullest self-revelation takes place in the figure of the One who hung dead upon the cross. From this premise, Luther articulated a "theology of the cross," the implications of which he saw to be primarily in the areas of justification, revelation, and ecclesiology. Long before Luther, however, Francis had articulated in his life and ministry a theology of the cross which expressed itself in terms of humble service and poverty. It is the conclusion of this author (a Lutheran), that this fundamental Franciscan insight of ministry as conformity to the crucified Christ may be precisely what is needed to fill the void in contemporary Lutheranism's understanding of ministry. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is presently in the throes of a five-year study of ministry (the outcome of which appears to be "up for grabs"). We would do well to consider the Franciscan witness, holding up, as it does, a model of ministry which may be seen as a necessary implication of the "theology of the cross" that was so central to the thought of Luther.

The author, a recently ordained Lutheran minister, wrote this paper for a course in Franciscan Theology/Spirituality taught by Michael Blastic, O.F.M. Conv., at the Washington Theological Union. He is a graduate of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and also holds an M.A.R. in Church History from Gettysburg Seminary. He now serves the Lutheran Parish in Thompsontown, Pa.

It was at the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518 that Luther first referred to a *theologia crucis*, in a series of theses concerning the nature of revelation. "That person," said Luther, "does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened (Rom. 1:20)." Rather, it is the one "who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross" who alone "deserves to be called a theologian."[1] As explicated by Alister McGrath, Luther here asserts, first, the necessity of revelation. Speculation on the basis of the created order will not bring one to a knowledge of God. Second, what God reveals of Himself is, at the same time, concealed. We perceive only the *posteriora Dei*. Third, this revelation takes place in suffering and the cross, not in common human morality or in creation. Fourth, the revelation demands faith, for only faith recognizes that the One on the cross is, in fact, God.[2]

Luther's emphasis on the cross as the primary locus of God's self-disclosure is not unique to him, but may be traced back to the renewal of devotion to the humanity of Christ at the time of Francis.[3] What is unique to Luther is his sharp distinction between the *theologia crucis* and the *theologia gloriae*. The two, for him, are mutually exclusive.[4]

> Faith has to do with things not seen (Heb. 11:11). Hence in order that there may be room for faith, it is necessary that everything which is believed should be hidden. It cannot, however, be more deeply hidden than under an object, perception, or experience which is contrary to it.[5]

Thus Luther is led to state categorically that "God can be found only in suffering and the cross.[6] The converse is a necessary corollary. Where there is not pain or the cross, but instead pride, wealth and ostentatious display, it is to be doubted that God is, in fact, present.

Luther's *theologia crucis* thereby became a verdict of judgment against the triumphalism of the medieval church, and particularly the papacy.[7] He "was convinced," says Eric Gritsch, "that the church may have to suffer the loss of its status in order to become a better instrument of the gospel."[8]Luther called the church to embrace the humility of Christ. He called it to the cross. There the church sees its true vocation to be that of suffering servant.[9] It is to be called by the world "*Afflicted one*, as well as *storm-tossed, and not comforted*, 'Miss Hopeless.' "[10] Luther's *theologia crucis* demands that the church, like its Lord, be hidden under suffering. This is not, however, the self-chosen discomfort of pious depri-

vation, but that genuine suffering which inevitably folows the faithful proclamation of the Word of God.[11]

This understanding of the church may be looked at from the angle of Luther's understanding of justification by faith alone. Luther argues that one can be reduced to clinging in faith to Christ only through humiliation. It is through a direct, intense encounter with the wrath of God, experienced as suffering and *Anfechtungen*, that the sinner comes to know "that his salvation is uttery beyond his own powers, devices, endeavors, will, and works, and depends entirely on the choice, will, and work of another, namely, of God alone."[12] This point (often neglected by contemporary Lutherans) receives its greatest elaboration in Luther's 1521 commentary on the Magnificat. Humility is here said to be a necessity for justification, not in the sense of a "work," but in the sense of an utter repudiation of trust in works. Thus Luther distinguishes between "true" and "artificial humility." The latter he regards as an affectation which seeks reward through outward appearance. True humility seeks no reward. It is "nothing else than a disregarded, despised, and lowly estate, such as that of men who are poor, sick, hungry, thirsty, in prison, suffering, and dying."[13] Those in such a state know they have nothing. Therefore they cling in faith to the promise of the Crucified One.

Luther's arguments at this point bear a remarkable similarity to the writings of Francis. Both hold up the cross as the example of the suffering servanthood to which the baptized Christian is called. The importance of the crucified Christ to the call and ministry of Francis cannot be overemphasized. It was a vision of the cross, says Bonaventure, which caused Francis to understand "as addressed to himself the Gospel text: If you wish to come after me, deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me (Matt. 16:24)."[14] And this is but one of seven visions of the cross with which Bonaventure brackets Francis' life, a progressive series which culminates in the stigmatization at Alverna.[15] "In all things," says Bonaventure, "he wished to be conformed to Christ crucified, who hung on the cross poor, suffering and naked." This led Francis to lovingly embrace that humble service which Christ had accepted, marked by washing the feet of the brothers, humility among both "servants" and "masters," and joy among those "who are looked down upon."[17]

This is the sort of ministry one might expect to flow from Luther's theology of the cross. Yet Luther never saw the implications in quite this way. This is at least partially due to his polemical circumstances, and the particular abuses revalent in his day.[18] In fact, each time Luther mentions Francis it is in connection with a scathing attack on sixteenth-century Franciscanism. Some of these attacks may be traced to inter-order rivalry (the Augustinians of Luther's day having no great love for the Franciscans), but many have a grounding in genuine abuses and spring from the heart

of one who had both learned from Franciscan theologians (particularly Bonaventure, Occam and Scotus), and who had an overwhelming desire to let nothing detract from the glory of Christ. For example, he accuses the Franciscans of having turned Francis and the Rule into idols.[19] They are willing to bear his cross, but flee their own crosses. "They crawl into monasteries to have peace and happy days, leave other people in trouble and toil, and still claim to be holier in doing that than all others."[20]

Luther contrasts the spirit of Francis and "the other fathers" (i. e., founders of religious orders) with that of their later namesakes. While the "fathers" made mistakes, they were, he believed, "driven under the power of the Holy Spirit and in complete faith and consuming love." Yet "their successors have rushed in and taken over their outward practices, but have abandoned the spirit and faith of the early founders."[21] Francis himself was no doubt "naive or, to state it more truthfully, foolish," in his attitude toward money, Luther felt, but he ought to be commended for begging "for bread and other necessities of life, and then distribut[ing] them among the poor. But look closely at his successors. Did they not look out for themselves and for their kitchen rather well?"[22]

Luther's most penetrating criticisms strike at the very foundations of monasticism and mendicancy. He accuses them of sectarianism. Francis, he says, took the "universal gospel" and made it "into a special rule for the few. What Christ wanted to be universal and catholic, Francis made schismatic." Luther concedes that this was no doubt the result of the efforts to secure papal approval for the order. Yet he repudiates such a motive as an attempt to flee the suffering imposed by the cross. Highly significant for Lutheran spirituality (at least on a theoretical level) is Luther's rejection of the concept of the "evangelical counsels." The whole gospel, for Luther, applies to the whole church. Thus, he says, "When a Franciscan takes his vow he vows nothing more than that which he already vowed at the start in his baptism, and that is the gospel."[23] In sum, the "universal gospel" was restricted to a few spiritual athletes, and trivialized into demands for outward trappings such as cowl, cincture, celibacy and poverty.[24]

Some abuses have been corrected. Others have been recognized, and are being addressed. While Franciscans tend not to wash their habits publicly, occasionally an outsider hears about "refounding," and attempts at "declericalization." Franciscans are increasingly returning to their roots, and asking what it means to be faithful to the vision of Francis. In so doing, they challenge the rest of Christianity as well. Non-Romans have taken special interest in the struggle of Leonardo Boff to articulate his vision of a church renewed through poverty and *minoritas*.[25] All of these efforts address the problem that Luther referred to as Franciscanism's "sectarian" tendencies.

But what of Lutheranism's sectarian tendencies? Though Luther criticized the "theology of glory" which dominated Roman Catholicism in his day, his successors failed to construct an alternative that was convincingly any better. Lutheranism, too, has been dominated in this ecclesiology and ministerial theology by a "theology of glory." This led it to embrace political power in Europe (with disastrous results). And it has led it to withdraw, in varying degrees, from the rest of Christianity through explicit (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and a plethora of smaller groups) and implicit (all the rest of us) claims to theological purity.

Franciscanism, because it shares with us a theology rooted in the cross, is in a position to challenge Lutheranism to be true to that common heritage. It is not only able to challenge, but it provides the resources Lutheranism so desperately needs at the present time. Looking at the Lutheran debacle over ministry through Franciscan eyes, one might suggest that the ELCA's discussions are not really about ministry, *per se* but about ecclesiastical power, and who should wield it. Francis, however, bids us hear the words of our Lord, who has called us not to exercize power (as James and John longed to do), but to serve as washers of feet. The *theologia crucis* is an ecumenical call to renounce ecclesiastical and ministerial triumphalism of one hue, and to embrace poverty, weakness and shame.

This demands hard choices at multiple levels. Bonhoeffer spoke of the "cost of discipleship," and that may fairly state the matter. All the baptized are called to discipleship, and through discipleship, to ministry. As disciples of *Jesus*, we are called to follow His life of self-emptying *(kenosis)*. Is European Luthernism, for example, willing to empty itself of political safety? Is Lutheranism in all lands willing to embrace the humility of Christ in ecumenical dialog (or social activism)? Is it willing to forsake the patronizing role of "advocate," and to embrace joyfully the degrading task of "foot-washer"? Are Lutheran pastors willing to abandon power, authority and prestige (whether as "Herr Pastor" or as "CEO"), in order to become humble servants of their flocks? These are but a few of the questions that await Lutheranism when it risks its very existence to become *ecclesia crucis*. These are the true ecumenical questions, which must be asked of all triumphalistic structures which claim the name of the Crucified One. They are the necessary implications of a truly catholic application of Francis' vision.

The *ecclesia crucis* is a servant church. To speak thus of servanthood is to speak not simply of what the church does, but of why it does it. It is to address the question of the church's being. It is also to address the question of attitude. Narrowing this to the topic of ministry, it may be said that there is ecumenical agreement on the basics of what the "doing"

of ministry involves. Nearly all ecclesial entities will agree that the church, through its ministry, proclaims the Word and administers the Sacraments. For Lutherans, this is stated explicitly in article 5 of the Augsburg Confession. Given this, what might Lutheranism learn from Franciscanism about the implications of the *theologia crucis* for "how" ministry (particularly in this basic sense of proclamation of Word and administration of Sacrament) is to be done? This, we suggest, is not a matter of importing an unknown concept into Lutheran thought, but rather a challenge to uncover what is already present.

Lutherans and Franciscans share a reverence for the proclaimed Word, as well as the conviction that the central content of that Word is the Gospel event of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lutherans have described this Word as an "external word," a word that is *extra nos*. Yet this way of speaking may give the impression that human life, like the primeval chaos, is devoid of God's activity until the preacher speaks (to coin a phrase) *gratia ex nihilo*. Franciscanism, on the other hand, asserts the givenness of God's ever present gracious activity. Preaching does not inject God into a situation where He was not, but reveals that presence as the presence of the One of the cross. The ability to name grace in this fashion demands not only an acquaintance with the Word, but also an attitude of *minoritas* in relation to the lives and traditions of the people to whom the preacher speaks.

In this understanding of the preacher's responsibility, Franciscanism articulates a concept that is present in Luther's thought, but in a slightly different context. In arguing with the "sacramentarians" over the manner of Christ's eucharistic presence, Luther made a distinction between Christ's presence and our apprehension of it. Thus,

> ... although he is everywhere, he does not permit himself to be so caught and grasped; he can easily shell himself, so that you get the shell but not the kernel. Why? Because it is one thing if God is present, and another if he is present for you. He is there for you when he adds his Word and binds himself, saying, "Here you are to find me." Now when you have the word, you can grasp and have him with certainty and say, "here I have thee, according to thy Word."... [O]therwise you will run back and forth throughout all creation, groping here and groping there yet never finding, even though it is actually there; for it is not there for you.[26]

In an attempt to synthesize the insights of Luther and the Franciscan tradition on this point, one might venture to define "sin" not as a "privation of the good," in Augustinian fashion, but as an "obfuscation of the good" — a "muddying of the waters." The preacher's task, then, is to confront the ambiguity of the world with the Word, thereby speaking sense into a seemingly senseless situation. It is to point out — to name — the beauty

and joy of grace hidden in the gray murkiness of life. It is to name bread and wine as Body and Blood, the darkness of the cross as the glory of God, and the apparent absence of God in suffering as His sweetest presence. The preacher is thus charged with the mission of bringing the paradoxes of life to light — and naming the sheer fact of that paradox "grace."

