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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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Standard Abbreviations used in **The CORD**

for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

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

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cet: Celano, First Life of Francis	LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis
2Cet: Celano, Second Life of Francis	LMin: Bonaventure Minor Life of Francis
3Cet: Celano, Treatise on Miracles	LP: Legend of Perugia
4Cet: Legend of Saint Clare	L3S: Legend of the Three Companions
5Cet: Legend of Saint Clare	SC Sacrum commercium
6Cet: Little Flowers of St. Francis	SP: Mirror of Perfection
7Cet: Marion A. Habig, ed., <i>St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of</i> <i>Writings for the Life of St. Francis</i> (Chicago Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).	
8Cet: Fr. J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., <i>Francis and Clare: The Complete</i> <i>Letters</i> (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).	

Two Days In The Life Of A Francis House Client

JOHN MARK STRICKLAND

Wednesday at Francis House is the day that many clients come by for an afternoon of camaraderie, conversation and recreation. The day's activities can include playing games, watching television or videos, random conversation, etc. It's a wholesome opportunity for us to break up the regular monotony of our week. And so, one Wednesday, I spent a pleasant interlude in just that way.

When I was about to leave, Sister Anne lent me a video entitled, "St. Francis, Troubadour of Peace." I took it home and began to watch it that very evening. As I did, I found myself stopping the tape periodically to jot down ideas and notes as they came to mind.

I would like to share them with you now.

It strikes me that St. Francis was able to face our human inadequacies by living his life in truth. The actor portrayed very well the passion that Francis had for lives lived with love and in peace, and his zeal to communicate this passion to all peoples everywhere. Even amid the vanity of youth he maintained a good heart and strove to do good as he perceived it.

In watching a drama or film, it is common to identify with or relate in some way to the protagonist. For my part, I have never heard the voice of Christ, nor have I experienced "holy visions" like Francis did. But I have dreamed dreams that have had a lasting impact on my life.

As I continued to watch the video, I found myself reflecting that there must be more to me than my feelings and thoughts. There must be more to life than the basic activities of daily living: "What am I to eat? What am I to wear?" Surely there is more to life above and beyond one's appearance and speech. How do I bring everything together to determine what I truly am, and more important, what God's purpose is for me?

Francis House is an interfaith day center for men, women and children infected or affected with HIV/AIDS in Tampa, Florida. Sister Mary Margaret Dougherty, O.S.F., an Allegany Franciscan is its founder and executive director.



It seems to me that when Francis gave up all material things, even his family name, he was able to release a weight that had held him down and kept him away from what should be the central focus of life. I myself once left a relationship, leaving behind several thousands of dollars' worth of my material possessions, including an automobile, expensive clothes and jewelry, status, and even the one I loved. In their stead I gained inner peace and thereby retained my sanity. Through the pain of renunciation I discovered equanimity.

"To the one who would ask of you, give!" (LUKE 6:30) These words of Jesus, quoted in the film, puzzled me. Of course I want to help those who are less fortunate than I am. However, I often find myself in an uncomfortable situation. How much can I give? How much can I take? I suppose my underlying question is, "What would Jesus tell his apostles to do? What would Francis do?"

Thursday at Francis House is called "Positively Creative." Clients are invited for lunch and stay afterwards for any one of a large number of creative activities. The Thursday which was the day after I viewed the video on Francis, the creative activity was a visualization exercise led by Father Dave. First he asked us to assume a comfortable, relaxed position with our eyes closed. This was not hard, for when I enter Francis House I am inevitably enveloped with a feeling of safety and security.

Father Dave began by guiding us, in a mental picture, as we walked down a dirt path through a forest. After a while we approached a steep hill. We began to climb and as we reached the summit, we noticed someone walking toward us. It turned out to be a man, and that man turned out to be Jesus! We were asked to look at him very closely and note what we saw. What I envisioned was a man whose clothing reflected a life of poverty, but whose eyes radiated care, concern and love. These eyes were gentle, kind, soothing to behold. Then Father Dave directed us to ask or say anything that we wished to Jesus. I began by admitting to Jesus, and to God his Father, whom I could not see, my character defects and my faults, and I asked for forgiveness. Then I asked Jesus how I could be his servant, and what I must do to remain so. Father Dave now had us pause, allowing time for a response.

To my surprise, I now discovered that the answer was quite simple. Jesus, in this visualization, told me: "First, you must love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul; and in the same way you must also love your neighbor. Then all else you seek will fall into your lap, and you will know how to handle all situations."

Then Father Dave invited us to say farewell to Jesus. I knelt before him, kissed his feet, and embraced his legs. He released me, turned, and slowly

walked away. I watched until he was out of sight. This was the most humbling experience I have ever had, in the world or in the spirit.

Why do I share my reflections and thoughts? I do so to express my gratitude to Francis House for its manifold ministrations to me and people like me. It is indeed neat to be a client of Francis House!

* * *

THE WAY OF THE LAMB Dedicated to Msgr. William Easton

We Wish
Until we are,
What Clare was.

Clare, who enkindles our hearts
to be lovers of God,
and lovers of all.

She fills our minds,
with passages
from Scripture.

We take up her longing,
to pass from emptiness
to fullness,

Embodied in a love that comes from God
and goes to God,
passing from death to life.

But we, pondering her phrases,
may miss
the mark.

So our sister Moon,
reflecting light
from Brother Sun,

Points beyond her self,
Beyond her Francis,
to the Way of the Lamb.

Sr. Florence Vales, O.S.C.

"The Heart Turned Towards The Lord"

The Contemplative Dimension of the Christian Life in the Writings of Francis

THADDÉE MATURA, O. F. M.

The title proposed for this study indicates its objective and limits. Its objective is to discover what is the so-called "contemplative" dimension of the Gospel life described by Francis and what place it occupies in it. The Franciscan gospel life and spirituality in which it is rooted certainly extends beyond the origins and role which Francis played in it. The fact remains, however, that the perspective proposed by Francis in his written message have a basic value: everything is there in embryo, and they are a fundamental parameter for Franciscan spirituality.

But when one considers Francis's writings as a whole and subjects the term "contemplative dimension" to grilling, one is taken by surprise. In fact, the word "to contemplate" is found only once (1Adm/20), while in Clare's writings, which are less numerous, "to contemplate" is found 4 times, and "contemplation" 3 times. Besides, its description is so little developed, that we cannot find any explicit treatise on what we understand by the "contemplative dimension!"

So, instead of trying to force Francis' texts into a pre-established schema, I will begin with certain passages from his writings centered more specifically on the basic Christian experience and will try to bring out a global vision of the contemplative dimension of life according to Francis.

Consequently, the following study will first present:

The author, an internationally known scholar in Franciscan studies, is a member of the St. Joseph Province of Friars Minor, Canada. He prepared this paper for the Order's Commission on the Contemplative Dimension of Franciscan Life, a commission which he himself heads. Fr. Thaddée resides in France.

1) the few major texts (the "places") treating of man's approach to God, and then

2) a more systematic view which will treat of the structure of this process, of it objective and its itinerary.

I. The Texts or The Major Places

The 4 following passages seem to deal more or less directly and at length with man's relationship with God (and, consequently, with the whole of reality. . .)

1. Admonition 16 on purity of heart;
2. the long exhortation in Chap. 22 of the 1st Rule;
3. the thanksgiving in Chapt. 23 of the same Rule;
4. the two brief, lapidary but very central recommendations of the 2nd Rule 5, 2 and 10, 8-9

It is fitting to add to these, but on another level of signification: the Rule for Life in Hermitages.

Admonition 1

and all the prayers reported in the Writings.

This study strictly limits itself to St. Francis writings. This method makes no use of the biographical accounts, or of the later writings of traditional Franciscan spirituality.

To these Writings we have added a few fragmentary passages, scattered here and there.

As much as possible, we situate each of these texts in the context of Francis' life. A meaningful chronological presentation is not possible, since all the passages quoted are spread out over the last 3 or 4 years of Francis' life. However, they are given in their order of importance.

The 16th Admonition comments on the beatitude of the pure of heart. It proclaims, in a striking and pithy phrase, what a pure heart is and the object of its vision. Herein Francis gives the essential key to man's encounter with God. Although it concerns more specifically the "eucharistic" experience, the Admonition situates itself in the same line as spiritual knowledge and this will be taken into account.

Chap. 22 of the 1st Rule, in the form of a long, insistent, impassioned admonition, explains what ought to be at the heart of every friar's life: love of neighbor, pushed to the extreme ("love your enemies"), radical self-denial ("hate self"), and even more forcefully, the continual need to have "the heart ever turned towards the Lord."

The admirable thanksgiving of Chap. 23 (1st Rule) describes in a very lyrical fashion the grandiose vision which is discovered by a pure heart when it turns towards God and His work.

The two passages of the 2nd Rule already mentioned (5, 2; 10, 8-9) are a condensed summary, applied to concrete situations, of the long exhortation of Chap. 22 (1st Rule). One can see how Francis reacts to circumstance, at the distance of some years, while maintaining the same basic exigencies.

The other texts will not be treated separately, but will be taken into consideration in relationship to the whole.

II. The Process

As had been remarked above, although Francis does not use the word "contemplation — contemplative," he speaks several times of the realities which these terms designate in Christian usage, namely a certain perception of the mystery of God, and therefore, another glance at the whole of reality.

This is borne out by the texts which will present and whose riches we must now bring out.

1. The front door: a pure heart.

In commenting on the beatitude of the pure of heart (Mt, 8), Francis declares in a single somewhat awkward phrase (as is often the case in the Admonitions): "They are truly pure of heart, who gaze from above at (usual translation: "despise") earthly realities, seeking heavenly ones, and who never cease to adore and to see, with a pure heart and spirit the Lord God living and true."

Man does not approach God with his eyes, but with his heart. In the biblical language used by Francis this designates the person's unifying center, his deepest self, the weight which constitutes and moves him. He usually joins 'heart' to the word 'mens', to form a couplet. It has an intellectual connotation (its equivalent here is *animus* which, for lack of a better term, we translate as "spirit", signifying the light of knowledge, the capacity to see, alongside a dynamism which is blind per se. So, then, the heart alone, enlightened by knowledge encounters God. And it must be pure, free of all superficiality and centered upon what is important and true. For Francis this implies a certain attitude towards reality, seen in its double component: earthly — immediate, perceptive — and heavenly, what is "from above" and per se imperceptible by the senses. The earthly, empirical or pragmatical side of things will be seen differently from above, from afar (this seems to me to be the exact sense of the Latin word *despicere*, too often translated as "to despise"). To see in another way, to perceive its relativity — so as not to put one's whole heart into it — and its opening to a beyond, to the depth hidden in everything. The heavenly is precisely the dimension of mystery present in everything, and whose absolute cen-

ter is God alone. If one must look from above, as if passing by, with a gaze which sees the immediate reality in depth, we must seek, watch unceasingly, be on a permanent quest for what can be seen at the core, or underneath everything, the Lord God, who is not an inanimate and deceitful idol, but the living and true Lord. This is what purity of heart is all about.

Contact with this mystery of the living and true God — by means of earthly realities seen diversely — and by an incessant quest of heavenly realities, is made in adoration and vision: "who never cease to adore and to see." Vision (eye) is not first, as in the Greek perspective ("theoria" or contemplation — vision, gaze). Adoration is rather a matter of the heart. This reminds us of Pascal's "God sensitive to the heart." The word "adore" is frequently used by Francis (15 times) to indicate placing oneself before God, or the movement of astonishment, the rush of emotion, the inner and exterior prostration which seizes man when he draws near to the inaccessible mystery.

This adoration of the heart is accompanied by seeing, a word which in the Johannine language familiar to Francis, designates faith and experimental knowledge.

the heart, unified and centered, which sees, searches and pursues by means of all earthly and heavenly realities the unique object of its adoration and vision, the living God.

Thus this brief commentary resumes in a condensed and almost schematic description the fundamental structure of approach to God: the heart, unified and centered, which sees, searches and pursues by means of all earthly and heavenly realities the unique object of its adoration and vision, the living God. Francis expounds this very dense outline in other texts.

2. What the pure heart sees: God and His work.

The commentary on the beatitude indicates in a few words what the pure heart sees (and adores): the Lord God, living and true. So rather than restrict, it seems to center the experience of the encounter and vision to one unique reality: God. But the famous text of thanksgiving in Chap. 23, 1-6, 1 Rule, which lyrically sings of the mystery of God in his Trinitarian communion, does not separate Him from His work which unfolds in history. The vision's first object, evidently, is the magnificence of the most holy Father with his beloved Son and the Spirit Paraclete, but also, indissolubly, man as the image of God, along with "all things spiritual and corporal." So, then, what the pure heart sees is the total

reality, with its foundation and center in the Triune God from Whom he originates and with the "holy love" whereby the human adventure develops.

Thus the contemplation of the mystery having as its focal point the Father in his sovereign elevation, widens to Trinitarian communion with insistence upon the role of the Son, and then focuses on the totality of the divine work, on His "economy" (His "Salvation History"). Hence the vision which emerges from this hymn is at one and the same time Trinitarian, Christological, cosmic, historical and esthetic.

The Father is the central Figure in this text, and His greatness is suggested by the accumulation of His names and attributes (9 in all!). He alone takes the initiative in all the divine interventions which scan the History of Salvation: Creation, Redemption, the parousia. In them, He is the Protagonist, through His Only Son, with the Holy Spirit.

But the deed of the Son: His part in the work of creation, His coming in the flesh, His redemptive passion as well as His final epiphany in glory, is also clearly designated. Though the Holy Spirit is mentioned only three times in the prayer, it always appears as a force of Life with the Father and the Son.

The cosmic dimension, implying the totality of the work of creation, with man as its center and crown, is present from the beginning. For God created all spiritual things (the invisible world, especially the angels) and corporal things (sensible realities). Since it is not otherwise developed, we must refer to the Cantic of the Creatures and to numerous references scattered in his Writings: (LH; ExhLD; 2 L Fid, 61; Ps) where he speaks of heaven and earth, the sea, the abyss, flowers, fields, birds, wild beasts.

Francis' vision is not static. it moves in history, from the origins in paradise (protology) until the final completion (Eschatology). This history includes the Fall of man, his rise through the Birth and Death of the Son, made Man in the womb of the glorious Virgin Mary, and finally his return to Paradise, "to the Kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world".

What Francis perceived with his heart and spirit, he does not present as an abstract and dry exposition, but as a lyrical hymn, a eucharist, a doxology which celebrates the admirable design of the Father which continues in the world. For the project "of his holy love and of his holy will" is harmonious and beautiful. It is a true "divine drama" with various actors: Father — Son — Paraclete, the Virgin Mary, and man, the image of God, whose destiny is one of contrasts.

Although the visionary does not explicitly express his sentiments before this objective reality of the grandiose and beautiful work of the Father, yet one

can feel, by the choice of his words and his gasping style, a subjective thrill of admiration, especially in his Praises of God (LD).

This text of Chap. 23, 1-6, whose major lines are brought out, can be rightly considered as a model of Franciscan contemplation. It replies to the question: What does a pure heart see when it enters into contact with the mystery? The reply is formulated in simple and generous terms: it sees everything, but differently. It sees everything: it sees the Father, celebrated "for His own sake," with his "two hands" — His Only Son and the Holy Spirit — acting in history; it sees the "world pregnant with God," who fills it and transcends it" (Angela da Foligno); it sees man, whom God saves, both in his excellence and in his misery; it sees the visible and invisible world;" it sees the progress of God's "holy love" across the events of history. The wonder aroused by this vision bursts forth into a passionate thanksgiving, which weak man cannot express, and so he entrusts the task to the Son and to the Holy Paraclete.

According to this text, then, "to contemplate" is to have a total (holistic), hierarchical and balanced vision of the truth, of the true reality of God, man, the world and history. This vision, however, is not merely an intellectual concept derived abstractly, but a vital, experimental understanding of the depths veiled by the exterior of things.

To this teaching on the process of a pure heart, one should add, at least in passing, the concrete light which Francis' numerous prayers (at least 20) can bring us. We analyzed one which served as a guideline for this exposition. But when treating of the Praises of God, of the prayer "Omnipotens" (L Ord 50-52), of the Praises before the Office, of the Exhortation to Praise of the Cantic of Brother Sun, and, lastly, of the Psalms (to mention only these), we can discover Francis' relation to God in a real-life situation, and what he glimpsed and experienced there. Thus the total character of the experience emerges in harmony with the previous analyses, where the whole man is involved, and the whole reality, immersed in God, is disclosed. Thus its focus is Trinitarian, instead of Christological: almost all the prayers are addressed to the Father, especially in the Psalms, where the Son is seen and heard praying. All the prayers are expressed in poetic language: to celebrate God's "beauty" (LD 4, 5), Francis makes use of language which is beautiful

3. The itinerary of turning one's heart toward the Lord

Some texts in Francis' writings treat more or less extensively of spiritual experience. Thus Admonition 1 describes the road which begins with the vision of the sacrament and humanity of Christ, seeking to penetrate, in the Spirit, into the heart of the mystery of his divinity which, in turn, opens to knowledge of the invisible Father. Again, there is a passage in the 2nd Letter to the Faithful

(48-56), describing the fruit of the Christian life, namely the believer's Trinitarian relationship, through the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Likewise, the concluding prayer of the Letter to the Order presents an itinerary of purification, enlightenment and being set on fire by the Spirit, in order to follow in Christ's footsteps and thus make one's way to the Father (L Ord 450-52).

Chap. 22 of the 1st Rule, especially, and the already cited passages from the 2nd Rule touch directly on the question of the "pure heart", prayer, and a "contemplative" gaze.

The major text, almost a small treatise of a few pages, is Chap. 22, vv. 9-55 of the 1st Rule. After an urgent invitation to love of one's enemies (1-4), and to radical denial of our sinful lower nature (5-8), there is a long development centered on "obeying God's will and pleasing him" (v. 9). The expression "nothing else" (*nihil aliud*) underlines the importance of the exhortation, repeated here four times (9, 17; 18-24; 25-40; 41-55), each time according to a similar structure: exhortation followed by a collection of biblical texts, return to the "one thing necessary," the heart turned towards the Lord.

The Different Movements of The Heart

What now remains is to point out the expressions Francis used in these few pages so as to see in the very diversity of these formularies the steps involved in this movement, to which he commits the friars with such insistence. "Leave the world. . . have nothing else to do but obey God's will and please him" (v. 9). "Raise the mind (*mens*) and heart to the Lord" (v. 19). "Keep the words and commandments of God in one's memory" (v. 20). "Serve, love, honor, and adore our Lord and God with a pure heart and mind (*mens*), "seeking this above all else." "Make a dwelling place within ourselves for the Lord. . . Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (v. 27). "Hold fast to the words, the life, the teaching, and the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 41).

The point common to these six counsels is the importance of the **heart** and of the **mens** or mind (spirit as intelligence), as well as **memory**, the place for receiving the word, and even more, the abode of the Triune God. Despite its apparent simplicity, the expression "raise the mind and heart towards the Lord" (*habere cor ad Dominum*) comes from, or at least recalls the invitation of the Preface at Mass: *Sursum corda: Habemus ad Dominum*, and is rich in a variety of meanings. After abandoning the world and cleansing their hearts, the friars must dedicate themselves to the important task of following the will of God and pleasing Him. This consists in receiving the word which proclaims and makes present "the life, teaching, and holy Gospel of Christ" in a memory which is prepared like good soil. Welcoming the word lead towards and opens

one to a greater mystery: the dwelling of the Trinity in the faithful soul, which is also treated in the 2nd Letter to the Faithful, 48. When man is indwelt by God's ineffable presence, he can, in the secret temple of his heart, "serve, love, honor and adore" Him. This last term especially, "adore," will be repeated at length by means of Johannine citations (1st Rule, 22, 29-31; cf also 2 L Fid. 19, 20).

A few years later (1223), when Francis undertook the final draft of the Rule, the same concern was vigorously manifested in two important places of the text, regarding work, which was given a strong emphasis (2 Rule, 5, 1-2), and studies, a possible cause of pride and of vain glory (10, 7-10). In striking phrases he reaffirmed what he regarded as essential in the life of the friars: to desire above all to have the Spirit of the Lord, to allow Him to pursue His work of sanctification in us, to pray with a pure heart, with humility, patience and love of enemies. In these two cases all other activities and enterprises are to be subordinated to this fundamental concern. These two texts strongly underline the role of the Spirit of the Lord which, in at least one case (10,7) is clearly the Holy Spirit. His task is to help us to rise up to God in prayer with a pure heart.

As can be seen, turning one's heart towards the Lord implies a great variety of attitudes. It is not only fixing one's gaze upon the mystery of God (which is the center, for Francis), but it is a series of steps: holding fast to his word, loving, serving, adoring God, acting according to the Spirit, but also living in humility and patience and loving one's neighbor, and even ones' enemy. It is astonishing that amidst these many recommendations, no reference is made to a prayer method, to frequency or duration, except the exhortation to "pray always" (1st Rule 22, 29; 2 L Fid 21). The Rule for Hermitages, after indicating the detailed framework of liturgical prayer, concludes with a gospel phrase which could not be more inclusive: "That they seek first the Kingdom of God and its justice" (Rule for Hermitages 3).

The texts in which Francis mentions salary, help, (or service), work, utilize the word **pretext**. The heart must not turn away from God under the pretext of these occupations. This means that these works or occupations are good per se. They must be performed, both to render service to others, to gain one's livelihood and to avoid idleness. But they must all be performed in such a way that the ultimate concern (turning the heart towards God) not be placed on a secondary level or extinguished. In the chapter on work regarded as a grace (2nd Rule 5, 1-2), he explicitly asks the friars to work "fideliter et devote", with application, with concern to do their work well, with interiority and openness of heart. Thus the spirit of prayer and attachment to God, instead of being in opposition to work, will add a dimension of depth and seriousness to it. The same holds true for studies. If Chap. 10 of the 1st Rule warns us against the dangers which they can present (knowledge for its own sake, ambition, etc. cf

Adm 7), the Letter to Anthony, authorizing him to teach theology, supposes that study can also be harmonized quite well with the "Spirit of the Lord and his work in us."

Certainly, a perfect equilibrium is never given nor acquired once and for all. The most diverse human occupations occupy the greater part of life and require application, attention, and competence. The effort and concentration which they demand could take hold of the depths of the heart and render it inattentive to what it ought "to desire above all." The solution, however, is not to be found in suppressing or reducing one's current activities — except by a temporary sojourn in a hermitage — but by the manner of performing them. "Nothing, then, must keep us back, nothing separate us from him, nothing come between us and him" (1st Rule, 23, 10). This phrase ought to hold good not only for a more or less long time in solitude. Rather, man is called to turn his heart towards the Lord "at all times and seasons, in every country and place, every day and all day" (ibid., v. 11). If the heart, which the Spirit has made the abode of the Father and the Son (1st Rule 22, 27; 2 L Fid 48) is truly inhabited, if it "does not cease to adore and to see God," then one's whole life will be transfigured and whatever man does, provided it is just and good, "pleases God and follows his will" (1st Rule 22, 9). The question is knowing how to arrive there, or better, how to be open and surrender oneself to this fundamental experience. Perhaps it is this conclusion of Chap. 23, 9 which best indicates the essential human part: "We should wish for nothing else and have no other desire; we should find no pleasure or delight in anything except our Creator, Redeemer, and Savior."

"To see and adore" God in Himself and in His every work is a gratuitous gift which man cannot procure by his own efforts: only the Holy Spirit who dwells in His faithful" (Adm 1, 12) can produce it in us. What is required on the part of man is desire: "to desire above all the Spirit of the Lord" (2nd Rule 10, 8), the human expression of the presence-absence which we are given to experience "only by his grace and mercy" (1st Rule 23, 8; L Ord 52).

III. Conclusions

I think that this journey through Francis' Writings authorizes the following conclusions:

1. It is the **heart** which meets God and His presence in creation. The heart, not sentimentality or simple affection, but man's ultimate depth, the center of his unity as a person, where all the dynamism that constitutes this unity converges and concentrates itself. Abstract intellectual and notional knowledge alone is not the way of access to this mystery, neither is a purely voluntarist decision. What is needed is a totalizing process wherein body, spirit and heart

minge, with their diverse energies, twelve of which are mentioned by Francis (1st Rule, 23, 8).

2. The object of the pure heart's vision (contemplation) is the totality of reality as it exists before God. It is God Himself in the fullness of his mystery of communion and in the realization of His project of love: world and history. It is also man both glorious and miserable as a historical and plural being ("we" and not only "I"). If the focus is on the center (God's overflowing presence), man and the cosmos, perceived in their depth, once exteriority and banality have been overcome, they too are the object of vision and of thanksgiving.

3. The processes for approaching this plenitude of the divine reality — God and the world which veils and manifests Him — are **multiple and diverse**. It is symptomatic of Francis that the first word which presents itself to Francis when he speaks of the pure heart is not seeing but adoring. Franciscan contemplation is not only a gazing, a vision, according to the restrictive sense often given to this term, but it is a whole gamut of Christian attitudes: "believing, looking with one's heart, loving, honoring, adoring, serving, praising, blessing, glorifying, exalting, magnifying, rendering thanks" (1st Rule 23, 11). Without forgetting, according to a surprising gradation, "humility, patience in persecution and illness, love of enemies and death to self" (2nd Rule 10, 9-10; 1st Rule 22, 5-8).

4. **Concrete means are not indicated here**, any more than in the Gospels, when speaking of continual prayer (Lc 18, 1). When Francis entreats the friars "to put away every attachment, all care and solicitude," he also asks them to "honor, and adore God with a pure heart and mind" (1st Rule 22, 26). The Rule for Hermitages seems to consider solitude as a means, though not the sole means or the best. For Francis seems to give it only relative value in another text, when he states that to love troublesome friars is "of greater benefit. . . than the solitude of a hermitage" (L Min, 8).

5. Though the vision Francis presents may disappoint those who would like to find in it a description of contemplation like that elaborated especially since the 16th century, yet **his perspective is biblical and patristic**. John's Gospel, especially the Prologue, and some of St. Paul's hymns (Eph 1, 3-14; Col 1, 15-20), offer passages which Francis's texts echo. God's whole Salvific Plan and all the magnificence of His glory are the object of his contemplation. And it is his whole being that participates in it: "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God" (Ps 84, 3).

The Church Fathers have the same approach. For them the term "mystical" (and therefore: contemplation — contemplative), signifies one who, by faith and experience, discovers the "mystery" of God in all its riches, is thereby

filled with wonder, and penetrates it. This, it seems to me, is the process which Francis proposed "to the pure heart turned toward the Lord."

* * *

I Have Hoisted My Sail

I have hoisted sail over the sea of your gaze
Umbrian sky is wheat-colored
like a din of swallows like an unresolved enigma Castilian
wheat rose on Franciscan land
Rocca Maggiore which spreads its clusters of olive trees as
far as the setting sun
I hoisted sail over the sea of your gaze now all wheat
resembles you
 oh my Castilian wheat under the ochre breeze and sky
like an unknowable thing I carried within me
 within you its origin sea of light incandescence
 gentle glowing spring hidden spring
your absence was revealed to me
 the call of the swallow at San Damiano
 the cypress lane in the sky surging with wheat
the Umbrian sky is the color of wheat in fields of olive
trees I consulted the flower "oh sweet one! you are sweet
and not bitter at all"
living entrance into death I await you on the other side of
the mirror rose-colored rose
for flawless flight, my gently glowing spring I hoisted
my sail over the sea of your gaze

— Lisa Boscane, O.S.C.

From *Chemins* (Paris: Editions St-Germain-des-Près, 1986, p. 17) and translated into English by Mary McCarthy, R.S.M., Georgian Court College.

Doors On The Journey of Clare

LYN M. SCHEURING, SFO, PH.D.

Some time ago, while in prayerful dialogue with Sr. Elizabeth Enoch, Abbess of the Bronx, NY Poor Clare Monastery, we were noting three significant doors in the life of Clare. Reflecting on these doors through which Clare encountered Christ may add nuance to understanding her 2nd letter to Agnes of Prague, in which Clare exhorts this daughter of a king, to persevere in their common call of going "forward" and following Christ in radical poverty. In reflecting on prayer in Clare's life (and our own), I'd like to suggest that the three doors can be viewed analogously to the three classical stages of spiritual growth or prayer: the purgative, illuminative and the unitive.

In St. Bonaventure's masterwork *The Triple Way*, he identifies the various stages of the person's relationship with God. Bonaventure writes that if one wants to ascend the steps of perfection (i.e., LOVE),

...with facility and joy, the three stages must aid you. For first there is the purgative way, and this consists in severing sin and anything not of Christ, from the depth on one's soul; the second is the illuminative way, and this consists in an intensive imitation of Christ; the last is the unitive way, and this consists in a very union of souls — the lover below, striving for the Beloved in the highest.¹ ... for purgation leads one to peace; illumination draws one to truth; perfection or union is the same as charity. . .², i.e. love.

As we may know, these stages of relationship with God, while progressive on the spiritual journey, are not static or irreversible. A person can, through certain sufferings, temptations, or sin, seem to lose touch with God on the journey and go through repeated cycles of purgation, illumination and union.

Dr. Lyn Scheuring and her husband, Dr. Tom Scheuring are founders of LAMP (Lay Apostolic Ministries With the Poor). Currently both are teaching at the Franciscan University of Steubenville where they also direct a LAMP outreach with the poor in which students participate. Among her many publications, which include books and articles, are an article on "Spiritual Poverty in Julian of Norwich and Francis of Assisi" (CORD, 1986) and one on "Mercy in St. Francis according to St. Bonaventure" (CORD, 1991). This present article in her words is "a reflective approach as a secular Franciscan."

Think of any authentic relationship, especially marital, there are times of tension and suffering; moments of new insights into the "who" that other is; and times of deep union of mind and heart.

Prayer, like relationship, is never static. It is that very communication between God and the person. Its ongoing dynamic depends on responsiveness within that relationship. Reflecting on Clare's response to God at three significant doors may shed light on our own experiences of relating to God on the spiritual journey. The doors analogous to the three stages in the journey of Clare are:

- 1) the Door of the Dead, which I suggest as the Purgative stage;
- 2) the Door of the Portiuncula, the Illuminative stage and
- 3) Finally Clare arriving at the Door of San Damiano, symbolizing the Unitive stage.

1) First let us look at "the Door of the Dead": In medieval Assisi, nearly all of the houses had two doors which came onto the street by a step. The ordinary door was large with an average sized step and the other door was much smaller with a high step. The smaller door was customarily kept closed and no one used it except for taking out the deceased.

In order to grow in understanding Clare's choice at the Door of the Dead, it might be clarifying to glance at some choices which led to this door. As we reflect on the witnesses of the canonization process, we experience a portrait of Clare's character. Especially clear was Clare's stance regarding the poor. Several accounts verify Clare's humility and devotion, that she was "very enamored of poverty, with compassion for the afflicted."³ Even at an early age, Clare had already put aside self-centered ambitions and the status trappings of wealth. The purgative stage was already in process. The house watchman for Clare's family, witnessed that "although their household was one of the largest in the city and great sums were spent there, she (Clare) nevertheless saved the food they were given to eat, put it aside, and then sent it to the poor."⁴

A neighbor of the family, Pietro de Damiano, testified that Clare's family:

... wanted her to marry magnificently according to her nobility, to some-one great and powerful, but she could not be in any way convinced because she wanted to remain in her virginity and live in poverty, as she demonstrated since she sold all her inheritance and gave it to the poor. He knew that no one could ever convince her to bend her spirit to worldly things.⁵

In the **Legend of St. Clare** we read:

... From her infancy, as mercy was growing with her, she bore a compassionate attitude, merciful towards the miseries of the destitute ... she committed herself thoroughly to the counsel of Francis, placing him, after God, as the guide of her journey. Her soul relied on his sacred admonitions and received whatever he said of the good Jesus ... She was already troubled by the "tinsel" of an ornate world and considered as almost dung everything acclaimed by the world, in order that she might be able to gain Christ.⁶

Clare's exiting through the Door of the Dead on Palm Sunday, in March of 1212, through "barred door" obstacles, is clearly symbolic of the Purgative Stage. Through Jesus Christ, Clare dealt with the obstacles of a worldly life, detaching herself from a life of self-centeredness, of monetary security, and of status. She left all this behind her and chose downward mobility — the way of poverty, first chosen by Jesus, who emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant. The "worldly choice" is upward mobility and ambition, often through exploitation of the poor. Clare went through the door of the dead, the door of purgation, responding to Christ "with swift pace; light step (so as not to be heard) and unswerving feet so that even her own steps stirred up no dust⁷," but Clare was sure footed; so clear was that footprint that it didn't disturb any floor around it. When one walks in another's footprints, indentations are already made. She followed and fit right into Christ's own footprints.

The words in the 2nd letter to Agnes echo Clare's similar experience of breaking through the expectations of maintaining status from her wealthy family of nobility, and all the worldly trappings which Agnes also encountered as "royalty". She too emerged through a door of the dead in her life and went forward, to embrace the poor Christ and live like Him in "highest" poverty.⁸ (Clare uses the superlative because it was the choice of the **highest**, God himself, to be born and to die "poor").

In the first chapter of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium (Soul's Journey Into God)*, we are presented with the image of the person bent over (needing purgation) "from original sin" in "a darkness", but only through grace (Baptism, in particular) can that person become upright, no longer bent over, enabled to see light.⁹ And in further responding to grace, through prayer in action, one can go forward "through that narrow" door as Clare went forward into "light" (synonymous for her name) into the pursuit of that perfection to which the Spirit of the Lord calls.

To break through life's obstacles, which make the door of life seem "narrow", prayer and healing are key. Only prayer, i.e., that responsive communicating with Jesus, the Door, can we find our way and be healed. If we have reached a seeming impasse from being broken, rejected or injured in some way, complementary to experiencing the healing grace of the sacraments and

through the Word of God, perhaps we may receive some direction from Bonavenutre's words in the *Soul's Journey*, where he writes:

When one has fallen down, (need healing) he must lie there unless someone lend a helping hand for him to rise. So our soul could not rise completely from these things of sense (purgation) . . . unless Truth, assuming human nature in Christ, had become a ladder, restoring the first ladder (direct relation with God) that had been broken in Adam. Therefore, no matter how enlightened one may be by the light of natural and acquired knowledge, he cannot enter into himself to delight within himself in the Lord unless Christ be his mediator, who say: I am the door. If anyone enters through me he will be saved (healed); and he will go in and out and will find pastures. But we do not draw near to this door unless we believe in him, hope in him and love him.¹⁰

Christ is the door, the way to be healed. So much of the Purgative state of prayer deals with being healed and reconciled, of letting go. All of us, especially Franciscans, need, like Clare, to go through "a door of the dead", to leave behind all that keeps us from embracing that Lord who reigns over those things which cause all kinds of death in our lives because of our inauthentic choices. We can look to Clare as an example of response to God by moving through obstacles and going toward authentic life, of being purified of transitory goods and self-centered ambitions which pull us away from Christ, His peace and His call for us to love and care about humanity and serve our neighbor, especially those the "world" considers the "least", the poor.

With Clare, I connect my own experiences. In the beginning of LAMP (Lay Apostolic Ministries with the Poor), through God's grace and provision, we set up the Center, on the same street where a Poor Clare Monastery is located. (Throughout the last 12 years, the Poor Clares have been such a profound complementary support, especially by their faithful lives.) During the first year of LAMP, it was offered to us to be part of a religious community of priests and brothers, as their lay volunteer branch, and to be provided with financial security for our family. Who wouldn't want this care. . . ! Needless to say, we went through a purgation: with prayer, looking to Jesus and His example of downward mobility, we saw that we could want "security" more than His will for our family with 3 children. We found peace as we chose what seemed His will and meant a greater dependence on Christ . . . For us it was like going through a "door of the dead".

God has been our provident Father over these years of our family life and in serving the materially poor, especially through the intercessory prayer and love of our Poor Clare neighbors. We've had the privilege of reaching out by evangelizing through works of mercy (LAMP Ministers are married couples, single men and women, and religious; we are careful to support them in their primary religious community). What we have discovered in the last twelve

years of LAMP, is that it is the poor who evangelize us. We are the receivers of the gift of grace. From Francis and Clare we are learning this paradox of the Gospel. As Christians, we are called, **not just to leaving all**, going through a "door of the dead" as Clare did, but then called to go beyond that, forward to that deeper "yes" — to that place, that door of commitment, which we can see in Clare's journey as the Door of the Portiuncula.

2) To the Door of St. Mary of the Portiuncula, Clare ran — to this place, according to the **Legend**, where Mary's mothering role was key. . . "there Clare gave the world 'a bill of divorce'" and confirmed her call. . . "there, her hair shorn by the hands of the brothers, she put aside every kind of fine dress."¹¹ The author of the Legend notes: "This is the place in which a new 'army of the poor', under the leadership of Francis, took its joyful beginnings, so that it might be clearly seen that it was the Mother of mercies who brought to birth both Orders in her dwelling place. . ." Before this altar honoring the Mother of God, "the humble servant, Clare, was married to Christ. . ."¹²

Clare's arriving at the door of the Portiuncula may represent the illuminative stage, her being drawn to the truth, of imitating Christ, conforming to Him, making a commitment to put on Christ. The Portiuncula was the place of commitment, the doorway to the truth of her call . . . Clare went forward, believing nothing, agreeing with nothing which would dissuade her from the resolution. . .¹³

The Portiuncula was the place of commitment, the doorway to the truth of her call . . .

We reflect on Clare's experience with those who banded together in forceful opposition to her commitment, and read: "even though she endured an obstacle in the way of the Lord and some of her own relatives opposed her proposal of holiness, her spirit did not crumble and her fervor did not diminish. Instead, amid words and deeds of hatred, she molded her spirit anew in hope until they, turning back, were quiet."¹⁴

Perhaps we, each of us, can make connections with Clare's commitment at this door of the Portiuncula. In my commitment to serving the poor, through the door of LAMP twelve years ago, I am reminded of an experience of answered prayer — an illuminative stage, confirming the truth of my husband's and my call of evangelization with the poor and teaching others how to also respond. From the beginning of LAMP Ministries in the NY area, we had a conviction that the Spirit wanted to open new avenues of service, in addition to poor parishes where LAMP ministers had already begun to serve.

One afternoon during the first Orientation Week we had for new LAMP ministers, the group of us were praying and had just read from Matthew 25, the passage: "Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, . . . naked, . . . sick or in prison. . . ?" And the Lord will answer: "Whatever you do to the least of these brothers of mine, you do to me". Just then the phone rang, and when I answered it, the caller asked: "Would LAMP Ministries come and evangelize the homeless in Times Square?" He was concerned about the many homeless and was hoping one of us might serve full time in a single room occupancy hotel where the homeless were living — a fraction of a step removed from the streets. Needless to say, God's word was graphically clear and evoked our immediate "yes" to the homeless who are obviously poor. The caller was a Christian who spent caring time with the homeless, literally washing their feet after his regular working hours.

Well, it required struggling through the "red tape" of New York City agencies to get permission for a faith-presence ministry in these hotels (these are usually run-down hotels, some in midtown Manhattan, which the city welfare department rented in order to house homeless families). We explained to them the holistic effect of our working with other services, but the "doors seemed barred closed" because those in charge of the hotels and agencies working there couldn't see the value of such a service. There were many temptations for us to feel discouraged. But we came together with other LAMP ministers and prayed for the Spirit to remove the obstacles and to open the doors through Mary's intercession. We truly believed that she, as mother of the church, would want some clear witness of her Son's presence and compassion, through Catholics, to her poor, disenfranchised homeless children in the shelters where there is drastic confusion and disintegrated family values.