The Eucharist shall provide an example of how this same line of thought might apply to the Sacraments. The *theologia crucis,* as presented by both Luther and Francis, invites us to join in humble adoration of the One who has humbled Himself for our salvation. And it is in the Eucharist that we are especially confronted by that humiliation of Christ. Bonaventure relates how Francis was "overcome by wonder at such loving condescension and such condescending love" revealed in the Sacrament.[27] And in his own writings as well, we often see Francis standing in awe of the sacramental mystery, as when he exclaims, "O admirable heights and sublime lowliness! O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! That the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under the little form of bread!"[28] We encounter the same wonder and awe in Luther, beginning with his first mass in 1507 (Granted, few Lutherans see that experience as a good thing!). Yet Luther's reverence for the Sacrament is perhaps most clearly seen in the later controversies with those, such as Huldreich Zwingli, who would deny the Lord's Eucharistic presence. Rather than surrender his confession of the union of the human and divine in the Risen Lord, Luther surrendered the unity of the reformation.[29]

The challenge to contemporary Lutheranism is that its liturgical life, too, be reformed by the *theologia crucis*. This would necessitate a return both to the primacy of the Eucharist in Christian worship and, with this, to the attitude of reverence and awe shown by Francis and Luther toward the Body and Blood of Christ. Our ever-expanding bibliography of ecumenical agreements and theological declarations (not to mention our incomparable collection of confessions, *The Book of Concord)* will remain meaningless as long as the Eucharist retains its status as *adiaphoron* in the lives and worship of the faithful. This means that we must return to (at least) weekly celebrations of the Eucharist. It means intensive education of laity and clergy. And it means an example of reverence on the part of all Euchaharistic ministers, both during and after the service proper. It does *not* mean a multiplication of medieval ceremonial. Instead, the "trappings" of liturgy ought, with our actions and words, give simple witness to the presence of our God.

The pressing question for Lutherans is how to do this. Lutheran churches, as a whole, have not had weekly Eucharists for centuries. Many parishes, influenced by the temperance movements of the last century

(or by the concerns of recovering alcoholics today), use grape juice. Still others, wanting a more tangible "symbol," have adopted the use of giant loaves of crumbly whole grain bread. Each of these practices reveals a practical Zwinglianism. How shall pastors lead their parishes to practices more in line with Lutheran theology? Shall they (or the bishops) simply exercise their power and demand a change? This seems not to be in keeping with the stance of *minoritas* presented in this paper. Shall we try to effect a gradual change? This would seem to reinforce the contention that it doesn't matter. (And the Catholic reader of this paper will note that we have said nothing of the specific Roman objections to Lutheran sacramental theology.)

The pastor might begin by articulating clearly and precisely both the church's confession and the pastor's own conviction. The importance of the latter is that the Word is now "embodied" in the pastor, as an expression of a human being's longings and comforts, and is not simply a directive from "on high." The pastor also needs to be an example of reverence, handling the Eucharistic elements in a fashion that conveys to the assembly the pastor's recognition that they are indeed the Body and Blood of our Lord. In working toward weekly Eucharist, the pastor may need to add a service to the weekly schedule that is specifically designated as Eucharist. Here, however, the pastor must exercize extreme caution. If the weekly Eucharist is at a secondary service on Sunday (either before or after the "main" service), it may simply reinforce the view that the Eucharist is an unnecessary "extra." Perhaps it would be better to have such a service in the middle of the week, which might bring out many of the same people who attend the Sunday service. Thus, by frequent reception, the parish members may come to appreciate the centrality of the Eucharist in Christian life and worship. (Also, the addition of a second service might underscore the pastor's personal conviction, in that the pastor would be seen as volunteering to do more work than was necessary — particularly if the pastor took the responsibility for preparation and clean-up.)

These suggestions will not make everyone happy. They do not pretend to be ultimate answers, but simply illustrate the magnitude of the problem Lutherans face. There seems to be no easy way to hold together *minoritas* and Eucharistic centrality in the current Lutheran context. The worst situation would be one in which, through pastoral rigidity, weekly Eucharist became associated with an authoritarian form of ministry, rather than being, as Francis saw it, a reminder of the humility and condescension of Christ.

Is it possible for Lutheranism to learn from Franciscanism? There are hints of such openness. In the Church of the abiding Presence (the chapel of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg), the stained glass windows depict scenes from the Bible and church history. The window

closest to the pulpit depicts the cross. Just below the foot of the cross, and a little to the right, the first Christian martyr, St. Stephen, kneels in adoration. A little further down, to Stephen's left, is St. Francis, receiving in his own body the marks of the crucifixion. This window is symbolic of the fact that Lutherans rercognize in St. Francis of Assisi one who truly surrendered himself in humble submission to the shame of the cross. We recognize that, as St. Bonaventure said so well, "In all things he wished to be conformed to Christ crucified, who hung on the cross poor, suffering and naked." This was what Luther's reform sought to extend to the entire church. In a sense, it succeeded. The Body of Christ is broken and unrecognizable. Our task today — Lutherans, Franciscans, and all others who hear the voice of the Crucified One — is that with which Francis was commissioned. "Rebuild My church, which, as you see, is in ruins."

Endnotes

[1]*Luther's Works*, American edition [hereafter, LW] (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955 -; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955 -.), 31:40.

[2]Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 149-50.

[3]Hermann Sasse, *We Confess Jesus Christ*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), p. 45. See also Ewert Cousins, "Francis of Assisi: Christian Mysticism at the Crossroads," in *Mysticism and the Religious Traditions*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 163-90; Cousins, "The Humanity and the Passion of Christ," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (New York: Crossroad, 1987), pp. 375-91.

[4]Sasse, *We Confess Jesus Christ*, pp. 46-47; Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 26.

[5]LW 33:62.

[6]LW 31:53.

[7]McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, p. 181.

[8]Eric W. Gritsch, *Martin — God's Court Jester: Luther in Retrospect* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p.. 185.

[9]Ibid., p. 184.

[10]LW 17:242.

[11]Walther von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), pp. 118-19, 126-27; Gritsch, *Martin — God's Court Jester*, p. 184; LW 41:164-65.

[12]LW 33:723; McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, p. 154.

[13]LW 21:313-15.

[14]*Legenda Maior* I:6. All citations are from *Bonaventure*, ed. Ewert Cousins, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

[15]*Legenda Maior* XIII:10.

[16]*Legenda Maior* XIV:4.

[17]Admonitions IV:23; Earlier Rule VI:3-4, IX:2; Letter to the Entire Order 26-29. Citations are from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong and Ignatius C. Brady, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

[18]A good overview of Luther's doctrine of the ministry is to be found in Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 339-67.

[19]See, for example, LW 6:230; 9:54; 12:284; 14:99; 16:245; 17:70, 259.

[20]LW 20:330.

[21]LW 44:268.

[22]LW 2:327.

[23]LW 44:255.

[24]LW 22:274.

[25]On Boff's ecclesiology, see especially his *Church: Charism and Power*, trans. John W. Diercksmeier (New York: Crossroad, 1985) and *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986) esp. pages 23-33. Harvey Cox provides an example of an outsider looking in at this point. Especially noteworthy is his attempt to see the uniquely Franciscan aspects of Boff's thought in *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff: The Vatican and the Future of World Christianity* (Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988).

[26]LW 37:68-69.

[27]*Legenda Maior* IX:2.

[28]Letter to the Entire Order, 27.

[29]See, for example, Basil Hall, "*Hoc est Corpus Meum:* The Centrality of the Real Presence for Luther," in *Luther: Theologian for Catholics and Protestants*, ed. George Yule (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), pp. 113-44.

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Francis Neath the Bitter Tree

Francis,
I first saw you
in my little
Book of Saints
pictured beneath the
cross of your dying Lord.
Oh, this was long
before I knew you
graced the bird baths
and fountains
of every yard and
public place
as the Holy Fool.
And this was long
before I saw you
cradle the tiny Child
in your arms,
or tame the
snarling grey wolf —
long before I knew you
as the veritable tree
for your precious
winged sisters
and animals of every
pattern and stripe.

I first saw you
neath the bitter tree
locked in embrace
with the crucified God
who bent down
for your tender comfort
and most gentle
love.
Later I was told
you stretched our
scarcely visible frame
to cover even the hopeless
and the lepers
of your day.
And now I see,
now I know why
He flew to La Verna
wrapt in resurrected wings
to transfigure,
to share the glory,
with the one
who had spared himself
none of the
suffering.

William Hart McNichols, S.J., S.F.O.

Reflection on Franciscan Life as Evangelical

SR. JANE KOPAS, O.S.F.

Since the publication of "The Essential Elements of Religious Life" there has been considerable discussion among Franciscans as to the character of religous life that exemplifies the Franciscan charism. The expression that has come to be used most widely to describe Franciscan religious life is "evangelical." The purpose of this article is to explore some of the limitations of using that expression and to redirect some of the questions that have been raised by the "Essential Elements."

Evangelical Life as Description

The term "evangelical" is being used lately to distinguish Franciscan religious life from the monastic life and the apostolic form described in the document "Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate" (Letter of John Paul II to the Bishops of the United States, May 31, 1983). This contrast suggests that monastic and apostolic religious congregations do not embody the gospel values as Franciscan life does. Such a distinction does not promote understanding among various major forms of religious life nor does it accurately reflect the contribution of the Franciscan vision to the Church's understanding of the religious life.

There can be no doubt that Francis of Assisi initiated a new form of religious life and that it was rooted in the example of Jesus in the gospels. The dominant form of religious life at that time was monastic. Francis, called to a new expression of commitment to God, turned from the existing form of religious life to one inspired by a new reading of the gospel. That

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the life he created was evangelical or based on the gospel is unquestionable. To suggest that the monastic life was not a gospel life, however, is another issue. There are grounds, therefore, to consider more carefully the use of the word evangelical as a contrast.

Francis of Assisi was inspired to live a life of commitment to and imitation of the human Jesus. He was not given to analysis or comparisons. He did not set himself against the monastic form of life but instead he simply followed what he perceived to be his call. The life of the Lesser Brothers differed radically from the monastic life, but this new form of religious life should not be contrasted with the monastic life primarily in terms of its gospel values.

All religious orders, insofar as they profess to live a committed Christian life, are rooted in the gospel. No one group can claim to live the gospel in its fullness, but each reflects certain values that are based on the life of Jesus. With varying emphases each reflects the so-called evangelical counsels. Therefore, the gospel life is not something to which the Franciscans have a special claim that distinguishes their model of religious life from other religious groups.

The earliest form of Christian religious life took its inspiration from the Jesus who retreated to the desert to face temptation. The more communitarian forms of religious life under an abbot that followed took their inspiration from the obedient Christ who submitted himself to the will of God. Francis took poverty and the suffering Christ as his model. What gave his expression of the imitation of Christ a new focus was the way he attempted to follow the itinerancy of Christ and the disciples more literally. Thus, it was most commonly described as a mendicant life.

Francis of Assisi exemplifies for many an outstanding imitation of Christ. His special mirroring of the poor and suffering Christ flows from his unique vision of the humanity of the savior. The vision, in turn, inspired a life style among his followers which was oriented toward reflecting the manner of life Francis perceived among the early disciples of Christ as it pertained to the age in which he lived. It may be useful, therefore, to distinguish the charism of Francis from the lifestyle of Franciscans. His charism was shaped by a particular reading of the gospel. The charism in turn shaped a model of religious life which was also influenced by the signs of the time in which he lived.

Francis' charism was inspired by the gospel and the vision of that life is rightly called evangelical. The model of religious life that takes expression from the charism, however, bears the marks of its historical context too strongly to be described adequately by the term evangelical alone. Though the Franciscan model of religious life reflects the early Christian community's simple dependence on God, mobility, and awareness of the

reign of God, it is marked by a selectivity that calls for further clarification of the model of religious life.

Any interpretation of the gospel involves a certain amount of selectivity. In examining the way Jesus lived, Francis pays little attention to the friendships of Jesus with people like Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. Nor does he make much of Jesus' apparently frequent appearance at dinners and celebrations. Some of these relationships suggest that the life of the early Christian community may not have been as austere as Francis perceived it. In other words, Jesus appeared to have a more social life than Francis recognized.

Another neglected element in the Franciscan interpretation of the evangelical life may be found in the way that Jesus dealt with women. Among the disciples, women participated in various ways from providing for the entourage out of their means to listening to and discussing with Jesus. Francis' attitude toward women, unavoidably shaped by the religious values of his day, fails to do justice to certain prophetic and liberating aspects of Jesus' relations with women and its place in his way of life.

This is not to say that Francis did not have a gospel vision or did not live in a way that embodied gospel values. But it is to say that there are limitations to the extent that anyone lives the good news of Jesus. Therefore, there are limitations to naming one form of religious life as evangelical. The challenge facing contemporary Franciscans is to discern the abiding aspects of Francis' charism and interpretation of the gospel life so as to most effectively bring his insights to life today.

The image of a divine and triumphant Christ had dominated the middle ages before the time of Francis. His insight into the poor, suffering, and tender Christ captured the imagination of his contemporaries. One has only to look at the changes in the way Christ is depicted in art after the time of Francis to see the importance of the human in Franciscan life. Not only the human Christ but also the humanness of Francis and his followers became one of the key hallmarks of Franciscan religious life.

Before examining the human element in Franciscan life more closely and relating it to other aspects of the charism, it is well to consider in greater detail Franciscan responses to the "Essential Elements" so as to put the present discussion in clearer focus.