Within a few hours after these prayers, we received a call from the city to inform us that a LAMP minister would be allowed in the hotel in a role they could refer to as a "receptionist"! This news of answered prayer brought great joy because it would enable a LAMP minister to be more visible and available to the people than we had ever expected. After all, a receptionist is one who "receives", who can serve others (in the name of the Lord). Being let in "that door" of the hotel called us to concrete commitment and opened a way for the truth of the Lord's compassion to be expressed through His servants to 500 families, including about 1400 children who critically needed some presence of the caring church through a faith-supporting ministry. After the privileged grace of serving there for some months, the Spirit of God broke open many other hotel doors for our commitment.

The analogy to Clare in this experience of encountering an obstacle for serving the homeless, that initial "no" from the city, that "group resistance" to the "God" dimension, brings to mind . . . Clare and the "group resistance" from

relatives who couldn't deal with the God dimension in Clare's life. We made a commitment (at the hotel doors, so to speak). There was no funding, but we knew we had to make that commitment anyway, because we believed that Mary, Mother of the Church, would want to care for her children . . . and we could be privileged through her intercession to serve them — in the name of her Son. (By the way, provident assistance in funding did eventually come from the Archdiocese).

Clare didn't know what her commitment would mean at the door of the Portiuncula, i.e. how it would work for her, but she knew the Spirit called her to say her "yes" in the presence of our Mother of mercies. Following her "yes", like Mary hastening to serve her cousin Elizabeth, upright, going forward securely, agreeing with nothing which would dissuade her from her resolution . . .¹⁵ In fact, in his visit to Assisi in 1982, Pope John Paul II said: "In Clare, Francis finds the image of the most perfect spouse of the Holy Spirit, Mary most holy."

So often in less dramatic ways (than my experience at the hotel doors), aren't we confronted, each of us, with having to go through some "narrow" doors of commitment, perhaps many times not knowing the blueprint, but knowing (illuminative stage) we're somehow following the truth of His footprints? Clare quotes St. Paul in her **Testament**: "'Know your vocation' (I Cor. 1:26). The Son of God has been made for us the Way which our blessed father Francis, His true lover and imitator, has shown and taught us by word and example."¹⁶

3. Now we, with Clare, come to the 3rd Door, that of San Damiano, the place where she will pursue that perfection — that unitive stage of love for Jesus Christ — to which the Spirit of the Lord has called her. Of San Damiano, we read in the Legend:

There, as if casting the anchor of her soul in a secure site she no longer wavered due to further changes of place. In this little house of penance the virgin Clare enclosed herself for love of her heavenly spouse. Virgins ran after her example to serve Christ; . . . married women to live a chaste life more completely; . . . The ardor of young men was no less moved . . . Everyone desired to serve Christ in a jealous fervor and wished to become a participant in this angelic life which so clearly shone through Clare.¹⁷

In her 2nd letter, Clare called Agnes to perseverance. Clare's life example calls us to perseverance, which can happen only by contemplating, gazing on Christ, being in union with Christ, . . . on the cross and in our neighbor. Clare emphasizes: "If anyone would tell you something else or suggest some thing which would hinder your perfection or seem contrary to your divine vocation, do not follow his counsel. But as a poor virgin embrace the poor Christ."¹⁸

The Legend records:

Thus after leaving the world outside, . . . she ran after Christ without being burdened with anything. The pact that she had established with holy poverty was so great and brought such love, that she wanted to have nothing but Christ the Lord and would not permit her sisters to possess anything. She encouraged them in their little nest of poverty to be conformed to the poor Christ.¹⁹

The Spirit who impelled Francis and Clare, calls us to be unburdened of all that holds us back from union with Christ, (the unitive stage of prayer on our journey,) to go through and be one with Him who is the Door — the Way, the Truth, the Life, — and we will become whole.

The door of San Damiano opened up for Clare her persevering ministry as servant. In the Process of Canonization we find witnessed verification of Clare's union with Christ in her ministry of healing others, especially through the sign of the cross, which was key for Clare. The Process of Canonization is filled with witnesses of Clare's healing the sisters of different illnesses and also all who came to the monastery. Francis even sent people to Clare for healing, for her to make the sign of the cross on them. This symbol of the paschal mystery brings to mind the San Damiano crucifix, that same crucified image of Him who impacted the life of Francis, and that same crucified image upon which Clare gazed for over 40 years of contemplative life.

Clare showed us how "to pass from death to life" as she served others. Her life was a sign of the cross — of Jesus who laid down His life as a servant. Clare was a servant, and besides healing as a way of serving, she (literally) washed the sisters' feet. Sr. Filippa, a witness at her canonization process said that the humility of Clare was so great that she consistently looked down upon herself and abased herself before the other sisters, making herself less than the other persons by serving them, giving them water by hand, washing the mattresses of the sick sisters with her own hand, and even washing the feet of the serving sisters.²⁰

After Jesus washed the feet of His disciples he said: "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:15). In the unitive stage, that identification with Christ who came to serve, becomes evident in the one who serves others. (Francis made this clear in His *Admonitions*).

In this 3rd door Clare went through, her persevering life of union with Christ encourages us to be anchored in our day to day "yes" to Him, no matter how undramatic our service is. As one gazes (Clare's verb) upon Christ, especially into his wounded face in our neighbor, whom we serve, our hearts begin to beat with His heartbeat of compassion for them, by the grace of His unconditional love which passes through us to our neighbor.

Clare, by the working of the Spirit, you ran after the example of the poor Christ who came in poverty and served others. We thank you for going before us, marked with the sign of the cross, calling us to know our vocation, more deeply as we go through the doors of spiritual growth to union with Christ. Help us to follow this call with courage and perseverance by always fixing our gaze on Him.

End notes

¹ St. Bonaventure, *The Triple Way* (New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1956), pp. 44-45.

² *Ibid.*, p. XIV.

³ Armstrong, Regis, trans. and ed. "Acts of the Process of Canonization (1253)". *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York: Paulist, 1988), p. 140.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, *The Legend of Saint Clare*, pp. 192, 195.

⁷ *Ibid.*, "The Second Letter to Agnes", pp. 40-41.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey Into God*, trans. and ed. Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Paulist, 1978), p. 62. Also see Armstrong, Regis "Towards an Unfolding of the Structure of St. Bonaventure's *Legenda Major*", *The Cord*, January 1989, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 12-13.

¹⁰ Bonaventure, *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

¹¹ *The Legend*, p. 196.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹³ *The Second Letter*, p. 41.

¹⁴ *The Legend*, p. 197.

¹⁵ *The Second Letter*, p. 41.

¹⁶ *The Testament*, *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁷ *The Legend*, pp. 198-200.

¹⁸ *The Second Letter*, p. 41.

¹⁹ *The Legend*, pp. 204-205.

²⁰ *Process of Canonization*, p. 140.

* * *

Saint Clare of Assisi: A New Biography

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

As we draw closer to celebrating the anniversary of the birth of Saint Clare of Assisi, we become more conscious of the lack of quality literature on her life and spirituality. Such a lack becomes painfully more obvious as we grow in an appreciation of what Saint Clare contributes to the struggle of religious women in our contemporary Church. While resisting any attempts to categorize them into preconceived patterns or theological paradigms, women religious are more eager than ever to respond authentically to their feminine inspirations and intuitions. By doing so, they manifest an inner strength and resiliency that we may easily take for granted. Thus, a thorough, historically accurate and well balanced biography of Clare of Assisi¹ is a welcomed event, particularly when its author enjoys such a favorable reputation for she is a model for our day.

Marco Bartoli has written a number of excellent articles on Clare of Assisi. One in particular, *Analisi storica e interpretazione psico-analitica di una visione di S. Chiara d'Assisi*, provides an insightful, well documented examination of the controversial vision described by Sisters Filippa and Cecilia in the *Acts of the Process of Canonization*. The vision, frequently omitted from publications of the *Acts* for fear of offending pious eyes, describes Clare sucking the breasts of Francis in language reminiscent of the Cistercian authors of the twelfth century. Not only does Bartoli highlight this similarity, he also situates it in the remarkable spiritual friendship of Francis and Clare and, in so doing, demonstrates his ability to interpret the cryptic thirteenth century texts that touch on Clare.

His latest, endeavor, *Chiara d'Assisi*, contains an introduction to these texts and ten well documented chapters in which those same texts bring to light the contours of Clare's life and personality. The first chapter, "The Chivalrous-Courteous Culture and Hagiographic Models" presents an overview of the shifting sands of the socioeconomic history of Assisi before and during the early thirteenth century and attempts to situate Clare in what has always been a context that is difficult to understand. The following two chapters deal with what

This important critical review by the internationally known author and lecturer appeared in COLLECTANEA FRANCISCANA 61/3-4 (1991). His insights are of special value to all of us for deepening our love and appreciation for Clare during this year of grace.

Bartoli entitles "The Search for an Alternative" and "The Privilege of a Life without Privileges" in which the author begins to examine the journey of Clare's conversion and her definitive choice of what would be the source of so much tension in her life, Gospel poverty.

With the following four chapters we are brought into the enclosure of San Damiano, "The Space of Holiness", as Bartoli calls it, to study the dynamics of the spiritual life, its Christological underpinnings, and the influence of Francis upon Clare's understanding of religious life. Only then does Bartoli begin to highlight the miraculous dimensions of Clare's life: a holiness manifested by supernatural interventions in the life of her sisters, and a power of prayer expressed by its effects upon those paid mercenaries threatening San Damiano and Assisi and upon those who came to her for cures. In light of this evident holiness, the author concludes with two chapters dealing with her death and the development of the cult that led to her canonization.

Such are the broad strokes of Bartoli's portrait of Clare of Assisi. His work is well documented, thoroughly annotated and written in a style that even for someone not well versed in Italian is easy to follow. In his preface to the work, André Vauchez praises the courage and boldness of the author's navigation of such difficult terrain. "Marco Bartoli", Vauchez comments, "has overcome all these difficulties (touching on her hidden life, her traditional place in the shadow of Saint Francis, etc.) and the gaps in the documentation. . ." Indeed, we might assert with Vauchez that Bartoli has presented a traditional biography of Clare that rarely strays from the data of the early documents. What Vauchez sees as the biography's greatest strength, however, we see as its greatest weakness.

We became increasingly disappointed in Bartoli's use of the documents by, to or about Clare between 1212 and 1263. Our first hesitation came with Bartoli's presentation of the *Legend of Saint Clare the Virgin* which he claims is "attributed almost unanimously to Thomas of Celano". In the introduction to the *Legend in Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, there is an outline of the various opinions concerning the authorship of this work, an outline that is further detailed in an article, "Clare of Assisi, the Poor Ladies of San Damiano and the Ecclesial Vision of Thomas of Celano". While some might find this a pedantic criticism, an unquestioning acceptance of Thomas of Celano's authorship can lead to overlooking the broader feminine hagiographic tradition and neglect of Thomas's other descriptions of Clare and the Poor Ladies.

Bartoli unfortunately does both. His frequent use of the Legend could have been richly enhanced had the author attempted to situate it, together with its vocabulary, images and nuances, within the larger framework of the medieval hagiographies of women. So many passages and images permeate the feminine

literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that it is difficult to imagine writing a contemporary biography without highlighting their similarities and contrasts. Even a superficial glance suggests the strong influences of the broader tradition and prompts the question: did the *Legend's* author truly understand Clare's uniqueness or was he simply placing her within an established framework in which the rough edges of her challenges to ecclesial authority were muted? More surprising, however, is Bartoli's neglect of the contrast between Thomas' earlier portraits of Clare, found in the *Vita prima S. Francisci* and the *Vita secunda*, and that he is supposed to have written in the *Legend*. The remarkable ecclesiology, for example, and the tantalizing description of the virtues of the Poor Ladies are ignored as are the larger questions surrounding these.

Bartoli's uncritical acceptance of Thomas of Celano as author of the *Legend* encouraged me to be alert to his treatment of the legislative documents that shaped the life of Clare, the Poor Ladies, and the Second Order in general. It may be that I was too eager to obtain new insights from an author whose earlier works I had appreciated. But it was here that disappointment stung the most. Somehow the author neglected to study the *Form of Life* given to the Poor Ladies by Francis himself and, therefore, overlooked its two fundamental premises upon which so much of Clare's vision was built: the Trinitarian pattern of the Gospel life and the special bond uniting Francis and his brothers with Clare and her sisters. This may explain why Bartoli's treatment of Clare's spirituality is also disappointing. Many of the profound Trinitarian themes articulated by contemporary authors such as Optatus van Asseldonk and Lazaro Iriarte are overlooked much to the impoverishment of Bartoli's work. Moreover, there is no mention of the Rule of Innocent IV, the controversy surrounding it, and its attempts to strengthen the bonds between the First and Second Orders. Such a serious neglect weakens any consideration of Clare's *Testament* and, more importantly, of her *Rule*.

It was this omission that led me to re-read *Chiara d'Assisi* with a careful eye focused on Bartoli's interpretation of Clare's struggle to have her own Rule approved by the Holy See. This attentive reading made me understand the reasons for my overall disappointment: the biography did not present Clare's unique strength in preserving Francis's charism when confronted with persistent and ubiquitous opposition. Is the author satisfied with portraying Clare as an *Alter Franciscus* or as his *pianicella*? Not only does his seventh chapter "Chiara: *Alter Franciscus*", leave us that impression, his entire treatment does. Were that not the case, Bartoli would have documented the development of the legislation guiding the Poor Ladies, drawn attention to the undercurrents of opposition to their eager pursuit of poverty, and portrayed Clare as a woman who courageously defended Francis's ideals in a masculine world that was unwittingly letting them slip away.

With this awareness I scrutinized Bartoli's bibliography and footnotes. The author certainly cannot be faulted on his awareness of much of the literature concerning Clare of Assisi; how well he interprets it is another question, as I have suggested. But it is inconceivable that Bartoli attempted to write a biography of a medieval religious woman without a broader use of the profound studies done in this field, especially those in the English-speaking world. In vain did this reviewer search for the names of Carolyn Walker Bynum, Brenda Bolton, Jane Tibbets Schulenberg or Suzanne Fornay Wemple, all of whom could have made invaluable contributions to the treatment of feminine issues that continue to be overlooked in appreciating the unique role of Clare of Assisi in the history of women. In his treatment of Clare's upbringing, for example, some of the recent studies of women's educational possibilities would have been helpful. Wemple's considerations of marriage and its importance for aristocratic medieval families would shed light on the consternation of Clare's family at her embrace of religious life. Bartoli's portrait of Clare, in other words, could have been so much richer and far more informative had he broadened his horizons and investigated literature that touched on medieval women.

More surprising, however, was the author's oversight of the work of Margaret Carney, O.S.F., whose doctoral work at the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality in Rome, provided new insights into the composition of Clare's Rule, the controversy surrounding it, and the historical context in which it developed. In Bartoli's presentation, the gradual drifting of the friars from the ideals of Gospel poverty is hardly mentioned. In Carney's treatment, the situation of the friars places Clare in a different light for it accentuates her lonely position in the defense of the Franciscan tradition. Whereas Bartoli seems satisfied with the traditional portrayal of Clare as a follower of Francis, his *pianicella*, Carney considers Clare the feminine incarnation of the Franciscan ideal and raises serious questions concerning the traditional ways of considering her. Once again, Bartoli's work suffers from omission and neglect.

Bartoli's work, *Chiara d'Assisi*, is basically a good work. It offers a fundamental overview of Clare's life and some insights and reflections on her pursuit of the Franciscan ideals. But it is a disappointing work because of its omissions which, in the opinion of this reviewer, were serious. Unfortunately, because of his neglect of the larger world of feminine studies, Bartoli's research loses sight of the larger context and, therefore, its effectiveness.

A welcomed addition to Bartoli's work is a series of sixty-two prints by a Dutch painter of the seventeenth century with Latin titles by Henry Sedulius of the sixteenth century. The presentation was that of Servus Gieben, the Director of the Franciscan Museum, whose work is internationally well known. While

not qualified to comment on this aspect of *Chiara d'Assisi*, I was delighted to see a presentation of the iconography of Saint Clare and hope that this one is the first of many. Recently two major exhibitions concerning medieval women in art have been offered in the New York Metropolitan Museum on Art and the Washington, D.C., National Art Gallery. Both have been received with enormous enthusiasm. Hopefully, our celebration of Clare's birth will produce similar exhibitions.

End notes

¹ Marco Bartoli, *Chiara d'Assisi* (Bibliotheca seraphico-capuccina, 37). I-00163 Roma, Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1989, 24 cm., 265 + 70 (append. iconogr.) pp. (L. 40.000).

* * *

"Psalm 89"

Love puts the template of the holes
on my hands, puts the suffering and
tearing and death on my heart
and face, blood
in love, blood for your love
though gardens may not know their gardeners
by sight, worship passes through
the first gate, your notice,
your attention,
your gaze is my relief

Br. Malachy Fitzgerald, O.F.M.

Book Reviews

Angela Foligno: The Complete Works. By Fr. Paul Lachance, O.F.M., Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1993. Pp. xii, 424. Paper, \$18.95.

Reviewed by Fr. George Marcil, O.F.M., Associate Professor of the Franciscan Institute, at St. Bonaventure University.

The publishing of the Classics of Western Spirituality has been running for well over fifteen years. The preparation of the "Complete works" of Angela of Foligno is itself also a lengthy story. This book can be separated into four parts, and the four are quite distinct from one another.

The preface by Romana Guarnieri is a mere seven pages. The introduction to the work of Angela by Fr. Paul Lachance is a full hundred pages. The translation of the Angela work fills up two hundred pages. The endnotes, which relate both to the introduction and to the translated text, make up another hundred.

This review will go over the three long sections separately: first the introduction, then the translation, and finally the footnotes.

Fr. Paul Lachance, O.F.M. got interested in Angela ten and more years ago. He contracted with Paulist Press to do the book that long ago. He however had some trouble. He couldn't get his hands on the Angela critical edition that was then being prepared by Frs. Thier and Calufetti.

To resolve this, he went to Italy where the work was being chiseled out. Being forced to wait for the finished

work, he settled down to doing doctoral studies at the Antonianum in Rome. He finished this in due time writing a dissertation on the thought of Angela. His work was published and has received due acclaim.

With this done, and having made himself into an authority on Angela, he could now set himself down to the translation of Angela's work. The introduction that we now have is the result of this extended endeavor.

According to Fr. Lachance, Angela is one of the great women of the past. Born around 1248, she lived till January 4, 1309. She married in 1270 and had several sons. In 1288, great tragedies fell upon her. Her husband, sons and even her mother died, all about the same time. She was now a widow and childless.

Her life took a special turn. She became very religiously centered. But still this did not come easy. She strove for a conversion that just didn't seem to come out of the blocks. When it did, she found a good Franciscan friar who was willing to be her confessor and guide.

The friar's name was Arnaldo, often called simply Brother A. Brother A had some serious doubts about Angela. He thought she was possessed, that the devil was the one leading her.

In time however he began to take her more seriously. He began to write her story as she narrated it to him. Her life was really that of a mystic. Not very educated, but still deeply immersed in God.

Her life became a rather unorganized tale of 26 mystic occurrences. First, some 19 short events guided by God's initiative, and then seven more, clearly profound and much more deeply explained. These twenty-six steps were her mystical journey, even though they were not set down in imitation of the three neat moments packaged by Pseudo-Dionysius or later studied by St. Bonaventure in his *De triplici via*.

Fr. Lachance looks at a number of aspects of her life: that she had a close friend named Masazuola; that she had a following; that she influenced members of the spiritual movement; and that she was important to the growing women's inner life. Furthermore he traces the history of her readers through to the twentieth century.

The complete works of Angela are nothing more than two short writings put down in pen and ink by her confessor and guide, Friar Arnaldo.

The first booklet, *The Memorial*, is the story of her mystical experiences. It is the narration of her 26 special steps as she moves closer and closer to God. For anyone who leans toward analysis, these 26 steps are not simple. The wording may be different, still a number of these steps seem repetitious of one another.

However, there is a gentleness to the narrative. Angela is definitely telling Arnaldo of the sweetness of her encounter with God. The words spoken, either by Angela or by God, have a special power. In her 20th step, Angela disclaims herself, "Whatever I say

seems blasphemous to me." In the very same step, God approaches her with the words, "sweet daughter, my temple, my delight."

As one reads from *The Memorial*, one feels that one is listening to the private conversations of a saint and her God. The distinct steps that she goes through may be deeply personal, but at the same time these moments do effect us as we read. In the 25th step Angela reveals seven ways in which God makes himself intimate to individuals. Again in each of these seven moments there is a certain privateness to the experience.

The second booklet is entitled *The Instruction*. Unlike the first booklet, this one is more a set of moral or spiritual ideas. It advises humility, devotion to the suffering Christ, a spirituality centered on St. Francis, the idea of poverty.

Angela is obviously a woman of prayer and also one of advice. She speaks to her followers about the knowledge of God and of self. The rest of spirituality springs from these two. She expects them in true Franciscan style to have devotion for the incarnation and for the passion, along with devotion toward Mary and the angels.

She speaks with eloquence when she lines up a series of special gifts. In instruction 27, she mentions seven: the love of poverty, the desire to be despised, the desire to be afflicted, the knowledge that one is unworthy, etc.

Toward the end, she speaks in depth about the eucharist. Here she is not at a loss for words.

At the very end, she talks about death.

It may seem a great deal to say that the endnotes measure a full hundred pages. But this is to say the author has put all the notes for the introduction, for *The Memorial*, and *The Instructions* together.

In this case the notes are important. Fr. Lachance has been working on Angela for many years. His notes therefore unite material connecting Angela to her past, her present and her future.

Angela is important for a number of reasons. She is to be noted because she is a woman, very much part of the budding medieval movement of feminine spirituality. She is to be counted also because she is part of the lay movement.

In some ways we have to be very grateful to Fr. Paul Lachance for putting this sum of information and spirituality together. He has done us all a great service.

* * *

St. Francis of Assisi

He was a simple man
disentangled from the frames
of a stilted world,
alive to the vital values
that open the hearts of our crippled life.

His cause was openness as person,
what tenderly trespassed
the isolated center of Christian hope
and opened the box office
to a real God
who lives and speaks and loves.

He created a radicalism
by living an ordinary life
as the person God created him to be.

He abhorred the extravagant blueprint
of structured living
so he rebelled without revolution
by merely becoming
an extravagantly simple man.

— Sister Julia Keegan, OSF

Brief Notes

J. A. DAVIES, O.F.M.

Jesus & Mary. Finding Our Sacred Center. By Henri Nouwen, Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993. Pp. 66. Paper \$3.95.

Part one of this book is a homily delivered at St. Michael's Cathedral Toronto during May of the Marian Year, 1988. It reflects on Mary Our Mother, Mary the Mother of the Child Jesus, and Mary the Mother of the Suffering Jesus. Part two is a brief journal compiled during the author's pilgrimage to Lourdes in January of 1990. He reflects there on purity, simplicity, innocence. The common theme of homily and journal is expressed in his own words: "I realize that I can make Jesus the heart of my heart only when I ask Mary to show me how (p. 32)."

Feister, John Bookser, ed. **Radical Grace.** Daily Meditations by Richard Rohr. Cincinnati, Ohio, St Anthony Messenger Press, 1993. Pp. 410. Cloth, \$22.95.

Although there are 365 days in the year, the editor gives 408 reflections from Richard Rohr's tapes, books, articles, sermons over the past twenty years. There is a meditation for each Liturgical Day of the year (the varying dates of Easter give longer periods of Ordinary time, hence the "extra" days). Fr. Rohr was obviously not in the same place spiritually for each reflection — he sees a four-fold development in himself and his awareness of the Gospel message. A liturgi-

cal calendar for the next ten years and a topical index are useful additions. Certainly this is a useful hand-book for meditation and a valuable homiletic tool as well.

Devotional Classics. Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups. Edited by Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993. Pp. 353 with Indices. Paper, \$18.75.

Whether by design or coincidence there are 52 selections in this work. The Selections are grouped around XIX themes. — "Preparing for the Spiritual Life," "The Prayer-Filled Life," "The Virtuous Life," "The Spirit-Empowered Life," "The Compassionate Life," "The Word Centered Life." Each of the selections has an introduction, a Bible-text for reflection and a brief reflection of the editors setting, as it were, these gems, in something appropriate. Some of the 52 authors are C.S. Lewis, (Whose piece, "On Giving All to Christ" heads the work), Augustine, Thomas A. Kempis, Francis De Sales, Thomas Merton, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, John Wesley, Catherine of Siena, Madame Guyon, John Calvin. One of the frequent themes of all the authors is to read slowly when we read the Scriptures or a Spiritual Book, for we read to know God, not just to know about Him. Be sure to follow this advice when you sit down with this really valuable work.



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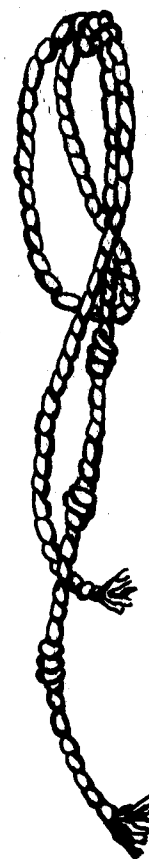
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The Knight-Errant of Assisi. By Hilarin Felder, Capuchin. Reprint. \$7.00 plus postage.

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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 Clerics¹

EpCust: Letter to Superiors¹

EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful¹

EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo

EpMin: Letter to a Minister

EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order

EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of the People

ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God

ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father

Form Viv: 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

¹I, 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 Commencium

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).

NEW FIORETTI

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M.

"Non-Violence is not something for the weak
but for the brave of heart" (M. Gandhi)

1.

It was the year of our Lord 1992. All over the world countless utopias envisioned by countless men of good will were once again being trodden into the sand, as had happened shortly before in the Gulf War. More and more people came to recognize ever more clearly that wars have never resolved problems but always served only to create new ones. Some governments were at war with each other, while the peoples and above all the mothers and the poor of the world in thousands of streets and squares demanded that investment should be made in life instead of financing senseless killing. Ever more precious and chaste water was being violated by the obscene acts of war. Some still spoke of the need for surgically clean operations. In the meantime, undimmed and destructive hatred consumed the hearts of many people and darkened their minds.

But there were also many men and women of diverse lands and religions who asked themselves and each other how the world, and indeed the whole cosmos, could still be rescued from the avarice and destructive madness of mankind. A well-known theologian of the Roman Church had just brought together his inquiries in a new book in which he pointed out insistently to the whole world that "there can never be peace among peoples without reconciliation among religions." Many centuries before, a Cardinal and theologian from Germania, who also spent much of his life in Rome, namely Nicolas of Cusa (1401-1464), had expressed similar thoughts in his writing *De Pace seu Concordantia Fidei*. In 1453, as Constantinople was being captured by the Turks, he had there written, "You it is, o Lord, Giver of Being and of Life, who while always remaining one and the same God, are called in various ways and with various names in various religions. . . Do not hide any longer. Then will rest the sword and all hate and all suffering, and all men will come to see that in the

Readers of The CORD will welcome again the captivating reflections of the General Minister of the Order of Friars Minor. We are most grateful to him for making them available in the English language.

variety of religious usages there is only one religion (una religio in rituum varietate)." And behold, even in the Roman Curia of the Lesser Brothers on the secure Gelsomino Hill a holy restlessness was at last in the air and the question was asked more and more insistently, as some used to put it, what then should be the real "priorities" and "options" of the Fraternity for the future. In obedience to Brother Francis and not least also in obedience to the Lord Pope who in those months, in contrast with the wise and clever of this world and in contrast with the Realpolitik of the great ones, had not ceased to denounce the senselessness of war, they asked themselves urgently whether the time had not come to attempt a new initiative in the work for peace, world-wide justice and the safe-guarding of creation and to see this task as a Franciscan service for the evangelization of the world and as a small contribution to a better future and a lasting peace.

2.

To understand better the saying of Gandhi, that non-violence is not something for weak but for brave hearts, the Minister journeyed first of all to the desert of Nevada (it was the mild month of March). There he met a group of Sisters and Brothers who are convinced that the very production of violence through weapons, especially atomic weapons, is already a robbing of the poor of the whole world. For many years this group, led by a certain Vitalis, a former Minister of the Fraternity in California, has appealed to the conscience of the world and of its leaders in order to remind all mankind of the "priority" of life over death, and not least the Fraternity itself of its obligation to praise and worship the Lord of life and not to follow false gods. In the gray light of morning, as the sun was rising over the desert, all those who had come for the "Lenten Desert Experience" took part in a liturgy of the Word and of the Bread during which they all prayed to be found worthy to proclaim to the whole world and the whole cosmos the good news of its redemption and of welcome to new life, and this in such a way that in it the whole mystery of Christ, his death and resurrection, but also the priority of life over death, should shine out (cf. CCGG 100). Brother Hermann spoke in his homily of how we must "first let ourselves be touched and saved by the God of peace and of mercy, before we can heal the earth." At the moment of the breaking of bread he recalled the commission of Christ to keep alive in the midst of a culture of death and of war the "memoria activa" of the God who does not want to destroy the world and its life but to bring it to perfection. And all listened attentively to the song which an Indian of the tribe of the Shonas sang to his own words and melody giving expression to both lament and hope:

"O great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the winds and whose breath gives life to the entire world, hear me. I come before you as one of your children. I am small and weak, I have need of your strength and wisdom. Let me

wander among beauty and let my eyes always see the purple-red setting of the sun. Let my hands respect the things you have made and let my ears hear your voice. Grant me the wisdom to discover the teaching you have hidden in the desert, in every leaf and in every rock and in every man of peace."

3.

After this, Brother Hermann desired to discover more precisely what was being done in the Fraternity for the "priority" of the service of peace and active non-violence in obedience to the Lord Pope. He was always conscious that while there must be a time for the concerns of the Curia at the so-called "center", there must also be a time for pilgrimage and for life with the Brothers at the base and at the "periphery" (as some in Rome called it); that is to say a time for "defining" and analyzing ideas and the experiences gathered, but also a time for gathering completely new experiences and challenges in unaccustomed circumstances and "marginal situations" still to be defined, which the Seraphic Doctor St. Bonaventure had called "speculatio pauperis in deserto" ("Itinerarium"). And so he set out, and it was in the hot month of June, for Rio de Janeiro to the World Summit on the Environment. There at the "Global Forum" he learned a great deal about a variety of experiences in the service of peace, justice and the conservation of the environment. On Mahatma Gandhi Square he celebrated with the Franciscan Family an ecumenical liturgy, during which everyone sang:

"The dying forests look to us, the polluted seas and rivers
have need of our constancy.
The parched desert and the denuded hills look to us, the dying flora and fauna
have need of our constancy.
Men who have been exploited and cheated of life look to us in all the continents
and have need of our constancy and solidarity.
We look at each other
and ask:
Will we find ways for love, understanding for the God who loves life,
hope for mankind and for the cosmos?
Will the peace of God once more let the world grow green,
let all the deserts of the world become alive not with weapons and walls and barriers
but with oases and prophets,
Will it people again the dead oceans
and let men smile once more without fear?

At a press conference which he later gave together with Sisters and Brothers from various countries, the Minister spoke of the priority of active love, yes of "political diakonia" (as certain theologians have called it), over the scripture scholars' analysis of the law (cf. Lc 10). The Brothers did not want to be like those who would like to learn to swim without having to go into the water. Therefore in obedience to their General Constitutions they wanted to seek dialogue with all religions (CCGG 93 §1), since, as is becoming more and more

clear to them the traces and seeds of the one Word of God are to be found in all religions and cultures (CCGG 93 §2), and precisely where the great ones of this world least expect it. And with special solicitude, following the desire of Saint Francis, they wanted to encounter the Brothers and Sisters of Islam (CCGG 95 §3). In everything they wanted to be guided by good experiences and not by bad ones. Brother Hermann said that his visit to the Global Forum and to the poor people of the country had led him to recognize the truth of a saying of Albert Einstein's, "We must be prepared to make the same sacrifices in the cause of peace as we have made without hesitation in the cause of war."

4.

Shortly before Advent of the year 1992 the Minister General, accompanied by Brothers Emmanuel and John, went on to visit the regions and Provinces in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were desirous of giving to the Brothers of the Order afflicted by the war there, as well as to all men and women of good will, a sign of their support and solidarity. They met the Brothers in Split, Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Tomislavgrad, Livno, as well as many other places. They paid a fraternal visit also to the Bishop of Mostar and the Cardinal of Zagreb. The Minister visited the wounded, comforted the refugees, listened to words of lament and desperation, but also of hope. Over and over again, they sang together the Magnificat, according to which the mighty will be cast from their thrones and the lowly raised up. He told of other people's suffering and example in South Africa, Somalia, China and Peru, and spoke of the solidarity needed in suffering as also in hope. He then read from the new General Constitutions, which they had all solemnly promised to observe, for himself and for all the Brothers, these words: "Conscious also of the atrocious dangers threatening mankind, the Brothers must firmly denounce every species of war-like action and the armament race as a most grave plague upon the world and a most serious injustice towards the poor. Let them not spare any energy or omit any effort to build up the kingdom of peace." (69 §2). He spoke also of his conviction that one day not too far away, war as a means of policy will be as outmoded and despised as have become already slavery, colonialism, the oppression of women. All of them besought the Lord to be given the courage to dream the great vision of his Kingdom, in which no people will any longer live at the cost of any other, and to be given the even greater courage to take the first tiny and modest steps towards it, as is appropriate for Minors. Inspired by the new vision which had been proposed to them by the Pentecost Chapter, the General Minister at the end of his visit called out to the Brothers:

"No one showed us what we had to do,
but the Lord himself revealed during these years to his Fraternity
in old and new signs
that they were to live in the manner of the kenosis of Jesus

and of his active non-violence,
to serve the peace and the life of the world and of the whole cosmos
and to make greater sacrifices for a culture of peace and reconciliation
than are made for a culture of rivalry, power and blasphemous war,
which disfigures the name and the face of our Lord.
And the Brothers are strictly bound by obedience
to listen to the poor, the powerless, and the victims of war,
instead of interpreting the world and history
through the eyes and hearts of the victors and the mighty.
For the Lord shows his power in the powerless.
And the Brothers should not so much ask how they can evangelize others,
as first to let themselves be evangelized
by the peace-loving, the poor, and the victims
of exploitation, apartheid, racism, and war.
For it is not victory in war and supremacy over others
which will bring peace to the world,
but only victory over war
and a life of respect for others and of service of one another.
If we want to remain faithful to the charism of our Father and Brother,
we must be prepared for a radical conversion
and first live in ourselves peace, justice, and reverence for creation,
in order then to proclaim to others the peace of God."

Then they all returned to Rome to the Gelsomino Hill.

Ad laudem Christi. Amen.

Rome, on the World Day of Peace, 1st January 1993



The American Context of Franciscan Life

ROLAND J. FALEY, T.O.R.

The question here posed is not that simple. What will Franciscan life look like tomorrow when we consider its present historical, cultural, and theological context in these United States? The answer must of necessity be couched in a sufficient number of "maybes" and "perhapses" to make it plausible. But the challenge to address the issue leads to a salutary process of reflection and that in itself is helpful.

We shall begin by looking at the heart of Franciscan life and then view that against the background of American life in this last decade of the millennium. We shall then address the vows, contemplation, community, ministry, and ongoing conversion.

There seems to be little doubt that initially Francis had no intention of founding a religious order. For him the Gospel life said it all. In his Testament he says: "When God gave me some friars, there was no one to tell me what I should do; but the Most High himself made it clear to me that I must live the life of the Gospel." (Testament, para. 5). Although his Rule does dwell on particulars of what that life should look like, the fact is that the Gospels were always central in Francis' thought. There is no specific ministry which characterizes Franciscan life; there is an absence of the supportive structures which helped to fashion monasticism. Francis' whole intent centered on taking the original spirit of Jesus and bringing it to life in a culture which had become decadent, at a time when both church and society were morally debilitated. It was his belief that a return to authentic New Testament values would lead to a transformation of medieval culture.

This article was the keynote address at an assembly of Friars Minor in Andover, Mass. Fr. Roland Faley, TOR, holds degrees in Sacred Scripture and in Theology. He has served as seminary professor and rector and is the author of several books and articles. He has held the office of Superior and Vicar General of his Order and was Executive Director of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men from 1985-1991. Currently he is at EMMAUS where he serves as Spiritual Director for the Diocese of Austin, Texas. Fr. Faley is also visiting professor at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. Readers will immediately recognize the depth and wisdom of his insights.

And what are the traits of the culture that surrounds us today? Is the quintessential spirit of Francis still applicable? Is the need for conversion any less today than it was then? If Francis can be said to be the perennial favorite of the Christian saints and the only one with universal appeal, the same can be said for the values for which he stood. Francis had an all embracing concern for humanity which saw the Saracens as companions in dialogue rather than military opponents. He was a reconciler who tried to bring the warring Assisians and Perugians together. While he separated himself from the structured communal life of the monks, he saw community itself as vital to the brotherhood and insisted upon its importance. He saw the vows as expressive of Gospel truth in a society which gave such values scant attention. Franciscan life, then, was to be counter cultural, and yet Francis was not at war with the world. He saw himself as part of humanity and saw himself as walking shoulder to shoulder with the human community. In an anticipation of Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*, he shared the joys and sorrows of the world about him. But in moving with the People of God, he saw the importance of casting a renewed Gospel light upon the world. It was his conviction that there was a persuasive power about the Gospel, which, if unleashed, would have a transforming effect.

If Francis can be said to be the perennial favorite of the Christian saints and the only one with universal appeal, the same can be said for the values for which he stood.

How different is the world in which we live? Sufficiently different to realize that not all features of the primitive Rule are applicable today. The idea of returning to a primitive observance is a form of religious literalism or fundamentalism, which while satisfying a nostalgic spirit is largely an exercise in futility. We shall never succeed in turning the hands of the clock back. Moreover, there is no escaping the fact of the cultural conditioning of the most inspired document. However, the present culture can in many ways benefit from the incarnation of that Gospel teaching which is part of the Franciscan heritage. The universe today is a global village. Never in the history of the world have different peoples become neighbors as is the case today. This produces its own tensions with frequent eruptions of hostility, massive emigration, new manifestations of racism, and political manipulation. The Franciscan vision of the sacredness of the one human family with a consequent respect for personal dignity and worth can have far reaching consequences. As nations characterized by ethnic and religious differences once again regain political autonomy, age old hostilities arise as well. While the danger of a super power holocaust recedes, we are more than ever aware that smaller brush fires will dot the world

map. The work for a more just world is related to Francis' own efforts as a reconciler. That unity of all things in Christ about which the hymns of Colossians and Ephesians speak is at the heart of Francis peacemaking. The Franciscan presence at the United Nations today, while as yet modest and rather inconspicuous, is wholly consonant with our founding spirit. The same can be said of the Justice and Peace offices which have become part of almost every province's life.

As for the vows themselves, a world which becomes increasingly more consumer minded, licentious, and self willed is fertile soil for the authentic living of contrary values. We shall address each of the vows in turn. And in a society which is marked by extreme individualism, as Robert Bellah has well documented, the Franciscan emphasis on community and concern for the brotherhood has an unmatched opportunity to move parishes, neighborhoods, and cities to greater concern for the common good.

The spirit of Francis is summarized well in the first chapter of the Rule of 1223: "the Rule and life of the Friars Minor is this, namely, to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without property, and in chastity." It is the living out of that objective in an adaptation to changing times which does not dull the cutting edge to which Franciscans of today and tomorrow are called. There are hard questions about the way we Franciscans are doing that today. A collective examination of conscience cannot but help all of us.