Responses to "Essential Elements"

In his reflections on Franciscan life in connection with the Vatican document, "Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to works of the Apostolate" (Franciscan Federation Newsletter, July - August 1985), Jean-Francois Godet makes several obsrvations. The thrust of the CRIS statement on religious

life is geared toward apostolic religious life rather than other forms. Godet says this makes its application to Franciscan life impossible because Franciscan life does not fit the characteristics of apostolic life.

To this Godet adds two other significant criticisms. First, the document presupposes a separation between action and contemplation which caused problems in the history of the Church and is not applicable to the "evangelical" life Franciscans profess anyway. Second, the way the document deals with the consecrated life suggests a separation of religious life from the world which does not characterize the Franciscan approach.

I concur with Godet's observations about the limitations of the document on each of the points he has made. At the same time I would add the caution that Franciscans should take care not to let their examination of their charism and life be guided primarily by a reaction to the Vatican document. To let the "Essential Elements" be the primary determinant of reflections on the Franciscan charism or manner of living would be to let it dictate the issues and questions that are of primary concern. In particular such an approach would promote an attitude of comparison which may not be productive.

The "Essential Elements" needs to be evaluated for its own strengths and weaknesses for religious life in general, not just Franciscans. It is a document which speaks of canon law, conciliar and post conciliar documents of Vatican II, and the pronouncements of popes as the basis for current Church praxis regarding religious life. Franciscans, and others too, would find this description somewhat inadequate since it does not deal with the special charism of founders or with the movement of the Spirit. Even as regards its treatment of apostolic religious life it lacks an appreciation for the diversity of ministry and community. In short, the "Essential Elements" needs much closer examination, and it needs to be complemented by a larger vision of the forms of religious life in history. Such a project lies beyond the scope of this article.

While considering the way that "Essential Elements" has been a stimulus for discussion, however, it will be useful to give some attention to another response to the document. As already noted, the "Essential Elements" has forced a clarification on its own terms which may not be the most fruitful way for Franciscans to approach their charism. The other response I want to note illustrates this further.

The schema of contrast between monastic, apostolic, and evangelical forms of religious life developed by Thaddeus Horgan, SA, and Jeanine Morozowich, CSSF, (Franciscan Federation Newsletter, August - September - October 1987) sets up the classification of "Evangelical Life" as a distinctive and unique form of living out the vision. They identify the focus, prayer, ministry, community, leadership. structural model, and distinguishing characteristics of each of these forms.

There are two apparent difficulties related to this schema. First, while there are various groups that would fit under the monastic and apostolic forms of religious life, it appears that only the Franciscans belong to the category of "evangelical life." Perhaps it is unique enough to be the only exemplar under this form, but it seems a broader category is necessary if one wants to establish a classification that would include a group like the Dominicans who originated at the same time as the Franciscans.

Second, a number of the descriptions under the categories appear to be straining to establish the uniqueness of Franciscan life. The focus or purpose for which Francis began his order as they put it, "to live as Christ did as portrayed in the gospels," clearly depicts the non-pragmatic origins of Franciscan beginnings in contrast to groups that began with a more task oriented goal. However, some aspects of the description seem to fit other forms as well. Among the other categories such as prayer, ministry, and structural model, the differences between the forms do not appear to be significant.

I would suggest that it is important not to stress too greatly the differences in life style which come from differences in charism. Even among communities with the same charism there may be differences in the way it is lived out. Focusing on differrences at this level may obscure the quest to become clearer about the values that underlie behavior.

It is easy to become engaged in a discussion in which one tries to prove the uniqueness of Franciscan life, rather than beginning with the vision of Francis and its relevance for *today*. I seems to me that the question is not so much how does Franciscan life fit with the two models of apostolic and monastic life. There may, in fact, be more than two models, and whatever models there are develop and change in the course of history. Rather, the question appears to be how are we to relate to the insight and inspiration of Francis so that it gives insight and inspiration to us today.

In summary, then, "The Essential Elements" should not lead Franciscans into a defense of the distinctiveness of the Franciscan charism that creates misleading comparisons with other groups. Nor should the document be a starting point to discuss the form of religious life that emerges from the Franciscan charism before the charism itself can be more thoroughly explored in light of its revelation for the present day.

What, then, are we to call the charism and lifestyle that Franciscans live under the influence of their founder? What are the characteristics of that charism and life style that had relevance then but not now? What are the values and insights that are to shape renewed Franciscan life as it is emerging in response to the needs of this time in history?

I would suggest that the Franciscan way of living religious life simply be called Franciscan for the present. Until the term mendicant can be justified or another term can be found to include Dominicans as well, the term "evangelical" may be too restrictive to function as a category in the same sense that monastic and apostolic do.

In exploring the charism of Francis of Assisi and the way of living that embodied that charism for him, it is important to remember its embodiment in the 13th century. Not only did Francis exercise a certain kind of selectivity in appropriating the message and person of Jesus, but Franciscans today will also inevitably exercise a certain degree of selectivity in appropriating the message and person of Francis. Selectivity involves not only the choice of what will be emphasized but also the choice of what will not be emphasized or what needs to be reinterpreted.

I would first like to suggest some areas where it is important to acknowledge that the example of Francis ought not be used. The followers of a particular religious founder are often inclined to emphasize the positive points of his or her vision and to fail to mention its limitations. Mentioning these limitations can help to bring the positive elements into sharper focus.

First, the particular way that Francis lived out the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience are very much constricted by the assumptions of his age. This is not to say that his exemplification did not have a compelling and effective influence. This is not to deny that his life showed how they can be liberating. But to attempt to rely too much on his idea of obedience or poverty or chastity will imply a certain negativity toward the body and a somewhat static view of human development.

Secondly, Francis' attitude toward women, while reverent and elevating, was at the same time full of the contradictions that made mutuality impossible. His relationship to Clare, especially, needs to be recognized as having suffered from this attitude as well as benefitting from it.

Thirdly, his understanding of and response to the church did not require him to see it collegially as the People of God. His response was one of unquestioning obedience to the church except in cases where it bore upon his vision of God's will for himself and the brothers. This attitude was one that cemented his influence as a trustworthy example, but his view of the Church that supported it, though adequate for his time, is not adequate for ours.

Selectivity is risky; there is always the danger that something important will be omitted or that something less important will be emphasized. Yet

there is little alternative to selectivity. No one individual or group can be free enough from their own bias or perspective to capture the whole of the gospel. One can only hope that she or he will catch the spirit of Francis and embrace as much of Jesus' challenge as is required in this time.

Some Vital Elements of a Franciscan Life

As a way of promoting discussion of abiding elements of the Franciscan charism and lifestyle, I would propose several key areas. These include the integration of contemplation and action, expansive justice, the holiness of humanness, and kinship with creation. The first element, the integration of contemplation and action has been more fully discussed than the others as a distinctive aspect of Francis' vision, and it bears on each of the other areas.

In singling out these aspects of Franciscan life, it might appear that a number of very important aspects have been omitted. For example, the centrality of Jesus, the role of fraternity and the need for conversion. I would not deny that these are extremely important to the Franciscan charism, but I believe that they yield their clearest Franciscan meaning in relation to the qualities mentioned above. Otherwise, they may become abstract and applied without integration. Also, the distinctiveness of Francis' compelling influence over the last seven and a half centuries resides not so much in his views of Christ, the Church, or his own community as in the way that he dealt with his world and the human beings he encountered in it. It is through their relations with the world and other human beings that present day Franciscans will most effectively bring his charism and vision alive.

Contemplative Action

Francis' struggle to discern whether he was being called by God to solitary contemplation or active presence in community is well known. His integration of the two elements has been the inspiration for generations of Franciscans. More recently, it has received explicit attention as Franciscans try to clarify the distinctive lifestyle that characterizes their attitude toward prayer and toward apostolic activity.

Contemplative action and presence has been and needs to remain a special concern for Franciscans. It is not so much what they do as how they do it that marks their charism. To be a witness to Christ in the spirit of Francis means to devote oneself to a quality of presence. Franciscans over the centuries, whether they have been missionaries to the new world, university professors, manual laborers, or pastoral workers in a variety of

ways have been recognized as Franciscan in their appreciative, reflective presence to the people to whom they minister.

The attitude that makes his action contemplative draws its inspiration from Christ as a revelation of God and human beings as revelations of Christ. For Francis it was the incarnation of God, pre-eminently in the humanness of Jesus Christ, that radiated God's presence. His goal to see and revere that presence in every space of his world enabled him to make it visible in the simplest as well as the noblest actions.

Franciscans did not need to devote themselves to specific preaching about Jesus. Rather, the effectiveness of the Christ-center of Franciscan life demonstrated itself primarily by contemplative action. If the action was born of an attitude of reverent presence to God, then the fruits of the action were secondary. Competence, efficiency, and practical results cannot be the primary objective. God is glorified not by pragmatic success but by seeing Christ and by making Christ present through a reverent human presence.

Expansive Justice

While Francis did not have a global spirituality as we understand it today, he did approach everything he encountered in his world with an inclusive love and creative justice. He did not measure what a person deserved, but responded to what they needed. He envisioned this attitude, he created a climate for expansive justice.

The demands for justice and a peacemaking attitude today cannot flow only from the need to correct oppression or from the desire for a just distribution of goods. The Franciscan responsibility for promoting justice roots itself in the expansive kinds of approach that sees the oppressed and the oppressor as God's creation in need of redemption. Just as creative or expansive justice goes beyond the distributive justice which strives to provide what a person has a right to, so also conversion has a broader Franciscan vision.

Whenever Franciscans speak of conversion they should do so in light of a cosmic and not merely personal view. Sometimes conversion appears to refer mainly to an individual's growth in closeness to God. To constantly be turning back to God does not confine itself to the movement of forming a closed circle. The circle of conversion is a spiral with an increasingly expansive conversion to a love of justice for others. Francis embraced the leper, the real leper and not only the leper within himself.

For this reason, discussions of conversion in the Franciscan charism cannot be rooted narrowly in the religious conversion of the individual. Not all Franciscan groups have a penitential attitude of conversion in their heritage. Those who do will resist the temptation to deal with it too

much as a merely personal phenomenon. The notion of conversion, however it occurs, needs to situate itself in a social and relational world where transformation affects structure. Francis may not have thought in terms of a relational philosophy, but his perception of the world as permeated by Christ in all human beings lent itself to expansive justice.

The Holiness of Humanness

Perhaps the most effective element of Franciscan presence comes from the ability to see the holy in the humblest of beings and the simplest encounters. Just as Francis let the humanness of his savior touch and transform him, so also he let his own humanness show through to touch others. It was not merely the common touch that allowed him to reach others. It was the way that his own humanity let itself be grace.

Because he was so accepting of his own humanness, (though not necessarily his own body), Francis could make the simplest encounter an opportunity to become a sacrament. A simple meal with a fasting brother, a walk down the street to preach a sermon, a conversation with the birds, a confrontation with his own fears of touching a leper were all ways for him that let the ordinariness of human experience be the bearer of the holy.

Even Francis' mistreatment of his own body which he came to recognize late in his life provides a potential source of recognizing the holiness of the human. Since Francis was heir to the medieval suspicion of things bodily, one can only guess that he might have corrected his prejudice had he lived longer. There is evidence that Franciscans since then have found a greater appreciation for the body and its needs. But here is another example of the way that a central insight of Francis about the holiness of the human can be carried further.

The sophistication of our world, not to mention its hectic pace, makes it difficult to maintain a sense of the holiness of the ordinary. Yet when the Franciscan charism has been recognized more often than not people note the Franciscan's ability to communicate God's grace present in humanness even in the midst of busy activity. To be at home in the sacredness of the ordinary is to find a Franciscan place.

Kinship with Creation

Sacralizing the ordinary flows naturally into kinship with creation. Francis' ability to see God's presence in everything inevitably affected his self-perception. As his canticle so beautifully states, he was all of creation as brother and sister to him. As Gerard Manley Hopkins put it, the world was "charged with the grandeur of God." Francis by being related to everything was part of that grandeur.

When Franciscans discuss the centrality of fraternity as a Franciscan value, the focus often falls on the brotherhood or sisterhood living together in community. This is, without a doubt, the proving ground of community. But it may so easily lead to parochialism. The standard of community becomes the amount of time a person gives to the small group with which he or she lives or the quality of persence one brings only to that group. Francis' may have spoken a great deal about the brotherhood of the friars, but his idea of community was so much larger.

Kinship with creation implies a universal community, both of human beings and nature. There is unquestionably a special importance to the group with which one makes a home. No one can honestly speak of fraternity or community if this does not assume a prominent place. But the itinerancy of Franciscan life and his cosmic vision of Francis point to primary membership in the community of all creation. To speak of community as kinship makes global community familial.

In today's mobile society little enough has been said about Franciscans who for a time live alone or in twos. There is a Franciscan dimension of community as leaven. Analyses of Franciscan life today could do great justice to the variant forms of community and to the reality that religious women and men today participate in a variety of communities simultaneously. Such participation provides a new opportunity to clarify community as a form of kinship with creation in its manifold human expressions.

The aspects of Franciscan life discussed above bear the marks of present day concern and selectivity, but they are reflective of genuine gospel values that motivated Francis. The characteristics identified center particularly on the world as graced by God. It is this writer's bias that Franciscans have been and will be most clearly inspired by the example of their founder when they love the holiness of the human as graced by God and own their own distinctiveness as somehow being like everyone else.

The Most High Himself
revealed to me
that I should live
according to the form
of the **Holy Gospel.**

THE TESTAMENT OF ST. FRANCIS

Francis' Unique Experience of Church

M. PRASAD REDDY, O.F.M.

The life of Francis of Assisi has been written and rewritten by numerous authors. Beginning from the mythical biography of Thomas of Celano to the radical interpretation of Adolf Holl, there have been an array of images of Francis. Yet, down through the ages there is definitely a shift in approaching the life of Francis. And this shift is both welcome and necessary. St. Francis is seen no more as a "romantic" saint but as a person who has been moulded by very much earthly forces, namely, the historical situations of his times. This shift from a heavenly to an earthly Francis has not in any way tarnished or diminished his image and charisma. Whatever the age and interpretation, the charm and charisma of Francis of Assisi always remain.

What follows below is a critical look at the life of Francis of Assisi: his life looked at from a purely historical point of view. There are enough sources to see the life of Francis in the light of the Medieval times.

The birth of Francis took place in circumstances of upheaval and enormous change in the society and the Church of twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was a period of rapid economic growth. The economy changed due to the business expansion and the rapid increase in European population. That was the time of the emergence of Burgoisie. The effects of this changing society did have a profound impact on the Church set-up. During the twelfth century, under the leadership of Pope Innocent III, the church achieved complete world domination. Clergy monopolized the religion. They were the exclusive holders of the sacred. The laity were thus isolatd. And in the thirteenth century, the Church reached the

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peak of its power. The Church as society was divided into three orders — the top-most being the prayers (*oratores*), the next being the warriors (*bellatores*) and the least were the workers (*laboratores*). There was a definite hierarchy of powers and positions.

In this given situation, Francis' life becomes concretized. While the Church in his time was yearning to build its power structure and was even dominating the civil authorities, Francis of Assisi throughout his life yearned to take a different path. While the Church was becoming extremely hierarchical, Francis worked towards building a way of life based on equality. And this way of life which Francis initiated ultimately worked out into the Franciscan order itself and in a way resulted in a parallel Church — not a hierarchical church, but a church based on equality amongst its members.

Certain events in Francis' life make evident in a glaring manner his attempt to break away from a system of hierarchy to build a new order and a new way of equality and a more egalitarian way of life. The first of such evident "break-away" came during his youth: the break with his father Peter Bernardone. His father was definitely aspiring for a powerful place in the communal society of Assisi. He was one of the most famous cloth merchants in Assisi and abroad. Yet Francis, true to his desire to be the initiator of a more simple way of life, went to all extremes and ultimately broke away from the system of power and wealth. In a way, every "break" that Francis made was followed by a union. But it resulted in a union which was quite contrary to the "break-up". He broke away from power and made himself weak and united with the powerless. In this particular break from the power-image of his father, Francis united himself with the poor and the abandoned of his society. He was one with the lepers, the outcasts, the poor of his native city.

The initial break-away lead him into a series of other breaks and unities, which contributed to a fine build up of a movement. After breaking himself free from his family ties, Francis began to explore his own identity. In this state of affairs, he was in for the next of his breaks. This time it is the break with the state of the Religious life in the Church of the middle ages. The Church at this time was too set in the hierarchical ways to be able to meet the demands of large populations and economic stresses, especially in urban conditions. This kind of an elitist way of life in the church lead to the formation of a number of reform movements. Some of these movements were heretical.

There was a lot of similarity between Francis' (and his brothers') way of life and the heretical movements of his days. To name some of the similarities: these movements were oriented towards the primitive Church, they had an appeal to direct divine inspiration, emphasis on poverty as the justification of their itinerant preaching, strong convictions

about the principles of brotherliness, rejection of all leadership roles, high estimation of manual labour and care for the sick. In emphasizing the above aspects and in particular, poverty, Francis created for himself a distinctly christian identity. This identity was in clear contrast to the Church of his day which was glittering with pomp and power.

As years went by Francis' ideals of poverty, simplicity and freedom came into loggerheads with the Institutional Church. Thus he felt the necessity to write down a kind of way of life, a *forma vitae,* for himself and his brothers. These efforts lead him to the formulation of three Rules out of which the final came to be recognized by the Pope. That is the Rule of 1223. In this Rule there are many aspects which reflect the ideals sought by Francis and his efforts to bring about an equality among the existing hierarchical structures of the Church and the religious life of his day.

In a way his life and inspiration have initiated a new era in the history of the Catholic Church.

The situation in the Church was such that clericalism emerged. There was a total concentration of sacred power in the hands of the clergy and a growing disproportion of the laity, until they were reduced to the mere mass of the faithful, attenting rites, lacking the means to produce their own religious goods. Cleric meant learned and intellectual and lay meant uneducated and ignorant. In his Rule Francis differed. For in his way of life no differentiation was made between the rich and the poor or learned or unlearned. In an effort towards equality Francis welcomed everyone to follow his way of life. The brothers came from all walks of life, and were united into one family.

In further steps to ensure that disparity would not crop up among his brothers, Francis also included in his Rule the non-acceptance of landed property or appropriation of money in any form. Also, itinerant preaching, common superior, common Rule were all efforts to maintain the spirit of equality in their manner of life. Cajetan Esser calls the above aspects, the "novelty of the Order of Friars Minor."

By the time of the formulation and approval of their way of life in the year 1223, Francis and his brothers acquired a complete "Christian identity." Especially by this time Francis had come almost to the end of his life and we would do well to see the amount of change that he underwent

since his first break in his youth. The Rule of 1223 and his Testament given in the last days of his life, are a perfect reflection of Francis, wherein his life experiences of the various breaks and unities are formulated into writing. The Rule and the Testament serve as a kind of mini autobiography of Francis. They are a reflection of his emotional and spiritual growth down through the years of his life.

Though Francis throughout his life was obedient to the Church, yet he was not conformed to its structures and institutions. In a way his life and inspiration have initiated a new era in the history of the Catholic Church. His efforts to remain a lay man, a Christian man who is not absorbed by the structures of the institutional Church are still evident in the present day Franciscans' desire to call the order a lay order, while the Church continues to hold it up as a clerical order. That exactly was the thrust of Francis' life and that of his brothers: To tell the institutional Church, that what is closer to the hearts and lives of the people is not the hierarchical Church but Church of the base, of the grass-roots, a Church of the people. In this respect the life of Francis of Assisi truly initiated a new experience of Church — a Church of the people, based not on power but on service, equality not on hierarchy.

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The Sword of Francesco Bernardone

Yes, he was once a warrior, and I, a stalwart,
redolent of violence, hung at his side.
Yet from the time his father beaming pride
and ambition bestowed me on him I knew
that I would come to no glory by his arm.
His was the grip of a romantic, his
clasp about my hilt sent no malice from sinew
into steel; rather the caress of artistry
as though holding the neck of a lute.
I marked him for an early death.

In the field he was inept, there was no lust
for killing in his heart. I rarely tasted blood
and never the ecstasy of swords: that certain
lunge that cuts flesh and life at once.
Such usage changed me. As if a rust or tarnish,
his manner imprinted my form. When captured,
the Perugian captain held me aloft in the spoils
room and sneered, "No balance, no heft, a pretty
thing." These were remarks about *me.*

Meanwhile,
he grew wan and cheerful in jail. His heart became
an incendiary, a forge, his words hammer blows,
his body God's anvil upon which an astonished
world would be retempered. "Unbalanced, bereft,
a pity" — these were remarks about him the day
he died in the public square, put on Christ
and knotted cord, and thought of war no more.

Justin Carisio, S.F.O.

Book Reviews

Unveiling the Feminine Face of the Church. By Helen Cecelia Swift and Margaret N. Telscher, Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1989. 113 pages, paper, $6.95.

In Search of God. By Waltraud Herbstrith, New York: New City Press, 1989. 126 pages. Paper, $7.95.

Gathering the Fragments: A Gospel Mosaic. By Edward J. Farrell. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1987. 101 pages. Paper, $4.95.

Reviewed by Father Daniel A. Hurley, O.F.M., National Chaplain of the St. Bonaventure University Alumni Association, Instructor in English and Campus Minister at the University.

Here we have a book written by two Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur on the subject of femininity in the Catholic Church. Recogizing that much has been said and written about the place and the role of women in today's society and today's Church, the authors have for their purpose the presentation of "a balanced view of the need for women (and feminine qualities) in the Church's ministry" (page 1). In eleven chapters, the authors explain the nature of feminine and masculine qualities in the human person and then show how an imbalance between these qualities has affected the history and the ministry of the Church.

An explanatory subtitle explains the authors' intention of offering "An Explanation for Groups or Individuals." The structure of each chapter is such that the subject matter is explained by illustration both from the Gospels and from the life of a person of the Nineteenth or Twentieth Century. Appropriate questions in each chapter are aimed at promoting and provoking discussion of the subject.

After defining femininity as consisting of nurturing psychological factors (page 7), the writers show how such qualities are found in the God of the Old Testament and in the Jesus of the Gospels. They then cite Scripture passages that demonstrate such feminine qualities in the Apostolic Church. In the fifth chapter, the authors give examples to show that there was a decline in feminine influence in the church in succeeding centuries.

Sisters Swift and Telscher then cite the Second Vatican council as a changing point in the Church's attitude toward femininity. They show that the council document, *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church,* presents a whole new image of the Church when it refers to the Church as the "People of God." No longer need the laity feel "second class" to the hierarchy and the clergy. The People of God are both clergy and religious and laity, women and men. Since the Second Vatican Council, there can be and there will be a renewal of feminine influence in the Church. The final four chapters of the book cite ways in which this feminine influence can take place: namely, in the Ministry of the Word of God, in the Ministry of Service, in the Ministry of Justice, and in the Sacramental Ministry.

This reviewer found *Unveiling the Feminine Face of the Church* very interesting. In some areas, he thinks the authors seem to strain the facts to make a point, but the examples used are most appropriate to the subject of each chapter. An example of straining the facts is the tracing of the rule for priestly celibacy in the Western Church to political and economic reasons (page 109) rather than to ascetic or spiritual reasons. All in all, it seems that this book could be a source of lively discussions in adult religious education sessions. The questions in each chapter are most challenging and there about seventeen questions per chapter.

The author of the book, *In Search of God,* is a cloistered Carmelite nun of Cologne, Germany. Her name in religion is Sister Teresia a Matre Dei, O.C.D. She writes on Carmelite spirituality as found in the life and writings of St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Therese of Lisieux and Edith Stein, all Carmelites. The work first appeared in German in 1977 and has been translated into English by Edward Flood and Gary Brandl.

In Search of God is divided into two parts. Part I introduces the reader into the meaning of meditation and contemplation. The writer states, "For the Christian, to live in a contemplative fashion... (means) establishing a personal relationship with someone called Jesus Christ" (page 11). She explains the necessity of finding a way to live a contemplative life in the midst of a life of activity. "The goal of unifying work and prayer... can only be reached if we learn to make our actions spring forth from a personal center" (page 14). This center is defined in her statement, "In everything we do, we should be interiorly touched and transformed by the Spirit of Jesus" (page 15).

In response to the question, "What is meditation?" the author states that three elements are necessary: a space of time, silence, and turning to God as another person (page 23). She concludes the first part of her book emphasizing the importance of making Jesus Christ the center of our prayer life. "For the Christian, every practice of meditation is related to Christ" (page 38).

Sister Herbstrith entitles Part II of her book "Discovering the lives of religious people." This section shows how the principles of meditation explained in part I are exemplified in the lives of Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Therese of Lisieux and Edith Stein. She writes: "Both Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross agree that our relationship with God, whose presence we become aware of through meditation, can only be conceived in utmost stillness, that is, in profound silence" (page 53). The author states "Therese of Lisieux was a meditative person" (page 95). "With the help of grace and her personal search, she found what was so right for her and for others" (page 101). The author writes, "Edith Stein's life offers a model of how even we who live in the twentieth century... are capable of experiencing the one who made our hearts restless so that we would find rest in him (St. Augustine)" (page 102).

In Search of God is a book that reads easily and explains simply the Carmelite way of meditation. It is a good book for a person who wants to find encouragement in becoming a prayerful, reflective person. For a person who is afraid to try reading such mystics as Teresa of Avila or John of the Cross, *In Search of God* may break down such a barrier of fear.

After several years' absence from the publication world, Father Edward J. Farrell, a priest of the Archdiocese of Detroit, has written another book of spiritual reflections. The occasion for this writing is the author's observance of his thirtieth year of ordination to the priesthood. This small book of just over one hundred pages embraces twenty-five reflections of the author on the common experiences of a priest living in an inner-city parish. The "fragments" that the author refers to in the title of his book are "Reflections on God's presence as experienced by a city parish priest" (page 14). These reflections cover all different subjects as exemplified by some of the titles of the different chapters: The Gift of Reverence, Relationship with God, The Prayer of Reconciliation, How to live the Eucharist, Becoming a Disciple, and others.