Poverty. In the American context of religious life today, very few of us know what true poverty means. We begin with the fact that many of us have been given opportunities in education and life in general which would have been beyond the grasp of our middle class or lower than middle class origins. In the whole discussion of health care costs today most of us have no strong personal investment. When we get sick we will be provided for. None of us really knows what it is like to be without insurance or without employment, to be faced with the traumatizing fear of an uncertain future. The larger we become the more bureaucratic we are. To think that all of this will change is idyllic thinking. None of which is to say that we should not look for every opportunity to live a life that is simpler and less consumer oriented. This is an ascetical question in an age where we have passed from personal radios to personal televisions, from a community car to a fleet affording instant mobility, from an annual vacation at the Jersey shore to excursions to Maoui and Mediterranean beaches. But that is material for our next retreat. It is mentioned here lest it be thought to be unrelated to the question at hand.

It is, moreover, necessary to be mindful of the extent to which the culture conditioned Francis' own application of the meaning of the vows. The Rule forbids the friars to accept money (c. 8), to speak to women alone (c. 12), and

calls for unqualified obedience to guardians (Test. para. 9, 10). Today the vows are seen in ways which are considerably incompatible with a medieval outlook. To return to many of these applications would only narrow our vision and bypass an enlightened understanding of the vowed life which has come to us refracted through the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

The terms in which poverty is discussed today moves us beyond the concerns of my personal life style or the happenings of my local friary. Again this is not to say that these issues are not worthy of consideration, They are, and our authenticity will increasingly depend on it. But there are basic ways in which we shall never be poor, and it is simply an exercise in futility to say that we will. But that is not to say that our historical context does not summon us to a way of living out that commitment.

There will be increasingly significant ways in which we will be able to see God in the eyes of the poor. There are still many people who are falling between the cracks in our society. They have needs which range from a bed and a decent meal to advocates who plead their cause in city hall or the halls of Congress. Poverty means being free enough to respond to those needs. It means being unfettered and free from institutional and other commitments to be able to move. In fact, that is exactly what gospel poverty means. The Christ of the Synoptics did not ask his disciples to give up walking sticks, sandals, tunics, and purses because they were in some way tainted. It was because he wanted them to be free and flexible enough to respond.

While it is true that Franciscans do not have a clearly defined apostolate, it is hard to deny that the poor and the truly deprived are in Francis' eyes the special object of their call. While recognizing the conundrum of the many ways in which people can be said to be poor, one can only answer that there are also many ways in which religious life as a whole has attempted to respond to the various types of poverty, even to the extent of religious communities founded for the education of the better classes. Franciscanism has from its origins found itself most at home with the materially deprived. That which was formerly bitter for Francis became sweet, not after a visit with the wealthy Count Orlando, but only after he embraced the leper, as he himself testifies in his Testament. It is there that the call still centers. This may take a variety of forms, education being one of the most significant. In visiting Catholic high schools in the inner city, which are educating minority students of every religious background at considerable sacrifice, one wonders why religious moved in such numbers away from the educational apostolate in the seventies to be more directly engaged in the life of the needy. A rekindling of that earlier concern is needed today, and Franciscans should be in the forefront. And what is to be said of our sense of mission? In many Franciscan groups that I have addressed or whose chapters I have facilitated, foreign missionaries repeatedly express

their disappointment in the lack of mission interest. We may no longer be proselytizers but assistance to developing churches is very much in keeping with the Franciscan calling. In the future, poverty will increasingly be identified with helping move people away from degradation and misery. Every Franciscan entity that hopes to survive will have to ask what that means for its members. But it is not sufficient to improve the lot of the disenfranchised. This must be accompanied by a sense of true values, derived from a living faith, which states that true happiness is not to be found in affluence and materialism. In this regard the example of our own Franciscan lives will speak volumes.

Obedience. Six times in his *Testament*, Francis speaks of God's initiative in leading the saint to the decisions he made. "God inspired me . . .", "God gave me . . .", "God revealed to me . . ." While Francis showed reverence and respect for human authority, his first allegiance was to the will of God which was made known to him in a variety of ways. In Vatican II's decree on Religious Life, the emphasis falls on discerning the will of God on the part of the individual religious and the person in authority. In Franciscan terms, this means the minister and the friar work to arrive in faith at a decision. Hopefully this will lead to an agreed upon decision. If not, the principle remains that the person in leadership has the final say.

The day has long passed when commands were executed by a simple "fiat." There was the further notion that even if the superior were wrong, the subject would profit by a growth in virtue. It is the will of God that stands at the center of the vowed life. It is that will that called one to religious life and it is that will that is sought by all concerned at every step of the journey. It would be wrong to think that this is an easy "out", a good way to rationalize in reaching a personal preference. The will of God often involves pain and in embracing it the person becomes ever more configured to the person of Christ, who was "obedient unto death." Obedience may call one to a more strongly Christian stand.

The culture of our times, our strong sense of personalism, and the democratic country in which we live all point to an ever greater role of the individual friar in decisions that are made in his regard. Our candidates are older today, and there is every indication that they will continue to be. This often means newly professed friars who have previously made their own way in society. Decision making has become an ingrained part of their human make-up. While the broader vision of community concerns must now be integrated into the decision making process — thus the role of the minister, the concerns of the individual will have to be taken into account as well. This will require a true faith posture on the part of all concerned if we are not to end in repeated impasses.

To grow up in a democracy is to see collective decision making as a normal part of life. There is no reason to think that this will not flow over into religious life. In this regard, Franciscans have little breast beating to do. Their election of leaders in the community is a centuries old practice. Since the Council, even more structures for consultation and decision making have been introduced. This is quite positive and consonant with the contemporary emphasis on the dignity of the human person. It is to be hoped that the church as a whole will recognize how workable this is and give greater play to democratic procedures in ecclesiastical life. It is to often said that the church is not a democracy. But neither is it an autocracy. In fact many democratic procedures are found within the church with no accompanying discomfort. The way that consensus is reached in religious life will continue to have great importance to the church as a whole. What religious have to assure is that it reflect an obedience, which is honest and credible.

Chastity. The corrosive effects on American society by the inroads of permissiveness and licentiousness are beyond doubt. This is not only a question of the media and public entertainment, although both clearly reflect the modern trend. Today it has become almost the norm for couples to cohabit before marriage, as every parish priest is aware. Sexual misconduct has become common in the public forum, with the involvement of the clergy receiving particular notice. Without spelling out further examples. It is clear that the need for celibate chastity in the life of the church is more to the fore than ever. The demand for the presence of the vowed religious will be no less strong tomorrow than it is today. This will be especially true if eventually there is a married diocesan clergy, in which case the celibate life would be largely reserved to religious and dedicated lay people. But it will be a celibacy linked to a true sense of human bonding. The outcry of today against a vow of chastity which means little more than a detached bachelorhood is all too shrill. There is a healthy demand for true human relationships which while representing a challenge to the chaste life are seen today as indispensable to it. Experience shows that not a few religious have abandoned their life and often married because they found no warmth and openness in their community setting. This, I am suggesting, will be even more the case tomorrow.

Another problem to be faced with ever greater frequency, very much tied to American culture, is that of sexual diversification. Franciscan life, no less than religious life in general, has always been made up of heterosexual and homosexual men. There is ample evidence to show that both have served God and the church with fidelity and distinction. The contemporary socialization and politicization of the "gay" issue has brought the question of sexual orientation to the fore; people are much more explicit about their own sexuality than society would have even countenanced twenty five years ago. It has become a question of human rights, non-discrimination, and politics.

All of this is impacting religious life today. Wise decisions will have to be made in the future as there is greater candor about sexual orientation. The call of religious life will remain the same. The vow of chastity means a commitment to a celibate non-genital way of life. About that there is no equivocation. However, forms of discrimination against people because of their orientation alone will create as much reaction within the church as it does today in society at large. The area of concern is community life. What must be avoided is a spirit of divisiveness centering around sexual orientation. Greater openness will avoid the half-closeted situations, present in religious and diocesan life today, which easily lead to a sort of sub-cultural networking and even political assertiveness within a province. The issue of orientation must be dealt with honestly and openly, and then the community must move ahead. At the same time, homophobic attitudes must be excluded as alien to any Christian or Franciscan community. The requirements of the vow remain the same, and as Sean Sammon has written, we need healthy role models of celibate chastity, regardless of orientation.

Contemplation. Most of us learned that at the very least thirty minutes a day should be dedicated to mental prayer. One wonders to what extent that is observed today. It would be sad if the time dedicated to prayer in silence and alone were to be abandoned. It is wholly salutary. On the other hand, there is no denying that many forms of prayer, which in the past became quite formal and even sterile, have been revitalized today. The spiritual life of many religious is abundantly nourished by the liturgy today. The fact that the Word of God has been opened to all and is readily accessible gives a spiritual strength which in the past was often derived, with less benefit, from spiritual writers. There is, moreover, today a thirst for the world of the Spirit among religious, which is sated by days of solitude, prayer experiences, and a variety of retreat forms. While today there is less concern about structured and formal prayer, it would be quite incorrect to say that prayer is disregarded.

There is, moreover, a growing awareness of the need for what I call a posture of prayer. This is what Celano speaks of when he says that after La Verna in the latter period of his life, Francis was not a man who prayed but rather became a living prayer. This involves seeing the imprint of God on everything in one's life — other human beings, daily experiences, the poor, the world, joys and sorrows. There is a meditative dimension to the whole of the Christian life, and the awareness of that is very much to the fore in Franciscan spirituality. For example, it is in contemplation that we realize the profound significance of minority. It teaches us what it means to be a Friar Minor. The Matthean Jesus and the Paul of first Corinthians point up the irreconcilable difference between Christian service and ambition and power seeking. In prayer, Francis saw that as central to Christ's teaching and as related to the true meaning of poverty. It

is values such as these that continue to emerge not simply through study but more especially through contemplation.

Community and Ministry. Francis stands between the stability of the structured monastic tradition and the ministry centered thrust of the apostolic tradition. He did not favor the locus centered type of community lived by the monks, but community itself remained a pivotal value. While the brothers were sent off in twos to proclaim the Word, they returned to the other brothers to live New Testament *koinonia*. Not determined by specific ministries, Francis saw the Gospel life as being itself the primary witness, and community was an essential part of that.

The ongoing renewal of Franciscan life is certain to see greater emphasis on the friary and less emphasis on the school or the parish. The independent friary allows greater freedom to determine the rhythm of daily life and broader diversity of ministry. The friary will become increasingly the place of hospitality and outreach.

For a variety of reasons, about which I have written elsewhere, religious will re-think their commitment to the parish ministry. This will be especially true of Franciscans. The reason is not solely the decrease in personnel. There are other factors at work. The parish remains the central focus of American church life, regardless of what may be said about its possible demise. It is the structure in place which serves well the needs of its people and can be flexible enough to embrace new pastoral directions. Moreover, religious bring a great deal to a parish and can often leave the imprint of their own charism upon this important ministry. The point is, however, that religious were not founded, in the main, to become part of the diocesan structure. In fact, they were quite separated from it and their status as exempt removed them from the direct control of diocesan authorities. What happens all too often is that the parish determines the life and goals of the friary. The rhythm of daily life is parish determined and other friars who may live there feel like the "odd man out." In all too many instances, the friary begins to resemble a diocesan rectory and the priests of the parish identify more with the priests of the diocese than they do with other religious. The picture is compounded, of course, when friars staff small parishes of one or two priests where not even the minimum level of community life can be maintained. Parishes return repeatedly to the agenda of provincial chapters, and already a considerable amount of reduction has taken place. This will be even more the case in the future as renewed emphasis on the independent friary, with its inherent flexibility, offers the best opportunity for service to the local church in keeping with the distinctive charism. Again, community will come very much to the fore.

Conversion. This is the distinctive charism of one branch of the Franciscan family, commonly known as the Third Order Regular and the Secular

Franciscans, originally united under a single banner, known quite simply as the Order of Penance. Many studies in recent decades have seen Franciscan penance in terms of Christian *metanoia* or ongoing conversion. In his Testament, Francis identifies the beginning of his life of conversion, which concretely may have linked him with the antecedent medieval Order of Penance, with his embrace of the leper (Test., para 1). It was a conversion which continued until it reached its apogee in the transforming love of LaVerna. There is no doubt about the fact that the rediscovery of the penitential charism and its incorporation into the 1982 revised Rule of the Third Order Regular has had an inestimable impact on the men and women from a great variety of Franciscan congregations who follow that Rule. But it is also woven into the fabric of the entire Franciscan Order.

What does conversion mean concretely? It means that we are not so idealistic as to think that we are where we should be. We are very much on a journey, walking side by side with the whole people of God. We realize all too well our humanness, our need for greater holiness. But we also realize that adversity can become a stepping stone to holiness. Franciscans have long been known for their compassion, their human side, their closeness to the people. They do not stand for power but rather for littleness. These are qualities which enhance their value in the world of today where so many people cannot find meaning and are overwhelmed by the complex factors which condition their existence. Where everything is so grim and misfortune lurks behind so many corners, it is a perfect delight to be greeted in Franciscan fashion with a "Buon giorno, buona gente." We may fail in many ways but in that we must not lose heart. We must encourage people to seek forgiveness and understanding, so characteristic of the Jesus of Luke's gospel. In God's plan, there is room for everyone and everyone is loved. It is time to invite people to come home. It is Franciscans who should be key agents in the restoration and renewal of the sacrament of reconciliation. It is they who should touch the homeless, the unemployed, and those dying of AIDS. As men of conversion, we are men of hope. Problems we have, but they are no different than those of others. But there are also limitless possibilities to grow and to reach a world in need. If Christ died for us, then the picture is anything but dire. We are free and members of the family of the living God. In every aspect of our life, the simple message of PAX ET BONUM must continue to resonate.

* * *

From Out of the Shadows: Towards a Modern Biography of St. Clare

ANN DEVINE

In Clare of Assisi: A New Woman, the Four Ministers General of the Franciscan Family tell us of the need in the present day to rediscover the person of Clare, her life and faith story and their meaning for today's world. Quoting Pope John Paul II from an address given in 1982 they say:

In our age, it is necessary and important for the life of the Church to repeat the discovery of St. Clare; it is vital to rediscover that charism, that vocation. . .¹

Presently, however, for those who seek to study the life of Clare, modern biographies available in English are very scarce. This means that, for the average readers, the life of Clare has been found within modern biography in the life of Francis. In this context, Clare's life has been "hidden" as a chapter of Francis' life.

Given the purpose of the writers, the picture of Clare's life found in these modern biographies has been filtered through the lens of Francis' life. In addition, the biographies have reflected, at times, the prevalent attitude of society toward women. This leads the reader to ask what would a modern biography of Clare look like and what image of Clare would develop from a biography focusing on Clare herself.

This paper will attempt a survey of the portraits of Clare found in a sampling of modern biographies of Francis, followed by a tentative sketch of the life of Clare based on the original sources. This sketch will present Clare from the perspective of her own life and not that of Francis.

Ann Devine is an Eastern Catholic Secular Franciscan who lives in Hazleton, Pennsylvania. She holds both a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies and a Master of Arts in Eastern Christian Studies. In addition to her work for the Byzantine Franciscan Custody of St. Mary of the Angels, Ann coordinates the catechetical program in her parish, and is editor of her fraternity's newsletter. Currently, she is completing her studies at the Franciscan Institute toward a Master's in Franciscan Studies.

Clare in Modern Biographies of Francis

There are many biographies of Francis written or translated into English. Among the more widely known and representative of these are:

1. *Life of St. Francis of Assisi* by Paul Sabatier;
2. *Saint Francis of Assisi: A Biography* by Johannes Jorgensen;
3. *Saint Francis of Assisi: A Biography* by Omer Englebert;
4. *Francis of Assisi* by Arnaldo Fortini; and
5. *St. Francis of Assisi* by Raoul Manselli.

Sabatier

Paul Sabatier's biography of Francis, originally published in 1894 is very well known. In it, Clare's relationship with Francis is described very beautifully as the union of 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.²

Clare herself is portrayed as a young girl who:

sought him (Francis) out and opened to him her heart. With that exaltation, a union of candor and delicacy, which is woman's fine endowment, and to which she would more readily give free course if she did not too often divine the pitfalls of base passion and incredulity, Clare offered herself to Francis.³

Francis accepts her and gives Clare a Rule.

By one of those intuitions which often come to very enthusiastic and very pure women, she (Clare) had penetrated to the inmost depths of Francis' heart, and felt herself inflamed with the same passion which burned in him...⁴

Clare from then on is described as one who holds fast to Francis' ideals, despite many struggles with the institutional Church.

(Clare) defended Francis not only against others, but also against himself. In those hours of dark discouragement which so often and so profoundly disturb the noblest souls and sterilize the grandest efforts, she was beside him to show him his way. When he doubted his mission and thought of fleeing to the heights of repose and solitary prayer, it was she who showed him the ripening harvest with no reapers to gather it in...⁵

Francis is seen as needing to give a corrective to the force of love which prompted Clare and the sisters to later defend his ideals:

Yet this love with which at St. Damian Francis felt himself surrounded frightened him at times. He feared that his death, making too great a void,

would imperil the institution itself, and he took pains to remind the sisters that he would not always be with them.⁶

In the end, Sabatier's Clare is pure, candid, delicate, loyal, supportive and loving.

Jorgensen

In Chapter V of his life of Francis, published in the early part of the twentieth century, Jorgensen begins his treatment of Clare and the sisters of San Damiano with the following statement:

While men sometimes must be satisfied to represent theory, practice, often outside of all theory is the vocation of the woman. No one ever realizes more fully a man's ideal than a woman, once she is possessed by it.⁷

Francis is seen as the one who is admired to such a degree that he feels the need to separate himself from San Damiano.

It could be no secret to Francis, in how high a degree he was an object of admiration to Clare and the other Sisters, and that a part of their religious feeling was intertwined with his personality...⁸

Clare is portrayed as weak, receiving her strength from Francis and then continuing on after his death by remembering his strength.

If Clare thus showed herself before Francis as a weak woman, who was one that longed for comfort and encouragement...⁹

The portrait of Clare in Jorgensen is a woman who is weak, full of admiration for the man whose ideals she has adopted, and perhaps a bit infatuated with Francis.

Englebert

In "St. Clare and the Order of the Poor Ladies," Omer Englebert provides a short biography of St. Clare in the context of St. Francis "founding" the Order of the Poor Ladies. The chapter, divided into ten parts, gives the pertinent information concerning the life of Clare from Francis' perspective.

This brief sketch, originally written sometime around 1947, is colored by the statement made at the beginning of the chapter and carried throughout the text:

A woman is usually worth what the ideas of the man she admires are worth; and her capacity for sacrifice enables her to attain the heights of heroism when that man has shown her the way. So it was with St. Clare, who better than anyone else in the world, and nearly as well as the Poverello, himself, realized his ideal.¹⁰

From this statement, the sketch develops of Clare as a malleable piece of clay, adopting Francis' ideals and following him as a guide and model. It was Francis who directed, who gave life to and who organized the Poor Ladies. It would seem that Clare never influenced Francis, and that he was a paternal figure for her. In other words, the portrait of Clare was that she was, in effect, a little girl on Papa Francis' knee.

Fortini

Fortini in 1959, included the chapter, "Saint Clare, Lady of Light" in his book on Francis. According to Fortini, Clare is the one who pursues the conversation with Francis.

What must have been Francis' feeling when he saw at his feet, trembling with devotion and love, the daughter of the powerful feudal lord of San Rufino? The girl for whom he had longed when he had daydreams of being a poet and a knight, the damsel for whose admiration he would have performed great princely deeds, in the end had come to him, sweet and gentle.¹¹

Clare seeks to serve Francis and spends her life remaining faithful to his teaching.

Clare knew that she would be able to serve Francis in no better way than to remain faithful to his great principle, Poverty.¹²

The Clare portrayed in Fortini is a fairly strong woman, yet she is very much dependent on Francis. She has adopted his principles and seeks to live by them. It would seem that she did not contribute to or influence Francis' thought.

Manselli

Manselli in his chapter entitled "Francis and Clare: 'Fratres et Sorores Minores,'" attempts to portray the relationship between Francis and Clare and the Sisters Minor. The Chapter is divided into three parts, Francis as *loculator Domini*, The Women's Movements and Clare of Assisi; and The Testimony of Jacques de Vitry. The role and figure of Clare is given in the section entitled "The Women's Movements and Clare of Assisi." The author himself states that he "will only use those elements that will help us reconstruct the historical reality of Francis' personality and of the institutions that he conceived and established" (153).

According to Manselli, Francis "did not foresee the possibility of associating a group of women with his group of men" (153). When Clare presented herself before him, Francis needed to discern how a new form of life associated with him would be "both close to the gospel form and avoid in every way any obstacle raised by canonical doctrine (153)."

Clare's relationship with Francis is described here in terms of the Form of Life given to her by Francis:

There was much emotion, first of all, in the encounter of these two personalities. In their deep diversity each one clarified the dimensions of the other, . . . There is a distinct impression here that Clare still clearly remembered a perplexity, a kind of intimate disquiet in Francis. He had not worried or feared for himself, yet he was cautious and even worried over whether delicate, fragile women would have the natural resilience for his way of life. . . Clare discerned with penetrating intuition Francis' state of doubt. She saw the need to reassure him over (sic) herself as well as her companions: they had thought over thoroughly the step that they had taken and feared none of the renunciations involved in their abandonment of the world. The spiritual father's kindly but timorous anxiety was met by Clare's simple and serene firmness.¹³

This very brief treatment of Clare does not provide any details of her life outside of her relationship with Francis. Yet the impression is given that this was a mutual relationship, one which portrays Clare as discerning, serene and firm.

SUMMARY

The portraits of Clare presented in these biographies of Francis do vary in their emphases: from Clare as weak to Clare as strong, from Clare as malleable piece of clay to Clare as a discerning woman; and from Clare as holding a minor part in Francis' life to Clare as being influential on Francis.

Which picture is accurate, or are all of equal value? In order to assess them, a portrait of Clare based primarily on the sources needs to be drawn. The following is an attempt at such a sketch using primarily the *Process of Canonization*, and the *Legend of Clare*.

Which picture is accurate, or are all of equal value? In order to assess them a portrait of Clare based primarily on the sources needs to be drawn.

Life of Clare — From the Sources

DUTIFUL DAUGHTER

Clare of Assisi was born to Ortulana and Favarone di Offreduccio in 1193/1194. Before her birth, her mother, Ortulana was assured that she would bear a child who would "illumine the world" (CP VI, 12) and so she was named Clare. She is known to have two sisters — Agnes (Catherine) and Beatrice. As a small child she was known for her devotion and piety. It is reported that as a child, Clare would count her Our Fathers using pebbles as she said them (CL 4).

As members of the noble class, the family had to flee to Perugia in 1199 when a civil war erupted in Assisi. Clare spent the next five years in Perugia before returning with her family to Assisi around 1205.

SERVANT

When she returned, Clare's reputation as a kind, young religious girl continued. She was known for her fasting, prayer and almsgiving. Lady Bona Guelfuccio, a witness for Clare's canonization, said Clare was a prudent young girl who "always stayed in the house, hidden and not wanting to be seen by those who passed in front of the house to the Lord" (CP XVII, 4). Lord Ranieri de Bernardo, who also testified as a witness in the canonization process said that Clare did not wish to marry although her parents wished her to accept a husband.

Somewhere during this time (between 1206 and 1209) Clare heard of the work Francis was doing in repairing the Portiuncula. She was moved enough by his activity to give Bona Guelfuccio some money to take to the workers to buy food (CP XVII, 7). When Francis returned from Rome with papal approval of his Rule (1209), this contact with Francis developed into a deeper relationship, one of spiritual guidance and mutual support. Lady Bona again says that she secretly accompanied Clare many times on trips to speak with Francis. She also said that another brother (Brother Filippo) talked with Clare (CP XVII, 3). Clare's sister, Beatrice, says that "after Saint Francis heard of the fame of her holiness he went many times to preach to her (CP XII, 2)."

Francis is said to have preached to her about converting to Jesus Christ (CP XVII, 3). Clare "committed herself thoroughly to the counsel of Francis, placing him, after God, as the guide for her journey" (CL 6). Both seemed to have sought each other out because of their commitment to the Lord.

Soon after this relationship developed, Clare "renounced the world and all earthly things, and went to serve God as soon as she was able" (CP XII, 2) and at age eighteen she sold her inheritance and part of Beatrice's and gave it to the poor.

SPOUSE OF THE SPIRIT

During the Lent of 1212, Clare went to Francis "asking (him) about her conversion and how it should be carried out" (CL 7). He told her to receive the palm on Palm Sunday and then that evening to come to the Portiuncula. Clare attended the Palm Sunday services, and received the Palm from the Bishop, who "came down the steps, came to her and placed a palm in her hands" (CL 7).

That evening (March 18) Clare left her family home and went to the Portiuncula (perhaps with a companion — Pacifica — CP I, 3). In order to leave her home unnoticed she had to leave through an unguarded but barricaded door.

The brothers met her with torches at the Portiuncula. Her hair was shorn by the hands of the brothers, and she put aside her fine dress. After she received the habit of penance (the insignia of holy penance — CL 8 the tonsure and the habit), the Legend says "the servant was married to Christ."

Perhaps it was at this time that Clare first heard the words (in some form) that Francis later formally wrote down for her in the Form of Life and around which she shaped her life and community.

"Because by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the Most High King, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel, I resolve and promise care for myself and for my brothers to always have that same loving care and solicitude for you as (I have) for them" (RegCl 6:3).

Clare then went with Francis to San Paolo de Abbadessa (Bastia) where she was found by her relatives. After they tried to persuade her to leave, Clare "grabbed the altar cloths and uncovered her hair, showing them she was tonsured" (CP XII, 4). In doing this, she claimed sanctuary from the Church. Her family left and a few days later Clare went to Sant' Angelo di Panzo accompanied by Francis, Filippo and Bernard.

At Sant' Angelo di Panzo, her sister Agnes (Catherine) soon joined her (about April 4 — CL 25). Again the family came to retrieve their daughter, but again they were unsuccessful even when they attempted to remove Agnes forcibly (CL 26). Francis then cut Agnes hair and "directed her together with her sister in the way of the Lord (CL 26)."

Soon this small group moved to San Damiano, where in September of 1212 Benvenuta joined them (CP II, 1). During these early years, Clare was already known for providing for the needs of her sisters. In the summer of 1214, oil was needed in the monastery, Clare told the Brother who begged alms about it and he asked her to prepare a jar. Clare washed it and left the empty jar for the Brother to use. When the brother returned, the jar was filled (CP I, 15).

As time passed, more women joined this group who were beginning to be known for their dedication to poverty. Among those who joined at this time were Benvenuta of Perugia, Pacifica, Cecilia, and Filippa. The need for a more formal structure for the "Poor Ladies" became evident with the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council. By the end of 1215 (or the beginning of 1216), Francis persuaded Clare to accept the title of "Abbess." Also, some time before he died

on July 16, 1216 in Perugia, Innocent III granted Clare and the Ladies at San Damiano the Privilege of Poverty. This and the Form of Life given her by Francis guided their life for the next few years.

A WATCHFUL MOTHER

When Honorius III became Pope he soon renewed the Privilege of Poverty for San Damiano and put the monasteries directly under the direct authority of the Papal See. Cardinal Hugolino who was the Papal Legate in Tuscany, then provided Clare with a Rule (written between August 27, 1218 — July 29, 1219). This Rule was approved by him when he became Pope Gregory IX. This marked a long dialogue with Hugolino and his successors in which Clare struggled to be faithful to the original form of life given her by Francis, while at the same time obtaining papal approval of this way of life.

Clare and her sisters initially faced these challenges alone. Francis had gone to the Middle East in June of 1219. Her sister Agnes was also not present, for in 1219 she had gone to Monticello (near Florence) to become abbess at the monastery there. Later, when Francis returned (in late 1220), he too faced challenges to the future of his way of life. In addition, Francis also faced increasing ill health.

Clare could not expect too much realistically from Francis in terms of concrete actions. There is not much recorded evidence of their relationship at this time although a story from the Fioretti may fit in to this time period — the story of how Clare ate a meal with Francis and his Friars. (See Fior 15 for complete text). In the text there is a unity of spirit between Clare and Francis, one which perhaps sustains them in their separate daily struggles?

Clare became ill during 1224-1225, perhaps in part due to the rigorous fasting she had done. (Perhaps it is at this time Francis commanded her to eat a little bit every day (CP I, 17; II, 8). Francis also became increasingly ill in these next few years. Late in 1224, he returned to the Portiuncula, having received the Stigmata. Yet when Francis visited San Damiano in the spring of 1225, it is she who reportedly cares for him in his sickness (1Cel 101, LP 42-43). Clare at this time also received a hymn of consolation written for her and her sisters by Francis (LP 45).

Clare received a last re-assurance of his support for the Form of Life she and her ladies were following from Francis shortly before his death (LP 109). A week later, the brothers brought Francis to San Damiano for a final farewell (1Cel 116-1117) before he was buried at San Giorgio in Assisi.

Clare received the Privilege of Poverty for San Damiano shortly after Francis was canonized (July 16, 1228). Perhaps Clare felt some relief in the Privilege seemed secure. Perhaps she also found more support in her sister, Beatrice,

who joined the poor Ladies in 1230, "the Lord Pope has satisfied me, as I have said, and has satisfied you too, in all things and in every way according to your intention and mine regarding, as you know, our position on the ownership of property" (Agnes' Letter to Clare, 6). Later events disturbed that security.

A new challenge emerged in 1230 when the friars were forbidden by the papal bull "Quo elongati" to enter the convents of the Poor Ladies. Clare successfully fought for a return to the earlier practices by going on a "hunger strike" (CL 37). Pope Gregory IX "mitigated the prohibition into the hands of the general minister" (CL 37).

In the midst of this, Clare initiated a correspondence with Agnes of Bohemia (1234), encouraging her in adopting the Form of Life of the Poor Ladies. This exchange of correspondence continued throughout the rest of her life and in it is reflected her understanding of foundations of her relationship with God and her life with her sisters.

Clare continued to care for the needs of her sisters although very often she was ill. In 1240, for example, her sisters reported that she saved them from an attack by the Saracens and Assisi from destruction (CP II, 20; III, 18; IV, 14-15; VI, 10; VII, 6; X, 9; XII, 8). According to the sisters, it was through Clare's confident prayer and trust in the Lord that they were saved. Francesca (CP IX) and Filippa (CP III) give the details of these incidents.

In addition Clare had become known by this time for her healing gifts. She healed not only those in San Damiano but those who came to visit (eg. CP VII, IV, XI, V). In all these healings, Clare's discretion, her humility and her compassion are reflected as well as her commitment to serve her sisters (CP X, 6). Her life of intense prayer had also become known by the sisters and they tell of a number of mystical experiences (eg. CP X; 8; XI, 3-4; IV, 4, 19; III, 29-30; VI, 9; XIV, 7-8).

In 1247, Pope Innocent IV issued his own Rule for the Poor Ladies. Clare was faced with a Rule which is obligatory for all monasteries including San Damiano. The Rule did not give Clare what she was looking for — a confirmation of the Form of Life given her by Francis. Knowing that she was getting older and that death may not be too far off, Clare began work on her own Rule and her Testament. In both documents, she attempted to create a portrait of the vision she and Francis shared.

By 1252 Clare completed her Rule and was again ill. When Cardinal Raynaldus, now the Cardinal Protector of the Order, visited her, she urged him to obtain approval of her Rule and he did help (CL 40; and RegCl 1-2).

FINAL DAYS

By 1253, Clare completed her Testament. Her sister Agnes had returned and was present in San Damiano during Clare's final days. Pope Innocent IV arrived in Assisi in April and visited Clare. Later, in August (sometime before the 11th) he visited her again and Clare renewed her request for approval of her Rule. On August 10, 1253, Clare received the Bull of Approval for her Rule (CP III) and kissed it many times.

On August 11, Clare died, knowing that she has remained faithful to the Form of Life given her by Francis and that she has provided a Form of Life for her sisters. The *Legend of Clare* tells us that surrounded by her sisters, the Companions (Leo, Juniper and Angelo), and Cardinal Raynaldo, she was read the Passion of the Lord, blessed her sisters and was met by a multitude of virgins as her soul left her earthly body.

Conclusion

Hopefully, as Clare emerged from the shadow of Francis, the contours of her life determined the portrait. Clare, from the known details of her life, was a strong woman, sensitive, caring, discerning and above all committed to the gospel life and to poverty. She received the Form of Life from Francis and is intimately connected with him, and yet she made this Form of Life her own, appropriating its essence and bringing it to fruition in her own unique way. This is the image of Clare the emerges from the primary sources from which a modern biographer can draw.

End notes

¹ Four Ministers General of the Franciscan Family, *Clare of Assisi: A New Woman* (Cincinnati: Franciscan Publishers, 1992) 4.

² Paul Sabatier, *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Louise Seymour Houghton (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906) 148.

³ Sabatier, 151. ⁴ Sabatier, 161. ⁵ Sabatier, 166. ⁶ Sabatier, 166.

⁷ Johannes Jorgensen, *Saint Francis of Assisi: A Biography*, trans. T O'Connor Sloane, Ph. D., LL. D. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1922) 122.

⁸ Jorgensen, 133. ⁹ Jorgensen, 135

¹⁰ Omer Englebert, *Saint Francis of Assisi: A Biography*, trans. Eve Marie Cooper (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1965) 160.

¹¹ Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992) 337-338.

¹² Fortini, 360.

¹³ Raoul Manselli, *St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Paul Duggan (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1988) 164.

The Bishop John R.H. Moorman Franciscan Library: Manuscripts and Scholarships at St. Deiniol's Residential Library, Hawarden, North Wales, Great Britain

BROTHER HUBERT, S.S.F.

Students who would wish to unravel a fascinating part of the thirteenth century renaissance of the Christian Church and the part played by the followers of St. Francis of Assisi, could not do better than make their way to the shrine of the great Victorian statesman W.E. Gladstone. This land owned by the Gladstone family with Hawarden Castle as its centre has become the place of a unique Residential Library, St. Deiniol's, named after an old Welsh saint. The Library has become a quiet sanctuary for all who love to read, research and write. This working academic library is ever growing in size and scope. The student who has come to seek Francis and his brothers will find material methodically researched and documented. This is mainly the work of the great Franciscan Scholar the late Dr. J.R.H. Moorman one time Anglican Bishop of Ripon.

In his will Bishop Moorman bequeathed his *Bibliotheca Franciscana* to St. Deiniol's Residential Library, together with a Scholarship to enable students, scholars and writers to use his Collection and his Manuscripts for reading and research at St. Deiniol's Library. The strength of the Collection is its concentration on the history of the Movement down to 1517, and it includes

This article, written by Brother Hubert, S.F.F., is the result of the efforts of Rev. Dr. P.J. Jagger, Warden and Chief Librarian of Saint Deiniol's Library Hawarden. Besides taking us into the scholarly contributions of the great Bishop John Moorman, Brother Hubert presents a brief history of the Anglican Franciscan Movement including his own ministry in Belfast during the past sixteen years. Readers will take special interest in the scholarship opportunities available at St. Deiniol's.

books about St. Francis and about the history of the friars, Clarisses and tertiaries, the works of the leading Franciscan writers before 1517, and sets of periodicals dealing exclusively with Franciscan history.

Early manuscripts include a **Missale Ordinis Fratrum**, written in Italy in the 15th century, and a tiny breviary, ideally suited to the itinerant friar because of its weight. Among incunabula are an edition of a handbook for confessors by Nicholas of Osimo printed in 1476 and the **Arbor Vitae Crucifixae** written by Ubertino da Casale, a leader of Spirituals, and printed in Venice in 1485. The Collection contains two early collections of documents, the **Speculum Minorum** of 1509 and the **Monumenta ordinis Minorum** of 1511, together with various early histories of St. Francis. The **Annales Minorum** of the Irish friar, Luke Wadding, is represented by two editions of the 18th and 20th centuries.

The great revival of Franciscan studies began with Paul Sabatier's **Vie de Saint Francois** in 1894, and the Collection has an early edition inscribed by the author, along with 30 other works of Sabatier and various letters. There are over a hundred biographies of St. Francis and various editions of the main sources for his life. Regional histories range from large folio volumes to paperbacks, and there are many volumes on the great Franciscan Schoolmen, including Bonaventura, Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. The Collection of course includes works by Bishop Moorman himself. These are but a few examples of some of the great treasure and rare items contained in this unique and extensive Collection.

St. Deiniol's Library, which now houses the Franciscan Collection, has in its own collection a very wide coverage of monastic and medieval history. It was the brilliant conception of its founder, the Rt. Hon. William Ewart Gladstone. Throughout the long years of his public life, this great Victorian Churchman and Prime Minister drew strength and inspiration from the peaceful days he spent at his home, Hawarden Castle which he called the 'Temple of Peace.' It became one of his cherished ambitions to create a foundation where others could share this privilege. The Library today reflects Gladstone's own interests in theology and history, and there are impressive and wide-ranging holdings in both subjects with substantial collections more generally in the Arts and Humanities, numbering in total over 200,000 printed items. As such, St. Deiniol's Library provides an ideal setting for the Franciscan Collection and enables the reader to see St. Francis and his Order in both the wider historical and theological contexts.

The present writer is fortunate enough to have known John Moorman over a period of many years and it was largely his influence and friendship which led me finally to Ordination to the Priesthood in the Anglican Church. In the 1950's when Moorman was Principal of Chichester Theological College and I had a small post in the British Museum (now the British Library) I was invited

to Chichester and allowed to browse in his Franciscan library and also I was able to research and help in a practical way in facilitating Moorman's own research work. The good news is that not only is his Franciscan library but also twelve large boxes of his personal study notes are now available to all serious students. It has indeed been for me a particularly interesting labour of love to have arranged and listed these study notes nearly forty years on from when I first met a man I came to love and admire. It was in 1960 that I resigned my post and joined the Anglican Franciscans of the Society of St. Francis.

Dr. J.R.H. Moorman's great contributions to the history of the Order is his book: **A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517** published in Oxford in 1968. But also **Sources for the Life of St. Francis** published in Manchester 1940, **The Grey Friars in Cambridge** to mention but three of his more historical works. This last work reminds me that St. Deiniol's has a silver penny of Edward III which is believed to have belonged to the Cambridge Franciscans.

The twelve boxes of Moorman's study notes are a mine of information. There are lists of Custodes in Italy, Spain, France, England, Germany and Bohemia. Manuscripts of his published books and other unpublished works are also included. We also find 'Fioretti', for Moorman translated from various sources 'A New Fioretti' with Introduction and Notes. This work is bound in with the English **Omnibus of Sources for the Life of St Francis**, Third Revised Edition. All Franciscans must be very grateful to the General Editor of this great source book, the late M.A. Habig. There are notes from Episcopal Registers, notes on Chapter Meetings, on Franciscan preaching and poetry; the friars and the Universities. There are notes from other Franciscan writers such as Renaudet's '**Prereforme et Humanisme a Paris**' and Little's **Grey Friars in Oxford**. A.G. Little was one of the foremost English scholars among the members of the British Society of Franciscan Studies.

There is a Papal Bull, a Bull of Indulgence granted by Pope Gregory XI to six Franciscan friars (23rd July 1373) of Scarzole in the diocese of Orvieto to take effect one year after its receipt (this is fully described in the Study Notes). Another item refers to Franciscans in Yorkshire, England including a list of Ordinations to the Priesthood, extracts from the Archbishop of York's Register. There are Dissolution lists of York, Doncaster and Richmond. I only list these few items to show the scope and the range of the research undertaken.

British interest in this subject, aroused by the publication of Paul Sabatier's **Vie de S. Francois**, was enhanced by the 1926 seven hundredth anniversary year of the death of St. Francis of Assisi.