With an awareness of God's presence accompanying him in his daily ministry to his people, Father Farrell presents a source of reflection for anyone desiring to discover how God is present to us all whatever our place may be in the scheme of daily living. The author writes simply and sincerely about his daily life in a way that can encourage each of us in our living of a Christian life in the 1980's and the 1990's. In ordinary, everyday language, Father Farrell offers the reader opportunities to reflect with him on our faith and on our life as daughters and sons of a loving God. This reviewer recommends *Gathering the Fragments: A Gospel Mosaic* to all reflecting people to be read a little at a time. A chapter or two read slowly and prayerfully will help put a person in the presence of God, thankful for being alive.

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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[1]
EpCust: Letter to Superiors[1]
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful[1]
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
[1]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).

Election of Chapter Delegates A Modest Proposal

One of the fruits of Vatican II's call for religious to return to their roots has been an extension of the participation of religious in the governing of their communities. In the Order of Friars Minor, for instance, delegates are not only the ex officio office-holders (Provincial and Council, Guardians) but also delegates elected from groupings based on seniority in religion, apostolate, and in some instances geographical area.

The process of electing delegates is a cumbersome one, and must start long before the Chapter. It includes a primary among a selected group, and then a final ballot in which all vote, having seen the result of the primaries. It would make an interesting sociological study to see if elected delegates have impacted the legislative and provincial electoral process significantly (once the first Chapter got out a book of legislation). What doesn't need scientific study is the fact that the same people seem to be elected to serve as delegates. This offers the advantage of experience but, in my judgment, limits the participatory intent of the idea of delegates. A recent Chapter of Mats (see my previous editorial November, 1989) has convinced me, of what I knew long before: there are three or four times the number of friars who do go to chapters who are fully capable of serving as Capitulars, and if you will, deserve that experience.

As it stands, some friars do not make a high profile, and haven't been in a high profile post, so the present voting process works against them. I propose a simple solution, a lottery system instead of elections, among the eligible voters. With elections every three years, one who lived 30 years in religion would most likely get to a chapter, even in a quite large Province. The mechanics should offer no problem and can be worked out in many ways.

Someone might argue that the goal of wider representation at chapters could be achieved by limiting the times a delegate could

be elected (two successive times would seem to be enough in my view), but I think the lottery idea carries with it the view that Provincial matters are matters for everyone in the Province, and may work toward diminishing feelings of alienation and distance from the Province that do arise in humans who want a part in determining their future.

Fr Julian Davies ofm

Searching for Francis

RAYMOND F. NALEWAJK

They came from places like Albuquerque, Salt Lake City, Cleveland, and Brooklyn. They were the unwitting wise men and women of the new world returning to the old, bearing gifts of enthusiasm, curiosity, and the desire to learn. What they would learn in six weeks of an Italian summer would exceed their greatest expectations. Some would indulge themselves in medieval art, some would become enraptured by the Tuscan countryside, some would savor the Umbrian cuisine, and most would engage in stimulating debates over the early biographies of Francis of Assisi by Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure. Still others would be changed human beings.

Who were these people? They were fifteen outstanding, hand picked, secondary school humanities teachers invited to search for Francis under the sponsorship of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Dr. William Cook, the director of the seminar and his committee knew why *they* had selected these fifteen teachers from over one hundred and fifty applicants. But what is more interesting is why these teachers *themselves* chose and applied for the seminar entitled "The Early Lives of Francis of Assisi." In light of the availability of forty-nine other seminars including ones dealing with Galileo, Pascal, Socrates, and Aristotle, to mention a few, why Francis of Assisi?

In terms of the humanistic tradition, studying figures with the cultural status of Shakespeare or Dante might have been more appealing to scholars instead of studying the life of a former merchant who never wrote a book, never held office, never fought a war, and loved being poor. Therefore,

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the choice of a seminar on Francis would immediately set these teachers apart from their colleagues. They were not only going to study an historical figure but a figure who was also a saint of the Catholic Church.

What is still more amazing is that of the fifteen teachers only seven were Catholic; the others were Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Mormon, Fundamentalist Baptist, and Jewish. Again we must ask what prompted this group of educators to study the Poor Man of Assisi? We know that one woman saw her mother cured through a friend's prayer to Francis. Another taught a course on the environment and hoped to find in the life of Francis ideas on the stewardship of nature. Another had been brought up in a Franciscan parish and felt he ought to know more about Francis. And one came to search for his Christian roots.

But what did they expect to find? Did they have preconceived notions? Ironically, while Francis may be the most popular saint in Christianity, he is probably the one about whom the least is known by his admirers. The popular image of Francis is someone who preached to the birds and to animals. That he spoke to men as well is not always included in that image.

Currently, international environmentalists have adopted Francis as their patron. His love of nature is well known. But whether or not he really focused on ecology, the environmentalists still see him as the spiritual custodian of the great outdoors. Francis has also become a saint acceptable to most religious sects. In fact, not only was Assisi the recent center of an international day of prayer for peace, but young pilgrims perennially flock to Assisi as if to a pious Woodstock singing their songs of peace and brotherhood into the wee hours of the morning in the town's square.

But peace and brotherhood, while noble aims in themselves, are only a part of Francis' legacy. His love of poverty, humility, and penance is a side of Francis the modern world does not hear about or perhaps does not wish to hear about. Finally, Francis' primary goal which was to become as Christlike as possible becomes blurred in the popular peace and brotherhood movement.

Who then is the real Francis? Was he the popular image of the handsome young hippie seen in the film *Brother Sun, Sister Moon?* Or was he the forty year old man physically ravaged by fasting and penance concealing the bleeding seal of his God — the stigmata? This is what fifteen high school teachers came to find out. This was the beginning of the search for Francis.

At this point, one may ask what all this has to do with secondary school teachers in public schools in which the majority taught. During the seminar sessions, one point that continued to rise was the way, if there were a

way, in which the values of Francis might be conveyed to the youngsters back home. As one teacher put it, "My students don't have any values. My own son doesn't have any values. How do we give them values?" However, as one might expect, which of Francis' values were appropriate for today and which were not consumed a great deal of discussion time. A common question was what would Francis say today? So every day for six weeks, the pursuit of the real Francis continued.

But the six week search did produce discoveries. These discoveries ranged from academic and historical observations to personal enlightenment and inspiration. As one seminar member cautiously uttered during one session, "I never realized this before, but it's clear to me now that Francis is the greatest saint in the Church at least in this millenium." While those well versed in the knowledge of Francis might consider that remark naive, it was the kind of illumination that took place during the quest.

And what precisely did the quest involve? The group investigated three areas under the direction of Dr. William Cook, a history professor at SUNY, Geneseo, New York. First was the translated texts of the early biographies of Francis; second the art dealing with Francis; and third, the actual locations where Francis lived. The original texts were *The First and Second Lives of St. Francis* by Thomas of Celano and *The Life of St. Francis* by St. Bonaventure. These were the very first biographies of Francis written immediately or shortly after his death. In other words, the group's first impressions of Francis came from Thomas of Celano who knew Francis personally. This was no fantasy as is sometimes found in well intentioned novels or films. But in spite of the stark descriptions of Francis by Celano, the teachers kept questioning and trying to see beyond the text, probing for the real Francis.

An interesting sidelight concerning the texts studied is that nearly all copies of Celano's *Lives* were destroyed by command of the Franciscan Minister General at the Chapter of 1266. In fact, only two copies of II Celano remained extant and that was because they were in the possession of some Cistercians who were beyond the jurisdiction of the Franciscan Minister's edict. The reason for this book burning was that it was decided that Bonaventure's biography would be the official Franciscan view of their founder.

It should be noted that I Celano has a slight different view from II Celano and Bonaventure's tone differs from both. This naturally aided and complicated at the same time the group's goal of discovering the real Francis but also added the adventure of personal interpretations for those of us in the twentieth century.

The second area which the group explored was the world of visual images, that is, Francis as he was depicted in frescoes, altarpieces, and

paintings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is interesting that there are only two hundred surviving such art works from that period. According to Dr. Cook, scholars estimate that there is only a one percent survival rate of such works which means that at one time there were probably twenty thousand images extant. It should be further noted that St. Francis received more attention in art than other saints which is an indication of his early popularity if not his importance. However, of the two hundred catalogued art works depicting Francis most are in Italy. The rest are scattered throughout Europe and the United States in Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City, New Haven, New York, Pasadena and Williamstown.

However, the group's focus was on those paintings and frescoes in Italy. They visited Rome and Florence, Pescia and Pistoia in Tuscany, and lesser known places like Montefalco, Orte, and Nocera Umbra. Wherever there was a museum or church, large or small, open or closed, that housed even one medieval picture of Francis, the group traveled there and examined it. These artistic illustrations aided in the search for Francis because they complemented the texts of Celano and Bonaventure and even *added* knowledge to the life of Francis. In our time videocassettes will record the lives of saintly contemporaries, but in the Middle Ages art was the visual means of instruction. In fact, a special art form known as the dossal was created especially for Francis. The dossal contained a large central figure of the saint with small panels to the right and left illustrating important events from the life of the saint. Of course, Dr. Cook brought the teachers to every dossal within reasonable travel distance. One of the most memorable dossals was in the Bardi Chapel in the church of Santa Croce in Florence which contains twenty scenes from the life of Francis.

The climax of the search for Francis in art came during the final three weeks in Assisi where the teachers saw for the first time the grand and famous frescoes of Giotto in the Basilica of St. Francis.

The mention of Assisi brings us to the third area of study which was the geographical locations where the group would experience first hand the actual places where Francis had walked, preached, and lived the most important events in his life. Visiting Assisi is a *sine qua non* in any in depth study of the life of St. Francis. Assisi is a city of enchantment. If it had a certain charm at the time of Francis' life, that charm has only grown due to its most famous citizen. The medieval city has not changed much from its original ambience. One can walk the same streets Francis walked; and one can visit the cathedral of San Rufino where he was baptized; one can enter the Chiesa Nuova, the church that houses the residence of Francis' parents, the Bernardone fmaily. There is also the

church of Santa Chiara in which one finds the tomb of one of Francis' most devoted followers, Saint Clare.

About a half hour on foot below the town of Assisi, one finds the church of San Damiano in which the crucifix spoke to Francis and declared his mission. A short bus ride takes you down into the valley to the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli in which is enshrined the Porziuncula, the tiny church where Francis lived and died. A longer walk of less than an hour takes one up Mount Subasio to the Eremo delle Carceri, a monastery tucked away in the forest which Francis frequented as a place of retreat.

Besides living in Assisi, the teachers visited Greccio where Francis built the first Christmas crib, Laverna where Francis received the stigmata, and even Gubbio where Francis tamed the famous wolf of that town.

Perhaps the most impressive sight for many members of the seminar was the first visit to the crypt where the remains of Francis lie. After three weeks of churches, museums, and discussions in Siena, the reality of the man Francis struck home at the sight of his resting place. If anyone has ever seen the tomb of Napoleon, one is impressed by its grandeur. The tomb of Francis is quite simple yet exudes a feeling of a power of its own. Where Napoleon's power is gone, that of Francis continues to grow.

Upon seeing the tomb, some of the participants were not sure whether the journey had come to an end or had just begun. The arrival in assisi, the Franciscan Mecca, produced the simultaneous feeling of coming home and the feeling of asking where do we go from here?

On the last day of the seminar, the participants were asked to give their views of the study and the experience. One comment that stood out was that it was difficult to evaluate and compare a secular figure who affected history with a spiritual figure who affected history unless one believed in the spiritual. Do we say that Augustine cannot be compared with Cicero or Virgil because he was involved in a spiritual world? It was important to see history as the story of God's people with Christ as the central figure in that story if one were to understand Francis' place as a man who affected his age. If one has that view, then Francis can be seen as just as influential as Charlemagne, Napoleon, or Lincoln. Most participants learned at least that one can affect history without wearing the garb of conquerer, philosopher or president.

While the issues of secular and spiritual were debated the spiritual aspect did affect a few participants. One teacher confessed, "I don't know what it is, but I really feel different, more spiritual I think."

Another example of the spiritual effect came from a current participant who said, "I pray to Francis now. I never did before. I think you'd have to be foolish not to." Whether that teacher was impressed by the list of miracles recorded in the texts studied, one will never know, but that is the kind of change that took place.

Today there are fifteen more people across the United States who have been exposed to and filled with the spirit of Francis. Fortunately, they are teachers of high school students; for what better representatives can one find to bring back the message to a captive audience of teenagers. Since all the teachers are involved in the humanities in some way, their students will be able to receive the benefit of whatever rubs off from their teacher's exposure to Francis. Bear in mind that these fifteen educators did not apply for the program with the intention of proselytizing. But each one with so much experience in the classroom knows the emptiness found in the hearts of our youngsters today. They see how television, walkmans, computers, and vcrs have blocked out the rest of the world from their senses and souls. Most young people have never heard of Dorothy Day, Mitch Schneider, or Bruce Ritter. And many can hardly recognize Mother Teresa. Young people deserve to understand the values that inspire contemporary heroes and the tradition that inspires those values. Fortunately, there are fifteen more classrooms around the country this year where the youngsters can learn these things from teachers who immersed themselves in the study of such values.

This is why the search for Francis was an extraordinary opportunity not only for teachers but also for their students. Regardless of their faith or degree of spirituality or whether they brought back slides, posters, or books for their students, they all brought back Francis. □

The Importance of the Images of Francis of Assisi for Worship

WAYNE SIMSIC

The modern pilgrim who visits the Upper Basilica in Assisi admires the life-size frescoes depicting Francis' life but has a difficult time imagining how powerful these images were for the medieval worshiper. Twentieth-century people understand how effective words can be when they are used with impact but find it difficult to understand how images can produce effects that are psychologically, intellectually, and emotionally powerful. We are familiar with verbal texts as the dominant force shaping imagination and belief, but in the early medieval period images were primary and defined a person's vision of self and the world. Images were readily available to the entire community through sculpture, stained glass, carved pulpits, painted panels, and frescoes.

Private devotion centered on small statues, relief plaques, crucifixes, and relics of the saints. Worshipers did not experience the aesthetic distance toward religious images that we do today but embraced them, first of all, as mnemonic and didactic aids which allowed them to participate in the liturgy and, secondly, as ways of concentrating the will and eliciting powerful emotional responses.[1] Seeing the images of Christ or of saints like Francis could transform one's life. We can never completely regain the medieval perspective toward religious images, nor would we necessarily want to, but we need to understand it if we are to appreciate the extraordinary impact that the images of Francis had on a medieval worshiper.

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The Primacy of Images

In thirteenth — and fourteenth — century Italy visual participation in the lives of the saints and Christ began in the cradle and continued into adulthood. It was thought that images left an imprint on the imagination at a very early age. In 1403, Cardinal Dominici, a leading spokesman for the church, gives the following advice on a small child's religious education: "...you should observe five little rules... The first is to have paintings in the house... of holy little boys and virgins, in which your child when still in swaddling clothes may delight, as being like himself, and may be influenced by the similar images."[2]

The importance of images for introducing an adult to a life of faith is especially outlined in a thirteenth-century compendium of knowledge:

> Know that there were three reasons for the institution of images in churches. First, for the instruction of simple people, because they are instructed by them as if by books. Second, so that the mystery of the incarnation and the examples of the saints may be the more active in our memory through being presented daily to our eyes. Third, to excite feelings of devotion, these being aroused more effectively by things seen than by things heard.[3]

The medieval worshiper, unlike the modern person, did not passively look at images but participated in them. The image did not catch the eye but the eye caught the image. The soul was affected in a fundamental way by a painting. To walk into a church and see the life of Christ as well as scenes from the lives of the saints covering the walls and depicted on the altarpiece was to experience an intimacy between one's life and the spiritual world. Even the person who was illiterate possessed a visual sophistication that came from many other frescoes and knowing the symbols used by artists. This allowed the ordinary person to enter a fresco and translate it in an intimate and powerful way.

For people at the time, sight was the entrance to the heart. Franciscan scholars in the thirteenth century had come to accept the theory that the universe originated in a light which gave birth to the spheres and infused the world. Light was the source of grace and closed the gap between creature and Creator. Gazing at this light could lead a person to beatific contemplation because the eye allowed the radiance of love to fill the heart. A dramatic example of the primacy of vision can be found in the fourteenth-century rite of the Mass.[4] Reception of communion was rare during this period. Participation in the Eucharist was more a matter of seeing than eating. The priest paused for a long time during the elevation of the host so that the worshipers could gaze with love and devotion. This alone, according to St. Gertrude, was enough to bring spiritual merit. Worshipers would go from Mass to Mass timing their arrival so that they would see the elevation of the host and leave immediately afterward. A

topic for theological conversation at the time was the disposition necessary for seeing the host.

Due to this belief in the potency of sight, paintings and frescoes were understood as more than tools for teaching about faith events. "Minimally, images instruct; maximally, they are capable of translating the worshiper to ecstatic states of contemplation, and the maximum was not beyond the reach of the humblest worshiper."[5] Images were means of discovering direct insight into the mysteries of faith. It was presumed that even those who were illiterate had access to states of prayer that were closed to a more sophisticated and analytical viewer.

It is probable that Francis himself preferred a thought process that depended on images rather than to concepts. We do know that Francis espoused using images for worship sice he prayed to painted images though not as objects but as openings to a sacred reality. In the ruined chapel of San Damiano he knelt down before a crucifix and heard Christ command him to rebuild his church. It is this image of the crucifix that had profound effect on Francis. Francis indicated to his followers that he understood himself in the form of a cross when he used the Tau as a signature. In his biography of the saint, Bonaventure depicts Francis as one whose entire life could be understood as the gradual interiorization of the image of the cross.

The Icons of Francis

The early images of Francis grew out of the Byzantine icon. These icons, like the cross that Francis prayed before, were considered extraordinary images that acted as mediating points between the believer and God. They were used for instruction but were primarily ways of prayer. Because Italians grew up with an awareness of the Byzantine icon, the icons related to Francis' life had an immediate and powerful impact on their consciousness.[6]

The first images to appear after Francis' death were small paintings of altarpieces. The first of the altarpieces can be found in the church of San Francesco in Pescia. This early thirteenth-century representation of Francis painted by Bonaventura Berlinghieri offers an idealized image of the saint in heaven at the center of the altarpiece and scenes from his life in the panels around the sides. The artist was not interested in a photographic likeness but in conveying a transcendent reality. The central image is not attractive; it is not the welcoming figure of Francis with arms outstretched but an ascetic figure like Elijah or John the Baptist. The lines of the habit are thick and straight, accentuating the heavily shadowed cheek bones. The eyes are penetrating and call the viewer to repentance. This Francis is a herald of God, a prophet, and his message is one of conversion.

The eye moves from the central figure to the scenes from Francis' life in the side panels and back again to the central figure. This visual movement allows the worshiper to consider the earthly life and the glorified existence of the saint together. Perhaps the most imposing feature of the altarpiece, though, is the wounds of Francis' hands and feet. No other saint had ever been portrayed in a way that was so closely indentified with Christ.

Imagine a worshiper attending a liturgy at San Francesco in Pescia and seeing the figure of Francis flickering in the candlelight. The wounds on Francis parallel the wounds of Christ as he hangs from the cross above the altar. A friar dressed in the same garb as Francis points to individual panels on the altarpiece and describes Francis' life using postures and gestures that are meant to enact the scenes of the worshiper. The visual expression of the sermon threatens to usurp the verbal. With emotional intensity rising in his voice the preacher proclaims that Francis is a new and powerful saint, one who has been marked by God with the stigmata, and whose life serves as a model for us all.

In time the scenes from Francis' life, such as his conversion before the bishop, preaching to the birds, and the stigmata, became well known. Of all the saints that could be identified in Italian panel paintings between the late eleventh-century and early fourteenth-century the figure of Francis of Assisi was the most common.[7]

In the fourteenth century devotion had shifted from rites and priests to the people. This process was partly due to Francis himself who through his preaching gathered together and inspired large groups. Later his friars would follow in his footsteps and continue to win over the masses. As a result, works of art began to reflect the needs of a more popular, devotional and private religion. The greatest concentration of images could be found in the Church where side chapels sponsored by wealthy patrons were used for devotional purposes separate from the liturgy. One of the most famous examples of this can be found in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence where Giotto, around 1320, painted a *Life of Francis* in the Bardi Chapel. One need only remain for a time in this side chapel of seven frescoes to appreciate the meditative quality of Giotto's artistry. The beauty and power of these few frescoes convey more than the eye expects to see and it is easy to imagine how a person's heart would be opened to devotion after remaining for a time in their presence.

The proliferation of images culminated in the Upper Basilica in Assisi. A medieval pilgrim who came to worship would first visit the bare crypt of the saint in the Lower Basilica and then climb the stairs to view the images of Francis' life in the Upper Basilica.

The potency of these Basilica images is clear from the extraordinary

experience of Blessed Angela of Foligno.[8] Angela followed Francis in a life of strict poverty and prayer. Around the feast of St. Francis she took a pilgrimage to Assisi to implore the saint that he give her strength to be faithful to the rule of the Third Order. This penitent from Foligno, who had consistently invoked Francis help from the beginning of her conversion, was open to whatever grace Francis might obtain for her. She first went to the Lower Basilica to pray. Then, after a meal, she returned to the Upper Basilica where her gaze became focused upon a stained glass window depicting Francis in the bosom of Christ. Awestruck by a sense of divine presence, she heard these words:

> Thus I will also hold you closely; and much more so that can be considered with the eyes of the body. For now is the hour, my temple, my delight, when I will fulfill what I told you; for as to this consolation it will depart from you; but I will never depart from you, if you love me.[9]

Angela later told her confessor, Brother Arnaldo, that this was the point when she became conscious of the indwelling of the Holy Trinity. When asked to explain further, she said that words failed and comparisons were useless.

Even ordinary worshipers who saw scenes from the life of the saint... overcame any distance between themselves and the saint.

The image of Francis of the Assisi Basilica may not have had the same dramatic effect on the lives of other pilgrims but there is no doubt that they charged the imagination and inspired devotion. Giotto's enormous frescoes of Francis' life that covered the walls of the Upper Basilica allowed the pilgrim to enter the saint's life in a personal way. The relationship between the scenes from Francis' life and scenes from the life of Christ and Old Testament events heightened one's awareness of participating in a sacred drama.

The representation of Francis that the pilgrim uncovers in the Assisi Basilica is highly sophisticated. Unlike the early icons these images emphasize Francis' relationship to Rome and the approval of the order; they also reinforce the validity of the stigmata. Francis' life is closely modeled on Christs's life and Francis himself is linked to John the Baptist, Elijah, and the Angel of the sixth seal of the Apocalypse. Francis' ministry now

receives cosmic significance. He is considered the representative of a new age, a focal point of salvation history, and a model for Christians everywhere.

Art and other Forms of Devotion

The images of Francis found in paintings were reinforced by other forms of devotional spirituality common in the late Middle Ages, namely, literature, theatrical perfomances, and sermons. A new spirituality had emerged in the cities of towns of Northern Italy. Individuals and groups of every size practiced a devotional religion that evolved from Francis' dedication to the historical Christ and to the passion in particular. This spirituality appealed to the emotions and the imagination and, though it took various forms, it never strayed far from the visual texts that could be found on the walls of local churches.

One form of devotional religion, meditational literature, concentrated on the human and fragile nature of Christ and the saints. This literature was a form of prayer that imaginatively re-created an event, thus allowing a worshiper to become part of it. The intent was to place the worshiper in the event itself so that a personal identification with Christ or a particular saint could be complete. Meditational reading often led to contemplation of image, usually a crucifix or a small panel painting portraying the life of a saint.

One popular text commonly attributed to Bonaventure, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, is addressed to a nun, a Poor Clare. The text itself evokes a Franciscan form of spirituality in its opening pages when the author presents this question: "Do you believe that the Blessed Francis would have attained such abundance of virtue and such illuminated knowledge of the scriptures... if not by familiar conversation with and contemplation of his Lord Jesus?"[10] The reader, of course, realizes that meditation to follow should be experienced through the prism of Francis' spirituality, namely, his poverty, humility, and dedication to the Passion. This message is visually reinforced in the book by an illustration of Francis receiving the stigmata, an image that the reader had seen many times in local churches.

Perhaps the most powerful image reinforced by verbal texts like the *Meditation on the Life of Christ* was the presence of Francis at the foot of the cross. The medieval worshiper was already familiar with the visual representation of Francis at the foot of the cross kneeling and bending over, resting his head on Christ's feet, his body draped in rivulets of blood. With this image in mind, the worshiper herself assumes Francis'

position at the foot of the cross and reads the following meditation on Christ's last hour:

> Behold, then, the Lord hangs dead on the cross; the whole multitude departs... But you, if you will contemplate your Lord well, will consider that from the sole of His foot to the crown of His head there is no health in Him: there is not member or bodily sense that has not felt total affliction or passion... Study devoutly, faithfully, and solicitously to meditate on all this.[11]

The strong relationship between meditational text and artistic images continued into the sixteenth century. Cardinal Borromeo made a retreat in 1584 at the Franciscan shrine at Varallo, north of Milan, and we have a detailed account of his experience.[12] The Sacro Monte at Varallo was the largest and most sophisticated of the Franciscan shrines which began to dot the landscape in the thirteenth century. It became a popular pilgrimage site, reconstructing the way of the cross so that individual Christians would find an intimate experience of contrition and forgiveness.

We know from his biographers that Borromeo used written meditations in preparing himself to visit the chapels dedicated to scenes from Christ's life. The meditations described each of the twenty-eight chapels in personal and intimate terms. The Cardinal read the meditations during the day and in the evening, by flickering lamplight, visited the chapels that illustrated the themes of his meditations. Each chapel contained a literal representation of a sacred story from Christ's infancy, the Passion, or the life of the Virgin Mary. Inside each chapel were life-size figures arranged to represent a story and frescoes painted on the back and side walls to illustrate the actual location of the event.

Ideally, the practice of prayerful reflection on a meditative text and viewing the recreation of a scene from Christ's life elicited an emotional response in the pilgrim that was immedate and intimate. Even without the text the visual language of the chapel was so accesible that any pilgrim could engage in imaginative forms of prayer.

Pilgrims who found their way to Sacro Monte or to other Franciscan shrines were, in effect, following Francis' own footsteps to Mount La Verna where he prayed and fasted in solitude. Whereas Francis was transformed into an alter Christus through his love for the Passion of Christ the pilgrim who indentified with Francis and meditated on the suffering and humanity of Christ became an alter Franciscus. Francis, whose life and teaching were commonly recognized as modeling Christ, led the pilgrim who imitated him to union with Christ himself.