Dr. Moorman was a member of the British Society of Franciscan Studies and from undergraduate days for sixty years John Moorman collected Franciscana. His smaller books include a very useful Life of the Saint. **The Franciscans in England** is yet another published in 1974 with a foreword by Cardinal Heenan. Moorman spoke Italian and gave lectures in Italian in Italy. He was a personal friend of Cardinal Montini of Milan who afterwards became Pope Paul VI. As an observer at the Vatican Council he was able to publish **Vatican Observed**.

By 1939 the British Society of Franciscan Studies had published most of the major Franciscan texts and feeling their work to be done voted themselves out of existence. John Moorman continued to be a good friend to Franciscans everywhere and he took his part in the great celebration in 1974. This was a joint celebration when Anglican Franciscan brothers together with our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters met in Canterbury Cathedral to commemorate the 750th anniversary of the coming of the first friars to England in 1224. Grey Friars, Canterbury was the first Franciscan friary in England. These celebrations were occasions of great joy and fraternal togetherness. John Moorman gave his talk in the Cathedral and I remember how he remained cool and gentle when some religious fanatic entered the pulpit with him.

The Society of St. Francis, of which I am a member, began in 1922 under the name of the Brotherhood of St. Francis of Assisi, but a Franciscan religious community had already been established in the east end of London and in other places including a mission in Africa. This was the Society of the Divine Compassion whose members gradually died out so that soon after the Second World War the Society inherited much from the S.D.C.. This movement, promoting the living of the religious life in the Franciscan way, coincided with the interest in the academic pursuit of Franciscan Studies. It was in 1892 that A.G. Little published his historic account of the Grey Friars in Oxford which as Dr. Moorman himself says in his **The Franciscans in England** set the standard for all future work on Franciscan history. Two years later there came out the English translation of Sabatier's **Vie de Saint Francois**.

In 1893 James Adderley became Vicar of Plaistow in East London and, inspired by the story of St. Francis, Adderley wanted to start there a community of men who would take simple vows and devote themselves to the service of the poor. From these small beginnings the Franciscan religious life in the Anglican Communion was revived. One member of S.D.C., William Sirr, yearned for a more contemplative life and after many years of waiting was allowed by his community to found a monastery in Worcestershire at Glasshampton where he acquired the stables of a large burnt down stately home. His postulants did not stay with him and he lived there for many years as a hermit. The Society of

St. Francis has also inherited this very beautiful monastery and use it as a House of Prayer where novices spend part of their novitiate to learn the right use of silence and the practice of contemplative prayer.

Other small Franciscan groups came into being such as the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross, and when in the thirties Fr. Algy Robertson came to join the Brotherhood of St. Francis of Assisi from the Christa Seva Sangha in Poona, India, then in truth the Society of St. Francis came into being. For it was in 1921/1922 that Douglas Downes became interested in the small beginnings of what is now called the Society of St. Francis. A Committee of well-wishers invited him to come and take over the house in Dorset and to build up a community. Our Founder is always known as Brother Douglas. When the call to Dorset came he was Chaplain at Worcester College, Oxford. As Moorman says: "Brother Douglas went to the Farm in 1922 as a stop-gap and remained there or was connected with it for the rest of his life."

The Community at Flowers Farm in Dorset grew slowly until after the Second World War after which came quite rapid growth and expansion. In 1959 work was undertaken in Papua, New Guinea and later in the Solomon Islands. It is from this Pacific Province that SSF is now making its most rapid growth. John Moorman took a real interest in the fortunes of SSF all his life. The Apostolate at the beginning was Wayfarers (i.e. Tramps), down and out; the homeless. With the years and with the growth of the movement our work has developed in many different ways. As with so many Religious Orders we now work in groups of two, three, four, five brothers in inner city situations. For the past sixteen years I have been in our house in Belfast where I have been engaged in a variety of ministries such as teaching, preaching, hospital chaplaincy work, reconciliation groups and ordinary parish work. Other brothers do what they can to help AIDS patients, as well as the mentally and physically handicapped. All social outcasts concern the followers of the Blessed Francis.

To conclude this article and to give you some idea of the range and scope of the Moorman Franciscan Research Notes, it might be a good idea to take an extract from the Handlist:

118. Miscellaneous Papers including a List of Norwich Friars — a description of Cambridge Seals — List of Franciscan licensed to hear Confessions in the Ely Diocese. — List of Cambridge Friars Minor 1215-1538. — List of names from Ely Registers.

119. Miscellaneous notes including lists of Names. Also MS copy and typescript of Moorman's 'Some Franciscans in England' with extensive bibliography — includes notes on Learning and on Movements. A list of foreigners in England.

120. A List of English Franciscans by Houses.

121. Franciscans in England — Ministers, Custodes, Wardens, Lectors, etc.

122. MS of Moorman's 'The Franciscans in England 1974'.

123. Franciscan convents and monasteries in the Middle Ages.

124. Friars: Lists of Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, Carmelites, Friars of the Sack, Trinitarians, etc. also General notes.

125. Documents connected with Cambridge Grey Friars: —

Notes on Individual Friars. Correspondence with regard to Grey Friars in Cambridge 35 letters 1945-50. List of Friars and notes from Cambridge Grace Books. Notes for the Constitution of Benedict XII. See A.F.H. 195. Copies of a Papal Bull 13.

Notes on Wills (bequests). Notes on Jean Copeland 'The Relations between the Secular Clergy and the Mendicant Friars in England the century after the issue of the Bull Super Cathedram (1300).' Notes on the Franciscan Educational System. Franciscans and the Statute of Mortmain. Annals of Cambridge, Provincial Chapters held in Cambridge — cross references to various documents. Notes on B. Mullinger: **The University of Cambridge from the earliest Times to the Royal Injunction of 1535.** Origin of the Cambridge Codex 1873 — **The History of the University of Cambridge by Thomas Fuller 1841.** Cambridge MSS.

There are also notes on most aspects of Franciscanism: Missions to the Far East, to Africa and America; Friars and the Eastern Church; Friars and Crusaders; Friars and the Inquisition. There are notes on individuals; Brother Elias, St. Bonaventura; Robert Grosseteste and the Friars. Other subjects include: Franciscan Preaching, Poetry, the Schoolmen of the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, Disputes between Friars and Seculars, Chaucer and the Friars, The Friars and the Universities. Very interesting too are the references to the Monti di Pieta which were schemes for lending money to protect people from the excessive interest charged by the Jews and Lombards. These notes show how the Friars influenced people of all ranks and classes.

Bishop Moorman decided to make a special study of St. Francis when he was a young boy, and his Collection reflects the enthusiasm of both a church historian and a man of faith for whom St. Francis' life was a true *imitatio Christi* and a model for others. To ensure that his own historical research and enthusiasm might continue, Bishop Moorman endowed an annual Scholarship. This Scholarship meets the entire residential costs at St. Deiniol's Library for successful applicants who wish to make use of the Moorman Franciscan Collection or to undertake reading, research or writing on St. Francis or the Order.

Applicants are invited annually, and submissions can be considered for future years in the case of those planning study leave and sabbaticals well ahead of time. A number of scholarships are awarded annually for periods from a few weeks to several months. Applicants can belong to any branch of the Christian Church, from any country and of any age.

St. Deiniol's Library is fully residential and its amenities include a large common room, television lounge, lecture and seminar rooms, a domestic Chapel, and waitress-service dining room, which, together with the stately galleried library, are all under one roof. There is modern accommodation for forty-six people in single, twin and double-bedded rooms, each with study facilities and hot and cold water. There are ample bath/shower rooms. The building is centrally heated and double glazed throughout. A coin-operated laundry is available. The combination of a fine academic library with comfortable residential accommodation is unique, and for successful applicants the costs of full board and lodging will be met by the Scholarship. For paying guests the charges are very reasonable being subsidized from Endowment income.

Each year St. Deiniol's welcomes clergy, religious and laity, men and women, young and old, individuals and groups as guests. They represent many different academic disciplines, professions, countries, nationalities, cultures and religions. The informal and stimulating company of such an international community is an added bonus for those who come to study St. Francis and the Franciscan Movement.

* * *



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Bodo, Murray. **Through the Year with Francis of Assisi.** Daily Meditations from His Words and Life. Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993. Pp. 240. Paper \$7.95.

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

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

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

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

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



New Fioretti

On How Certain Brothers Recognized The Truth Of The Words: The Lord Corrects Those Whom He Loves

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M.

1.

At that time — it was the beginning of the month of Ramadan, as it was also for Christians the beginning of the penitential season in preparation for Paschaltide — during the week in which Desert Storm in Arabia and Mesopotamia began to abate, lo! Brothers John of America, William of Britain and Transalpine Hermann, all belonging to that house in Rome called the Curia of the Friars Minor, set out for the East. They set out for the regions once known by the names of Carpathia, Valaquia, Moldavia, Transylvania and Dacia, regions now inhabited by the tribes of the Magyars and the Czechs as well as by descendants of people from Saxony and Suevia in Germany. The three pilgrims from Rome were anxious to visit their brothers living in these regions who, through many long, dark years, had suffered a great deal of injustice and persecution. In these latter months, however, at the end of most severe affliction, they now saw, in accordance with the plan of a benevolent God, a new light appear and they began to awaken to new life. The pilgrims wished to experience, in the example of their brothers in exile, a new driving force for their own faith and the service they were rendering in Rome. They, on their part, came to offer these brothers encouragement and solidarity.

Though the experiences related here took place some three years ago, readers will resonate deeply to the Franciscan values so beautifully expressed by the author.

2.

The three companions from Rome chose for their first stopping-place the country of the Magyars, a place called SZEGED, in the Province of St. John Capistran. Precisely here, on the banks of the river Theiss, is located the ancient convent of which blessed James of the Marches had been the Guardian. On their arrival, the three companions were greeted by Brother Claudius, the Provincial of that Province, and by the local bishop. During the forty years previously, those with power in the land and those who had embraced an ideology opposed to God, had profaned this building and had all but destroyed it completely. In these latter years, however, it was coming to life again in an extraordinary way. Our pilgrims were overjoyed to hear that just in those days a great number of young people, by divine inspiration, were asking to be received to obedience as members of the three Provinces of the Magyar tongue. In this same house, which was being reconstructed with great sacrifice and the contributions of numerous brothers the world over, these men would receive formation in accordance with the Gospel and instruction in sacred theology. Brother John celebrated the holy liturgy, joined by all the friars and the people of the place; and its principal theme was: "Whoever has not the courage to dream, does not have the strength to strive." In the name of Jesus they recalled the exodus from Egypt and the crossing of the desert. For themselves and for all the oppressed, wherever they might be, they celebrated the memorial of their liberation by the Lord. And they asked the Lord of History to deign to heal this dissolute world and to render their brothers capable, wherever they might be, of being servants of evangelization, of healing and liberation, now most of all when the Chapter of Pentecost was imminent. Afterwards they renewed their strength with a good, strong fish soup and slept for some hours on hard straw mattresses. The three companions then set out once more under the maternal protection of Brother Claudius of Budapest, who had now become their guardian on their journey.

3.

In Transylvania, which today forms part of Rumania, they first visited the place called MARIA RADNA, where the memory of the Mother of the Risen Lord is kept alive. There, three very old friars who had survived a long period of oppression, were overjoyed and immensely grateful for the visit. Other friars came from all the surrounding countryside as soon as they heard of the arrival of their guests from Rome. After having been forbidden to do so for so many years, they now took their habits out from their hiding places and put them on for the first time in ages, as a sign of belonging to a brotherhood which extends all over the world. This was also an act of thanksgiving for the fact that the Lord and their brothers in the whole world had not abandoned them in their time of exile. When they had exchanged greetings and the kiss of peace and had fortified themselves with the large loaves and the dry wine of those cold regions, they went in procession into the sanctuary to thank the Lord and his

Holy Mother for these signs of consolation. When a huge crowd had gathered together from all the surrounding villages, they all sang this chant which, in a wonderful manner, the Lord himself inspired them to do at that moment:

"Hail Mary,

You who take upon yourself the hopes of the oppressed,
Sign of salvation and of unexpected liberation,
You have been chosen by the Lord of History,
Blessed are you among all the poor,

Holy Mary, Mother of Europe, of Latin America,
and of all the poor

in all the world and throughout all time,
pray for us

that we may listen to the Spirit of God and obey him
in this hour

in which the peoples of the whole world are becoming awake.

May the hour soon come

in which everybody may experience full and complete justice
joined to a lasting peace;
and where the new era of liberty
may be there for all to see.

4.

They then visited TEMESVAR, DEVA, HUNEDOARA and finally a place founded by the Germans, which bears the name of HERMANNSTADT. For that reason it held particular interest for Brother Transalpinus. After a tiring journey along the course of the river Moros and through the Carpathians covered with snow, they reached the country of the CZECHS, where the friars of the Province of King Saint Stephen, (969-1038), even to this day take care of the sanctuary of the "Mother of the Afflicted." Here one can also see a slab which records that away back in August of 1938, the Minister General from Rome, a certain Brother Leonard Mary, had visited this sanctuary and the friars who take care of it. The three companions remained there for some days during which time they themselves saw to the heating of the bare cells by hauling great trunks of firewood from the woods which were still under snow from the Carpathians. They held a meeting with the friars of the whole Province and mutually updated their information about the death and resurrection of the Fraternity throughout Europe and other areas, giving thanks to the Lord for having changed bitterness into sweetness of soul and body. At the end Brother John celebrated the Holy Eucharist with the friars and all the people who had gathered in from the countryside. And with great astonishment they heard the words which declare that the future belongs to the poor of all the earth, that the

afflicted will be consoled and that the persecuted shall all receive a new home close to God (cf. MT. 5, 1 ff).

They drank from the living font of the memory of a God who liberates and they ate of the bread which constitutes the sacrament of the closeness, the fidelity and the solidarity of that God with this world groaning in birth pangs. As a salutation of peace and farewell, and in the name of the friars of the whole world, they sang the "Magnificat" there facing the "Mother of the Afflicted": the Lord himself puts down the mighty from their thrones and raises up the little ones (cf Lk. 2).

5.

While our pilgrims were making the return journey — from BUDAPEST on the Danube to ROME and Latium on the Tiber — lo and behold, a warm spring sun shone all over the country. After a long and severe winter the ice began to melt before the warmth of the sun, a fresh stream of water ran alongside the road and in the clear air the first flowers began joyfully to adorn the plains and valleys of the Balkans. So the three companions returned to their Curia invigorated, strengthened and interiorly enlightened. Tired were they from their journey, but convinced that the Lord corrects, chastises and purifies them and the whole fraternity while, at the same time, never ceasing to love them and build them up.

In praise of Christ. Amen

Brother Hermann.

All of this was seen, heard and faithfully written down by Brother Hermann Transalpinus on the Solemnity of the Lord's Ascension, A.D. 1991.

* * *

Reflections On Perfect Joy And Liberation Theology

JUDE WINKLER, O.F.M., CONV.

One of the most famous incidents during the life of Francis is his explanation to Brother Leo of the meaning of "Perfect Joy." This account appears in two versions. The first is an independent tradition which Esser held to be authentic. The second is a slightly different version found in the Fioretti, Chapter IX. In this account, Francis asks Brother Leo what perfect joy is. After a few ideas which would appear to be filled with joy because they would be associated with great triumphs, Francis responds that perfect joy lies in being shut out on one's own friary by a brother because one arrived late. That brother would not only refuse to let one in, but would then beat one severely for causing such a disturbance. Perfect joy would be knowing that the friar really recognized one and yet did what he did, and in being willing to take all of this suffering as form of participation in the cross of Christ.

This account talks about an extreme manifestation of virtue, so much so that people have often wondered whether the account might show a bit of masochism on the part of Francis. Furthermore, in recent years a popular movement in the Church has been the development of Liberation Theology. The basis of this theology is that all human beings are due certain rights based upon their status as being children of God. If these rights are not given one, one has an obligation to struggle to obtain them so that the reign of God might be further manifested upon this earth. Perfect joy would seem to have nothing to do with this theology. In fact, it almost seems to be the antithesis of the idea that one should demand justice. Are these two ideas reconcilable? Do these concepts have anything to offer each other as possible correctives? This article will be a meditation upon the source of perfect joy and its most appropriate application to liberation theology.

Why is Francis Filled With Joy

Exactly why is Francis so thrilled to be beaten and thrown into the mud and snow? It is not that Francis enjoys the pain and suffering for their own sake, for that truly would be masochism. Rather, Francis is filled with joy for a

Fr. Jude teaches scripture at the Washington Theological Union. He is also summer lecturer at the Franciscan Institute and has in recent years been guest professor at his Order's theological seminary in Romania.

number of reasons. The first is that which he himself states: that he is sharing in the cross of Christ.

St. Ignatius of Loyola speaks of the three stages of the spiritual life. The first stage is not to do anything which would cut one off from the life of Christ. In other words, one would avoid all mortal sin. The second stage is not to do anything which would be offensive to Christ. This means that one would avoid all venial sin. Finally, the third stage is that one would want to participate in the suffering of Christ.

This is a Biblical idea, especially seen in the later letters of Paul. As he approached his death, Paul spoke more and more about the Christian's responsibility to respond to the cross with joy. In the Pauline letter to the Colossians, we see the development of the Pauline spirituality of the cross. The author of this letter, which might not be Paul but is certainly within the school of Pauline spirituality, speaks of how he, in his own flesh, is making up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ (Col 1, 24). What could possibly be lacking? Was not the death of Christ enough to buy us freedom from our slavery to sin? Yes, but there is one thing lacking: to make it present again. The mystery of the death and resurrection happened a long time ago. It is difficult for people to believe in the great love which is behind this event. They might feel that they have never seen it or touched it. Therefore, it is necessary for Christians to make this event present again. In their own sufferings, they incarnate the mystery of the cross. They become sacraments, visible signs of the invisible reality. In them, people can once again believe in the love of the cross.

The Cross and Love

But why is the cross a sign of love? On the cross, Jesus took upon himself our pain and suffering, and especially our alienation, and he transformed them for all time. The greatest source of our alienation is sin, for by practicing egoism we shut ourselves off from the love of others. We create a world of loneliness in which we are the only god whom we worship. We become trapped in a prison of our own invention. Jesus takes upon himself this loneliness, and destroys it by his act of faith.

Jesus enters into this loneliness through his suffering. Jesus suffers terribly on the cross. Suffering itself is usually a source of alienation. In the midst of suffering, we feel as if we are shut off from everyone around us. We feel as if it is impossible to trust, especially in the idea of a loving God. In the midst of his tremendous suffering, Jesus shouts his creative word over the void of alienation and chaos, he shouts, "I trust you, Father, I love you, Father." In an instant, what once separated us in an agony of isolation now becomes an opportunity to reach out and trust.

Likewise, Jesus should have felt himself alienated from his disciples who betrayed him, denied him, ran away from him and his suffering. He should have felt himself alienated from those who were actively working to kill him. He should have felt himself alienated from all of us whose sins are the real cause of his death. Yet, he reaches out to all of us even as we are sinning against him and refuses to allow our sins to separate us from him. He calls upon his Father to extend his forgiveness to us, for we do not understand what we are doing. He tells us even as we nail in the spikes, "I love you dearly, I will always love you."

Even the alienation which our original sin had caused between ourselves and nature is bridged, for as the spikes enter his flesh, Jesus continues to love those spikes into existence. He accepts the spikes' song of praise as they fulfill their nature even as they tear into his hands and feet.

This trust and love is incredible. No wonder people living in our era find it difficult to believe in so great a love. No wonder it would be necessary to re-present this redemptive mystery over and over again so that people could possibly believe that they no longer have to be alienated, that they can trust once again.

Francis Overcomes Alienation

This is exactly what Francis is doing. He is accepting the suffering; he is receiving as a share in the cross of Christ. In his act of trust and love, he is telling everyone, including the friar who is causing the suffering, that our sins need no longer alienate us. He is re-presenting the Pascal mystery on that cold ground on which he is lying, bruised but certainly not defeated.

On one level, Francis is shouting out to the Father, even as Jesus did, I trust. He is allowing what should be a source of alienation and confusion between him and God to become a source of union. He is living compassion (cum-passio — to suffer with). He is living the ultimate surrender into the hands of a loving God. Rather than wondering whether God loves him in the midst of his suffering, Francis is proclaiming the opposite. He understands that his suffering is the very sign that God loves him. The Passion has become passion, and Francis can only respond with joy for the great dignity which the Lord has bestowed upon him, the dignity of being able to participate in his cross.

The union extends beyond this, however, for this moment is also one of union with the brother who is beating Francis. For one thing, Francis now knows that his love for the brother is absolutely pure. It is possible to love someone for the wrong motivation. One could love someone because that person is friendly, or beautiful, or well connected, etc. Francis knows that at this moment that there is no other reason to love the brother who is beating him than to share the outrageous love of God. Francis knows that the brother does not deserve

this love, but he also knows that he himself does not deserve God's love and yet God had given it to him. And so Francis does not allow the brother's act to separate him from the brother, but rather allows it to become a source of union between him and the brother.

Furthermore, Francis recognizes what the brother is doing is wrong. It is a terrible, sinful thing. Yet, seeing the situation with the eyes of God, he recognizes that the one being hurt the most in this whole event is the brother who is beating him. Francis sees this as the brother's attempt to create his own egoistic world, to make himself more lonely. Francis refuses to play this game, but like Jesus on the cross reaches out to him all the more, knowing that at a first moment this will probably infuriate the brother all the more, but that at a second moment the brother will recognize Francis' action for what it is: pure love. That is a cause for deep joy: that Francis can know that his love is pure.

But there is even more. Francis recognizes that the brother would not have done this to him if he were not already a hurting person. The pain of life must have damaged the psyche of this brother terribly, and whether the pain came from the outside (the brokenness of life) or was self-inflicted (sin) was not terribly important to Francis (just as it is not all that important to God). He only saw a hurting person before his eyes. And so Francis was filled with joy to take a little of this man's pain upon himself, even in this physical manner. He entered into a deepest form of compassion with his brother, for as the man beat and beat him and saw only love in return, the brother must have slowly recognized that he was still loved. He must have recognized that his love was stronger than his self-destructive tendencies. His pain must have been slowly melted away by the fire of Francis' love, and he must have been healed. Francis must have cried profound tears of joy that he was able to be an instrument of healing for his brother.

Liberation Theology

This is exactly the intersection point with liberation theology. The Christian living in the slum of Sao Paulo must recognize that what is being done to him/her is unjust. He/She must fight for justice. But how? What is his/her most powerful weapon? Francis would respond perfect joy.

That person must look upon the millionaires who are causing his/her misery, and he/she must feel their pain. This sounds absolutely outrageous, but if this is not done, then liberation theology quickly descends into a substitution of one form of oppression for another form of oppression. The rich are made poor and the poor are made rich. Then the former rich can suffer. This is not the message of Christ. Christ loves both the rich and the poor, and he feels the pain of them both. But who can best heal the situation? The person who is oppressed actually holds the trump card, for that person is already on the cross.

That person only need to shout out, "I trust, I love, I love even those oppressing me" to change the situation.

Concretely what does this mean? Is this passivity in the face of oppression? It is hardly that, for if one really loves the millionaire, then one feels the responsibility to help that millionaire recognize the hell which he/she has created for him/herself. By oppressing others, the millionaire has become one's own god, has closed oneself in a fortress of loneliness. That person is often so hurting that he/she has become immune to the pain which one has brought upon oneself. That person does not even recognize the hell of loneliness for what it is.

To say that I realize that the most hurting one in this whole situation is the one who appears to be the richest, but is actually the loneliest, is to see the world with the eyes of Christ.

That is why the poor person must love the millionaire. That is why the poor person must even be willing to suffer for that person. To fight for my own rights is one thing, but the power associated with that fight is so intoxicating that it can lead to greater alienation and pain. Rather, to fight for my rights for the sake of the one stealing my rights, to say that I love him/her so much that I will no longer let him/her do these things to me. To say that I realize that the most hurting one in this whole situation is the one who appears to be the richest, but is actually the loneliest, is to see the world with the eyes of Christ. It is to trust and love the Father as one is being crucified, it is to love those who are nailing the spikes into one's hands, it is to love the spikes into existence. It is perfect joy.

Thus, one certainly fights for justice. One does all those things which promote one's dignity, marches, hunger strikes, lawsuits, etc., but the underlying reason why one is doing these things has changed. One is doing them for the other, and not for oneself. Stendal in "The Red and the Black" states, "Love grants equalities, it does not seek them." In this Gospel irony, it is the poor person who is offering equality to the rich person by offering love.

A Necessary Prerequisite

This all sounds outrageous, and in a sense it is. The cross is after all folly. Yet, it is also outrageously redemptive. But before a person can enter into this mystery of the cross, there is one prerequisite. That person must have experi-

enced the overwhelming love of God. A person cannot give a love which the person has not first received. Thus, there is a first step in sharing this message with any group which is oppressed. One must help these people feel God's love in their lives so that they can learn to love themselves. If I accept suffering when I do not love myself, it is because I feel that I somehow deserve the suffering. I do not deserve better. This is not redemptive. This only creates more pain and alienation. This is not what God intends. Rather, I should be able to see that what is happening to me is unjust because I am loved by God and I do deserve better. Francis certainly knew he deserved better than what he was receiving. That is exactly why his response was redemptive, because he was freely accepting the pain in order to offer an invitation of freedom to his oppressor.

Thus, the basic message of the call to liberation is correct: in the reign of God none of God's children should be oppressed. Every Christian is called to fight for justice, but not to kill for it, only to die for it. In this death, there truly is perfect joy.

* * *

Claremount On Palm Sunday

Forsythia at a distance, ghost in yellow draperies.
Azalea bushes, jarvis-red, alive with honey bees.
Dogwood, a waterfall of bloom all bridal pink and white.
Faint redbud, like remembered pain in season of delight.
Around my bench, grape hyacinth, old friend,
In grasses none but birds and me have trod.
No one to ask a question of but God.

Bernetta Quinn, O.S.F.

The Georgia Martyrs In The Tradition of Franciscan Evangelization

CYPRIAN J. LYNCH, O.F.M.

This paper will concern itself with the remote spiritual heritage which inspired Peter de Corpa and his companions to come to Georgia and to endure martyrdom in witness to the faith rather than the immediate circumstances of their heroic deaths.¹ It was from their spiritual father, St. Francis of Assisi, who died more than 300 years earlier, that they derived their inspiration, values, ideals, motivation, evangelizing zeal and readiness to lay down their lives.

The primary sources of the spiritual heritage the martyrs carried with them to Georgia are the words of Francis himself, together with the writings of his early companions and first biographers. Because their simple prose carries a force and flavor which not even the most eloquent modern biographers can match, I have crafted this paper almost entirely from their words.

Our story begins one day, late in the year 1205 in a little church on the outskirts of Assisi where a carefree young man, who had begun to question the meaning of his aimless, self-indulgent life, was praying for enlightenment. Suddenly a voice from the crucifix before which he knelt said to him three times: "Francis, go repair my house" (L:M 2, 1). Believing he was being directed to imitate the ascetics who in those days dedicated their lives to rebuilding ruined churches, Francis assumed the garb of a hermit, and for the next two years divided his time between repairing churches and nursing lepers.

On the Feast of St. Matthias in February, 1208 he heard read at Mass the gospel passage which recounts Christ's commission to the Apostles. "Go after the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this announcement: 'The reign of God is at hand!' . . . Provide yourselves with neither gold nor silver nor

The author delivered this paper on October 3 of last year at a public session on the cause for the canonization of the Franciscan Martyrs of Georgia at which Bishop Raymond W. Lessard, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Savannah, Georgia presided. Fr. Cyprian has published numerous articles on Franciscan spirituality and history in various periodicals and encyclopedias. He is professor emeritus of the Franciscan Institute.

copper in your belts; no traveling bag, no change of shirt, no sandals, no walking staff" (Mt 10, 6-10). At that moment, "the Spirit of Christ came upon him and clothed him with such power that he adopted the way of life described, not only in mind and heart, but also in his daily life and dress" (LMin 2, 1). Garbed now as in itinerant preacher, the former mason and part-time nurse "began to preach penance to all with fervor of spirit and joy of mind" (1Cel 23). "He filled the whole earth with the gospel of Christ" and "made a tongue out of his whole body" (1 Cel 97).

"As the force of his teaching and the sincerity of his life became known, others were moved by his example to live a life of penance. They renounced everything they had and came to share his life and dress" (LM 3, 3). But because he was uncertain whether they too were called to proclaim penance and peace in the manner of the Apostles, Francis felt the need again to consult the gospel.

Early one morning in the spring of 1208, he went with his first two followers to the Church of St. Nicholas in Assisi and opened the book of the gospels three times, "proposing to follow what counsel should first appear" (2 Cel 15). The first text they came upon was Christ's admonition to the rich young man: "If you seek perfection, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor" (Mt 19, 21). At the second opening of the book they found Christ's commission to the Apostles: "Take nothing for your journey" (Lk 9, 3). The third time, they were confronted with the doctrine of the Cross: "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self" (Lk 9, 23). Francis was now certain that he and his companions were called to live the life of apostolic preachers. "Brothers," he told them, "this is our life and rule, and the life and rule of all those who may wish to join us" (L3S 29).

In the spring of 1209, when his followers numbered 11, "he wrote for himself and his brothers, present and to come, simply and in few words, a form of life and rule, using for the most part the words of the holy gospel" (1 Cel 32). But, unwilling to trust solely in his own inspiration, he determined to "go to our Holy Mother, the Roman Church, and lay before the supreme pontiff what our Lord has begun to work through us; so that with his consent and direction we may continue what we have undertaken" (L3S 46).

After pope Innocent III approved this primitive rule and commissioned the brothers to preach, Francis had the assurance that his personal charism was in harmony with the church's institutional charism. Then "he went about the towns and villages announcing the Kingdom of God, preaching peace, and teaching salvation and penance unto the remission of sins. . . He acted boldly in all things, because of the apostolic authority granted to him" (1 Cel 36). Full of new confidence, he assured the brothers: "God has shown me beyond all shadow of doubt that, he will make us grow into a great multitude and that the Order will spread far and wide, by favor of his blessing" (LM 3, 6).

In 1211, "burning intensely with the desire for holy martyrdom, he (Francis) wanted to take ship for the region of Syria to preach the Christian faith and penance to the Saracens and infidels" (1 Cel 55), but he became stranded on the coast of Dalmatia and had to return to Italy without attaining martyrdom or converting a single Saracen. "However, the prize of martyrdom still attracted him so strongly that the thought of dying for Christ meant more to him than any merit he might earn by the practice of virtue." Therefore, two years later "he took the road towards Morocco with the intention of preaching the gospel of Christ to the sultan and his subjects, hoping to win the palm of victory in this way" (LM 9, 6). "He was carried along by so great a desire, that at times he left his companions on the trip behind and hurried to accomplish his purpose, drunk, as it were, in spirit" (1 Cel 56). Although he became ill in Spain and was once again prevented from realizing his goal, he did not renounce the desire to preach to the Saracens and attain martyrdom.

In 1217 he dispatched companies of friars to "every province in every country where the Catholic faith is cultivated, observed and venerated" (L3S 62). Francis himself set out for France, but was turned back by his friend and advisor Cardinal Hugolino who chided him for sending his brothers "to undergo so many trials so far away and die of hunger" (LP 82). As a matter of fact, those who went to Germany at that time were mistaken for heretics and badly beaten.

The failure of this first missionary expedition outside Italy expanded, rather than contracted, Francis' evangelizing ambitions. Although he obeyed the cardinal and returned to Italy, he still insisted that, "God has chosen and sent the friars for the benefit and salvation of the souls of all men in the whole world. They will be welcomed not only in the countries of the faithful, but in those of unbelievers as well, and they will win many souls" (SP 65).

At the conclusion of the general chapter of 1219, he sent groups of friars not only to the Catholic nations beyond the Alps, but also to Moslem lands in North Africa and the Near East. He himself "courageously surmounted all dangers in order to reach the presence of the sultan of Egypt" (LM 9, 7). "Inflamed with that perfect love which drives out fear, he longed to offer himself as a living victim to God by the sword of martyrdom; in this way he would repay Christ for his love in dying for us and inspire others to love God" (LM 9,5).

Francis' appreciation of the gospel message was so profound that he assumed its mere proclamation would effect conversions; and his conviction of the divine origin of his mission was so firm that, when the sultan asked who

had sent them, Francis boldly replied that he had been "sent by God, not by man, to show him and his subjects the way of salvation and proclaim the truth of the gospel message" (LM 9, 8).

Although the sultan "was deeply moved by his (Francis') words and listened to him very willingly" (1 Cel 57), he showed no inclination to embrace Christianity. "Francis now realized that there was no hope of converting the Moslems and that he could not win the crown of martyrdom; and so, by divine inspiration, he made his way back to the Christian camp" (LM 9,9).

Failure of this third attempt to convert the Saracens and attain martyrdom had the unexpected effect of further enriching Francis' understanding of his Order's mission. He shared this insight with the friars in a letter he addressed to the entire Order shortly after his return to Italy. "Praise God because he is good," he exhorted them, "and extol him in your works, because for this he has sent you into the whole world that by word and work you may give witness to his voice and bring all to know that there is no other Almighty besides him" (EpOrd 8-9).

He was now convinced that his brothers were divinely commissioned to invite all peoples, believers and unbelievers, to become authentic worshipers of the Father in spirit and in truth; to give joyous witness everywhere to the goodness and greatness of God; and to urge everyone to render their Creator and Redeemer the worship that is his due. They were plenipotentiary preachers and practitioners of the gospel whose arena of evangelization was the entire world which Christ came to redeem and to which he sent his Apostles.

During the remainder of his life, Francis never relaxed his efforts to communicate to his friars, and through them to all people everywhere, that profoundly worshipful attitude which he expressed so often in the fervent prayers that enrich his writings. He wanted his preachers to make all "who bear the image of their maker and are redeemed by the blood of their Creator" (LM 9, 4) aware of their high dignity as God's handiwork and their happy condition as forgiven sinners. All the friars were to urge everyone they met to "fear and honor, praise and bless, give thanks to and adore the Lord God Almighty, in Trinity and in Unity, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, Creator of all" (RegNB 21, 2).

Francis forewarned the friars, however, not to be troubled if this saving message went unheeded, because its very proclamation was itself an act of worship; and if their efforts won them the prize of martyrdom, they should rejoice, because the martyr perfectly imitates and fully participates in that supreme act of worship by which the Son of God humbled himself and became obedient unto death on a cross. "The highest form of obedience," he told them, "in which flesh and blood play no part, is to go among the unbelievers under

the inspiration of God, either to help one's fellow man or with the desire for martyrdom" (SP 48). And in the earlier Rule, he wrote: "All the brothers, wherever they are, must remember that they have given themselves and handed over their bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ. And for love of him, they must make themselves vulnerable to their enemies, both seen and unseen, for the Lord says: "Whoever shall lose his life for me will save it unto life eternal" (RegNB 16, 10-11).

He charged the five friars he sent to Morocco in 1219: "Keep the Lord's Passion ever before your eyes. It will strengthen you and dispose you for courageous endurance. Go, my sons, and trust in God. He who is sending you will strengthen you and give you what is pleasing to him."² The next year, when he learned that these five friars had won the crown of martyrdom, he said, "Now I can truly say I have five brothers."³

In the succeeding centuries, he was to have many other such brothers: 34 of the 89 canonized Franciscans are classed as martyrs; 50 of the 160 beatified died for the faith; and 70 of the hundreds who engaged in the evangelization of the continental United States met martyrs' deaths. Included in this last number, of course, are the five Franciscans martyred in Georgia in 1597.

Love was the motive that impelled Francis to pursue the goal of universal evangelization, whatever the cost. "The unquenchable fire of love for Jesus in his goodness had become a blazing light of flame in him, so that his charity could not succumb even before the flood waters of affliction" (LM 13, 2). "He would not think himself Christ's lover if he did not compassionate the souls whom he redeemed. He used to say that nothing should take precedence over the salvation of souls, because it was for souls that the only-begotten Son of God hung upon the cross" (LM 9, 4). "He burned with love for God worthy of a seraph and, like Christ, he thirsted for the salvation of the greatest possible number of human beings" (LM 14, 1).

Francis' method of evangelization was that of "the only-begotten Son of God, who is wisdom itself. He came down from the Father's embrace to save souls. He wanted to teach the world by his own example and bring the message of salvation to the men he had redeemed at the price of his precious blood" (LM 12, 1). Therefore, his "chief concern was that he should not be a hypocrite in the eyes of God" (SP 63). "A faithful disciple of Christ, he practiced what he preached to others" (LP 71). He told his brothers that they "had been sent by the Lord in these last times to give examples of light to those wrapped in the darkness of sin" (2 Cel 155). "All the brothers," he insisted, "must preach by their works" (RegNB 17, 3), but those who had been given the gift of preaching by word "must act rather than teach; acting and teaching must go together" (SP 73).

Francis himself possessed such a marvelous ability to harmonize actions with words that his personal exemplification of gospel values rendered their explication superfluous. He never tired reminding his friars that mastery of this art demanded "unwearied application to prayer and the continual practice of virtue" (LM 11, 1). "The preacher," he told them, "must first draw from secret prayers what he will later pour out in holy sermons; he must first grow hot within before he speaks words that are in themselves cold" (2 Cel 163). The Franciscan evangelizer must therefore labor long and hard to cultivate a balanced sense of mission and mysticism, otherwise he will be incapable of inwardly experiencing and outwardly expressing the worshipful, redemptive love exemplified by Christ in his Passion.

Universal evangelization became an official objective of the Order of Friars Minor in 1223 when Pope Honorius III approved the final version of Francis' Rule. The third chapter of that document contains instructions on "the way the brothers should act among men," and the ninth gives directives on the manner and content of their preaching to believers. The twelfth chapter is unique in that it lays down regulations to be observed by "those who go among the Saracens and other unbelievers." This is the first instance of a founder including among the objectives of a religious order the evangelization of non-Christians.

Over the centuries, however, it has been much more the example of Francis' ardent love for God and for souls, than the terse legal language of his Rule, that has inspired his followers by the thousands to carry the gospel to lands where it had never been preached, often at the cost of their own blood.

The numerous quotations from the writings of Francis, his early companions and first biographers cited above suggest a list of the basic elements of evangelization as he conceived it.

THE MISSION:

- to preach penance and peace with fervor of spirit and joy of mind;
- to announce the message of salvation to all whom Christ redeemed by his precious blood;
- to repay Christ for his great love for us and inspire others to love him;
- to bear witness that there is no other Almighty but God alone;
- to invite all peoples to become authentic worshipers of the Father in spirit and in truth;

to urge all to give their Creator and Redeemer the honor that is his due.

THE MESSAGE:

- do penance and keep the commandments;
- embrace peace and become children of peace;
- have courage and rejoice in God;
- love him greatly who loves us so greatly.

THE METHOD:

- preaching by word and example;
- being subject to every human creature for God's sake;
- bearing witness to being a Christian;
- being gentle, peaceful, unassuming, courteous and humble, and speaking respectfully to all;
- proclaiming the word of God openly when it is his will to do so.

THE MOTIVE:

- love for Christ Crucified and for the souls he redeemed by his precious blood.

MARTYRDOM:

- the supreme act of worship,
- the perfect imitation of Christ,
- the highest expression of love of God and neighbor.

Francis did not arrive at his appreciation of the gospel concept of universal evangelization by dint of deliberate intellectual effort, nor did he attempt to inculcate it by precise pedagogical methods. It never occurred to him to constrain within the limits of a rigid system the complex of elements which constitute evangelization. His first followers grasped his perceptive insights by hearing him proclaim them in inspired gospel language and seeing him exemplify them by dramatic gospel action. He therefore felt no need to devise a precise plan of evangelization.

It was inevitable, however, that the learned men who were drawn to the Order in ever greater numbers after its founder's death, would feel a need to give his affective effusions doctrinal justification and to express in theological terms what he had simply felt and lived. The great Franciscan doctors, particularly St. Bonaventure (1221-1274) and Bl. John Duns Scotus (c. 1266-1308),

began the task — which continues until today — of developing and reinterpreting, in the light of changing historical circumstances, those elements of evangelization which had been the constant subject of Francis' prayerful consideration, without however destroying the freshness of his gospel message and manner.

Inspired by the dynamic theology of evangelization inherited from their Order's founder and developed by its eminent doctors, Franciscans over the centuries have eagerly embraced missionary challenges other groups hesitated to undertake. The fervor of Seraphic love, the mystique of martyrdom and the eschatological urgency of their task as they conceived it, inclined them at times to resort to a tactic which has been labeled "outrageous, conspicuously ineffective, yet designed to engage the forces of heaven at some mystical level."⁴ It is therefore sometimes difficult to determine whether the individual Franciscan evangelizer's "foremost aim was to persuade infidels of Christianity's truth, or to attain self-fulfillment by suffering death at their hands."⁵

In view of its far-reaching effects on the evangelization of the New World, the reform impulse which swept through the Franciscan Order at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries must surely be judged providential. This movement manifested itself with particular vigor in Spain where, by the dawn of the Age of Discovery, the Observants, as those friars who desired to revive the spirit of the founder, restore primitive observance of his Rule and renew the vigor of his Order's intellectual life came to be known, numbered in the thousands.

In the Chronicle he completed shortly before his death in 1508, Nicholas Glassberger reported that the announcement of Columbus' discoveries aroused such intense enthusiasm among the friars attending the Observants' general chapter in the spring of 1493 that many of the capitulars, "stirred up like elephants at the sight of blood" and "most eager for martyrdom," immediately sought permission to undertake evangelization of the newly-discovered Caribbean islands.⁶

A small number of friars accompanied Columbus on his second voyage, but systematic evangelization of the Antilles did not commence until 1502, when Francisco Ximenez Cisneros (1436-1517), the Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo and former provincial of the Observants of Castile, dispatched 17 carefully-chosen Observants to the island of Hispaniola (Haiti — Dominican Republic).

Evangelization of the North American mainland began in 1524 with the arrival in New Spain of 12 Observants who "began one of the most exciting and challenging periods in the history of the expansion of Christianity"⁷ and became known as the Twelve Apostles of Mexico. Their mission was orga-

nized by Francisco de los Angeles Quiñones (1480-1540), who desired to join the group himself but was prevented from doing so by his election as minister general the previous year.

The *Obedience* and *Instruction* which Quiñones issued to these 12 pioneer missionaries had a deep and lasting influence on the Franciscan evangelizing enterprise throughout the Americas.⁸ These two documents restated and revived the basic principles of evangelization enunciated by St. Francis, explicated by the Franciscan doctors and exemplified by Franciscan missionaries over the previous 300 years.

The *Obedience* was addressed not just to the 12 sent to New Spain in 1524 but to all friars who would thereafter engage in the work of evangelizing the New World. They were all, Quiñones insisted, commissioned to exalt the glory of God's name and build up his church on earth. Like Francis, they must thirst for the salvation of both believers and unbelievers, all of whom had been redeemed at the price of Christ's blood. Inflamed with love of Christ, they must glory in the Cross, subject themselves to every creature; and be ready, desire and even seek to shed their blood for the conversion of those to whom they are sent. And since the day was far spent, the eleventh hour at hand, and this aging world nearing its end, it was most urgent that they devote their best efforts to preaching by word and example, without however neglecting the contemplative aspect of Franciscan life. Because they labored without hope of earthly reward, the world would judge them demented, but they must be convinced that the folly of the highest poverty will convert the world.

Quiñones began his *Instruction* to the departing missionaries by reminding them that they had been deputed to maintain the continuity of the divine mission begun by the Father when he sent his Son into the world to communicate divine life to all who would believe in him. This mission was carried forward by the Son who empowered the Apostles to continue his life-giving work among men. The mission of the Apostles was in turn passed on to their successors to be continued until the end of time.

Francis and his followers had by apostolic authority been made participants in this divine mission, but those presently being sent to America also had reason to "act boldly in all things," because they were being sent not only by authority of the minister general, but likewise by apostolic mandate of Pope Adrian VI whose bull, *Carissime in Christo*, made the spiritual conquest of New Spain a mendicant enterprise. Finally, Quiñones reminded the twelve that love of God and neighbor must be the controlling motive of their great evangelizing venture. On these two feet, they must travel through the New World urging its inhabitants to worship the Father in spirit and truth.

The five Franciscans who gave their lives in defense of the unity and sanctity of Christian marriage on Georgia's Golden Isles in 1597 exemplified to an heroic degree the principles St. Francis enunciated more than 300 years before and which Quiñones restated only 74 years earlier. These friars already occupy a prominent place in the mainstream of their Order's rich tradition of evangelization. It is hoped that the church may soon grant them a place in its roster of the blessed.

Martyrdom, accepted as an affirmation of the inviolability of the moral order, bears splendid witness both to the holiness of God's law and the inviolability of the personal dignity of man, created in God's image and likeness. . .

Fidelity to God's holy law, witnessed by death, is a solemn proclamation and missionary commitment *usque ad sanguinem* (even to the shedding of blood), so that the splendor of moral truth may be undimmed in the behavior and thinking of individuals and society.⁹

End notes

¹ Accounts of the deaths of the five Franciscans martyred in Georgia in 1597 may be found in Maynard J. Geiger, *The Franciscan Conquest of Florida (1573-1618)* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1937) 86-99; John Tate Lanning, *The Spanish Missions of Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935) 82-110; and Luis Jerónimo de Oré, *The Martyrs of Florida (1513-1616)*, trans. Maynard J. Geiger (New York: J.F. Wagner, 1937) 73-99.

² "Chronica XXIV Generalium," *Analecta Franciscana* (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurac, 1895-1983) 3: 581-82.

³ "Chronica XXIV Generalium," 21.

⁴ Robert I. Burns, "Christian-Islamic Confrontation in the West: The thirteenth-Century Dream of Conversion," *American Historical Review* 76 (1971): 1395. A classic instance of the use of this tactic is the case of St. Nicholas Tavelic and his three companions who suffered martyrdom at Jerusalem in 1391. In his homily at their canonization in 1970, Pope Paul VI said: "The four friars who were the heroes of this tragic missionary adventure were motivated by two intentions. One was to preach the Christian faith and confute the religion of Mohammed, courageously, but certainly not cautiously and wisely. The second was to issue a challenge and provoke danger to their lives." *Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum* 89 (1970): 165-66.

⁵ Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward Moslems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) 125.

⁶ "Chronica Fratris Nicolai Glassberger," *Analecta Franciscana* (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1895-1983) 2: 523.

⁷ Edwin E. Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory in Sixteenth Century New Spain* (Washington, DC: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1975) 4.

⁸ The texts of both the *Obedience* and *Instruction* are included as appendices in Juan Fernandes Meseguer's "Contenido misológico de la Obediencia et Instrucción de Fray Francisco de los Angeles a los Doce Apóstoles de México," *The Americas* 11 (1954-1955): 473-500.

⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 92-93.

The Transitus: A Rite Of Intensification: Part III

DANIEL GRIGASSY, O.F.M.

The energy which motivates and mobilizes this ongoing exposition and critique of the Transitus is best articulated in the clever words of Michael Foucault: "People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does."¹ For approximately three centuries, Franciscans have gathered on or before the Solemnity of St. Francis to ritualize a world of meaning clustered around the symbols of psalm, relic, and story. In the doing of the rite, something has been done unto us. During and after the Second Vatican Council, a major cultural and ecclesial shift brought on the disassembling and restructuring of the rite. In redoing the rite, then, one would suspect that something new has been done unto us. Yet, the question must be asked: Does the doing of the rite redo us, does it undo us, or does it do little if anything to us in the doing?

After surveying multiplicity and pluriformity in both pre-and post-conciliar Transitus rites, one post-conciliar rite will be used here as a test case out of which several participant-observers will reflect. The rite to be scrutinized is idiosyncratic in that it is out of step with the ritual boundaries of the rite in **Franciscans at Prayer** yet it includes all the familiar ritual units sown into the fabric of the continuous death narrative gathered at random from various unspecified sources. The sequence of ritual units were: entrance and greeting, narration of the death of Francis, Canticle of the Creatures, John 13, reflection, distribution of bread, blessing of Francis, lighting of candles, Psalm 142, solemn commemoration of Francis' death, a closing resurrection hymn. The Guardian presided; the Vicar offered the reflection. Soon after a brief music practice, the presider and the homilist entered in silence and near darkness. Light returned to the space with the closing resurrection hymn.

Several interviews were conducted within a week after the enactment of the ritual, thus allowing a critical distance between the event itself and reflection on it. Questions were put to two non-Franciscans who were first time ob-

This concluding presentation of Fr. Daniel Grigassy's three-part study of the Transitus (cf. CORD, Oct., Nov., 1993) includes detailed and fascinating interviews with participants in the service. His own assessment raises challenges for all Franciscans in crucial areas of our lives that often go unnoticed or are simply taken for granted. The CORD is grateful to Fr. Daniel for giving us the privilege of publishing a work of such fine quality.

servers, two young Franciscans relatively new to the tribe and still in a liminal state of socialization, two seasoned Franciscans whose memories still hold on to various ways of doing the Transitus, and one so-called specialist regarded as one sensitive to the art of ritual activity, its significance, and its consequent demands.

First-Time Observers. Both first-time observers had never before been exposed to the Transitus, but they experienced the rite in a similar way with few though significant variations. The same rite will be referred to throughout the record of their impressions and evaluations. The reporting of this information will suspend the author's analysis. The intention is to highlight the multivocality of the seemingly simple ritual and to disclose the variety of interpretations operative within the same rite. Five general questions were posed to two first-time observers: 1) What attracted you to the Transitus? What were your expectations?; 2) What did you like best about the rite? What left you uncomfortable, uneasy?; 3) What do you think the rite is trying to say about Franciscans? about St. Francis?; 4) What do you think motivates people to come together every year to do this?; and 5) Did you feel like an observer or a participant?

In response to the first question, both first-time observers were drawn to the Transitus by an invitation from friar-friends and a desire to observe this important feast with them. Their expectations conformed with other positive liturgical experiences with this particular community at worship. Since other liturgical rites had been positive and effective, both first-time observers anticipated another prayerful and challenging experience.

The second question keyed into the dominant symbols of the rite. The homily or reflection and the distribution of blessed bread were positioned on the forefront of memory of both persons interviewed. One of the two further nuanced his claim. He said the homily was just one more part in the flow of narrative events since so many were taking part in storytelling. But in the course of the homily, the first-time observer distinguished between the historical narrative laced through the entire rite from the personal testimony of one friar who reflected on the death-event insofar as it forms and informs our own life stories. "From that point on," the same observer said, "I was more aware of what followed and it all made more sense." The homily created cohesion.

Both felt the reflection and the distribution of bread stood out as the essential elements of the rite. One claimed the silent entrance, the greeting, and the beginning of the death narrative were interesting and set the stage, but did not help the rite as a celebration. This observer anticipated a festive celebration but found it lacking in the actual flow of the rite. However, the interviewer flinched when the interviewee said the "celebration of the Eucharist" followed nicely after the reflection. Only after some further discussion did the interviewer press

the question: "Was the breaking, blessing, and distribution of bread by the presider in fact Eucharist for you?" Without hesitation this rather well-educated and informed Catholic layman responded affirmatively. His reasons were interesting: "Since we did not go through the standard ritual used at Mass, the rite drew attention to itself in a favorable way. The presider raised his hands over the bread without speaking a word. The simplicity of that symbolic gesture," he said, "did away with the need to go through the standard movement. The narrative, the blessing, and reenactment of the Last Supper in the reading of John 13 created a powerful Eucharistic celebration." He continued: "The silent blessing was refreshing and alive. Its sheer simplicity reflected the need for sharing which the rite was all about."

As these first-time observers pinpointed the pluses of the rite, they also noted the minuses. One questioned the meaningfulness of the praying of the psalm: "It didn't help me feel celebratory — something like Mass. It was like going through the routine of a ritual." After the interviewer informed him that the praying of the psalm was the one constant element in the historical unfolding of the rite, the one interviewed thought it only a historical nicety. He insisted that "for an outsider, it defeated any sense of celebration." The sung response was "perfunctory" and the psalm's significance could have been heightened if all sung the entire psalm with the cantor since the words of the verses were lost in the solo. In sum, then, both felt a "hook-up" during the reflection and the distribution of bread, or, as one called it, the "celebration of Eucharist." With the singing of Psalm 142, it seemed as though "everything important had past and we were now going through a perfunctory rite."

In posing the five question listed at the beginning of this section, numbers three and four fused together: 3) What is the rite trying to say about Franciscans? about St. Francis? and 4) why do people find a need to come together every year to do this rite? Both first-time observers agreed: followers of Francis need to understand their roots, "to evaluate where you are now, where you come from, and where you are going." The recollection of roots places a demand and a challenge on the Franciscan community. The tradition has not died but lives. The homily brought this home clearly: "A sense of history and your place in it came through in the recurring call to re-root yourselves in the story of Francis."

Notice the constant referral to Franciscans in the second person by the non-Franciscans interviewed. This is significant for the fifth and final question: Did you feel like an observer or a participant? One first-time observer responded to the question by citing the narrative as an "old liturgical tool which makes the events so past-oriented." Like the reading of the passion narrative during Holy Week, listening to Francis' death narrative puts one in the role not

of participant but of listener and, hence, observer. "You can lean back and let it go." In general, both of those interviewed felt more like observers than participants. From the time the psalm began, one said, he was "outside." During the homily and the bread-action which he called "Eucharist," he was "inside."

Both discussed the candle symbol and offered worthwhile insights. One said the lighting of candles has been done so many times for so many different rituals that it did not convey a sense of vitality or energy in the *Transitus*. The other claimed: "It never had much meaning anyway." He wished to clarify his statement: "The lit candle is symbolic in such an obvious sense that I would reduce it to a sign; it's used in so many liturgies, it's become a 'quick sign'." At this point the interviewer put the question: "Do you think we could have done without the candles?" Again, without hesitation, the response was "yes." A reference then was made to the comment in the leaflet regarding the presider's extinguishing the large candle symbolizing Francis. The community is advised to keep their tapers lit to symbolize "the spirit which Francis has imparted to the world." Those interviewed felt the message so obviously clear that specifying its significance in a directive drained all life from the symbol.

Summarily, the first-time observers are perhaps the most trustworthy analyzers since they are not predisposed to read all kinds of inflated significations into simple ritual movements. The one conclusion which can be drawn is that the rite creates more confusion than one might think. For the non-Franciscan, the ritual as a whole is "nice." However, when the non-Franciscan is pressed into articulating just what precisely makes it "nice," a great deal of conflict in ritual forms surface. Different angles of vision freight the rite with a variety of meanings, at times too many for it to bear. The weight of operative ritual meanings has the power to crack the spine of the ritual.

The Simply Professed. Two simply professed friars minor who participated in the same *Transitus* rite were interviewed next. Variations were made on the same themes of the five question put to the first-time observers: 1) What is the rite supposed to do?; 2) Who is the rite for?; 3) What does the rite as a whole say about us (Franciscans)?; 4) In any rite, language and symbols interact and comment on one another. What do you see as the key interactions in this rite?; 5) What would you say are the needed elements of the rite (without which the rite would no longer be the *Transitus*)? a) Does it matter when the rite is celebrated?; b) Does it matter who presided at the rite?; c) Does it matter what friars wear during the rite?; 6) Do you sense conflict, tension, or violence in the rite?; 7) If you were far away from a Franciscan community on the evening of October third, would you feel obliged to do something? If so, what? If not, why not? In other words, how important is this rite to Franciscans? to you? Could

we (you) skip it? While all the questions could not be discussed with equal time and intensity, the reporting responses will give the reader some feel for the degree of intensity with which each friar approached the questions. The two simply professed friars will be referred to as Friar A and Friar B.

What is the rite supposed to do? Friar A said its purpose is to recreate the scene of Francis' death, to set the tone and prepare us for the solemnity of the following day. Its focus is on the reenacting of events, somewhat like the Stations of the Cross. Like the liturgy of Good Friday, it is simple yet solemn. Friar B claims the rite makes present the event for us and gives us a chance to go back to where it all began: "We return to our roots; the rite takes us back so we can move forward."

Who is the rite for? This seemed rather obvious to both friars: of course, for the people participating. Friar B felt the rite got him "involved in Francis' death." The narrative from his biographies, the celebration of his death, offers a commentary on his life. "When I'm there watching him die, I get a tableau of his whole life. The rite sums up his life. In doing that, the rite gives the friars a chance to begin again." Friar B made a reference to a conversation with a first-time observer, one other than the two interviewed. The newcomer was struck by the simplicity of the celebration. Just as one who is not educated in exegesis can read the gospels and appreciate Jesus, so too can an individual attend the *Transitus* and come to an appreciation of Francis of Assisi.

What does the rite as whole say about us (Franciscans)? "The rite reflects the need which all Franciscans have to get back to our roots and revisit our tradition and symbols." Both friars agreed here, but neither was willing to take the next step in trying to articulate what precisely these roots, traditions, and symbols meant. One wonders if they had a clue in which direction to go.

What are the key interactions of language and symbol in the rite? The reading of the death narrative and the distribution of bread took on key positions. Friar A was hesitant about the candles: "I've seen so many different ways of doing the candles, I'm not sure what it means anymore." Friar B felt the narration, the narrator, and the one taking the part of Francis within the narration took on special significance. In a sense, he thought, the narrator represents the onlookers and through his commentary is able "to distance us from the action." Along with these key interactions, the same friar felt the symbol of light was significant since Francis was caught up in the light. The bread, too, an image of Christ, points to Francis' conformity to him. Friar A saw the Guardian's blessing of the friars a significant gesture which is most appropriately offered by the Guardian. While both agreed that the blessing should not be given to

everyone present, but only to the friars, they differed on whether the Guardian is necessarily the one who blesses.

What are the needed elements of the rite without which the rite would no longer be the *Transitus*? Stripping the rite to its bones, Friar B pointed to the death narrative as the essential element. While a simple reading of the narrative would be inadequate, some enactment of the narrative seems necessary. Dramatic tension is needed to make the rite effective; action must accompany word. When pressed on the precise meaning of action within the narrative, the friar listed the reading from John 13, the blessing and distribution of bread, the blessing of the friars, and the singing of the *Canticle* and of Psalm 142. A mere reading of the narrative without accompanying action would be inadequate. Friar A disagreed with this position. He felt the ritual reading of the narrative text makes up the essential element of the rite and would adequately constitute the *Transitus*.

Does it matter when the rite is celebrated? Friar A's response directed attention to the credibility of time: "Since we are creatures bound by time, we sanctify time in various ways. There is a rhythm in communicating an event in conjunction with the solemn feast. And this rhythm needs to be respected. It is incongruous to have the *Transitus* on the evening of October first and on the next day celebrate the memorial of the Guardian Angels. It's like shifting Good Friday to Monday in Holy Week. This tendency undermines the importance of the rite for the life of the community. Time and place are not to be treated lightly." Friar B was less enthusiastic about the credibility of time and simply said, "It's more important to celebrate the *Transitus* than to celebrate it on October third. Of course, I wouldn't celebrate it in July."

Does it matter who presides? Friar A prefers the Guardian as presider, not for juridical reasons but for the symbolic value of Guardian as spiritual father, leader, and symbol of unity. The issue was of little significance for Friar B since this *Transitus* was the first one in his experience at which the Guardian presided. Although the presider need not be the Guardian, he ought to be one who is "established" within the community, one who has been faithful, and one who is esteemed for his life of virtue. It is curious to note that Friar A who privileged the Guardian's presiding also insisted on the October third memorial whereas Friar B who did not insist on the Guardian presiding also did not consider essential the October third date for the *Transitus*.

Is there conflict, tension, violence in the rite? A clarification immediately arose: What constitutes violence in the rite? To explain this apparently strange idea, the notion of "something lost/something gained" was used, a stripping away of one thing so that another may take its place. While Friar A saw the *Transitus* as regarded by many as comforting, peaceful, satisfying, he main-

tained that if we leave it there, we miss what the rite is trying to do. He proceeded to point to the breaking of the bread, Francis' blessing of the friars, and the extinguishing of candles as embodying and heightening conflict and tension. As the bread is broken, we need to be broken. Francis' farewell alerted his band of followers to their imminent loss. The extinguished candles symbolize this finality. Friar B saw the tension in the rite on two levels. First, in the breaking of bread, Francis is broken; in the partaking of bread, we share his brokenness. Secondly, Francis enters into a cosmic struggle just as John's Jesus in the thirteenth chapter of his gospel. As one is wrenched from life in death, so too the commemoration of a beloved dead person wrenches one's own life. We are all born into this cosmic struggle and we will all pass out of it in due time. Therefore, by the end of the ritual, the participant is left with a certain uneasiness and discomfort.

What would you do (if anything) on October third if you were alone? Both responded similarly to this question: they would read the death narrative and pray out of it. If the text were not available, they would reconstruct the scenario in their imaginations and pray out of it. Could we do without the *Transitus*? Both believed we could. Friar B said, "Yes. We could do without a lot of things. But it is something that enriches our understanding of Francis."

Two Solemnly Professed. Two seasoned friars minor offered their reflections on the *Transitus*. The same seven questions asked of the two simply professed were posed to these two thoroughbreds who have been solemnly professed for at least thirty years. As one would suspect, their responses were consistent with the classical spirituality in which they were formed. Certainly, no denigration of their functioning spirituality is intended; in fact, the opposite is true. Their insights are instrumental for a retrieval of significations in the rite. A look at the seven responses make that evident. Since both friars shared similar views, there is no need to differentiate them in their responses. The following record points to the simplicity, straightforwardness, and one might say, obviousness which their analyses take on. The purpose of making explicit the varied implicit interpretations of this memorial rite is to heighten the dimensions of the *Transitus* which are multivocal and polyvalent, and to acknowledge the reality of the various lenses through which participants interpret the same ritual event. Such a perspective will help Franciscans become less ritually naive.

For these two seasoned friars, the purpose of the *Transitus* is to recreate the scene of our Holy Father's passing so that present day Franciscans might keep alive the memory of such a noble and courageous death. It permits the friar, sister, or secular to evaluate the extent of his or her own conformity to Christ in the way of Francis. Just as the Good Friday rite helps one celebrate

the solemnity of Easter, so the Transitus prepares the Franciscan for the following day's festivity.

Secondly, although the local community of believers has always been included in the memorial event, the rite itself is especially for Franciscans. Third, the rite as a whole draws a picture of the followers of Francis "on the way." As "pilgrims and strangers" in a foreign land, Francis' followers look to union with God as a joyous homecoming at the embrace of Sister Death.

Fourthly, the reading of the death narrative and the singing of Psalm 142 were considered the key interactions in the rite. "Francis' farewell discourse," as one friar called the narrative, recreates his continual admonishment to the friars that all things are passing away and our vision should be at the finish line where Christ will be all in all. Therefore, the essentials needed to constitute the Transitus as Transitus were thought to be the death narrative and the singing of the psalm. Great importance was placed on the celebration of the rite at the appropriate time of sundown on the eve of the solemnity. There was no question regarding the presider. In every and all cases, the spiritual father of the community is to preside, namely, the properly appointed Guardian. Both thought it extremely inappropriate for a friar to dress for the rite in anything other than the Franciscan habit.

Perhaps the response to the seventh question was most telling. On more than a few occasions, both friars had actually found themselves separated from a fraternity on the evening of October third. They were driven to involve themselves in a similar activity: a recreation of the scene of Francis' passing in their imaginations, the praying of Psalm 142, and a closing prayer for God's blessing on their community and personal solidarity with it. The concluding remarks of these two thoroughbred friars minor were also interesting. One friar recalled the simplicity of the pre-conciliar rite, the similarity between the pre-conciliar Good Friday ritual as compared to that of the Transitus. For example, just as the cross on Good Friday was venerated with a kiss by the barefooted friars only after a triple genuflection, so too was the relic of Francis venerated at the closing of the former Transitus. The rite was remembered as simple, unencumbered, straightforward, and prayerful whereas the rites of the last twenty-five years have been building up layers of verbal explanations which clutter and distract. In the earlier days, explanations were usually left unstated yet communication happened nonetheless. The friars' imaginations were free to fill in the blanks.

The Ritual Specialist/Expert. An interview with a so-called "specialist" respected within the Franciscan community as one sensitive to ritual movement and the consequent demands placed on the community proved most provocative. The prophecy of the cultural anthropologist, Victor Turner, proved true: "... laymen will give the investigation simple and exoteric meanings, while special-

ists will give his esoteric explanations and more elaborate texts."³ The interviewer was prepared to offer the same seven questions posed to the two simply professed and two solemnly professed friars. However, after the first question was posed, the following six collapsed in upon themselves. The main line of the exchange will be set out here.

What is the rite supposed to do? The ritual expert recalled that the rite was originally a devotional exercise which sought to foster commitment. Franciscans were called to associate themselves with a rather remote figure. Nonetheless, the Transitus was one of the more personal devotions in the Order, an exceptional quality in devotional practices in the pre-Vatican II period. In light of the post-conciliar era, the one interviewed was reluctant to judge whether there is a ritual life left in the Transitus. Although it carries personal value for some friars, for others its power has waned. If any strength remains, it is its fluidity of forms. Yet the specialist finds the rite naive in many of its assumptions: it is highly verbalized; it plays back a particular brand of spirituality which many find hard to swallow; it is overweighted with words which communicate a reluctant theology and spirituality. The question necessarily arises: what do people think they are doing in the doing of the rite? What do they think is being accomplished? The specialist claimed that, if the rite has any potential at all, it is toward recommitment. In that sense it is a rite of intensification. But it is quite another question whether it has the power to reestablish commitment and intensify it. The meaning of recommitment mediated through the rite carried somewhat different meanings prior to the council than it ought to carry now.

The interviewer then noted the general uniformity of the pre-conciliar rites and the proliferation of ritual forms after the council. He suggested the tendency to overload the circuits in post-conciliar Transitus rites may point to the suppression of several familiar pre-conciliar Franciscan rituals and the paucity of current rituals which are uniquely Franciscan. Consequently, this may explain the clutter of many recent rituals, folding in bits and pieces of "Franciscan things" to fill out the rite. The specialist's comment on this suggestion was not only a recognition of a void but also a reluctance to speculate on what might fill it.

At this point the interviewer turned to question number four. Since language and symbols interact and comment on one another in a rite, what then are the rite's key interactions? The expert claimed no key symbolic interactions whatsoever in the rite. Although the friars seem to enjoy the rite as an event, time and again the expert experiences it as a sterile ceremony. He finds no possibility of interaction between himself and the text primarily because of the arrangement, presentation, and performance of the text. "It is offered as a historical souvenir." The only interaction of symbols is the approach of each

friar to the presider to receive the blessing. The rite is "highly individualized with no real interaction among the brothers."

Another area of conflict for the one interviewed is the rite as a memorial revolving around the death of Francis as distinguished from the following day's solemn feast. The element of actively "remembering" Francis' death is peculiarly lacking in the ritual as a whole. It hardly goes beyond repainting Giotto's death scenario of Francis and inviting us to stare at it for its own sake. He explained his point in this way: "Death is such a highly coded and important event in a person's life. It is supposed to sum up the experience of the dying person and provide the basis on which the person is judged. I do not see how a ceremony that simply recounts the death of someone can hope to allow that person to enter into the experience which, I presume, the rite is trying to do. So, the experience of dying is not so much what is ritualized, but the experience of a person who had a moment of convergence, a moment of clarity. The rite ought to memorialize a generative person, one who is able to care for what he has created. Then the rite has yet to find a way to actualize the spirit of this person as a role-model for those who highly identify with this individual's brand of generativity." The specialist would expect the rite to accomplish that end, but so many assumptions always get in its way. He concluded: "A mere recounting of the events of Francis' death does not accomplish the desired end of the rite."

The interviewer then posed the obvious question: How would you envision the ritual accomplishing this desired end? The expert sidestepped the question with the claim that he had not yet thought it through adequately. In the next breath he returned to the earlier concern. The desired dynamic of the rite is that Francis ought to be presented as a role model, as one who has integrated all his life-tasks and achieved a certain strength. That desired dynamic ought to suggest some way in which persons can be brought back to their own experience of the way they have faced, or have refused to face, their own life-tasks. In other words, the ritual ought to go through the experience of Francis preparing for judgment, and the gathered community ought to be invited into that experience. To accomplish that end, the rite would have to be rebuilt so that honest respect would be shown for the participant's experience insofar as it has been informed and transformed by Francis' experience. In the specialist's estimation, this has not been accomplished in *Transitus* rituals: "No matter how cleverly they are constructed, the rituals talk at us. Even with periods of silence, the *Transitus* is a one-way ritual. A ritual which would respect our experience and want us to go back and review it more deeply would have to set up a process of reviewing life-tasks, just as you are supposed to be doing in reviewing Francis'. Then the function Francis has, it seems to me, would be that he had courage to become self-actualized in a very short life."

Such a review of life-tasks is accomplished more in terms of attitudes and expectations which would be in place long before the community assembles for the celebration of the rite. At issue here, then, is a need for ongoing catechesis: "People cannot just go into a rite and do it. It is true that a rite should be so self-explanatory that it does not need constant commentary. Yet most do not have the preparatory mindset needed to enter into a rite, even when it claims to be self-explanatory. So the first step in rebuilding the rite might be located here. How does one train people a month or two before the feast to understand the *Transitus* as a ritual about life-tasks, resolved and unresolved, strengths gained and not gained, and thus connect them with the death of Francis, which was precisely the same process?" The proximity of the feast of the Stigmata on September 17 might serve to help us design a processive preparation for the celebration of the *Transitus* and the Solemnity of St. Francis.

Concluding Remarks. Recall Michel Foucault's insightful phrase: "People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does." Before Vatican II, the *Transitus* "did" something to us; since that council, the rite continues to "do" something to us. Or does it undo something in us? Or are you indifferent to it?

In the first part of this article, accessible pre-conciliar rites were exposed. Dominant symbols and recurring forms were highlighted. The second part was made up of a sketch of rites spanning the years during and after the council. Interviews and commentaries comprise the third and final part. Questions thred themselves through all three parts, but few if any have been answered. Nor will they be answered in the space remaining.

The sole purpose of this exercise has been to inform the reader of the complexity of an apparently simple ritual which we Franciscans dare to do each year. None of this material has been assembled and exposed before; a huge gap in the study of Franciscan ritual has only been slightly filled after these pages reach the light of day. However, more rigorous work in ritual analysis may contribute significantly to our current task of refounding religious life. Although we witnessed a certain expansion, retraction, and stabilization in the development of the rite, the construction of current rites continues to be eclectic and haphazard, confusing ritual with pantomime, acquiescing to the politicization of the rite, and even blurring the person of Francis with the person of Christ to whom he wished to conform. Lack of coherence in what we are doing when we do the rite leads to skewed perceptions and distorted intentions and identities. Whether we have been about the business in the last five or ten years of refounding, reweaving, revisioning, or reforming religious life, a ritual crisis confronts us, a time of opportunity for forward movement, or a time of stasis and more of the same.

Whether we have been about the business in the last five or ten years of refounding, reweaving, revisioning, or reforming religious life, a ritual crisis confronts us

It would take yet a fourth part of this article to scratch the surface of a critique and evaluation, to apply the tools of ritual studies to more current rites, and to examine their yield. Such a project would best be done collaboratively among those who have these tools available and know how to apply them in field work. After that rigorous exercise, new rituals need to be crafted based on the results of such studies while safeguarding root metaphors which constitute the Transitus as the Transitus.

Still ringing in my ears are the words of an enclosed nun friend who was recently permitted to attend a lecture by Fr. David Nygren and Sr. Miriam Ukeritis, both psychologists from Boston University and authors of a three-year study of U.S. religious orders of priest, sisters, and brothers.⁴ The nun told of their testimony that in the last ten years we have done well in developing an intellectual response to the crisis of religious life in this country. Shelves of literature have been generated and have moved the issue forward. But, they claimed, the symbolic trajectory remains largely unattended. We have yet to find ways to respond symbolically lest we remain forever invisible. Perhaps careful attention to the Transitus is one way to bring our way of life to fresh visibility.

End notes

¹ Michel Foucault, as cited in Margaret R. Miles, *Practicing Christianity: Critical Perspectives for an Embodied Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 1.

² Questions were formed from Victor Turner's insights into the dynamics of ritual from *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967) and *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974). Strategies for questioning were also developed from the work of sociologists Leonard Schatzman and Anselm L. Strauss in *Field Research: Strategies for a Natural Sociology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 52-92.

³ *Forest of Symbols*, 45.

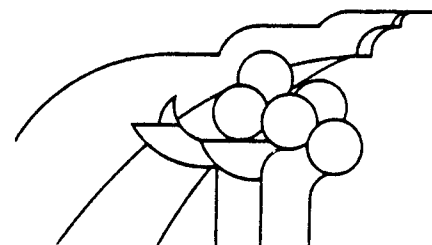
⁴ For the text of the study's executive summary, see *Origins* 22 (24 September 1992): 257, 259-272.

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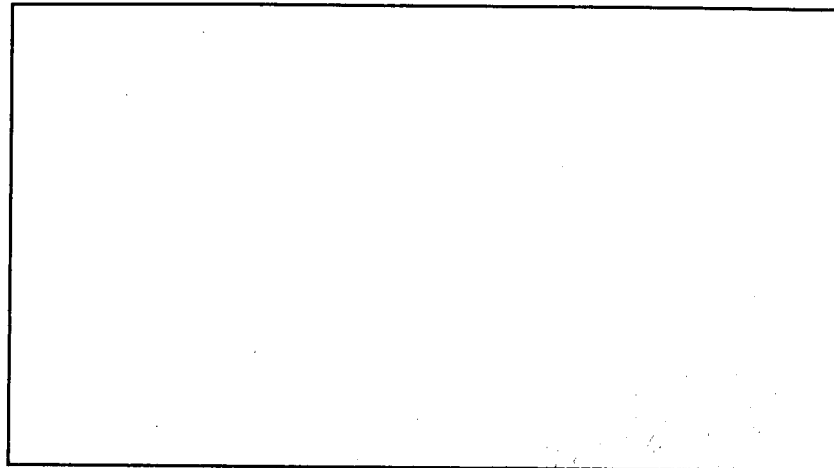
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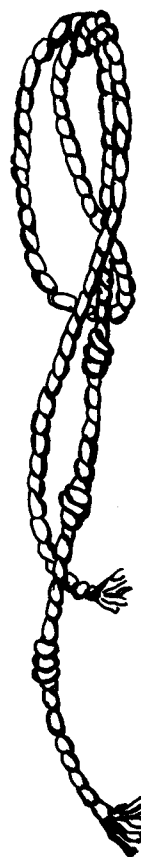
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Standard Abbreviations used in **The CORD** for Early Franciscan Sources

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 Clerics¹

EpCust: Letter to Superiors¹

EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful¹

EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo

EpMin: Letter to a Minister

EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order

EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of the People

ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God

ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father

Form Viv: 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

¹I, 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 Commencium

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).

“He Passed Joyfully To God” Joseph D. Doyno, O.F.M. 1923-1994

ROBERT M. STEWART, O.F.M.

At last, when all of God's mysteries were fulfilled in him and his most holy soul was freed from his body to be absorbed in the abyss of the divine light, the blessed man fell asleep in the Lord. (LM 14:6)

For some fifty years our brother Joseph D. Doyno, with imagination and heart profoundly affected by Francis of Assisi, followed *the teaching and the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Then, on the night of March 7, 1994, when greeted suddenly by Sister Death, *he passed joyfully to God*.

Friars, family, friends gathered to console and to be consoled, to remember and to celebrate “Fr. Joe.” With profound sadness, we grieved his death; with heartfelt gratitude, we remembered his life; with hope-filled joy, we celebrated his *Transitus*, his passing to the fullness of life.

At the wake service Fr. Joel Campbell, one of his classmates, spoke about Fr. Joe's many talents and gifts: as musician, tenor, linguist, teacher, researcher, counselor, editor, mentor, friend, brother. Joel confessed that initially he had wondered why one person had been given so many, many talents and abilities. But as the years went by, he found an answer to his question: Joe was given many gifts because he used those gifts; he used those gifts not for himself, but for others.

This saint indeed had labored assiduously in the Lord's vineyard, untiringly fervent in prayer, fasting, vigils, and preaching; he had walked in paths leading to salvation, caring attentively for others in watchful compassion and in humble disregard for himself. (L3S)

At the funeral mass, Joe was remembered and celebrated by another classmate, Fr. Reginald Redlon, O.F.M. With reverence and insight, he spoke profoundly about his friend and brother. With words graced by that friendship, he ventured to paint a portrait of how Joe had come “to know the Shepherd”:

When we gather to worship — to celebrate Eucharist — particularly when called to do so because one of the family has with stunning sadness

been embraced by Sister Death, we listen more intently, ponder more prayerfully, enter more profoundly the central reality, the Paschal mystery: the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. ...

Joe, as the years unfolded, revealed himself a quintessential Franciscan — in so many ways like the Poverello, the most Italian of saints and the saintliest Italian who ever lived. ... There are so many of every age who could say to him and of him — you light up my life! What was the secret of it all?

I dare now to venture where angels fear to tread: If you were to have listened carefully sometimes when he sang, there was a plaintive, almost Pagliacci-like quality to his voice. If you had looked carefully into his face, especially with his eyes glistening at times, you would have sensed that there was something more there than the sharing of gifts. There was fire. There he was being refined like gold in the furnace. ...

There was one very ordinary and very important gift Joe did not receive. For most of us it is as necessary as the air we breathe. Joe did not have the gift of *sleep*. All of you knew it to some extent; in later years he often would spend a whole night in work or study. But in the yester years, the rule would not permit it. We who welcomed him and slept in that barn-like dormitory at the Seraphic Seminary knew it. ... But never was there a complaint, a scintilla of self-pity.

How did he endure those dark, long, and lonely nights? To whom did he speak in the silence of the night? I suggest: as friend to friend with Jesus Christ. Heart spoke to heart, sharing their brokenness. Though many only saw his journey as one along the road to Emmaus, Joseph Doyno encountered the Lord in many ways, but especially in Gethsemane and unlike Peter, James, and John, he did not sleep. Graciously, indeed cheerfully, he walked with our suffering Savior to Calvary, shared profoundly in the redemptive character of the Paschal mystery, and this was the secret of his extraordinary life and ministry.

His *joie de vivre*, his love of a party, his availability and brilliance as a teacher and mentor, was not a mask, not a pretense, but the fruit of a great discovery. Like Andrew, he had found the Lord and wanted his brother to know. Like the woman at the well, he was overwhelmed with joy and wanted everyone to share his discovery.

And now he has gone from our sight ... I urge you to realize he has not left us; you just cannot see him. He with Jesus is with the Father sharing the glory given before the creation of the world. Chrysostom, over 1500 years ago, preaching at his mother's funeral said, "the one whom I knew, and loved, and have lost for awhile, is no longer where she was. She is wherever I am, because she is with God, and God is closer to us than we are to ourselves." Joe, continue to accompany us. ...

Two days earlier, before these words had been spoken, students at St. Bonaventure University had voiced a similar prayer, with language less theological but no less profound. Early Tuesday morning, as I walked in front of Plassmann Hall, my eyes damped with tears as I gazed upon their banner unfurled: "Watch over us, Father Joe."