Meditational texts were not the only form of devotional spirituality that reinforced the popular images of Francis. Reinforcement came from theatrical performances and sermons as well. Medieval drama took place outside

the context of liturgy. Audiences saw saints' lives portrayed and heard lyrics sung by Franciscan preachers. These performances were even more compelling when we realize that the theatrical images of Francis' life acted out in courtyard were also staged in a dramatic style on the walls of the Upper Basilica.

Sermons in courtyards or on street corners were also popular at the time because people would rather listen to a good preacher than go to their rooms and pray, and because the friars were more experienced than the local parish priests in their ability to hold the attention of a crowd. Popular preachers appealed to ordinary life experiences and called on people in the audience to be involved in the sermon. Preaching itself was dramatic since it often imitated the emotional intensity of religious painting. The preachers were performers who, using specific gestures and body language found in manuals, would act out scenes from paintings such as Francis' dramatic conversion in the courtyard of Assisi.

Medieval worshipers, then, were not only aware of the painted images of Francis but found that these were reinforced by devotional texts, drama, and sermons. Their visual experience was highly sophisticated and intimately related to their faith. Because of this interrelationship of various forms of devotion we might easily imagine that the intensity of the experience may have had transformative influence on a worshiper's life. Ordinary worshipers without any aspirations to mystical prayer could enter Francis' life through the images that surrounded them and discover a deepening faith.

Conclusion

The main point of this essay has been to clarify the manner in which the medieval worshiper participated in the images of Francis. The worshiper's experience of paintings and frescoes was not predominantly passive as is our experience of images today. Whereas we allow our conciousness to be flooded with images from film or newsprint without much participation, the medieval worshiper felt an indentification with the images from Francis' life. Even ordinary worshipers who saw scenes from the life of the saint depicted in frescoes, dramatized during a sermon, and emphasized through devotional texts, overcame any distance between themselves and the saint. Perhaps the closest we can come to this experience today is by spending time contemplating and studying the images of Francis without assuming an artificial distance between ourselves and them. The images of Francis are not simply images from the past but are archetypal; they reflect the process of conversion in saints throughout history and in some way reflect our own faith process. It is also possible that, through these images, we too may become present at the nativity,

the crucifixion, the resurrection and the Last Judgement and intuit what it means to participate in a divine plan of creation, redemption, and eschatology.

Endnotes

[1]Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), p. 44.

[2]Creighton E. Gilbert, *Italian Art: 1400-1500* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1980), p. 145.

[3]Quoted in Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight*, p. 66.

[4]Georges Duby, *The Age of the Cathedrals: Art and Society, 980-1420*, trans. Eleanor Levieux and Barbara Thompson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 236.

[5]Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight*, p. 67.

[6]*Art, Creativity, and the Sacred*, ed. Diane Apostolos Cappadona (New York: Crossroad, 1984), p. 278.

[7]See especially *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Rait (New York: Crossroad, 1987), pp. 75-105.

[8]Paul LaChance, O.F.M., *The Spiritual Journey of the Blessed Angela of Fologno According to the Memorial of Frater A*. (Rome: Athenaeum Antonianum, 1984), p. 90-92.

[9]Ibid., p. 176.

[10]*Meditations on the Life of Christ: an Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, trans. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Paris: Biblioteque Nationale, Ms. Ital. 115; Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 10.

[11]Ibid., pp. 337, 338.

[12]See William Hood, "The Sacro Monte of Varallo: Renaissance Art and Popular Religion," in *Monasticism and the Arts*, ed. Timothy Gregory Verdon (Syracuse, New York; Syracuse University Press, 1984), pp. 291-312.

The night is far spent the day draws nigh

The Virgin Birth

Not many words
spoke she,
yet in silence eloquently
The simple phrase
"be it done to me"
Mary became
The Temple of the Lord

But Joseph knew
For he too
Minced no words
Scripture tells only
That he believed
Thus the Babe born of her
Joseph claimed
His Son

One day in distant land
These two
Beheld the mystery unfold
A Child born, Divine
Yet human He
born a King in poverty

Rich in Love, Infant Arms
Stretch out to hold
A world
Transcendent to enfold
His Cross of Love
Our cross of sin

A Babe, a man, a God
Destined a sinful world to free
Our Lord
Our Light
Our Christ
Is He!

Sr. M. Thaddine, O.S.F.

In The Fields of Light

SR. CLARE IMMACULATE MCDONNELL, O.S.F.

Saints and Mystics, Poets and Painters have occupied themselves well and to our advantage with the effects of light.

"Since Christ," as Bonaventure says, "is pure efusion of the brightness of the power of the omnipotent God," the soul, he urges, "should run to this fountain of Light as to the Source of all goodness." Light here is that self-generating *person* who will aid us in our ascent to Godliness.

But in his account of Francis' death, Bonaventure[1] writes of Francis freed from his body and absorbed into "the abyss of divine Light," so that Light here seems equated with a place-a place and rest where shines an abundance of wisdom. Yet in the Prologue in his *Life of Francis*, Bonaventure calls Francis himself a "light-bringer for believers, one who prepares the way of Light and peace into their hearts, a guiding light for those sitting in darkness." The Biblical language (Isa. 49:6; Luke I:76,79) identifies the saint who most resembled Christ and was the most reflective agent of his Divine Light.

But, the mere physical aspect of light is included also in Bonaventure's account of the blind friar whose sight was repaired with a splendrous light; and light is treated symbolically in Francis' own unconcern with the really serious eye illness he suffered:

> For the body receives the gift of light
> for the sake of the spirit, and not contrariwise

he said, preferring to lose his physical sight rather than his interior vision. The story is told that one night when Francis was praying and weeping for the Lord's passion, a witness to the Light that shone within his soul said that an extraordinary illumination surrounded his body. Francis him-

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Sister Clare Immaculate holds a graduate degree in English from Catholic University and a M.Hum. from Penn State. She is Assistant Professor of English at Neumann College. The thoughts on Light were suggested by a casual reference from Ewert Cousins in whose 1986 NEH seminar Sister says she was privileged to be a member.

self did not speak of such moments of grace, for he said, "it happens that if a person loses some priceless thing for the sake of a small gain, he easily provokes the one who gave it not to give it again."

As we think upon both light-givers and light-receivers, we should not forget how Bonaventure credits Augustine with the consideration that Light is also a process — "the light of everyone who reasons truly is enkindled by that truth which he strives to reach."[2] Bonaventure himself thought of Light as a thing: "all sciences have infallible rules, like rays of light shining down upon our mind from eternal laws... thus the radiation and contemplation of this Light lifts up the wise in wonder.[3] How like the spirit of Francis is this theologian's concluding application of the heart to the relevance of the mind's earthly knowledge.

It is in his meditation on the stages of illumination that lead from creatures to union with the creator, that Bonaventure speaks of the light of truth as "a candelabrum that glows upon the face of the mind." He perceived that Francis' intellect — unlike his own university trained mind was yet illumined by the brilliance of eternal Light so that he could probe the depths of scripture with remarkable acumen — a gift the world acclaims resulted in Francis' extraordinary sanctity.

When the puritan poet Milton (PL, Bk. III, 52-4) in the most personal of his invocations addressed his Muse as light, was he speaking of the same divine Light (I John, 5); (I.8.12) as the Saints or Mystics or Dante in Paradise (XIII)? Surely that Muse is the same God's essence, agent, or creative power. One hears all these overtones as well as an intimation of mere physical light from which Milton like Francis was cut off by his blindness in his prayer to Celestian Light:[4]

> Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse. (III.52-4)

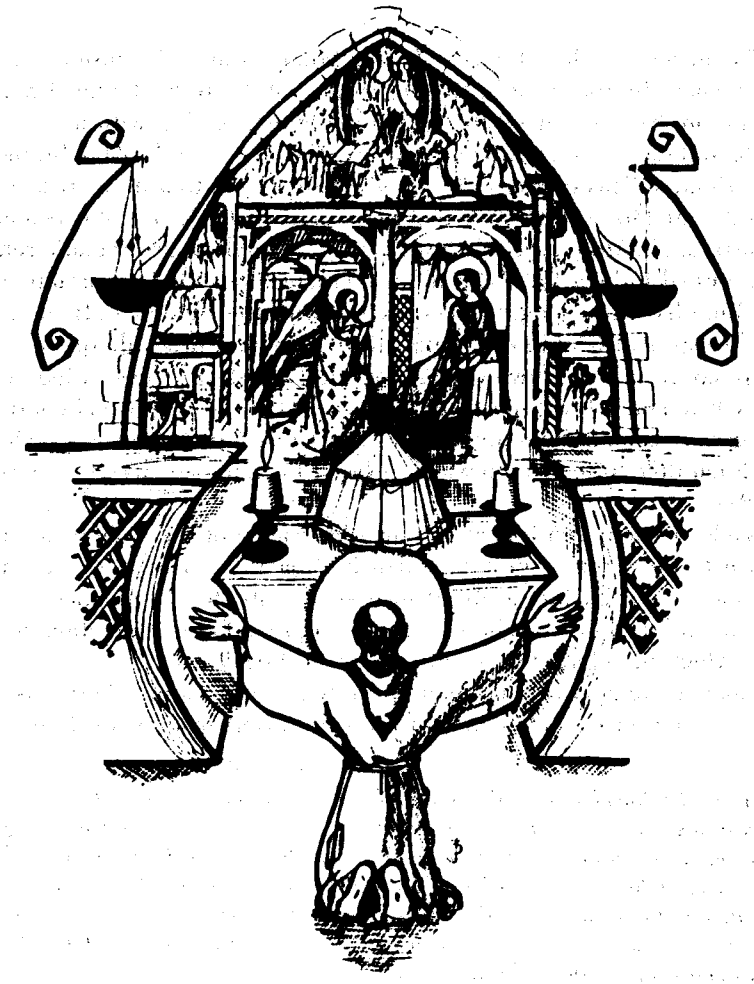
To turn now to artists of light working in another medium. Who can forget Bernini's masterful effects of light in his *Theresa in Ecstasy* providing us, as it does, the visible representation of that which is invisible.

Two painters, Giotto and Bellini have effectively contrasted the sources of light in their execution of St. Francis in Ecstasy. In his rendition of *The Stigmata*, Giotto's source of light is heaven-directed, otherworldly. In Bellini's work, though his landscape is more cool, inviting, and delightfully suffused with light, its source derives from the sun, from this world, so that the effect is a kind of daylight painting.

Of course, Caravaggio and Rembrandt will always remain among the outstanding painters of Chiaroscuro. Problems of light-effects constantly occupied these artists as they shifted dramatic accents in scenes for their heroes or subordinated bystanders in an incredible variety of shadows.

Witness: Rembrandt's *David Kneeling before Saul* or *The Flight into Egypt* and Caravaggio's *The Call of Matthew* and *The Call of St. Paul*.

While Kenneth Clark feels that it was "the years of the Impressionists that actually added something to our human faculty — an awareness of light which seems almost a new sense," one cannot but acknowledge that in reading or viewing earlier artists — poets and painters — it was with the coming of Jesus that light was made resplendent with deeper meaning, and very ordinary realities given a new and superior dimension.



The Deeper Obervance

HERBERT SCHNEIDER, O.F.M.

The history of the Order of Friars Minor is also the history of its observance. By that I mean the observance of the Rule of Saint Francis for the brothers who lived the gospel life of discipleship with him.

The Rule serves as the Magna Charta of the new lifestyle of the brothers with Francis. This explains why it is so valued and treasured. It is with eyes directed toward the Rule that renewal in the Order has always found its inspiration. More precisely it was always a search for greater adherence to the Final Rule of 1223. But in most recent times the interpretation of this Rule has been sought in connection with the Rule of 1221 because here the spirit of Saint Francis is perceived in tis more original expression.

My concern here, however, is not with its interpretation which certainly is in and of itself most fruitful for awakening our spiritual energies to a greater commitment to the Rule. I am more intent upon approaching the Final Rule from a depth which, I feel, also validly applies to the Rule of 1221.

While the fourteenth century saw observance of the Rule as a strict return to the original lifestyle and will of Saint Francis — which often became fixated on literal observance — the stricter observance of the seventeenth century sought for a renewed prayerful consideration of the Rule which therefore gave rise to the name Recollect.

Today as we approach the end of the twentieth century there arises a new demand of the hour: to seek after an observance of the Rule in a

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Fr. Herbert Schneider of the Province of Cologne (Germany) has published extensively in his native language. Following his doctoral studies at the University of Cologne, he taught for several years until he was elected Minister Provincial (1980 - 89). Besides his current duties as Vicar Provincial, Prefect of Formation and Guardian of the House of Studies in Remagen, he serves on a commission of the German Bushops' Conference. This article was translated from the German by Fr. Joseph Doino, editor of **The CORD.**

renewed way. This must be done if the order wishes to discover its identity at its source and not in externals, that is, neither from external encounters alone nor from an external observance and carrying out of the Rule but from an original sense of the depth of the Rule; and this is the Gospel.

This deeper observance reveals how much the Rule finds its justification in the Gospel, and actually brings this Gospel to expression. The Rule gains its understanding exclusively from the Gospel.