*There was therefore a concourse of many people praising God and saying:
"Praised and blessed be you, our Lord, God, who have entrusted so precious a treasure to us who are unworthy! Praise and glory be to you, ineffable Trinity."
(1 Cel 112)*

Brother Ed Coughlin, Director of the Franciscan Institute, remembered a conversation he had with Joe about the summer schedule of classes. Ed had suggested to Joe the possibility of offering a course that he always wanted but never had the opportunity to teach. Joe developed a course on *The Franciscan Imagination: Francis in Image and Parable* which was to "explore the place of the imagination in the experience of St. Francis." That course now will never be taught, but, as Ed noted, the course has already been taught by Joe in the parable of his life.

Fr. Louis Aiello, an alumnus of Christ the King Seminary, friend and former student of Fr. Joe, gave witness to the love that his students have always had for him. Joe embodied the somewhat rare combination of greatness in mind and heart: "He loved God, that was clear; he loved theology, that was clear; he loved the Church and his Franciscan family, that was clear; and he loved his students, that was absolutely clear."

Br. Anthony LoGalbo, vicar of the community and former student of Fr. Joe, shared with us from a scrap of paper found in Joe's desk:

We give him back to you,
O Lord,
Who first gave him to us;
Yet as you did not lose him in the giving,
So we do not lose him by his return.
For what is yours
Is ours also, if we belong to you.
Love is undying,
And life is unending,
And the boundary of this mortal life
Is but a horizon,
And a horizon is nothing
Save the limit of our sight.
Lift us up, O God,
That our sights may see further.
Cleanse our eyes,
That we may see more clearly.
And while you prepare the place
For this departed soul,
Prepare us also for that happy place,
That we may be with you,
And with those we love,
Forever. Amen.

Fr. Jack Zibert, the guardian of St. Bonaventure Friary, remembered Joe's humor, but not simply as "humor" but as a signal of transcendence. "Joe's ability to laugh in the face of suffering, in the face of incongruity, not to take self so seriously, was rooted in Christ's resurrection ... it bespoke a joy that comes from *knowing the Shepherd*, from living with Christ, and knowing his resurrection. ..."

Fr. Anthony Carrozzo, Provincial of Holy Name Province, challenged us in remembering and celebrating to let Joe's life, love, gentle Franciscan spirit, and deep Christian wisdom guide our own living: "If we loved Joe as much as we have said, than we must now be what he has been; we must live as he has lived." We too must en flesh the truth, bespeak love, and embrace wisdom in our lives.

"I have done what was mine to do; may Christ teach you what you are to do." (2 Cel 214)

For many years, Fr. Joe Doino has served and inspired many readers of The CORD. As his life has been a grace for us, so may his death be a grace for us. May his death call us to live more fully what we have promised, what Joe so gracefully embodied; may the memory of Joe's life and passing call us *to pursue what we must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord...*



Giotto. Death of St. Francis (detail).

The Lord's Prayer in the Spirituality of St. Clare of Assisi

SISTER MARY REGINA, P.C.C.

A truly Christ-centered interior life leads the soul to a life of more intimate communion with the Blessed Trinity and particularly to a profoundly filial devotion to the Eternal Father. For he who walks upon "the Way" who is Christ invariably finds himself traveling "*in via ad Patrem*." The prayer which Jesus himself taught his followers then becomes not only the pattern of prayer for these souls, but the very heart of their life of union with Him.

Such is the case with St. Clare of Assisi. Although she did not leave a systematic commentary on the Lord's Prayer as did St. Teresa of Jesus, we nonetheless discover her life and her teaching permeated with the spirit of this prayer of sons and sinners, saints and sages. And this should not surprise us. For one who professed to observe "the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" for the whole time of her enclosed contemplative life and who so faithfully observed what she professed could not fail to incarnate, under the tutelage of St. Francis, all that the Eternal Word put forth as the perfect pattern of prayer on earth.

It is significant that in the opening chapters of the *LEGEND OF ST. CLARE*, the medieval author presents us with the charming picture of the little Chiara counting out "Our Fathers" as she laid the foundations of her spiritual life on the solid rock of the Gospel. "She held the pursuit of holy prayer as a friend ... When (as a child) she did not have a chaplet on which to count the 'Pater noster,' she would count her little prayers to the Lord with a pile of pebbles." (*LEGEND*, 4) It intrigues us to think why the daughter of one of the wealthiest families in Assisi, whose mother was known for her great piety and who formed her child along the same spiritual lines, did not possess a chaplet, commonly known in medieval times as a "pater-noster," even if prayers other than the Our

Sister Mary Regina is a member of the community of Poor Clare nuns at the Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Mercy in Belleville, Illinois. She provides us with marvelous insight into the inexhaustible riches of Saint Clare's prayer life.

Father were counted on it. Yet, here is a very early expression of that Gospel discretion which was to mark the whole of St. Clare's spiritual journey, and most particularly, her practice of penance. The Lord and Master said, "Pray to your Father in secret," and the young Clare did just that, even rising early in the morning to do so, the versified legend of her life informs us. Christ said, "Keep your deeds of mercy secret," and fifty years later, friends and neighbors were to testify at the Process of her Canonization how the daughter of Favarone di Offreduccio sent to the poor through intermediaries the food she had denied herself.

Such were the workings of the Spirit and the answering responses of the future St. Clare, whose Gospel life marvelously matured within the walls of the little monastery of San Damiano. By following, then, the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, we can see how this enclosed life, so hidden and so simple, could bear such rich spiritual fruit and could provide those seeking to anchor their spiritual lives in the Gospel with an enduring model and mirror — and this through the medium of prayer which is at one and the same time the core of all catechesis and the height of all mystical experience.

Our Father who art in heaven.

At that decisive turning point in the conversion of St. Francis which has come to be called "the renunciation," the disrobed and disinherited son of Pietro di Bernardone declared, "Now I can truly say 'Our Father who art in heaven!'" While the accounts of St. Clare's conversion do not present an explicit encounter with her father — it is not certain whether Favarone was present in Assisi for the dramatic events of Holy Week, 1212 — we can nonetheless deduce from the "*forma vivendi*" of the Seraphic Father included in chapter six of her Rule that her flight from the world included a very definite willed renouncement of earthly family ties in favor of "that Father from whom all families take their name." The text is simple and succinct: "Since you **have made yourselves daughters and handmaids** of the most high sovereign King, **the heavenly Father** ..." Further, the Seraphic founders considered this separation to be an essential element in the vocational response of their progeny, for the author of the LEGENDA notes that one of the points on St. Clare's formative agenda was that her sisters learn "not to be influenced by love of kinsfolk, and to 'forget their father's house' (Psalm 45) if they were to please Christ." Paradoxically, this renunciation of family ties, rightly understood and generously embraced, equipped St. Clare and ensuing generations of her daughters for a deepened cherishing of those whom they had left behind for the sake of Christ.

"The fruit of detachment," Mother Janet Stuart once remarked, "is heavenly-mindedness." The writings of St. Clare, like those of St. Francis, bear abundant witness to this. Pungent and poetic phrases such as "the most high heavenly Father," "the most high sovereign King, the heavenly Father," "our perfect Father" are but outward expressions of a profoundly filial attachment to that "Father of Mercies and Giver of all good gifts."

Hallowed be Thy Name.

The Seraphic founders were imbued with an abiding wonder and reverence for the presence of God, in His Word and in His Sacrament. Thus St. Francis, who readily acknowledged his lack of learning, made manifest his outstanding respect for God's name by gathering with care every scrap of paper with writing he came upon, with the thought that even the smallest might contain letters with which the Name of God could be formed. St. Clare began her Testament, "In the name of the Lord. Amen."

This utter simplicity before the mystery and the holiness of God's Name, so characteristic of both saints of Assisi, was nourished by repeated pondering of the "Pater noster," especially in the context of daily liturgical prayer. In keeping with the custom of the times — which endures to our times, in some places — St. Clare was careful to legislate in chapter three of her Rule that those Sisters who could not read or who were legitimately impeded from praying the Divine Office should pray instead the "Our Father" a prescribed number of times for each canonical hour. Likewise, at the death of any Sister, all were required to pray the Lord's Prayer fifty times. While the witnesses at the Process testified to St. Clare's fidelity to her "customary prayers" even in times of serious illness, may we not suppose that when gravely ill and unable to read her breviary, she, too, found her spiritual nourishment and refreshment in the devout recitation of the "Pater noster?"

Thy Kingdom come.

The contemplative life is a life of the Advent, a hunger for the coming of Christ and his kingdom. This hope and holy expectation are at the very core of Clarian spirituality. All things point to the coming of this kingdom; all things prepare the soul for its fulfillment. The petition, "Thy kingdom come" is more than a loving invitation; it becomes an imperative of holy yearning. It calls forth that pure and purifying poverty of spirit which is requisite for the establishment of the kingdom. It equips the soul with humility and holy patience in face of suffering, that the beatitudinal "now" of the kingdom might flourish. St. Clare lived for the coming of the kingdom, within and without, and this longing kindled and sustained the blaze of forty-two fruitful years of prayer and penance which still astounds and inspires the world.

Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

"Christ became obedient, even unto death." Thus the Apostle summarizes the *raison d'être* for Christian obedience to the will of God. A life of obedience, accepted in generosity and faith, is a powerhouse of grace. God was pleased to manifest this in a particular way through his obedient spouse, St. Clare, to whom he granted the gift of healing — most often through that enduring sign of obedience, the sign of the Cross. Yet, it is interesting to note that while the Seraphic Mother showed all compassion and sympathy to her daughters in their physical and spiritual sufferings, she nevertheless recognized that the Cross, too, brought its own measure of healing. Her niece, Sister Amata, testified that her aunt prefaced her own cure with an invocation to God: "if it was for the good of her (Amata's) soul." And Sister Benvenuta left a moving account of physical healing in which the Lord's Prayer played a direct part. Coming one night, in tears, to the Holy Mother, this long-suffering Sister begged to be cured of the infections which plagued her for twelve years. "The kind Mother, moved by her usual compassion, got out of bed, and, on her knees, prayed to the Lord. After she finished her prayer, she turned toward Sister Benvenuta, made the sign of the cross first upon herself and then upon her, said the 'Our Father,' and touched those wounds." God's Will was done; the wounds were healed.

The Seraphic founders were imbued with an abiding wonder and reverence for the presence of God, in His Word and in His Sacrament.

Give us this day our daily bread.

St. Clare saw her radical form of Gospel poverty as a vital and vibrant witness to the all-loving providence of the heavenly Father. For her and for her thriving community — and the questing friars attached to it — "Give us this day our daily bread" was not a devout but abstract petition; it was the authentic cry of the humble poor in need and in faith before their Divine Benefactor. And their daily cry was heard, most outstandingly on that memorable day when the Holy Mother broke the single loaf in the monastery pantry, sending half to the hungry friars and directing the astounded refectorian to divide the rest to feed her community of fifty. Although the text of her prayer is not preserved, may we not judge from the miraculous results, that "giving thanks," she too petitioned and received from the Father of Mercies the daily bread which she of herself could not provide her spiritual children?

St. Clare's concern for "daily bread" was not confined to refectory fare, though. She had an abiding concern that her sisters be nourished with the "food" of solid doctrine and sound preaching, as well as with the Bread of Life. Not granted in her time to know the joy of daily Eucharistic Communion, she nonetheless left to her daughters both legislation enjoining them to communicate more frequently than was the availing medieval custom, as well as to anchor their spiritual lives, as she had, on the Tabernacle and to draw from the Living Bread sustenance and strength for their on-going pilgrimage of faith.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Reading chapter nine of her brief Rule, it is clear how fully St. Clare adhered to the Gospel guidelines concerning mercy and mutual forgiveness. Here the prayer the Master proposed for all his followers is concretely presented in his own words and in her own medium: "Let her who gave cause for disturbance immediately, before she may offer the gift of her prayer to the Lord, not only humbly prostrate herself at the feet of the other (Sister), begging pardon, but in all lowliness, entreat the other that she would intercede for her to the Lord that he have mercy on her. But let the other, mindful of that word of the Lord: '**Unless you shall have forgiven from the heart, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you,**' generously dismiss all injury her Sister has done her."

And lead us not into temptation.

The medieval accounts of her life present St. Clare experiencing temptation and combating it, as did her Lord, with the weapon of prayer. Spiritual realist that she was, she was careful to teach her sisters to be humbly mindful to pray this petition of the "Pater noster" in truth, and to recognize that "the cunning enemy lays hidden snares for pure souls, and tempts holy persons in one way and worldlings in another."

But deliver us from evil.

"Does it please thee, my Lord, to deliver into the hands of the pagans thy defenseless handmaids, whom I have nourished with thy love?" queried the Seraphic Mother, prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament as the invading Saracens clambered over the cloister walls. Her Christ was not slow to answer such a petition, saving not only her community, but also her beloved Assisi from plunder and ruin. At the heart of the enclosed contemplative's life of prayer and penance lies an aching desire that all the world be delivered from evil, and the dramatic routing of the enemy forces from quiet San Damiano stands as an enduring symbol of the power of humble, faithful and persistent

prayer, patterned after that given us by the one who "rescued us from the powers of darkness and brought us into the kingdom" of his most holy Father in heaven.

Amen.

Mention should be made at the close of these simple reflections on several other points of contact that St. Clare had with the "Pater noster" in her daily round of liturgical and para-liturgical prayer. Her breviary, still preserved at the Protomonastery in Assisi, gives the text of the Lord's Prayer at the end of the Psalter and again within the context of the Ordinary of the Mass.

St. Clare's devotion to the Office of the Cross (Office of the Passion) composed by St. Francis is well-known. While some of the rubrics of this masterpiece of pondering on the Passion are not entirely clear, the manuscript directives do specify that the Office is prefaced by the recitation of "the prayer the Lord and Master taught us: OUR MOST HOLY FATHER, etc. ..." Whether this means that the Our Father was prayed or that the meditations on the Our Father which have come down to us as the "Paraphrase of the Our Father" were recited, those who prayed the Office of the Passion were directed to enter into the thoughts and sentiments of the Savior through the gateway of his own prayer to the Eternal Father. There are also references in the early sources to St. Clare's devotion to a prayer in honor of the five wounds of Christ. The text offered by Nesta deRoebeck in her book, CLARE OF ASSISI, calls for the recitation of the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory at the end of each salute, again pointing an arrow to the Gospel solidity of St. Clare's devotional life, as well as her profound penetration of that highest fulfillment of the will of the heavenly Father which was the Passion and death of his Son.

"Put on the mind of Christ," St. Paul urged those who would be counted among His followers. The sanctity of St. Clare testifies to the thoroughness of her response to this admonition. Assured of her like-mindedness with Christ, both her daughters and His disciples can turn with humble trust to the Seraphic Mother and ask in all simplicity, "Teach us to pray," confident that she will respond from the depths of her own penetration into this enduring prayed and lived reality: "Our Father who art in heaven."

* * *

You said that you would
Take me back with tenderness;
With enduring love, you said,
You would have pity on me.
You said the you would leave
The ninety-nine and search for me,
That with great joy you would carry
My faint and wearied self
Around your strong and steadfast shoulders
And spread the news of my return.
You said that you would light a lamp
And search for me if I were lost,
And you promised you would find me.
You promised that your heart would stir
With joy upon my coming back.
You said that if I went away and
Squandered all I had that you would
Wait for my return, that you would
Watch ceaselessly for me as I
Came in sight far off in the distance,
That you would run to meet me,
Would hold me in your arms and kiss me,
Would celebrate with joy at my return.
You have promised me all this.
I journey back along the quiet streets;
I extend my hand,
Reaching outward toward you.
Perhaps I am too far off for you
To see me in the distance.
Perhaps you cannot hear my cries,
My longings to be with you.
Rescue me! I am running toward you:
Do you see me in the distance?
Run to me to meet me and we will
Celebrate with somersaults in sunshine
The moment I get back.

Rita Kristina Weinheimer, OSF

Troubadour

I can speak
and sing in
French,
as once you did.

I see you now,
head bent
to catch the tune
the calmness
on your thin face
the patched cloth
beautiful as the lily
Solomon could not match,
then you are dancing
like David
before the Lord.

To me you are Troubadour;
inspired and fired with devotion
and every unthinking motion
of you
a psalm-poem of praise
in the Most Eloquent
of all Tongues which raises
its voice.

Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M.

St. Francis and the Themes of Medieval Literature

SÉAMUS MULHOLLAND, O.F.M.

I

An aspect of Franciscan Studies which has preoccupied me for a long time is the effect of Medieval Literature, particularly the poetry of the Troubadours, on the ideals and attitudes of St. Francis. In describing St. Francis variously as 'troubadour', 'trouvere', 'jongleur' or 'God's Fool' the early biographers (and those since) have intuitively grasped an aspect of Francis' character which can at times be lost beneath the emphasis on his holiness. Yet, there is a real sense in which these different ways of describing Francis fit eminently into our inherited picture of him. The Middle Ages were a time of great contradiction and turmoil: there was the growth of Monasticism and the great reform of Cluny, there were the Crusades with all their barbarity and there was the growth and development of Medieval Literature which laid the foundation for the cultural and aesthetic development of Europe. However, the irony of this growth was that Medieval Literature depended to a large extent on the emergence of Knighthood and the violence (no matter how romanticized) that was part of it. It is certainly true that the flowering of Knighthood, while accommodated to the concept of Feudalism, owes much to earlier traditions — most especially the spread of legends about Arthur, Charlemagne, and the very important 'Song of Roland'. However, while such a dependence on the violence of the age is clear, Medieval Literature does not glorify that violence, but rather seeks to throw into relief the 'courtly' or 'courtly attitudes' present in such stories.

The strongest element which may have influenced St. Francis was that of the Chanson de Geste, of the 'songs of the deeds' tales, epic in character, which

Fr. Séamus Mulholland is engaged in parish ministry in London's East End. He is a high-ranking karate black belt and former karate champion. His poetry and articles have appeared in previous issues of The CORD. Sections V and VI of this article present valuable insights into the impact of medieval literature on Francis' image of the feminine.

highlighted the glorious deeds of great heroes such as King Arthur, Percival, and Roland (who emerges as the ideal of Christian chivalry). While it is true that literature played a great part in spreading these stories, they were also spread by troubadours, trouveres and medieval dramatists in the so called 'mystery plays' which were not always concerned with the catechetical dimension of Christian doctrine. Central to these epics were the concepts of 'Courtly Love'; allegiance to a lord by a vassal; and what may best be described as 'largesse' or 'gentillesse,' i.e. right behaviour intimately bound up with the proper treatment due to those less fortunate than the knight. It is this courtly attitude which is present in Francis, particularly in relation to Lady Poverty which may best be described as a courtly love symbol (especially in the *Sacrum Commercium*) and also in relation to creation characterized by the terms 'brother' and 'sister'. The courtly love attitude, which was an essential prerequisite for knighthood, was given greater strength through the Arthurian cycle. Arthur was little more than a second-rate Celtic British chieftain but eventually became the archetype for the romances, chansons and other courtly writings; and he exerts great influence over their shape and form. It is through these writings that Knighthood begins to develop into the 'sacred calling' and reaches its apex at the Crusades.

II

The literature really flourished between 1050 — 1350, and so Francis was born into, lived and died well within the tradition's greatest moment and was influenced by it in many respects — especially as it was expressed in and through the Troubadour lyric. The whole concept of courtly literature was new and vibrant, and it brought to the attention of those who listened to it a new manner of looking at the world. It is certain that the troubadours, story tellers, and others 'who recited or sang, idealized or proclaimed the great epics of the Chansons were present in Northern Italy,' particularly in Umbria, and the Italians seemed to have developed a liking for them. On the strength of this alone it would be seen that Francis came in contact with this tradition in some shape or another and was influenced by it, especially in his understanding of Knighthood. He certainly knew the instruments that were used to accompany the recitation of these courtly epics, poems, or novella; and it may be suggested that he was familiar with the more sensual songs and poems of the period. Undoubtedly Francis had a poetic and dramatic flair, and much is made of the fact that he refers to himself as 'Jongleur of God' which may indicate not just familiarity but actual use of some jongleur techniques of communication which included poetry and drama. Certainly Francis understood, spoke and sang French which was THE language of the Troubadour tradition which itself was THE way of expressing ideas on Knighthood, Courtly Love and Gentillesse.

A further influence of the literature of the time on St. Francis may be seen in the fact that Francis actually preferred French to his native dialect (setting aside for the moment the Canticum) to sing his love songs, that is, songs to his Lord. This is not so strange if it is accepted that love songs HAD to be in French. Vernacular love songs were not widely known or used because French dominated as the language of love. The idea is not so fanciful given Francis' recognized tendency toward the poetic/dramatic, and it takes nothing away from the metaphorical understanding of the prophetic nature of Francis' life which Celano links to Acts 2. The influence of such poetry, music and literature is further emphasized by the fact that Francis composed his own melody for the Canticum and perhaps used a troubadour style for it (unfortunately we shall have to wait to hear!).

III

While the influence of the Troubadour lyric is strong, it is the idealistic content of the lyric which seems to be most present in Francis. The stories of Roland, Arthur, the Holy Grail, of knights accepting the mandatum from the liege lord, of fealty beyond common loyalty, of courtesy (which had a deeper meaning than it does for us today) and untainted, unsullied love, had, to use modern parlance, been electrifying audiences for years. A soul spirit, or heart, already predisposed to gentillesse and courtly ideals, such as that of St. Francis, would hardly have failed to be moved by something like:

Se puis vedeir ma gente soror Alde

If I could see my lovely sister Alde

Vos ne jerreiz ja mais entre sa brace

You would never lie in the embrace of her arms

or not be inspired by this description of the archetype of Christian kingship — Charlemagne:

Deoz un pin delez un aiglentier

Beneath a pine, a wild white thorn

Unfaldestoil i out fait tot d'ormier

A throne stands inlaid with mother of pearl

La seit li reis ki dolce France teit

There sits the king who reigns over sweet France

Blanche at le barbe et tot florit le chief

His beard is white and proud his head

Gent at le couers c lo contenant fier;

He is graceful and proud of bearing

S'est qui'l ne'l estotet enseigner

Who asks his name. He needs no pointing out.

Or have the heart strings pulled by the following poem written by a Crusader in the year of Francis' birth and sung as a love song for years afterwards:

Ahi, amors, com dure depati

Ah love how difficult it is to cut myself

ma covient faire a perde la millor

away from her whose sweet embrace

Qui onques fust amee ne servie

I fondly seek and will never forsake

Deus meanainst a li pa sa dolcor

God bring me back, I only ask this grace

Si voirement com j'en part a dolor!

For I part in sorrow

Deus! qu'al-je dit? Ja ne m'en part je mie

What did I say? I do not part

Se li cors va servir Nostre Signor

For though my body serves the Lord tomorrow

Toz li miens cuers remaint en sa baille

My heart stays with my love.

Francis' knowledge of, and exposure to these literary forms and the ideals and attitudes within them would have given him access to a deeper understanding of the stories of Roland, Arthur, Charlemagne etc. and would have influenced the already present romanticism of his own heart and soul and strengthened his desire to be a knight. Indeed, it is fitting, in this respect, that the early friars were often referred to as the 'Knights of Christ'. It may be suggested that the fanciful impetuosity of a headstrong youth like Francis would easily conquer reason — for as a knight Francis was a disaster. While wishing to be as heroic and gentle (jaunt - tee) as Roland, he ended his knightly career in ignominy and defeat and eventually prison. However, (and here the influence

of the themes of medieval literature is strong) while the actual existentialities of Francis' fancies end in such a manner, the IDEALS and values of the literature's depiction of Christian knighthood stay.

IV

In this respect I wish to reflect not on his relationship with his Feudal Lord, the Most High God, but rather the ideals which he took on board. The whole concept of the knight as brother, servant, king, queen, or God was already an established idea within the context of the feudal system. However, proceeding from this was the concept of the Brotherhood of Knights, the Fraternity of Chivalry, which is most eloquently articulated in the vision of knightly equality under one king in the legends of the Round Table. It may be suggested that Francis' concept of fraternity and the 'epic' deeds he envisaged the friars performing owe more to the literary understanding of the idea than his own unique inspiration or innovation. This was emphasized in the romance novels, and the Troubadour lyric, and it was given further depth in drama. So, it may not be unfair to place Francis' understanding of the IDEAL of fraternity within the context of Medieval chivalry. While it is true that the literature, especially the poetry and the music, concentrated on courtly love and the knightly ideals, they did so within their own understanding of these — as did Francis — and thus such an interpretation of fraternity is valid and as original as the literature's.

Medieval literature did not simply eulogize these ideals of chivalry and courtois and fealty for the purpose of entertainment. It has a profound and pragmatic character to it. It was also an underlying purpose of these art forms to bring about a happening or an event. They were not simply art forms to bring about a sensualism (and undoubtedly medieval literature contains examples of the most beautiful love poetry ever written) or unattainable knightly idealism. Nor were these art forms pure artistry (no matter how stylized and formal in content it was): they were also THE ART FORMS OF ACTION AND CHANGE. The literature in particular was open to anyone who would understand it, and while it may have been written in French, it would have been interpreted so as to give it a wider audience: it was a most accessible literature and musical form. These art forms encouraged the spirit of brotherly love, mutual co-operation and a more humane treatment of women. The interpreters of these art forms, whether they were Troubadours, Jongleurs, Trouveres (the Northern French equivalent of the Southern Troubadour of Street artists), cut through the class system of feudalism because the art forms they were expressing were themselves classless. If Francis is an original re-interpreter of both religious and secular ideals and concepts, as his whole life of evangelical witness testi-

fies, the genius of Francis is that he claimed these ideals as his own and personalized them in his own life and in the attitude he adopted toward everyone and everything else. Thus, 'Jongleur of God' is a most appropriate epithet to give him.

V

The thrust of this reflection so far has tended to concentrate on how medieval art forms gave expression to the values of Knighthood and Chivalry with all their attendant ideals and responsibilities. It has tried to suggest that in some of Francis' ideas there is an influence, no matter how superficial, of the medieval chansons and epics, as well as the conceptualized thematic pre-occupation of love, brotherhood, peace and understanding. I have tentatively suggested that the interpreters of these art forms were in many respects ambassadors of peace in a world gone mad with war, crusades, inter-city feuds and vendettas. Troubadours, Trouveres, Jongleurs, poets, musicians and artists were the voice of reason and sanity in such a world through the expression of their creative idealism and artistic innovations which broke through the stifling claustrophobia of Medieval society. But it was not only in these areas that they may have influenced St. Francis, they may also have influenced his understanding of the Lady Poverty, not as a religious ideal or experience, but rather as a conceptual formality.

The lyric poetry for example of the Troubadours and other forms of poems such as those already cited earlier were highlights of an artistic form begun much earlier. In their praise of the ideal feminine (which at times is excessive though beautiful), these artistic interpreters brought to Medieval Europe a new way of looking at Woman, Love and Relationship and, ultimately, to the whole idea of the Feminine as an Archetype. Courtly love, as handed down in the various forms of art, can be seen as a reaction against the generally humiliating position of Woman in medieval society and, further, against a theology of marriage that reflected the social background of feudalism. Men were thought to be superior to women not only socially and juridically, but also theologically and philosophically. Men regarded themselves as more rational creatures and therefore more human than women (sic!). Indeed, centuries of commentaries on Genesis by males place the Fall firmly on the shoulders of Woman who was seen as sensual and tempting and the ruin of men. Monastic and clerical celibacy (at least ideally if not practically) encouraged anti-feminine attitudes that made women sub-human objects of fear and scorn. The consequences of such a theology are in striking contrast to the exultation of Woman and women by the medieval arts, especially lyric poetry and courtly romances. It may be suggested with a little anarchy that the lyric and courtly insistence on the pleasur-

able, i.e. sexual aspect of love freely sought and celebrated OUTSIDE marriage, was a response to the restrictive, impersonal conditions of medieval marriage.

To understand the idea of how the medieval courtly understanding of woman may have influenced Francis' own controls toward the Lady Poverty, I would like to offer a brief look at the central tenet of the courtly relationship between the Lover and the Loved as it is found especially in the literature. While the Lover is always a knight, he is more often than not the poet himself in that particular persona or a man of humble origins. The knight-lover seeks the favour of his lady in a well-defined ritual, and the lady is usually his social superior and always a paragon of virtue. The mood of the Lover is always presented as a melancholic self-pity as he considers the difficulties of winning his lady in his own unworthiness. Compare this idea with Francis' own attitude and feelings at the beginning of the *Sacrum Commercium*. However, final success produces the desired effect of the joy the lover seeks. Again it may be worth comparing the opening of the *Sacrum Commercium* and Francis' state of mind with his attitude and state of mind when he actually discovers the Lady Poverty and when she accepts him in *Sacrum Commercium* Ch. 6 and places her trust in him and his promise of fealty, fidelity and obedience to her.

The genius of Francis is that he claimed these ideals as his own and personalized them in his own life and in the attitude he adopted toward everyone and everything else.

The lady to whom the lover speaks, sings is always addressed as an archetype. Generally speaking, in the literature she is blond (notice for example that some ions of Clare and the Lady Poverty depict them as blond) and always has formalized features and a figure that rarely varies. She may be addressed in the masculine as 'Midons' (for example, Francis' affectionate epithet for the Lady Jacoba was Brother Jacoba which highlights both her status within the Order and Francis' own courtliness). The relationship between the Lover and his Loved in many of its formal aspects is a highly conventional sexual version of the relationship between the lord and his vassal in feudalism (notice for example the way in which the Lady Poverty is to be found in *Sacrum Commercium* 3 — despite the Omnibus' polite translation!). There are certainly elements of these formal conventions in Francis' attitude to women, and anyone so influenced by

chivalry and poetry as himself would have expressed their concerns with the same courtly attitude. In some of his dealings with Clare there is formality and formalized relationships: Clare is always the 'Lady Clare' and his sisters are the 'Poor Ladies' not simply because they WERE ladies but also because Clare herself stands as a different form of Woman. Further, this courtly attitude of Francis is quite correct given his understanding of the equality of relationships — but it is the Troubadour in Francis who understands this rather than he himself. In other words, I am suggesting that the dominant influence which shapes his attitude to women is not any great spiritual or theological insight, but rather the insight that came from constant exposure to courtly ideals. To understand this idea further one might compare the formalized style and structure of the *Sacrum Commercium* and the sensual presentation of the Lady Poverty.

VI

In Francis, feminine perfection as depicted in the medieval humanist arts also plays an important role, and though I believe it is still influenced by the courtly ideal, its ritual is different. In Francis the symbol of Feminine perfection becomes the most beautiful woman in all the world. For Francis this woman is the ideal partner who is to be wooed and sought fervently with distracted love and to whom he eventually presents his suit and is accepted (*Sacrum Commercium* 6). She is, of course, the Lady Poverty. Francis' Woman is rich and lofty in a different way because she is the Personification of Poverty; yet she is his superior since she is the maiden of the Lord and his 'widow'. But as in the literary tradition Woman is Perfection — so too is the Lady Poverty THE perfection for Francis. Like Woman of the literature, she is not sensual or sexual in a lascivious way; even though the *Sacrum Commercium* presents her in a powerfully sensual and sexual way — she is not free or wanton in her sexual favours. Rather she is the embodiment of the perfection of Form and true Eroticism (the pornographers have much to answer for in their sexist humiliating cheapening and degradation of the Erotic). The *Sacrum Commercium* allows the Lady Poverty to speak about her many betrayals and of how she has been whored in the past and is thus somewhat tentative in her dealings with Francis. But Francis is the true knight-lover who seeks only her favour and, as another Troubadour once wrote:

All my prayers these last twenty years have been answered

For this day did not my Lady, so beautiful, so virtuous

Not glance pitifully in my direction and smile at me:

Let my heart rejoice for my long vigil of love is now over

And let no one sully her high virtue and nobility.

In Francis, while woman does remain a courtly ideal and symbol, the symbolism is inverted; for unlike the lyric poets and other artists, Francis actually attains to his 'Lady;' yet he still maintains the formalized conventions of courtly love: he 'marries' the Lady Poverty promising his obedience and plighting his troth. In other words Francis hands over 'sauveraigntee' to the Lady which is another aspect of the courtly form found in Medieval Literature. Francis uses the same courtly approach when speaking to other ladies — the Lady Clare, the Poor Ladies, Lady Jacoba — because his approach is that of the knight-lover seeking nothing but his lady's good and happiness. Ultimately it is this approach, influenced so much by those artistic themes, which characterized many of his actions, thoughts and writings, particularly his poetry.

VII

In the end it is difficult to say just how far the themes of Medieval Literature with all their concerns influenced the ideals and ideas of St. Francis, though influence they did. The insistence on love, chastity, obedience, right relationships, proper treatment of women, tolerance, chivalric behaviour, gentleness and many other literary themes are present in some form or another in St. Francis. This reflection has tried to suggest that those influences were great even if not immediately provable because it is the way Francis uses them which makes him original. Francis re-interpreted the older ideals and forms of courtly lyric, especially those of the Troubadours, and made them fresh in his own life — as he did the gospel. Originality does not mean doing something which has never been done before, but rather re-interpreting of older values for any given age which preserves their uniqueness and individuality yet at the same time makes them applicable to one's own era and time. We should be grateful for these artistic influences on St. Francis for they give us a saint and founder who was a little more human, weak and approachable than some of the hagiography and iconography would allow. Literature is about the celebration of humanity and its humanism and as such is vital to assessing the condition of our age. And what is the life of Francis if not a celebration of the human and the humanist that he brought to his own era and time as he sought to proclaim the Good News: that God had become human, and that the more the man Jesus became Divine the more human God became; and in this God is glorified in all things — including the literature of any period.

Gethsemane

Dedicated to Shawn Bridget D'Orazio

Your condemnation comes too easily.
The night was warm, and you were gone so long,
What could we do but sleep, I dreamed of throngs
Of angels taking you away from me,

And there was Judas hanging from a tree.
His eyes were filmed in gold. The sun was gone,
And soldiers played in shadows. Blood was wrung
From ashes. Death would come too readily.

And then I dreamed of water. James and I
Were working in our father's boat. The sky
Was filled with fish. It was the day you came,
And then I wished you never came and tried

To think of mornings filled with fish and tried
To think of mornings that were calm and tame.

Bernard McKenna

Beauty

The birds chirp a lovely all day song
All praise to you, O God, from all creation
Richard comes — a good day to cut grass
Its odor a gift like incense to the Lord.
He clips and snips the hedges into well formed shapes.
He sings a prayer of thanksgiving for getting things done
The fountain is on and the water is bubbling
Like a happy crystal tumbling and gurgling
Then Richard enjoys a good lunch away from the sun.

Sister Marie Francis Gallagher, O.S.F.

Book Reviews

John Henry Newman: Heart to Heart, by Rev. Vincent Giese, New City Press, New Rochelle, NY, 1993, paper, 96 pages.

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

John Henry Newman was declared Venerable by Pope John Paul II in Rome on January 21, 1991. This declaration means that the Vatican Congregation of the Saints found, after careful research, that John Newman practiced the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude to a heroic degree. The Reverend Vincent Giese, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and an ardent admirer of Cardinal Newman, has written a short biography of Newman. The author's principal theme throughout his work is Newman's concern for the laity in the Church.

One of the founders of the Oxford Movement, John Henry Newman wrote about the need for the clergy in the Anglican Church, especially the bishops, to examine their lifestyle and their spiritual responsibilities for the people of their parishes. Newman wrote that many of the bishops of the Church of England were more con-

cerned about their own welfare as members of the British nobility than they were concerned about the spiritual welfare of the people who make up their flocks. Together with other teachers at Oxford, including Edward Pusey and John Keble, Newman began in 1833 to write Tracts of the Times. The tracts began what came to be called Tractarianism, a movement within the Anglican Church to free itself from control by the Crown. This movement became the Oxford movement. The various authors of the Tracts pointed out that not all of the beliefs and practices of the Church of England were a reflection of the tradition of the Church founded by Christ. All of the writers of the Tracts were of a mind that the Anglican Church was in need of reform. Some proposed the Branch Theory of the Catholic Church: Anglicanism, Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism. The climax of the Movement occurred with the publication of Tract 90. This Tract, written by Newman in 1841, asserted that the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England are not contrary to Roman Catholic doctrine. Publication of this Tract caused so much controversy that the tracts had to be discontinued. The leaders of Oxford forbade any further tracts and ended Newman's career at Oxford.

Newman's reading of the Fathers of the Church led him to question the

teachings and practices of the Church of England. According to Newman, the Church of England in the Nineteenth Century did not correspond to the Church founded by Christ as presented in the Fathers of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church appeared much closer to the Church of the Fathers and Newman felt drawn to the Roman Catholic Church. By 1845, John Newman had made up his mind to leave the Church of England and to join the Roman Catholic Church. He was received into the Catholic Church on October 9, 1845 by a Passionist priest, Father Dominic Barberi, who had long been interested in the conversion of England. Father Barberi was beatified in Rome by Pope Paul VI in 1963.

After his reception into the Catholic Church, John Newman went to Rome to prepare for ordination in the Catholic Church. Ordained in 1846, he returned to England and, with the approval of Bishop Ullathorne, established an Oratory in Birmingham. It was in the Birmingham Oratory that John Newman spent the rest of his life.

John Henry Newman was a scholar and a preacher. At St. Mary's Church at Oxford he gained his reputation, especially through his parochial sermons. When he was no longer allowed to preach at Oxford St. Mary's because of his views expressed in Tract 90, he continued his parochial duties at the Church of St. Mary and St. Nicholas in Littlemore. Here he continued his prayerful study of the Fathers of the Church that led him to embrace the Catholic faith. Father Giese presents

a picture of a holy, sincere, devout priest of the Church of England who was influenced by his spiritual life and his intellectual life to enter the Catholic Church. His life as a Catholic priest was a continuation of study, prayer, preaching and ministering to those who came to the Birmingham Oratory. Over and over in his biography, the author emphasizes Newman's concern for ordinary people. He states that Cardinal Newman was often quoted at the Second Vatican Council, especially in the preparation of the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.

The subtitle of the book, *John Henry Newman: Heart to Heart*, is taken from the motto Newman adopted when he became a Cardinal of the Church in 1879: *Cor ad Cor Loquitur* (Heart Speaks to Heart). Although this work is a small paperback, it presents an interesting and valuable picture of a great and scholarly priest and prelate of the nineteenth Century. This little book is really worthwhile for any serious Christian of the Twentieth Century.

Vincent de Paul and Charity, by André Dodin, C.M., translated from the French by Jean Marie Smith and Dennis Saunders. Edited by Hugh O'Donnell, C.M. and Marjorie Gale Hornstein. New Rochelle: New City Press, 1993. Pp. 126, including bibliography. Paper \$9.95

Reviewed by Louise-Merrie Schrecongost, M.A. (Suny, Albany, NY) an aspiring free lance writer.

St. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) is well-known as a saint of great charity

who devoted his life to caring for the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor. This book is an excellent introduction to St. Vincent, as the author provides the basic facts about the saint's life and beliefs. Although St. Vincent would one day act as an advisor to politicians and the nobility, his family origins were modest: a poor peasant family from Pouy, France. Vincent studied at a Franciscan boarding school in Dax, from 1595-1597; he continued his education at the University of Toulouse and was ordained in 1600. Father Dodin describes St. Vincent's work in founding the Congregation of the Mission; co-founding the Daughters of Charity, with St. Louise de Marillac; and organizing the Ladies of Charity. His ministries included helping abandoned children, galley slaves and prisoners; giving retreats; and educating priests and seminarians.

About one-third of the book consists of excerpts from St. Vincent's writings on the will of God, charity, humility, affective and effective love. Reading St. Vincent's own words enables us to better understand him and see the type of spiritual direction he offered. He challenged those who thought themselves religious to always do more to imitate Christ and actively help others. Readers will discover that he did not view charity as it is often misinterpreted today — a donation of money or food. Instead, he knew it as a virtue of truly loving one's neighbor as Jesus commanded. He defined it like this: "Charity is a love above emotion and reason through which people love one another to the same end Jesus

Christ loved people" to make them saints in this world and blessed in the next." (P. 100)

As most readers will undoubtedly be interested in learning more about St. Vincent, the editors have compiled an annotated bibliography listing St. Vincent's writings, and books about his life and spirituality. An iconography describes the earliest portraits of St. Vincent and tells where they are located. Some paintings, reproduced in black and white, are featured in the book.

St. Vincent shows us that we should never become discouraged about the problems that occur in society and the Church. Many French people in the 1600's lived in extreme poverty and ignorance of Catholic teachings. There was superstition, the growth of new Protestant sects, the influence of the Jansenist heresy, and for some, atheism. St. Vincent and the Vincentian priests dealt with these problems by preaching missions and founding new seminaries. We may not be able to accomplish as much as he did, but our prayers and actions can bring about positive changes today. This book is recommended to all priests, religious, and laity.

Catholic Treasures. New and Old. Traditions, Customs and Practices. By Joanne Turpin. Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1994. Pp. 138. Paper, \$6.95.

Reviewed by Julian A. Davies, O.F.M., an Associate Editor of this review.

This is a very concise and informative book. The 14 chapters cover the Mass,

Sacraments, Sacramentals, Angels and Saints, Mary, Popular Devotions, The Church Year and Sacred Space, Ethnic Customs, the Organization of the Church, the parish and Parish Life, and prayer. References follow each chapter. Written without footnotes, the work is accessible to all.

I learned some new things (E.G. that a lay minister may give the blessing of St. Blaise, that Raphael is often identified as the angel who stirred the waters (See John 5:4.); and I found only one mistake (The Feast Day of the Holy Innocents was listed as falling on December 29, when it is observed a day earlier. Another thing that might be corrected in another edition is the closing paragraphs about the Church Tomorrow which suggests that "priestless Sundays" are what's going to be, and seems to end the work on a down note. **Catholic Treasures** is a useful handbook for inquirers into our faith as well as for those who have grown up with it.

Breathing Deeply of God's New Life: Preparing Spiritually for the Sacraments of Initiation. By Mark G. Boyer, Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993. Pp. 170. Paper, \$7.95.

Reviewed by Peter F. Macaluso, Ph.D., Professor of History, Montclair State College and Adjunct Lecturer Bene Merenti Saint Peter's College. Team of St. Anne's Franciscan Parish, Fair Lawn, New Jersey.

Rev. Mark G. Boyer's book helps inquirers, catechumens and initiation teams understand and develop the rich spirituality of the Order of Christian

Initiation of Adults. The wealth of scriptural selections, quotations from the **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults**, reflections, meditation questions, prayers and journaling exercises included by the author can help catechumens respond to God's call to inner transformation and conversion.

Father Boyer employs a six-part meditation process:

- 1) Selections from Scripture for each rite are presented, 2) A selection from the **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults** complements the Scripture choice, 3) A reflection develops key themes and images found in the Scripture selection and the quotation from the rites, 4) A meditation asks the reader to identify how God was present in a recent experience from the reader's life, 5) A prayer summarizes the ideas and themes in the reflection, 6) A journal exercise asks the reader to review the major events and experiences of life and pinpoint how God has been leading and guiding him or her.

This is a simple book that may be used alone or within a group as a basis for discussion. A ten page introduction explains the objectives and process in which the book may be used. It can assist in the growth of catechumens and candidates in their spiritual lives as Catholic Christians. Father Boyer's work is recommended as a valuable resource for all team members involved in working with catechumens. Preachers also will find here a wealth of ideas for preaching during Lent, Holy Week, Easter and the Pentecost seasons.

Catherine of Siena: Passion for the Truth, Compassion for Humanity: Selected Spiritual Writings. Edited, annotated and introduced by Mary O'Driscoll, O.P. New York: New City Press, 1993. Pp. 144. Paper, \$8.95

Reviewed by Peter F. Macaluso, Ph.D., Professor of History, Montclair State College and Adjunct Lecturer Bene Merenti Saint Peter's College.

This work by Sister Mary O'Driscoll is an excellent introduction to the prayer and ministry of St. Catherine (1347-1380), great Doctor of the Church (1970). The author is an authority on the teaching of Catherine of Siena, who was in fact the topic of her doctoral work. Besides lecturing at schools and seminars in the United States she teaches at the Angelicum. It is important to note that several of her students have gone on to do doctoral theses on some aspect of Catherine's life and teaching.

Many of the writings from Catherine's "Letters," "Prayers" and "The Dialogue" which Sr. Mary uses in her courses were selected for this work and she has enriched them with introductions and annotations. Her skillful se-

lections and perceptive introductions represent a broad tapestry of Catherine's thought. The author includes an interesting ten page introduction, a chronology and a select bibliography.

Of particular interest, and especially representative of Catherine's unique spirituality and theology, are the sections presenting her teaching of "Walking Jesus' way on two feet: love of God and love of neighbor"; her unique use of images when doing theology and when speaking of God and the human condition; her account of accompanying a young man sentenced to death.

Catherine possessed the pain of the **stigmata** without visible lesions. This and Catherine's special mystical gifts do not prevent her teaching to relate to our life here at the close of the 20th century. Catherine the mystic "in the world," fits well the situation of many Christians today who feel called to a life which combines prayer and service. This anthology of Catherine's works is therefore not only of tremendous benefit to students of spirituality, mysticism and theology, but to all those interested in prayer and the spiritual life.

* * *

Books Received

Barnecut, O.S.B. Edith. ed. *Journey with the Fathers. Commentaries on the Sunday Gospels Year B.* Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1993. Pp. 160.

Dodin, C.M., Andre. *Vincent DePaul and Charity. A contemporary Portrait of His Life and Apostolic Spirit.* Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1993. Pp. 126, inc. Bibliography.

Haase, O.F.M., Albert. *Swimming in the Sun. Discovering the Lord's Prayer with Francis of Assisi and Thomas Merton.* Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993. Pp. 214. Paper, \$9.95.

Martini, Carlo-Maria. *Letting God Free Us. Meditations of Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.* Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1993. Pp. 128.

O'Driscoll, O.P. Mary, Ed. *Catherine of Siena. Passion for the Truth. Compassion for Humanity. Selected Spiritual Writings.* Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1993. Pp. 144. Paper, \$8.95.

Taylor, Mary Sue. *Prayer For Daybreak and Day's End.* 2 Vol. Vol. I January through June. Vol. II July through December, Cincinnati, Ohio, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993. Pp. Vol. I 428, Vol. II, 430. Paper, \$15.95 for each Volume.

Pilarczyk, Archbishop Daniel E. *What Must I Do? Morality and the Challenge of God's Word.* Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993. Pp. 82. Paper, \$4.95.

CONFERENCE

Franciscan Federation's 29th Annual National Assembly

PLACE: Fairmount Hotel, Chicago, IL
 DATES: Aug. 31 at 9:30 a.m. until Sept 2 noon, 1994
 Cost: \$275.00 (reductions for 2 or more)

Theme: "The Prophetic Heart: Evangelical Life as TOR Franciscan"

Keynote Presenter: Joseph Chinnici OFM

Ritual: Jeanne Derer FSM, Judy McKenna OSF, Pat Forster OSF

Special Sessions: Obedience and Authority: Giles Schinelli TOR
 Relationship as Sisters and Brothers: Margaret Carney OSF
 Discernment Criteria for Ministry: Ramona Miller OSF
 Active/Contemplative Synthesis: Michael Higgins TOR

** The coming Synod on Religious Life is offering Franciscans both the gift and the challenge to focus once again on the distinctiveness of their charism. This Assembly hopes to deepen that awareness, and continue the dialogue with our Church and Society.*

On-site Committee: Region Three Steering Committee; Chairperson: Brigid Jacobs OSF

For Additional Information Call:

Patricia Hutchinson OSF
 202-529-2334 • Fax: 202-529-7016

SEMINAR

Franciscan Federation sponsors Networking Seminar for Franciscan Directing, Staffing or Sponsoring Renewal/Retreat Centers and Franciscan Spiritual Directors

PLACE: Dubuque, Iowa: Shalom Retreat Center
 DATES: May 28 at 4 p.m. until May 31 noon, 1994
 COST: \$200.00 (reductions for 2 or more)

Presenters: Anthony Carrozzo OFM

"Christological Foundation of Spiritual Direction in the Franciscan Tradition"

Responders: Kathryn King FSP and Nancy Schreck OSF

Special Sessions: Ed Coughlin OFM "Creating a Franciscan Place" and "The Franciscan Person"

** The Seminar places priority on the networking of ideas and resources toward sharpening the focus on the Franciscan charism.*

Steering Committee: Marie Therese Kalb OSF, Dubuque, IA

Paul Warren OFM, Danville, CA
 Cathy Cahill OSF, Tampa, FL
 Bob Sandos OFM, Providence, RI
 Celeste Crine OSF, Aston, PA

For Additional Information Call:

Kathleen Moffatt OSF
 202-529-2334 • Fax: 202-529-7016

RENEWAL PROGRAM

Franciscan Federation Summer Enrichment III

PLACE: St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY
 DATES: July 3-22, 1994
 COST: \$1000.00 (Includes room/board, program and special TOR Seminar)

Description: Together with the best of the Franciscan scholars and spirit of the Franciscan Institute's Summer Program, participants will experience the riches of the Third Order Regular heritage in a special Seminar, July 13-17.

**Participating with all Franciscans, the Program also welcomes Sisters and Brothers preparing for perpetual commitment.*

Coordinators: Celeste Crine OSF, Anston, PA

Dorothy McCormack OSF, Redwood City, CA

For Additional Information Call:

Patricia Hutchison OSF
 202-529-2334 • Fax: 202-529-7016

SEMINAR

Franciscan Federation sponsors Seminar on Third Order Regular Heritage

PLACE: St. Bonaventure University, The Franciscan Institute, Olean, NY
DATES: July 13 at 4 p.m. until July 17 noon, 1994
COST: \$275.00

Description: This historic Seminar brings together the finest scholarship and experience of TOR Franciscans in the U.S.

Anchored by: Roland Faley TOR and Margaret Carney OSF; facilitated by Joanne Schatzlein OSF, the five day program includes:

- * The Language of Penance: Biblical Perspective & Contemporary Response: Roland Faley TOR with Mary Arghittu OSF and Norma Rocklage OSF.
- * Origins and History of The TOR with special component on the Founding Stories of USA Congregations/Provinces: Giles Schinelli TOR and William Short OFM with representatives from USA congregations to share their histories.
- * Evolution of TOR Rule and Commentary: Margaret Carney OSF, Francis Therese SSJ-TOSF, Rose Margaret Delaney FSP, Paul McMullen TOR, Hyacinth Kennedy OSF, Rose Cecilia OSF, Patricia Froning OSF, Alma Dufault FMM, and others.

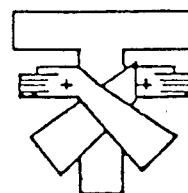
USA response: Documents, Programs and Action Plans;
 Facilitated by Elise Saggau OSF

On-site Coordinators: Rose Monica Katusz OSF
 and Patrick Donahoe TOR

Liturgical Coordinators: Chris Dobson TOR and Andrea Likovich OSF

For Additional Information Call:

Kathleen Moffatt OSF
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3 Franciscan Pilgrimage Experiences: Fall of 1994



1. FRANCISCAN STUDY PILGRIMAGE

September 16 — October 9, 1994

Explores in-depth the major places of Francis and Clare. Lectures, prayer, rituals and Eucharist with time for reading, reflection and relaxation blended together to make this a life-enriching experience

2. FRANCISCAN MARIAN PILGRIMAGE TO MEXICO

October 5 — 13, 1994 (with optional three night stay in Puerto Vallarta: October 13 — 16, 1994).

Experience the rich Franciscan contribution to the arrival of the Gospel in the Americas. Along with Franciscan guides, we will visit the two greatest Marian Shrines in the Americas: Our Lady of Guadalupe and Our Lady of Zapopan.

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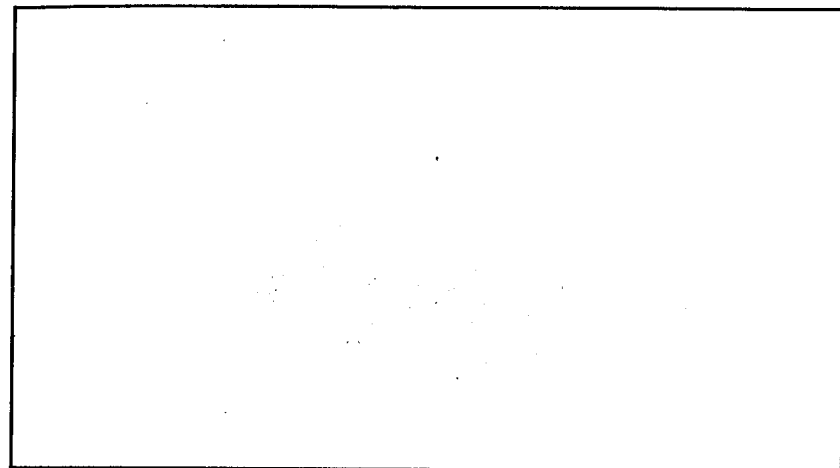
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MAY, 1994

The CORD



A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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The CORD

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

I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler: Letter to Clerics¹
EpCust: Letter to Superiors¹
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful¹
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin: Letter to a Minister
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order
EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of the People
ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father
Form Viv: 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
¹I, 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 Francis: His Charism and Life

JEAN SCHWIETERS, O.S.F.

The initials OSF have been a part of my identity for thirty eight years. Over the years I have glibly explained their meaning to those inquisitive enough to ask. I never realized how very little I understood their meaning myself. Through my exposure to the person of Francis in a Franciscan Studies class I have come to know that those three initials represent a fascinating, unbelievably stressful and sometimes elusive history. What they have uncovered for me are new insights into the person history reverently remembers as Francis of Assisi and an Order he haphazardly founded. Only recently have historians and scholars attempted to piece together the fragments of the Franciscan story scattered here and there, buried in long forgotten places.

When I first came to know Francis he lived in a world that seemed transcendent and eternal. Francis was timeless. He belonged to all ages and to all cultures without exception. It was as though he was seen as the subject of a painting without a frame. Over the centuries his image could be placed against any background and he seemed to fit there. Through summer studies, however, I was given insights which have enabled me to visualize Francis within the context of a definite time in history and, hence, a more specific background. I was given a frame into which I could place his image and see him as a twelfth century figure — one whose background added color to his character. These colors include: CLOTH, CONVERSION, CROSS, CHARISM and CHOICE.

CLOTH fills in the tones of his early life, the time of character shaping. Born the son of a merchant, the rising rival class whose greed for money made them a threat to the nobility, Francis quickly learned the benefits of money

Sr. Jean, reflecting on her summer of Franciscan Studies, invites others to enter more deeply into the mystery of Francis through prayer and study.

exchange. It not only gave him security and popularity, but pleasure and power as well. He also quickly learned that it provided little as far as meaning and purpose.

It was during an empty and colorless time in his youth that God burst into his darkness with the colors of crisis. Splashed against the dry canvas of his soul he felt the movement of the Spirit and heard the whisper of a mandate that would change his life forever. In this paradoxical time of light in darkness and darkness in light he was born anew. CONVERSION brought with it the beginning of a background devoid of all that cloth had secured. There was pain and confusion. There was ecstasy and vision. He felt frightened and alone. He experienced strength and presence. In a sweeping gesture of denunciation he wiped away what had been familiar and predictable, taking on the humiliation of a fool. For the first time in his life he began to see beyond the glorified figure affixed to a cross and saw the beauty that existed in the cross itself.

It is God shining through Francis that makes this drab little man able to illuminate the undefined background which surrounds him.

The CROSS! How it symbolized the ageless quest to know self, God and others. Through both the comfort and confrontation of the Scriptures, Francis came to embrace the cross which was to become in his life the image of what it meant to be conformed to Christ. He began to move gradually into a state of conversion. Through his daily dying to self he was able to breathe life into others. Through the recognition of his own sinfulness and need for God he shared the transformative power of ongoing conversion. The intrigue of his dance with divinity brought with it a blurred and yet brilliantly stunning dabble to his ever-changing yet static, faith filled background.

Both the charm and the passion of Francis have fascinated and beckoned many over the years. For centuries he has been the subject of inquiry. Who is the Real Francis? What is his CHARISM? How was his life and that of the early friars different from so many of the penitents who have struggled over the years to be free from heresy and elitism? What gave credence and endurance to the movement he began? How could this uneducated, non-cleric have anything to offer the world of church authorities and theologians? How could someone so poor be so rich in wisdom and understanding?

It would seem that the charism this poor itinerant preacher offers is so multifaceted that it is simply reflective of the God he sought with such passion and intensity. It is God shining through Francis that makes this drab little man able to illuminate the undefined background which surrounds him. Only in relationship to God does this ragged beggar, whose name means "freedom," challenge us to find our identity and expression in the Incarnate Son of God.

And so, the final colors we add to the background of our saint is our CHOICE. In freedom Francis calls those who respond to the invitation to choose a life of penance, humility, poverty and contemplation. It is through devotion to and desire for the Eucharist, as central to our lives, that we too shall come to know the mystery of God's unending end ever-present love. We are further invited to dwell on the Scriptures, as Francis did, to learn the meaning of obedience and fidelity to God. And finally, it is in and through the writings of Francis himself that we will more deeply come to comprehend "what is ours to do."

Once we have painted the historical background for our portrait of Francis we can once again remove the frame. We can begin anew to create a background that is linked with our own. To know Francis today we must know him in history.

Now whenever I print the initials OSF I will smile as I recognize their meaning for my life and the challenge they offer me.

* * *

Reflections on The Immaculate Conception

JUDE WINKLER, O.F.M., CONV.

One of the theological topics which has interested the Franciscan movement since its earliest days is the Immaculate Conception. It was, after all, John Duns Scotus, who proposed some of the important theological insights which permitted a further development of what was to become the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. This essay is a short reflection on the necessity of the Immaculate Conception from an existential point of view.

What Happened In Nazareth

The core of the importance of the Immaculate Conception of Mary is found in the interaction between the messenger of God, Gabriel, and Mary.

In Gabriel's greeting, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you," we hear that Mary was recognized as someone who was graced. The Greek word used here is a bit ambiguous, for it could be translated variously as "full of grace, or highly favored, or gracious, etc." The term seems to point to the fact that Mary is an appropriate choice for this encounter. Furthermore, more important than the actual translation of this phrase is the fact that the Greek verb used to describe Mary's condition is in the perfect tense. One uses the perfect tense in Greek to speak of an action which began in the past and which is still true in the present. Thus, one would use the perfect tense to say that it had snowed if it had snowed yesterday and there was still snow on the ground today. The fact that Luke used the perfect tense means that he wishes to communicate that even before the messenger of God met Mary, she was already "graced." Her heart was already filled with the love of God. This, in fact, is one of the few scriptural proofs that we have for the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (that Mary had been somehow prepared for the role which she was to play).

Fr. Jude, who teaches Scripture at the Washington Theological Union in Silver Spring MD, has taught at the Franciscan Institute during the summer sessions. In his reflections on Mary, Fr. Jude offers us an enriching blend of intellectual and spiritual insights.

The reaction of Mary to this greeting is interesting. She was greatly troubled. (Please understand that this reflection is a theological meditation and not a theological proof, so I would ask the reader to allow this author the luxury of some speculation). Why would she be troubled by a greeting such as this? Is it possibly because this messenger seems to know her through and through? That is what the messenger's greeting seems to indicate. He knows her attitude toward God, he knows of her deepest hope, of her profound love (her graced condition). Does she feel naked before one who can see her very heart? Does she feel tremendously vulnerable?

Then the messenger speaks again to her heart and delivers the message for which he has been commissioned. He invites her to be the mother of the "Son of God."

Vulnerability

It must have been difficult for Mary to have responded to this strange request. Yet, the original greeting that the messenger had proclaimed hinted at Mary's spirit of availability, of her readiness to serve. We cannot even begin to know what went through her mind. One thing must have struck her, though, for it was at the center of her invitation. She felt terribly vulnerable, and yet she must have realized that she was not the only vulnerable one in this encounter. God had become vulnerable. God was placing "Himself" in her hands. She could have easily said no, and made God look like a love sick old fool. It is exactly in this that we see the importance of the Immaculate Conception.

Original Sin

We all suffer from the effects of that first sin of Adam and Eve which we call the original sin. From the time that we are conceived, we are affected by the sin and selfishness of the world. We know of babies who are born affected by the crack or alcohol that their mothers have consumed. We know of babies affected by the agent orange with which their fathers came into contact. There was even an experiment done a few years ago concerning children in their mothers' wombs. The mothers would watch their favorite soap opera during their pregnancy. When the children were born, one would only have to play the musical theme of that soap opera to calm the children. The environment affected the baby even in the womb. It is no stretch of the imagination to believe that these children are also affected by the poison of sin which surrounds them from the moment of their conception. Every choice for sin made by the mother, the father, anyone who comes in contact with this child in the womb, somehow hurts the child. When the child is born, the child has already suffered so much hurt that it is difficult for the child in the future to choose love.

What is the reaction of these hurting people to their world? As with all people who are hurting, whose egos are damaged, they choose self-aggrandizement, even at the price of hurting others. Their ego strength is so weak that they believe they must rob dignity from others in order to survive. These are basically good people, but because of the hurts caused by sin, theirs and others, they respond to situations in a way which even they find repugnant. They try to get ahead, even at the cost of hurting others. They take advantage of any opening to be thought of as superior to others. They put others down on their way up the ladder of success. This is done in big ways and small. It might involve a few gossiped words about another or it might involve actual crimes against another. Augustine would call this all concupiscence, one of the results of the original sin.

Mary's Reaction

What of Mary? If she had been harmed by sin, if she, like we, had suffered from the damaging effects of our own and others' egoism from the moment of conception, how would she have responded to God's outrageous vulnerability? There is only one way she could have responded if she were damaged by sin: she would have asked what was in it for her. She would have taken advantage of God's vulnerability. Is this not what Adam and Eve did? God took a chance on them. He even planted a garden for them and provided them with their own private zoo. And what was their response? They tried to become more powerful than God. They took advantage of God's vulnerability.

But this is not what Mary did. She realized that while she felt naked and vulnerable before the messenger of her Lord, God had made Himself naked and vulnerable before her. He had spoken to her heart, and allowed her to see His heart. And so Mary did not seek to take advantage of God's vulnerability. Rather, she accepted God's invitation to enter into a dance of mutual vulnerability and passion. She responded with open arms and an open heart to her Lord. And the Word became flesh.

This could only have happened in one who had not been damaged by the pain of sin. The Immaculate Conception was necessary for Jesus to be born among us.

The Vulnerability of God

This reflection hints at another possible reflection. Did Mary see something more in God's vulnerability? Did she realize that this vulnerability was not so much an effect produced for the occasion, but was rather an insight into the very essence of God? We tend to speak of God in terms of power, but might it be that God is much more love and surrender? We see this in the Gospel of John where the author of this gospel redefines the meaning of glory. Whereas

Mary did not seek to take advantage of God's vulnerability. Rather, she accepted God's invitation to enter into a dance of mutual vulnerability and passion. She responded with open arms and an open heart to her Lord. And the Word became flesh. This could only have happened in one who had not been damaged by the pain of sin.

previously, glory signified power and prestige, here the hour of glory is the cross, and glory means the pouring out of God's love.

Those who have tried to be godlike by grasping on to power have always made themselves into grotesque caricatures of God, whether it be Lucifer, or Adam and Eve, or each one of us every time we sin. This is seen in Psalm 8. This psalm, which is written in a chiasm, asks the question, "what are we humans in the eyes of God?" The psalmist is mystified by the fact that God would give us honor and glory, which are attributes normally associated with God. This is because we have been created in the image and likeness of God (This psalm is, in fact, an exegesis of the priestly account of creation found in Genesis 1, 1-2, 4a). We have been given dominion over the earth. But what does this dominion mean? The answer lies in the part of the psalm which is parallel to these verses. There are two types of people mentioned. There are the enemies and there are the children who sing the glory of God. The implication is that the enemy are those who refuse to sing the glory of God, for they have made themselves their own god. On the contrary, the babies who sing the glory of God are those who have become so simple and childlike that they can glory in the wonders of nature, that they can see a butterfly as if for the first time and be filled with awe and gratitude. It is the babes who are Godlike, not those who define dominion in terms of grasping and holding onto power.

God is eternally vulnerable and eternally loving. God pours Himself out for the other, whether it be for the other in the Trinity or for the other whom He had created. This pouring out, this eternal kenosis, seems to be power, but it is not "power grasped" as much as the creative power of love. Becoming Godlike means following Mary's example of responding to this eternal love with vulnerability. It means entering the eternal dance of mutual vulnerability and passion so that once again humanity and God might be one, and God's love might be incarnate.

Saint Francis' Devotion to Mary

ANN WEMHOFF, O.S.F.

According to evidence found in Franciscan sources, devotion to Mary was an integral part of Francis' spiritual life. Since Mary has been venerated under many titles by people throughout the ages, perhaps we will have a clearer understanding of Francis' unique relationship with her if we can determine how he experienced her influence in his life. Because our spirituality is reflected through our prayers, this search will begin by studying the prayers of Francis himself. In them we find the following five references to Mary:

Hail, O Lady,
Holy Queen,
Mary, holy Mother of God:
you are the virgin made church
and the one chosen by the most holy Father in heaven
whom He consecrated
with His most holy beloved Son
and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete . . . (*SalBVM* 1)

. . . You brought about His birth
as true God and true man
by the glorious, ever-virgin,
most blessed, holy Mary . . . (*RegNB* XXIII:3)

. . . and through Your love
we humbly beg the glorious Mother
most blessed Mary ever-virgin . . . (*RegNB* XXIII:6)

Holy Virgin Mary,
among women,
there is no one like you born into the world:
you are the daughter
and the servant of the most high and supreme King
and Father of heaven,

Sr. Ann Wemhoff has studied at the Franciscan Institute. This article is based on a talk given to the Companions of the Sisters of St. Francis of Colorado Springs in Lincoln, Nebraska on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception 1993 by Sr. Ann.

you are the mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ,
you are the spouse of the Holy Spirit . . ." (*OffPass* Antiphon 1, 2)

Forgive us our trespasses:

Through Your ineffable mercy
through the power of the Passion of Your Beloved Son
together with the merits and intercession of the Blessed
Virgin Mary . . ." (*ExPat* 7)

There are two aspects of Francis' devotion to Mary that are directly or indirectly present in all of these prayers and in almost every reference made of Mary in the early records of the life of Francis. One is that Mary is the Mother of God. The other is that Mary was a virgin. In other words, Francis experienced Mary primarily as the Virgin Mother of God. It is important to note that Francis often prayed to Mary in a Trinitarian context as seen in the first and third quotes above.

Other titles which Francis gave to the Blessed Mother are found in his "Salutation of the Blessed Virgin," part of which was cited earlier. This prayer is a breath-taking reflection in which he ponders the wealth of her attributes. In litany-like fashion he graces her with the following names referring to her relationship to Christ:

Hail, His Palace!
Hail, His Tabernacle!
Hail, His Home!
Hail, His Robe!
Hail, His Servant!
Hail, His Mother! (*SalBVM* 4, 5)

Deep convictions often develop early in life. Celano writes that Francis was devoted to Mary as the Mother of God even before he had any permanent followers. During the difficult period after he had renounced his father, a friend named Bernard of Quintavalle often invited him to stay overnight in his home. Bernard observed that Francis slept very little but spent most of the night in prayer "... praising God and the glorious Mother of God" (*ICel* IX: 22). What was the source of this devotion? Francis listened to the voice that spoke to him from the cross in San Damiano which said, "Francis, go and repair my house. You see it is falling down" (*LM* II: 1). Because Francis always interpreted God's inspiration literally, he set out to repair neglected churches in the vicinity of Assisi. One of these was Saint Mary of the Angels, also known as the Portiuncula. Bonaventure writes:

. . . he came to a place called the Portiuncula where there was an old church dedicated to the Virgin Mother of God which was now abandoned

with no one to look after it. Francis had great devotion to the Queen of the world and when he saw that the church was deserted, he began to live there constantly in order to repair it. He heard that the angels often visited it, so that it used to be called St. Mary of the Angels, and he decided to stay there permanently out of reverence for the angels and love for the Mother of Christ (LM II:8).

Notice that in this quotation Mary is referred to under four titles: Virgin Mother of God, Queen of the world, St. Mary of the Angels, and Mother of Christ. These frequent references to Mary reflect the depth of Francis' devotion to her which took root in this place. In fact, this church was to be the cradle of the new Order, and was very dear to Francis. Bonaventure relates how the Blessed Mother was involved in the development of Francis' early vocation.

As he was living there by the Church of our Lady, Francis prayed to her who had conceived the Word, full of grace and truth, begging her insistently and with tears to become his Advocate. Then he was granted the true spirit of the Gospel by the intercession of the Mother of Mercy and he brought it to fruition (LM III:1).

After Francis had attracted a group of followers, and they returned from Rome where they had received the approval of their lifestyle from the pope, Francis brought them to Saint Mary of the Angels. It was there that the Order of Friars Minor had been founded by the merits of the Mother of God, and it was there, too, that it would grow to maturity through her intercession (LM IV: 7).

Later Celano gives the reason for this deep devotion which Francis had for Mary:

Toward the Mother of Jesus he was filled with an inexpressible love, because it was she who made the Lord of Majesty our brother (2 Cel 198).

Bonaventure reiterated this primary reason why Francis had such a profound devotion to Mary, and added another one referred to previously in the reflection on the Portiuncula. Because Mary is the Mother of God, she is also the Mother of Mercy (2 Cel 198).

He embraced the Mother of our Lord Jesus with indescribable love because as he said, it was she who made the Lord of majesty our brother, and through her we have found mercy (LM III: 5).

Bonaventure also describes how on the feast of one of the apostles, Francis heard the scripture reading in which Christ sent the apostles out to preach, and admonished them not to take anything with them. As usual, Francis was inspired to imitate this lesson literally. After he had given his clothes back to his father, he had chosen to wear the leather belt of a hermit. When he heard this gospel passage, he exchanged it for the simple cord of a mendicant. This was a symbol of his acceptance of a life of poverty in imitation of the poverty of

Jesus and His Mother (LM III: 1). Later, after Francis had several followers, he again imitated Christ literally by sending them out to preach. When he did so, he did not forget to ask for guidance from the Mother of God. Both he and the brothers withdrew and prayed so that they would go where the Lord wanted them to go. The first time this occurred was after the first chapter of St. Mary of the Portiuncula. After they had prayed, Francis said:

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the glorious Virgin, His Mother, and of all the saints, I choose the country of France . . ." (LP 79)

Francis experienced Mary primarily as the Virgin Mother of God

Francis' dedication in imitating the poverty of Jesus and His Mother was not a passing fancy. In the Legend of the Three Companions we find another example of when Francis gave a literal interpretation to what he heard:

Once during a meal a certain brother remarked that the Blessed Virgin was so poor that she had hardly anything to set before her Son our Lord. On hearing this, Francis sighed, deeply moved, and leaving the table, he ate his bread sitting on the floor (L3S V: 15).

This spirit of compassion for the poor, the needy and the sick was present during the earliest years of his conversion. It was grounded in his great compassion for the suffering Christ and His Mother, and his deep desire to imitate them. Bonaventure tells about Francis' response when one of the brothers failed to be compassionate towards a beggar:

"My dear brother, when you see a beggar, you are looking at an image of our Lord and his poor Mother . . ." (LM VIII: 5)

So much did devotion to Mary permeate the spirituality of Francis that it indirectly influenced that profound experience of the Stigmata. In the Legend of Perugia we read:

One day blessed Francis went to the hermitage of Mount La Verna. He liked its isolation so much that he wanted to keep a Lent there in honor of St. Michael. He had climbed the mountain before the feast of the Assumption of the glorious Virgin Mary. He counted the days between the feast and that of St. Michael: there were forty. Then he said: "In honor of God, of the blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother, and of blessed Michael, the prince of angels and of souls, I wish to observe Lent here."

It was during this time of penance and prayer that Francis was visited by the Seraph and received the stigmata. What the Legend of Perugia fails to make clear was that Francis had probably gone to La Verna on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, and had already completed a fast from that feast until the feast of the Assumption. Bonaventure writes:

In her honor he fasted every year from the feast of Saints Peter and Paul until the Assumption (*LM IX: 3*).

Early in his conversion process, when the friars were first living at the Portiuncula, Francis placed all of them under Mary's loving care.

After Christ, he put all his trust in her and took her as his patroness for himself and his friars (*LM IX: 5*; See also *SP 55*).

Celano also referred to this dedication when he wrote the first biography of Francis shortly after his death:

But what delights us most, he made her the advocate of the Order and placed under her wings the sons he was about to leave that she might cherish and protect them to the end. Hail, advocate of the poor! Fulfill toward us your office of protectress *until the time set by the Father* (Gal 4.2) (*2 Cel, 198*).

As mentioned earlier, Francis' devotion to Mary is best reflected in his own prayers. In fact, Celano writes:

He sang special *Praises* to her, poured out prayers to her, offered her his affections, so many and so great that the tongue of men cannot recount them (*2 Cel, 198*).

Probably the epitome of the influence the Blessed Mother had on Francis is found in the Antiphon from the Office of the Passion which was prayed at the beginning and end of all the hours. It serves as an appropriate closing for this article, since it summarizes the depth of devotion which Francis had for the Blessed Mother in her relationship with the Trinity as well as in the context of the Communion of Saints:

Holy Virgin Mary,
among women,
there is no one like you born into the world:
you are the daughter
and the servant of the most high and supreme King
and Father of heaven,
you are the mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ,
you are the spouse of the Holy Spirit.
Pray for us
with Saint Michael the Archangel
and all the powers of the heavens
and all the saints
to your most holy beloved Son, the Lord and Master.

Meeting In The Square

If Celano's description of you is accurate,
then, my friend, with all due respect,
you must have looked an emaciate
when you were nude before the bishop.

The poet in me sees the symbolism,
understands the dynamic pragmatism,
yet what attracts me about the incident
is the intensity of your innocence:

for that impetuousness I love would rather
be without everything, even a father,
than be without the Father of all fathers.

However, a thought, so bear with me awhile
for there is sympathy in me for Pietro:
neither you nor I doubt that he loved you
and in younger days would laugh and smile

I see with the eyes of a poet:
but Pietro — with what eyes did he see?

Séamus Mulholland, O.F.M.

Toward a Franciscan Consciousness

JOSEPH D. DOINO, O.F.M.

Introduction

The title of this talk may strike one as more than unusual. I hope to show in this presentation that the theme of consciousness itself cannot be overlooked in church life today, no more than it can in life in general. As a result, I feel that the theme of "Franciscan Consciousness" is one that in the current stage of renewal and ongoing formation deserves our special attention. I hope than an exploration of it can provide new inspiration and direction for our own lives and those of our brothers as we faithfully pursue the call of the Holy Spirit in these privileged times of the Second Vatican Council.

The Dynamics of Human Consciousness

Allow me to begin this reflection by quoting from a speech of Vaclav Havel, president of the former Czechoslovakia, to the United States Congress on February 21, 1990. On that occasion, referring to the democracy movement all over eastern Europe, the noted political spokesman made this significant comment:

The specific experience I'm talking about has given me one great certainty. . . . Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in our Being as humans. . . . We are still a long way from that "family of man"; in fact, we seem to be receding from the ideal rather than drawing closer to it; interests of all kinds: personal, selfish, state, national, group and, if you like, company interests still considerably outweigh genuinely common and global interests. We are still under the sway of the destructive and vain belief that man is the pinnacle of creation, and not just a part of it, and that therefore everything is permitted.¹

Havel claims that a "global revolution in the sphere of consciousness" is absolutely essential to a radical change in our life as a human family. He is using a

Those who knew Fr. Joe personally, the editorial staff and many readers of The CORD, knew him preeminently as "Franciscan." With sincere gratitude both for Fr. Joe's reflections on and his embodiment of a "Franciscan Consciousness," The CORD here proudly presents one of Fr. Joseph Doino's last major presentations. Fr. Joe delivered this talk at the Order's International Congress on On-going Formation held at Assisi in October 1993.

psychological principle we moderns have come to recognize and accept: there are various levels to our consciousness, each of which determines the nature and depth of our engagement with life and its values.² Early in this century, William James called on his contemporaries to be more aware of the profound shifts that can occur in consciousness.³ He warned them that it is possible to live one's life without suspecting the existence of potential forms of consciousness that alone allow us to lead complete lives.

In our day we have become accustomed to the phrase "heightened consciousness." Basically it is the first step in initiating the process required for radical change in human attitudes and decisions. But this first step can be taken only by those who seriously acknowledge the effective relationship between a change in consciousness and true conversion. Furthermore, our desire for ongoing conversion must be fueled and nourished by sustaining a heightened consciousness. We must be willing constantly to expand and deepen our awareness of ourselves and our relationship with God. Not to do so will of necessity cause us to settle for a life of half-attained commitments, to a life of mediocrity and superficiality.

As Havel suggests, our inability to make desired changes in our international as well as our personal lives is due to the way our every-day consciousness refuses to move beyond blind and self-destructive egotism. We choose to live exclusively from our empirical ego which can only respond to sense impressions and intellectual processes, but this "surface life or surface consciousness is but a scrap compared to the depths of which [we] are capable."⁴

Besides our own egocentricity, we must face the yet-to-be determined effects of the computer and of the science of information, known as cybernetics, on human life and consciousness. More and more we are becoming immersed in the age of computational man, where the utterly intelligent, the utterly rational who possess ruthless unhampered logic, will be the most valued citizens. Affectivity will thus become less important, not only in major decisions but in the experiences of our daily consciousness. Geometry will displace poetry, measurement will eliminate imagination. One can only conjecture as to the new mode of thinking that will be needed to relate to the kind of environment this particular technology creates. There is already talk of a "cybernetic consciousness" whose moral implications are unimaginable.⁵ At any point in our daily lives we would do well to question ourselves regarding the depth of awareness from which our actions flow. Such a self-examination could prove most liberating, especially as regards activities that are religious in nature. What is the level of awareness with which I gather with my brothers for the celebration

of the Liturgy of the Hours or of Eucharist? How deeply do I allow myself to experience my ministry, my work? Am I so caught up in professionalism as to rest content with thoughts of self-fulfillment, self-satisfaction, pleasing others?

Francis and Consciousness

Without using our modern terminology, Francis raised such issues both directly and indirectly in a most insistent way. Without using the word, he gave special attention to the level of consciousness with which we encounter life each day. While encouraging his brothers to be attentive and faithful to their work, he insists that nothing is to "extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthly existence must contribute" (RegB V). His use of the word "devotio" ("devotion") is ample proof of the depth of consciousness to which he is referring. The word, as we have come to realize, refers to an inner attitude, a sense of total consecration, being centered wholly on God, totally free from all selfish ambition.⁶

In his admonitions, Francis masterfully conducts the brothers into the deep reaches of consciousness, liberating them from all semblance of self-seeking intentions. His words show how sensitive he was to the possibility of allowing our attention and intention to be consumed by something other than God. In his own inimitable style he attempts to move the brothers to an awareness of the depth and dynamics of their inner lives. His own pre-conversion years had revealed to him how concerns for the self can subtly but forcefully take control of our desires and limit our perceptions of reality. One can be so caught up in daily concerns as to lose contact with the true self, with God, with others. Looking back, he must have been horrified at the way his insatiable desire for glory became the conscious focus of his inner drives and energies. The bitter taste of ashes was the result of having come to the realization that he had been substituting self for God in consuming idolatrous behavior.