Thus the Rule before all else has as its sole purpose to serve the observance of the Gospel, as Francis says in the first chapter: "The Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Rule, therefore, insofar as it is understood to be the basis for the life of the Friars Minor, is both a help and way for the observance of the Gospel.

In this sense the Rule is faithfully lived only when it brings to expression the observance of the Gospel. Its purpose is to bring the gospel to light. Attention must always be given to this fact in every consideration of the Rule.

The first chapter presents an abbreviated form of the Rule which then unfolds itself in the following chapters. This abbreviated form is life, in obedience, without property and in chastity. Consequently the vows can be viewed in a double perspective: an abbreviated form of the Rule and simultaneously the very observance of the Gospel.

One must, therefore, seek to discern the call of the gospel in the Rule and to live it. The more one lives the vows as an abbreviated form of the Rule the more the gospel is brought forth. This likewise holds for fidelity to the Rule in its twelve chapters.

It is this that I call the *deeper observance* of the Rule, which has the power to lead to a renewal and revitalization of our Order's life. How much Francis was concerned in the Rule for the actualization of the gospel is seen in the repeated references to sacred scripture.

Since the entire rule, as previously mentioned, is intended to give actual form to the gospel, those scriptural passages which Francis expressly chooses clarify the sense and meaning of this deeper observance. There are three criteria for the life of the brothers; namely, with what shaping concept, with what promise and with what availability the brothers live.

The shaping idea of the brothers' life is clearly visible in the first text of scripture, Matthew 19:21; the brothers are called to journey as pilgrims with Christ as when Jesus calls the disciples to leave all in order to come and follow him. The evangelical call to be pilgrims and wanderers has its justification in the following of Christ. It tolerates no looking back; one is always to look ahead (Lk. 9:62). The brothers equip themselves for this when they live simply among the common folk (Matt. 11:8), fast (Matt.

4:2), do not quarrel (Lk. 10:5), and show themselves as modest and undemanding.

In the faithful observance of the Rule the friars minor gain a deep understanding of what it means to be a pilgrim with the Lord and one of his disciples.

The promise made to the brother who in accordance with 1 Peter 2:11 is a pilgrim and stranger and lives in poverty as did the Lord (2 Cor. 8:9) consists in this: he will be an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven (Jam. 2:5).

In faithfully following the Rule the brother has a new world before him. Francis speaks of the land of the living (Ps. 141:6). The brothers reach it in the observance of the Rule. The Rule restores one first of all to a life which endures. Pilgrimage with its demand for renunciation has its great recompense, for one receives the gift of new life. To live as a stranger is not an end in itself; the lesser brother finds a new homeland in the land of the living. The future is full of life and homecoming.

While journeying, the brothers already obtain a foretaste of the land of the living when they are able to make known their needs to one another with trust (1 Thess. 2:7) and when they serve each other (Matt. 7:12).

Striving for the land of the living as pilgrim and stranger makes the friar minor available for whatever needs he encounters in the world (Ps. 11:7).

Their preaching is to be reflective and clear, that is, it is to be an expression of this pilgrimage to the land of the living. In service of this also is the brief word (Rom. 9:28) which without digression goes directly to the heart of the gospel and arouses the listener to discipleship. The brothers therefore are also to protect themselves against pride and greed (Lk. 12:15) as well as worldly anxiety (Matt. 13:22). As pilgrims underway to the land of promise they devote all their energies in this world toward reaching this one goal alone. Underway they remain totally pointed toward this new fulfillment of life. Thus Francis admonishes them that in their journey they are to love their enemies (Matt. 5:44) and to persevere to the end (Matt. 10:22), rooted in faith and strong and unshaken in the hope of the gospel (Col. 1:23).

The renewal of the order comes about through each individual who lives his life as a pilgrim and stranger on the way to the land of promise and thereby preserves himself free of the distractions of this world in love, faith and hope.

How does one equip himself for this battle? In no other way than through the acceptance of the gospel which expresses itself in the Rule. Knowledge of the gospel is only the starting-point. Then comes before all else meditation of the scriptures. This allows the word of scripture to enter the heart and it prepares the friar to be open to the gospel from the depths of his being. The second is the sharing of the scripture. This

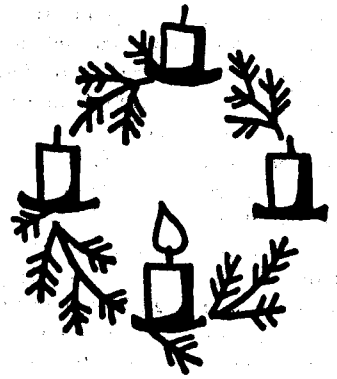
enables me to dwell with the message of the gospel in the midst of the community.

The third is decisive, namely, scriptural prayer. It leads me to communion with Jesus Christ. When his words become my prayer, I no longer stand next to, before or behind the message of scripture; rather I stand in it. Thus Christ takes shape in me. Scriptural prayer must be a personal priority each day so that scripture and together with it the Lord himself come to expression in my life and are thus made manifest.

The deeper observance of the rule leads to love for the scriptures and to scriptural prayer. In this prayer one's own life is brought into unity with the life of the Lord, together with His words. Also, that which the lesser brother brings to his reflection and prayer, immersed in the word of scripture this prayer brings about and actualizes: to dwell with the Lord and thus arrive in the land of the living.

This life of observance has positive results in the world. As it takes shape in us and as the gospel lives in us, there is awakened a wonderment and curiosity regarding our observance of the vows in the living out of the Rule.

The Rule intends to prepare us so that we live not merely at the periphery of the gospel but that we live in the gospel itself. If we succeed in this, then there also is made visible in the concreteness of our earthly existance an expression of the gospel itself. If our lives are authentic then there are awakened within the hearts of our fellow pilgrims in this world vital questions regarding our hope for the land of promise. □



BOOK REVIEW

The Forthbringer of God. By George H. Tavard. St. Bonaventure on the Virgin Mary. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989. Pp. 187. $9.95.

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

In January 1988 an insightful dialogue took place at St. Bonaventure University. Clergy and theologians representing the Roman and Reformed traditions held an afternoon of study on the topic of Mary. Interestingly enough the Protestant representative focused on Mary in liturgy and iconography while the Roman representative explored biblical images of Mary.

George Tavard's text grows out of a similar dialogue. February 1984 marked the beginning of a dialogue on Mary between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic traditions in the United States. As Tavard notes, he prepared a paper in 1986 comparing Bonaventure and Scotus. He rightly notes the abundant references to Mary in the Seraphic Doctor. He suggests that these references have been overlooked in favor of the Subtle Doctor because of the latter's belief in the Immaculate Conception.

Undoubtedly Tavard has made a significant contribution to the Lutheran understanding of Mary because his text does just that for any reader. Even a quick survey of the text informs the reader that what may have been held by the Marian piety of the 1950's is certainly not the limit of the Church's belief through the centuries.

Selecting the title, "The Forthbringer of God" drives home this point. Tavard aligns himself with the Greek tradition of "Theotokos" and thereby hints at a reconciliation that might take place between Romans and Protestants as well as an internal reconciliation that many Romans would feel in need of with their own tradition.

As Tavard notes, not everything in Bonaventure will be useful or of interest for every reader. He divides the text into four parts. Parts one and two concentrate on Bonaventure's more formal theology — his theological treatises and commentaries on the gospels of Luke and John. At times these sections can become tedious for even the very interested reader. For the most part Tavard is quite attentive to detail. Some points could be explored with a bit smoother flow of logic.

Parts three and four will capture the attention of the reader interested in Bonaventure's more popular Marian spirituality. These sections detail liturgical piety in Bonaventure's preaching and the mystical insight of his final works. In these areas Bonaventure is at his best and Tavard is at his best.

Though some of the quotations of Bonaventure selected by Tavard echo on overly sweet sentiment, the reader should not be put off. Placing the language in its cultural context, the reader should be attentive to the insight garnered by Tavard detailing Mary's role in a truly Christocentric understanding of salvation. It is in these sections that Tavard is best in describing the Church's medieval approaches to Mary.

Going back to pre-Reformation understandings of Mary can be helpful in further ecumenical dialogue, a topic of apparent contemporary interest. It can also be helpful for the Roman seeking some reconciliation with his or her own tradition. This reviewer found something of that in Tavard's text.

Shorter Notices

Julian Davies, O.F.M.,
Associate Editor

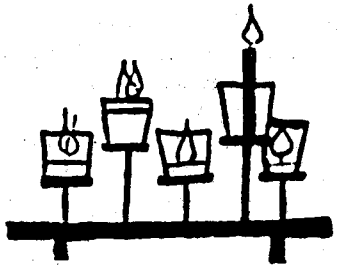
TWO NEW BOOKS WORTHY OF NOTICE

Twelve Tough Issues: What the Church Teaches and Why. By Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk. Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1988. Pp. 83. Paper, $4.95.

Letters to Marc About Jesus. By Henri J. M. Nouwen. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. Pp. 85. Cloth, $12.95.

The twelve tough issues treated by Archbishop Pilarczyk are Abortion, Artificial Conception, Capital Punishment, Divorce and Remarriage, Contraception, Homosexuality, Economics, Warfare, Priestly Celibacy, Ordination of Women, Authority and Conscience. In each case the teaching of the Church is clearly explained, and the reason behind the teaching. The perspective of faith is clearly illumined on each of the issues, and the most common objections to the stands of the Church quite adequately answered. Every priest and religious educator should have a copy of this work, and every parish and Church bookstand have it in stock. Would that its purchase price were a bit lower, but it is worth every penny.

Henri Nouwen wrote seven letters to his 19-year-old nephew explaining why Jesus gives meaning to life. The letters do not form an apologetic treatise, but rather a reflection on the spiritual life which is suitable for the veteran of religious life as much as the beginner. The letters deal with different titles that Nouwen gives Jesus: The Heart of Our Existence; The God who sets us Free, the Compassionate God, the Descending God, the Loving God, the Hidden God. The last letter speaks of listening to Jesus, and calls special attention to His Presence in Church, and Eucharist, Bible and inspirational reading, in personal prayer. Letters to Marc is not only a good homily source, but something for the reader.



Books Received

Beattle, Melody. *Beyond Codependency and Getting Better All the Time*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. xiii-252, inc. Bibliography. Paper, $9.95.

Boys, Mary C. *Educating in Faith. Maps & Visions*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. x-330, inc. Bibliographic Essay & Index. Cloth, $21.95.

Clarke, Jean, Illssey Clarke and Dawson, Connie. *Growing Up Again. Parenting Ourselves, Parenting Our Children*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. 194, inc. Index. Paper, $11.95.

Doohan, Leonard. *Grass Roots Pastors. A Handbook for Career Lay Ministers*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. xv-187, inc. Appendices and Index. Paper, $1.95.

Fortune, Maria M. *Is Nothing Sacred. When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. xviii-167, inc. Appendix & Index. Cloth, $16.95.

Habito, Ruben F. *Total Liberation. Zen Spirituality and the Social Dimension*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989. Pp. xviii-110, inc. Index. Paper, $11.95.

Kaufman, Philip S. *Why You Can Disagree and Remain a Faithful Catholic*. Bloomington, IN: Meyer Stone Books, 1989. Pp. xvi-174, inc. Glossary and Index. Paper, $9.95.

Mueller, Thomas J. and Amers, Charlotte A. *Fr. Theodore Hesburgh. Commitment, Compassion, Consecration. Inspirational Quotes of Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C.* Huntington: IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1989. Pp. 108, inc. Index. Paper, $5.95.

Neusner, Jacobi. *Invitation to Midrash. The Workings of Rabbinic Bible Interpretation*. San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. xv-336, inc. Index and Texts. Cloth, $25.95.

Philips, Dorothy Berkley, Howes, Elizabeth Bowden and Nixon, Lucille M., ed. *The Choice is Always Ours: The Classic Anthology of the Spiritual Way*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. 493, inc. Appendix and Indices. Paper, $12.95.

Polzin, Samuel & the Deuteronomist. *A Literature Study of Deuteronomic History: 1 Samuel*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. 296, inc. Indices. Cloth, $38.95.

Saint Teresa of Avila. *The Interior Castle*. The English Version. Translated by John Venard, OCD. Philadelphia: E. J. Dwyer. 1989. Pp. xv-105. Paper, $7.95.

Saint Teresa of Avila. *The Way of Perfection*. Modern English version. Tr. John Venard, OCD. Distributed by Meyer Stone Books, Bloomington, IN. Pp. xv-137. Paper, $7.95.

Sanford, John A. *Dreams. God's Forgotten Language*. San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. xiv - 194. Index. Paper, $10.95. First published 1968.

Schaef, Anne Wilson. *Escape from Intimacy. Untangling the "Love," "Addictions," Sex, Romance, Relationships*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. 165, inc. Bibliography. Cloth, $13.95.

Swift, Helen Cecilia and Telsher, Margaret M. *Unveiling The Feminine Face of the Church. An Exploration for Groups or Individuals*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1989. Pp. vi-133, inc. Index. Paper, $6.96.

Van Beeck, Frans Josef. *God Encountered: A Contemporary Catholic Systematic Theology Vol I. Understanding the Christian Faith*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Pp. xiii-388, inc. Bibliography and Index. Cloth, $27.95.

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