This feeling was all the more intensified as he remembered the countless times he had pronounced the name of God as a young boy when his education at San Giorgio had brought him into repeated reading of the psalms. How many times had he read and spoken the phrase "the glory of God"? How far his consciousness was from the reality! Presumably he joined in the liturgical celebrations accessible to Assisi's populace. Yet his adolescent heart, flooded as it was with dreams of military accomplishment, paid little heed to the reality celebrated in word and sacrament.

Like so many of his own day and of our own, Francis had used the living words of the Christian tradition with little or no attentiveness to their content. He was to undergo a radical change in consciousness; and the grace of his

conversion worked a revolutionary change in his reverence for the preciousness of Christian language. It became his ongoing and feverish desire never to allow an empty or heedless word to fall from his lips. Every word he thinks and speaks comes from a heart totally absorbed by its content.

It is quite reasonable to surmise that the recollection of his past failings evoked from him the concern he expresses in the strong plea he makes to the Minister General regarding the clerics' recitation of the Divine Office (EpOrd 40-42). They are to be reminded that saying the office with devotion before God means "not concentrating on the melody of the voice but on the harmony of the mind, so that the voice may blend with the mind, and the mind be in harmony with God." It is so important to Francis that precious words of prayer be not merely pronounced or sung, but be truly experienced as living words. This, he indicates, requires a discipline of consciousness so that even the desire to sing melodiously cedes to an awareness where voice, mind, and God are totally in harmony. In this way only can the depths of the inner heart experience that to which we are invited in praying the Liturgy of the Hours. This one example indicates how the correlation between consciousness and the experience of reality is so intuitively present to Francis.

The Church and Consciousness

In our own times popes, theologians and biblical scholars have seized upon this correlation in surprisingly emphatic ways. In a General Audience held on July 15, 1970, Pope Paul VI referred to the Second Vatican Council as "a new and original act of consciousness and of life, an event that opens surprising new ways to the church for its internal development, for relations with our separated brethren, for relations with followers of other religions and with the world as it is, magnificent and complicated, formidable and tormented."⁷ This striking statement needs no further comment.

Pope John Paul II reechoes this theme in many places. For example, in his encyclical letter *Redemptor Hominis*, he speaks of "the present-day consciousness of the Church." The "church's consciousness," he says, "is and must remain the first source of the Church's love as love in turn helps us to strengthen and deepen her consciousness." He attributed to Paul VI "a witness of . . . an extremely acute consciousness of the Church. . . . This heightened consciousness," he concludes, "is the result of what the Spirit said to the Church through the Council of our time."⁸

Both popes show a strong conviction regarding the correlation between the quality and richness of the Church's life and the depths of its consciousness. Pope Paul VI's description of the Council as a "new and original act of consciousness" merits particular personal application regarding our own

Franciscan lives. In general, however, we cannot fail to notice the place the theme of consciousness has assumed in official Church statements. Most recently, the 1993 "Directory for Ecumenism" (n. 20) reiterates the words of the 1985 Synod of Bishops in stating that ecumenism has "inscribed itself deeply and indelibly in the consciousness of the Church." A thorough reading of the document reveals how these words are another way of describing a profound spiritual transformation in the Church's appreciation of the ecumenical movement. For something to be inscribed "deeply and indelibly in the consciousness of the Church" means even more than a heightened consciousness. The point, however, is that consciousness as a word and as a dynamic reality has entered the our christian lexicon in new and unusual ways.

The Prophetic Consciousness and True Worship

An interesting perspective of this theme is given by Walter Brueggeman in his book *The Prophetic Imagination*. He tells us that "the task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."⁹ His description adds substance to the frequently used term "counter-cultural." It also enables us to appreciate the prophetic understanding Francis had of the ministry of all the brothers. In his Letter to the Entire Order, he outlines this prophetic ministry in forceful words: "... He has sent you into the entire world for this reason that in word and deed you may give witness to His voice and bring everyone to know that there is no one who is all-powerful except Him" (EpOrd 9).

The correlation between consciousness and the experience of reality is so intuitively present to Francis.

As prophets, the brothers are to speak and live the language of those whose consciousness is possessed by a spirit of worship of the living and true God. They are to understand themselves as sent to witness to the mercantile world whose idols are money and power. They are to be the voice of the true God who alone can free those trapped by the controlling symbols of the new economy. Their word and example are to be an invitation to an alternative consciousness which alone can bring them into relationship with the all-powerful God. Only in this way can people's energies be liberated from the idols to which they have given control over their lives.

Francis describes the beginning of the dynamic that leads to idolatry, something which he had experienced first hand in his early days. In his second admonition he alludes to Adam's appropriation and exaltation of the self. It is actually the self that is being glorified in false worship. The desire for self-glorification releases demonic forces and corrupts the spiritual energies that are reserved for God alone. Consciousness is concentrated on created realities that are intended to feed our desires for self-glory. It is the ultimate alienation of the self possible to the human spirit.

We would do well to hear from one of the great scholars of the twentieth century, Max Scheler, who writes at length on this topic.¹⁰ As a philosopher of religion, he argues that "the religious act is an essential endowment of the human mind and soul," and that "there can be no question of whether this or that man performs it." There is a standing law that "every finite spirit believes either in God or in idols." He issued a call for the "shattering of idols" which are a product of the "permanent self-delusion of putting a finite good (e.g. a woman, money, knowledge) in the place of God or of treating it "as if" it were God." What he has been describing, he says, are "some of the important consequences of the idea that finite consciousness by nature possesses a correlative sphere of absolute entities and values, which it fills with one kind of content if not another."¹¹

Permit me to quote Scheler at length:

Thus man believes either in a God or in an idol. There is no third course open! But it follows that if a man's faith in his idol is shaken, if he is disillusioned about the place it ought to occupy in his system of ideals, if the false god for which he felt such inordinate love, hope and faith is sent toppling, then all about him should look on that man with love and awe, arrested with emotion. Now is the time when something great may take place within him; he may grow ripe for belief in the one True God. To that God our hearts and minds have a natural bias, a natural link of significance. Once the idols are shattered and there is a void where every man can only be full, the soul inclines of itself to return to God, and to him it will return unless it is distracted and turns aside after new idols.¹²

The prophetic ministry of the brothers as Francis describes it would be an effective means for the "shattering of idols." Their word and example would furthermore be a graced invitation to awaken to the internal depths where lie the one absolute Source of truth and being, of freedom and joy.

There is no doubt that Francis' greatest concern was that he and the brothers live their lives each day in conscious contact with the Ultimate Reality operative within. Franciscan scholars express this in various ways. Joseph Ratzinger, for example, writes with great conviction "that Francis himself was led by a consciousness that was strongly eschatological though lacking in

apocalyptic tone" and that "without this eschatological consciousness Francis and his message is no more understandable than is Christ and the message of the New Testament. . . ."13

Much more can be said about our theme; we can, however, at this point draw one important conclusion: religious founders, like St. Francis discovered new sources of personal energy, integration, harmony, untapped potential, because they were led to deep shifts of consciousness and lived from its extraordinary reaches. Such men and women ceased to be survivors like the rest of humanity and were led to creative expressions of Christianity which continue to impact history in powerful ways.

Thanksgiving and the Franciscan Consciousness

In the case of Francis, we have a man who was convinced that all Christians possess the graced potential to lead such lives. He shows us this most clearly in his famous Chapter xxiii of the *Rule of 1221*.¹⁴ There he invites all strata of society to enter into the every-day inner stance of the friars. He and the brothers reveal to the entire world that intense gratitude directed toward the ever-present, inexhaustible, indescribable and absolutely undeserved goodness of God is their primary mode of consciousness. Thanksgiving, gratitude, is not merely an idea or a virtue that he cultivates next to others; it is the conscious basis of their entire lives. It is more like a climate which enfolds and penetrates all of his waking moments.¹⁵ From this derives the incredible energies of their lives, their creativity, adaptability, their zeal for the Kingdom, their desire for intimacy with the all-good God.

One does not really know Francis without participating in the remarkable canticle of thanksgiving that possessed his inner heart and desire. A constant *leitmotif* in all of his writings is gratitude rising from his perception of the immediacy of God's goodness that is the very nature of God himself and that is refracted in all created reality. Gratitude is thus at the very heart of the Franciscan charism.

Chapter xxiii of the *Regula non Bullata* indicates so strongly that gratitude was to be the stance of all who wished to be one with Francis and the brothers in their life experience. This chapter has been called a *manifesto*, a declaration of the brothers' self-understanding before the world. David Flood characterizes the chapter thusly:

The literary genre of this prayer is that of a *laude*, a style of preaching widespread in the religious movements of the age. A *laude* gives the brothers' message a rhythm which turns doctrine into chant. Thus, they sing rather than argue. Less intent on convincing than in gathering men into their movement, they display a religious enthusiasm which makes listeners either dance or flee. . . . The brothers were singing; they had wonders to sing about; and they sang a song that was catching . . .¹⁶

"We thank you" is a recurring phrase in this unusual chapter and it sweeps across creation, redemption, and final judgment. The opening words should not be skipped over hastily: "We thank you for yourself." These words tell us of the richly personal nature of the lived relationship of faith to which Francis had led the brothers. For them God is inconceivable except one's faith be set afire with the recognition of His immeasurable generosity. This gratitude is not only for the past; it springs from an acute consciousness of how this generosity is operative in every moment of one's personal history: "He has given and gives to each one of us our whole body, our whole life. . . . He did and does every good thing for us" (*RegNB XXIII:8*).

Intense gratitude directed toward the ever-present, inexhaustible, indescribable and absolutely undeserved goodness of God is their primary mode of consciousness.

Francis' thanksgiving reaches into all of reality, natural and supernatural. It is a passionate response to God's passionate love for humanity revealed in the cruciform love of Jesus Christ. His gratitude knew no limits. St. Bonaventure in a poignant scene shows how remarkably thanksgiving pervades the consciousness of Francis (*LM XIV:2*). Rather than give in to the suggestion of a brother that he pray for relief during intense suffering which the brother thought God had unduly laid upon him, Francis gently yet emotionally chides the brother, kisses the ground, and thanks God for even his sufferings. How faithful he is to what he asks of the sick brothers in Chapter X of the First Rule: And I beg the sick brother to give thanks to the Creator for everything; and whatever the Lord wills for him. . . . Similarly, those in positions of authority in the brotherhood should be able to discover reasons for being grateful in the pain and suffering brought to them by a sinning brother (*EpMin*).

Francis was grateful for lepers, for his brothers, for creation, for his charism, for his brother and Lord; he was grateful for knowing God. This was his basic stance. He lived it; he preached it; he demanded it of his followers; he shared it with others. The Christian consciousness of Francis and the brothers expands our own if we move with them in gratitude from the heights to the depths, from the length to the breadth, from the past to the present and future of God's unspeakable goodness. Neither time nor place nor circumstance nor any created reality is to divert the rich energies of our hearts from that Franciscan gratitude that is so preoccupied with the "fullness of Good, all good, every

good, the true and supreme good" (*RnB* xxiii:9) which evokes an uninterrupted desire "to love, honor, adore, serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and give thanks . . ." (*RnB* xxiii: 11).

Francis was keenly aware of the effects of a life without gratitude. He knew how when developed into a life-stance, the failure to give thanks can enslave one to self in a crippling way. Grace had transformed him and led him to a daily consciousness of God's unceasing benevolence which resulted in the most unusual dance of genuine freedom recorded in human annals.

The more we read Francis, the more we recognize the power and validity of his intuitions. Isn't it so that one does not really recognize reality as it is unless one lives in gratitude? If, for example, we do not appreciate those with whom we live, or the people to whom we minister, or the life we are given, or the incredible gifts of our Christian and Franciscan lives — if we, in other words, are not living out of a conscious awareness of these and so many other gifts, we are indeed out of touch with reality. In fact, most of our difficulties and struggles begin when we fail to be grateful, when we see people and reality primarily in terms of meeting or not meeting our self-centered demands and expectations.

The world has always been attracted to the remarkable realism of St. Francis. Rarely, however, does it attribute this to the unusual way in which his consciousness is suffused with gratitude for all that surrounds him. Francis experiences reality as always proceeding from the creative generosity of the heart of God. This vision fills him with that gratitude which makes possible the most unusual relationship with the world, self, others and God himself that never ceases to evoke universal wonder and admiration. His attentiveness to reality, however, is intimately related to his conviction regarding the reality of the Incarnation. This event, whereby God takes to himself our human history with such absoluteness, reveals the unimaginable love which embraces and sustains all reality from beginning to end. Francis knows from experience that failure to live from this vision leads to but a partial view of reality and ultimately to unreal dreams and illusion. It can actually lead to complete breakdown.

The invitation to a daily conscious relationship of gratitude to God has profound implications. Francis' wisdom possesses value not simply for the people of his times. Perhaps without realizing it, the world is still trying to catch up to the powerful intuitions of the saint. By this I mean that certain insights of the poverello possess perennial value for wholeness of life, even in divergent cultures. Let me give you a striking example.

About seven years ago, the New York Times in a special science section featured an article entitled: "In Japan, Gratitude to Others is Stressed in Psy-

chotherapy."¹⁷ Written by David Goleman, the article spoke of a new therapy sweeping over Japan. It is called Naikan, which means "inner observation," "looking within"; and basically it provides the patient with an intensive experience of gratitude and appreciation. This, it claims, serves as an effective way of healing "the psychic wounds of modern life." Though related to Japanese culture, it has been found by Doctor David Reynolds, an American therapist, to transcend culture in many of its aspects. He speaks of its effectiveness in his own American practice.

Naikan is a form of self-reflection or meditation that emphasizes the goodness of others towards us. Together with this recognition is the conscious acknowledgement of how little the patient has returned to such people. The memory is made to recall as far back as possible how much our loved ones have given us. Its basic tenet is that one takes without thought or gratitude. As a result very little of one's self is offered to our world.

This therapy is rich in imagery, symbols and history. It is built from a healthy, realistic, penetrating guilt which, however, is not a kind of mental flagellation, nor a self-punishing moralism. It is a demolishing of the ego, and a recollection of how little of what a person has been or is deserves to be called a self. One comes to a soothing awareness that despite obvious limitations others have continued to provide love and support. Typically, a Naikan patient is made to empty a drawer of its contents and "thank each object in it for what it has done: a spoon, for example, for having ladled out soup."

The article also speaks of another therapy, often used in tandem with Naikan; it is called Morita. Where Naikan attempts to cultivate a sense of appreciation and gratitude to others, Morita emphasizes the "Zen focus on here and now awareness." This is designed to help people see their world more clearly. It tries to get people to do what they need to, regardless of their feelings at the moment. A typical Morita exercise is to ask the patient to close his eyes and describe the room in which he finds himself. In the Zen tradition of the focusing on the here and now, the patient is made aware of a choice: to focus on that bleak inner monologue of complaints, or on the richness of what is actually going on around them.

Naikan and Morita therapy provides the client with the crucial lesson of how to live in reality or to live properly and gently. In both cases one comes to a deep experience of surrendering the self. Though there is occasional guidance from an experienced traveler, in both cases the patient is called upon to journey alone. When successful, the wonderful outcome is a desire to serve others.

The ten most common experiences related by those who have undergone

Naikan therapy deserve mention. They relate at least to some degree to what we know of Francis and the first brothers.

Allow me to list them:

1. A light is seen;
2. The client's body feels buoyant, tears pour out;
3. People and nature appear to be beautiful;
4. The client becomes more level-headed, sensible;
5. There is a feeling of joy, happiness, celebration of life;
6. The client feels more settled, develops the ability to take another's point of view;
7. There is a feeling of gratitude, closeness, and a desire to serve others;
8. The patient has a sense of being changed in a fundamental way;
9. There is an increased desire to take proper care of oneself;
10. There is a decreased anxiety and an increased sense of peacefulness.¹⁸

When we consider these stated results, we cannot but wonder at the genius of Francis. Though he and the brothers were mocked by many as fools, they were indeed possessed of a sanity, a freedom, an enthusiasm which can only be revered. Franciscan gratitude as a daily mode of consciousness provides the basis for an unusually well-balanced life.

The Source of the Franciscan Consciousness

It should not surprise us that Francis, a man one would think "had always dwelt among the Scriptures" (2 Cel 106), should regard thanksgiving so highly. Thanksgiving is for the New Testament people the essential Christian posture before experience. These theme become predominant in the Epistles of St. Paul. "Dedicate yourselves to thanksgiving," he writes to the Colossians (3:16). He had already indicated to this same community that the believer is to be "overflowing with gratitude" (2:19). The Greek word Paul employs for thanksgiving in these and many other passages is *eucharistia*, which is our word for eucharist. Paul gives us the original meaning of a word we now fittingly apply to the Lord's supper.

Why does thanksgiving occupy so primary a place in the life of the primitive christian community? The outpouring of the Holy Spirit has brought them to the realization that in gratitude we enter the "Yes" of Jesus. To be thankful is to enter into the inner dynamism of His spirit, which was always to give thanks. He lived out our humanity and reached into the depths of every human heart so as to empower us to be grateful and to give praise.

This inner dynamic of the heart of Jesus is beautifully presented in Matthew's Gospel (11:25-27). Here, as the clouds of hostility begin to gather over Jesus, we hear him uttering the deepest prayer of His heart, and it is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving:

I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will . . .

This prayer, as Joachim Jeremias reminds us, is "the only prayer of Jesus of some length from the time before his passion" and it is a "thanksgiving in spite of failure."¹⁹ Jesus praises and thanks the Father for His special revelation "to the childlike." Jeremias explains that Jesus is not merely following the Jewish practice of the *berakah*, the spontaneous prayer of thanks by the believer for God's intervention in his or her personal history. Rather, Jesus is indicating the characteristic stance of those who believe in and live in the Kingdom: it is one of gratitude. Thanksgiving is one of the foremost characteristics of the new age: "So when Jesus gives thanks he is not just following custom." The new thanksgiving is the living response to the actuality of God. The novel element is that the "childlike" recognize the actual presence of the living God in the person of Jesus. God is no longer known indirectly in the many blessings of life; He is now known directly, in the Son. Jesus tells us that the new thanksgiving is our living response to the actuality of God. In thanksgiving we actualize the Kingdom.

Jesus came in the power of the Spirit. He catches up in his "Yes" our ingratitude, our apathy, our biases and prejudices. He consecrates life once-and-for-all: past, present and future. His gratitude is nailed with Him to the cross, eternalized in the Resurrection so that He lives forever in his grateful humanity, sealed forever in the Father's gracious acceptance.

Neither time nor place nor circumstance nor any created reality is to divert the rich energies of our hearts from that Franciscan gratitude that is so preoccupied with the "fullness of Good, all good, every good, the true and supreme good" which evokes an uninterrupted desire "to love, honor, adore, serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and give thanks . . ."

The early Christians came to acknowledge this in a most unusual way. Early in the second century, in the 100's, they began to gather for thanksgiving, for eucharist. *Eucharistia*, thanksgiving, becomes a uniquely Christian word: it

will from then on stand for the Lord's supper.²⁰ To celebrate and reenact the sacrifice of the Lord is to enter into the dimension of Christ's thanksgiving. Now the words of the eucharistic prayer, "He gave you thanks and praise," take on a new significance. Now we understand why special words of thanks precede the solemn moment of the Holy, Holy. We are being led liturgically to the special moment of glory when the thanksgiving of the great heart of Jesus takes and transforms our unwillingness and inability to render thanks so that we may go forth as truly eucharistic people — people filled with the spirit of thanksgiving as was Francis.

The intimate connection between a life of thanksgiving and the celebration of the eucharist makes eminent sense for followers of Francis. We speak much today of transitions and passages and their importance as intermediary stages in the life-process. I believe that our most important transition is the one we make from our ordinary moments of life into the celebration of the eucharist. In today's culture it is so easy and yet so detrimental to lose sight of the awesomeness of eucharist, so acutely experienced by Francis and which he so strongly asks of his brothers in his *Letter to the Entire Order*. An honest self-examination would, I believe, reveal to us how more often than not our approach to eucharist is casual; we do little or nothing to prepare ourselves for an extraordinary experience of time, of place, of people, of God, of ourselves. A daily consciousness rooted in gratitude fosters the reverence that could lead us to the desired level of awareness necessary for a celebration that is truly table fellowship, the Lord's supper.

The Franciscan Consciousness of St. Bonaventure

Saint Bonaventure was most sensitive to the place of gratitude in the life of Francis. We have already referred to his description of Francis' unusual reaction to the brother who suggested that he pray for relief from acute suffering. The nature of Francis' gratitude revealed in this incident is an indication of his image of God whom Bonaventure describes as the "great Almsgiver." (LM 10). The God of Francis is the God of generosity and love, and from beginning to end the Francis of Bonaventure is the recipient of incredible gifts. In Chapter Eleven, Francis says to a sick canon: "Because of the sin of ingratitude worse things than before are inflicted." When later the canon met death, Bonaventure comments that his misfortune occurred "on account of his vice of ingratitude and his contempt for God, when he should have been grateful for the forgiveness he had received" (LM XI:5).

In a Sermon entitled "On the Manner of Living," Bonaventure reminds his audience of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians (4:1): Persevere in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.²¹ Bonaventure comments that

"thanksgiving, the act of thanks," must claim for itself the greatest portion of prayer; and this not so much in the sense of multiplying words as in terms of love and affectivity. This affectivity both in prayer and in thanksgiving arises from the concentrated and fixed meditation of our destitution in the face of the mercies of God, both general and special, communal and particular. He sums up by saying:

For no one can seek ardently unless he believes that he has need of that which he seeks and has confidence that he will be heard. Nor can anyone devotedly return thanks to God unless he is attentive to the magnitude of the divine gift and the lack of merit on his part...²²

Bonaventure ascribes an important place to thanksgiving not only in prayer but in the entire spiritual journey of the gospel person. This is especially apparent in his mystical work *De triplici via* ("On the Triple Way"). Gratitude is a persistent theme throughout this writing. For the seraphic doctor the heart is expanded through gratitude.²³ More explicitly, Bonaventure speaks of gratitude when he discusses the Illuminative Way which, he says, "consists in the perfect imitation of Christ."²⁴

Bonaventure takes his readers on a meditative journey in the first chapter of his mystical work. He desires that we turn the "ray of intelligence" to the past, the present, and the future. Like Francis he wishes us to give careful attention to the immeasurable goodness of God in the entirety of our human history.

He begins by calling our attention not only to our forgiven sins but even "the sins we could have fallen into if the Lord had allowed it." He then applies this same ray of light to the three classes of gifts bestowed on us by God which pertain to nature, grace, and the "superabundant gifts of love." Bonaventure reveals his own Franciscan consciousness as he takes us into appreciation of our human existence in all of its human richness.

Listen to his words:

Certainly God has complemented our nature.
Consider that He has given us a body —
A body with integrity of members,
Health of constitution,
And the nobility of sex.
Let us look upon the senses:
Has He not given us good eyesight?
Has He not given us keen hearing?
Has He not given us power to speak?
And with regard to the soul:
Has He not given us a clear intelligence?
Has He not given us true judgment?
Has He not given us a desire for good?²⁵

Bonaventure's attentiveness to the gifts of nature should heighten our own consciousness to the way we begin each day with little or no attention to them, not to mention the supernatural gifts which envelop our christian lives. Bonaventure is so acutely sensitive to the gifts of nature that he extends the notion of grace to creation, to what is not ordinarily known as grace proper. It is his purpose to extend our consciousness in thanksgiving, to recognize the giftedness of reality at every level. Faith in the transcendent goodness of the Creating Trinity will not allow Bonaventure to take anything of created reality for granted.

From these gifts Bonaventure moves to the supernatural gifts, properly so called. He mentions among these: the grace of baptism, the Sacrament of Penance, the grace of priesthood which enables us to be nourished with word, forgiveness, eucharist. He tells us that God's "perfect benevolence renders us full of awe and amazement." He directs our attention to the gift of creation itself, the gift of the "only-begotten Son . . . who is both a Brother and Friend to us."

Among these gifts are also the Church and the Holy Spirit. He goes on to remind us that the Christian soul is friend, child, and spouse to God. In view of these wondrous gifts, he exclaims, "Can the soul be anything but grateful to God, meditating on these gifts?"

But Bonaventure does not allow our journey into gratitude to end there. He reminds us of God's promises "to those who believe in Him and love Him." God's promise includes "a place among the Saints, and the very fulfillment of every desire in Him." He then concludes in words which we could easily imagine issuing from the mouth of Francis:

For God is the source and the end,
The Alpha and the Omega,
Of every good.
God considers those who live and desire Him
For Himself alone
As worthy of His goodness,
Which is so perfect that it exceeds every petition;
Far surpasses every desire;
Exhausts every thought!
Must we not desire Him and only Him
With every affection possible?²⁶

The Consciousness of the Contemporary Franciscan

There is no doubt in Bonaventure's mind regarding the essential place of gratitude in our daily Franciscan consciousness. If we desire to walk in the

truth, to awaken to the true reality of ourselves, of others, of the world around us, of God Himself, we must begin our day in gratitude.

Too often our first moments of awakening are occupied with what we have to do rather than who we really are. If my consciousness is thus occupied, I have already overlooked the most important and most essential aspects of who I am. In placing our doing before our being we can easily fall victim to the modern trap that ensnares us in our egos and robs us of our true identity. Over a period of time this can lead to a secularistic way of approaching our lives, even when they are dedicated to ministry for the Kingdom. In filling my consciousness with things I have to do, as valuable as they may be in themselves, my spiritual energies are already misdirected from God to self.

If we desire to walk in the truth, to awaken to the true reality of ourselves, of others, of the world around us, of God Himself, we must begin our day in gratitude.

Bonaventure provides us with an exercise which can truly free us for a contemplative approach to life. By turning our awakening each day to the contemplation of so many gifts and to prayer of gratitude, we can begin to experience all of reality as Francis did. Were we to pause now and submit ourselves to a review of this day's awakening, how much ingratitude would it reveal? When did I last thank God for the gifts of nature: of imagination, of communication, of speech, of thought, of listening, of reading and writing, and so much more? When did I last awaken to thanksgiving for life, for health, for food and shelter, for the people with whom I live and work?

How many of the supernatural gifts of God do I take for granted each day? Looking back to those mentioned in the *Triple Way* we can add the unique gift of being a Franciscan. Those of us who are ordained should ask ourselves how well we express our thanks for the privilege of celebrating eucharist and other sacraments. Actually, when one undertakes the exercise, the list of God's gifts shows itself to be endless. Were we to spend the remainder of our days awakening in this way, we would never exhaust it. Furthermore, our hearts would be expanded and become more and more conscious of the loving relationship with the really Real which according to Bonaventure is the inmost desire of our hearts.

To begin each day by directing ourselves to a loving awareness of God's boundless gifts is to prepare ourselves for a contemplative encounter with all of life. It is a process of ongoing conversion that can stretch our inner hearts into heights and depths, lengths and breadths hitherto undreamed of. One can best describe this by applying a favorite phrase of St. Bonaventure; it is "a most secret action, which no one knows unless he experiences it."²⁷

Conclusion

This paper obviously in no way exhausts the topic; it is merely a beginning. It does, however, point the way to a mode of consciousness that is uniquely Franciscan. As a matter of fact, without a daily awakening to gratitude, we undermine the possibilities of the gospel life to which God has so graciously called us. Over a period of time this can lead to compromise which, when worked into a lifestyle, becomes mediocrity. We do not cease to be Franciscan, but enthusiasm, creativity, and all we associate with Francis and the early brothers flatten out into routine.

Henri J.M. Nouwen, a well known writer on spirituality, wrote an article in *America* magazine some years ago describing his stay among the poor of Peru.²⁸ For the poor, he says, everything is the free gift of God. "For them," he continues, "all of life is a gift, a gift to be celebrated, a gift to be shared. . . . Children and friends, bread and wine, music and pictures, trees and flowers, water and light, a house, a room or just a bed, all are gifts to be grateful for and to celebrate."

Nouwen calls the poor "a Eucharistic people, who know how to say thanks to God, to life, to each other." Their basic inner spirit is suffused with gratitude and "this basic sense of gratitude is indeed one of the most visible characteristics of the poor I have come to know." There is an interesting convergence of themes here: every-day consciousness, gratitude, poverty, eucharist, and true worship of God. Nouwen is so correct when he says that the poor provide a great challenge to all of us: "to live and to work out of gratitude." Without this basic conscious commitment to daily life and reality, without awakening to a deep encounter to the God who sustains us in a dialogue of unfathomable love, without a consciousness suffused with an acute realization of the gifts within us and about us, our attempts at ongoing formation run the risk of externalism. It is so essential to our lives as friars that our workshops, our house chapters, our continuing education, our fraternal gatherings and all that we so generously undertake enrich our consciousness with thanksgiving. To do otherwise is to begin to secularize our consciousness and thus to rob our experience of time of the graced opportunity for that which is most essential to our Franciscan lives — "to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (*RegB* 10).

Francis and Bonaventure each in his own unique way continue to call and empower us to a transformation of consciousness which of its very nature can make us into the Kingdom people whose very lives are themselves as liberating as the Gospel we profess.

End notes

¹ *New York Times*, February 22, 1990. Section A, 14.

² For an enlightening application of this theme to Christian spirituality, see "Toward a Spirituality of Liminality," Bruce Lescher, CSC, in *Review for Religious*, 1981, 727-738. For a more general treatment of consciousness, see *Symposium on Consciousness*, Lee, Ornstein, Galin, Deikman, Tart. (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), especially "Bimodal Consciousness and the Mystic Experience," by Arthur Deikman, 67-88.

³ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Colliers Books, 1981).

⁴ William McNamara, "Psychology and the Christian Mystical Tradition," in *Transpersonal Psychologies*, edited by Charles T. Tart. (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 406.

⁵ See "A Cybernetic Consciousness?" in *Environmental Man* by William Kuhns (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 115-126.

⁶ See Cajetan Esser and Engelbert Grau, *Love's Reply* translated by I. Brady (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1963), 168; see also: "Devotio" by J. Chatillon, in *Dict. Spir.* III, 702 ff.

⁷ *Osservatore Romano*, July 23, 1970, 1.

⁸ Pope John Paul II, "The Redeemer of Man," (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1979) [number 3, page 8].

⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 13.

¹⁰ Max Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, translated by Bernard Noble (Hamden: Archon Books, 1972), 267.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 399.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, translated by Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), 39-40.

¹⁴ For an excellent analysis of the entire Chapter, see Leonard Lehmann, OFM Cap., "Gratias Agimus Tibi: Structure and Content of Chapter XXIII of the *Regula Non Bullata*," in *Laurentianum* V (1982), 312-375; reprinted in *Greyfriars Review* V (1991), 1-54.

¹⁵ See the article "Riconoscenza" by David Azevedo in *Dizionario Francescano* (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 1983), 1558-1570, *passim*.

¹⁶ David Flood O.F.M. and Thaddee Matura O.F.M., *The Birth of a Movement: A Study of the First Rule of St. Francis*, translated by Paul Schwartz and Paul Lachance (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1975), 49-50.

¹⁷ *New York Times*, Tuesday, June 3, 1986. The material in the article is based on the book *Naikan Psychotherapy: Meditation for Self-development* by David Reynolds, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

¹⁸ Reynolds, *Naikan Psychotherapy*, 11.

¹⁹ Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allison, 1967), 78.

²⁰ See: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, translated and edited by Geoffrey N. Bromeley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-77), Vol. 9, 414-15.

²¹ Sermo 1, "De modo vivendi," *Opera Omnia*, Vol. IX, 724a.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ See: St. Bonaventure, *The Enkindling of Love also called The Triple Way*, translated and edited by William I. Joffe (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1940), 77 [*Opera Omnia*, VIII: 9a].

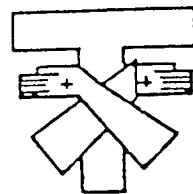
²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14 [VIII, 12a].

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 16 [VIII, 6a and 6b]. This translation from the Latin is somewhat free but substantially correct.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁷ *Collations on the Six Days*, translated by Jose de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild, 1970), II, 29.

²⁸ Henri Nouwen, "Humility" in *America*, December 11, 1982, 372.



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The CORD

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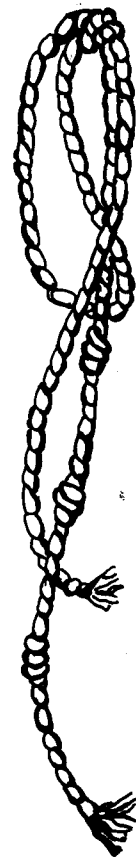
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Standard Abbreviations used in **The CORD** for Early Franciscan Sources

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 Clerics¹

EpCust: Letter to Superiors¹

EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful¹

EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo

EpMin: Letter to a Minister

EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order

EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of the People

ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God

ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father

Form Viv: 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

VPLact: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy

¹I, 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 Commencium

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).

New Fioretti Concerning a Journey of the Minister in Thailand

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M.

"Your oceans, O Lord, are so immense, and our boats are so small!"

While an intense cold was holding Old Europe in its grip and an absurd war was destroying lives and hopes in the Balkans, the Minister, friar Hermann, decided to set out once more from Rome, from the city called eternal, and from the hill redolent of the sweet scent of jasmine. He, too, had heard the mysterious words "ex oriente lux" and had resolved to betake himself on the wings of Brother Wind to Asia and Oceania in order to hold a fraternal meeting with all the Ministers of that continent and its numerous islands. He was also moved by a strong desire to become better acquainted than had hitherto been possible for him with the cultures and religious of the East which have so much to say to us about peace and humanity. And as he flew through the night above the lands of the Caucasus, Persia and Kashmir, always in the direction of the rising sun, he fervently prayed the Lord of history to give him in Asia, too, the opportunity of conversion and penance to enable him the more clearly to point out to the universal fraternity which was the road of the future. Shortly before the majestic airplane bearing the name "St Francis of Assisi" embraced the fertile soil of Thailand, the Minister laid aside for a moment the Roman breviary and prayed instead a psalm composed by an unknown poet of the isle of Kalimantan:

You have created the continents, you have made men
diverse in language and culture.

For man's sake you cause the rice and the bamboo to grow.

It is you who show yourself to be the source of life
in all the diverse religions and cultures.

It is you who are our God, good, peaceful, merciful, and compassionate.

O Lord, grant a cessation to the mortal combat between races, peoples and religions.

Grant that everyone may become convinced that they are brothers and sisters under the one God.

Many readers have voiced their appreciation of Fr. Hermann's "New Fioretti." Here the General Minister of the Order of Friars Minor invites us to venture beyond a more familiar Franciscan world and to ponder the wisdom of the East.

Give peace to Asia and to the whole world.
 Give peace to the whole universe, to the steppes and the forests,
 to the seas and the shores.
 Give us pure eyes to see the beauty of your presence
 and to love others.
 Lord, give us trust in one another; above all give us the great ability
 to read the signs you have inscribed in history and in the cosmos.
 And we pray that you will not let us fall into fear and faint-heartedness.
 Because your oceans are so immense,
 and our boats are so small and fragile.

In the fraternity of Lamsai, a placename meaning in the Thai language "Garden of peace and celestial beauty," the Minister was able to see for himself how the friars in accordance with the mandate of the last Pentecost Chapter sought to combine contemplation with a presence among the poor. Situated at the gates of the great and noisy city of Bangkok, their house is a place of welcome and of spiritual and bodily care for numerous victims of AIDS. Moreover the members of this international fraternity joyfully imparted to him the news that, with the help of God and of the Seraphic Father, they would soon be welcoming the first candidates to the year of probation. The Minister in his turn gave thanks to the Lord who after innumerable trials and sufferings was now in his providence granting to the tender little plant of the Thailand project some growth and hope for the future.

Thereafter the Minister journeyed to Udon Thani in the northeast of the country, for a fraternal meeting with the Ministers and friars who had there come together from all parts of the vast continent as well as from some of the more remote islands, as for example from the islands of Bismarck, Solomon and Tonga. All were given lodging in the house of the bishop of that place, the magnificent garden of which was lush with rhododendron, eucalyptus and myrtle bushes, with delicate orchids and wild magnolias, but was also, alas, home to some snakes. For three days the friars talked among themselves about the signs of hope and of sorrow which they noticed in their provinces and fraternities. All were convinced that in the future the Order would have to present a more Asiatic face, if the universal fraternity were to be capable of being transformed into an instrument of peace and of evangelization increasingly Catholic and apostolic, but at the same time ever more ecumenical and ecological. The friars of Asia and Oceania promised that, even in their poverty, they would come to the assistance of other provinces and of the numerous international projects of the Order.

While in these lands and on these seas the Chinese Year of the Butterfly was just beginning, a bright day in the month of February was dedicated to an experience of inculturation. For this purpose the friars who had come from

Rome, Papua and all the other quarters, set out on a journey towards the border with Laos. They first made a stop at a place called Wat Phra That Bang Phuan, in order to make a fraternal visit to a venerable monastery of the tradition of the Lord Buddha. After they had spent some time in the shrine, a saffron-robed monk offered on his own accord to predict the future for the Minister. And so, as was the custom of the place, the Minister, while reclining with the other friars on a bamboo mat, had to shake a wooden container rhythmically until there came out of it one of the many hollowed sticks, inside each of which was a minuscule roll of parchment. After the Minister had complied with this ritual under the curious gaze of his companions and of some Buddhist novices, the master read for him the following oracle:

In this world there are but two elements:
 beauty and truth.
 Beauty in the heart of the one who loves,
 truth in the arms of the one who tills the land.

The minister greatly marveled at these words. They seemed to him to be very close to the spirituality of the Poverello of Assisi, who had loved the poor, extolled the beauty of the universe in song and asked his friars to work with diligence. While the Minister was thinking how profound these words were and how applicable to the life of his friars, the monk spoke and added the following words:

If you discover how to praise the beauty of the world in song,
 even in the most solitary desert place you will find a hearing.

Pondering on all that he had heard, the Minister understood as never before that his fraternity, scattered throughout the world in many places where war, poverty and conflict prevail, was living out the destiny of those who sow in tears, but at the same time hope to be able one day to reap a harvest in joy and exultation.

That same day the friars also visited Phuttamamakassamakom, a place famous for its amazing collection of statues and monuments representing the various types of Buddha, Vishnu and Siva. Thus, they consciously implemented the mandate of their Constitutions, according to which all should "discern the seeds of the Word of God and his mysterious presence in the world of Today and also in many aspects of other religions and cultures" (CCGG 93.2). Towards evening, they boarded a rickety boat and were taken on an excursion along the Mekong River which, in the region of Nong Khai, marks the boundary between Thailand and mysterious Laos. Seated on the deck of the boat and having consumed a delicious supper whose main ingredient was fish, they gave themselves up to silent contemplation of the beauty of the star-studded horizon, so much so that at a certain point all found themselves listening in silence

to the Tao, the wisdom innate in all creation, in the mild evening breeze and in the sweet music which came wafting towards them from both banks of the river, as well as in the moving melody of the setting of the sun and in the soundless music of the spheres. These are the words which the Minister heard that evening:

With dampened clay are formed the pots,
but only their hollowness allows jugs to be filled.
From wood are constructed doors and windows,
but only the empty space they create makes the house habitable.
What is seen is indeed useful,
but what is essential remains invisible.
You possess only what you give away,
because what you try to keep will be lost to you.

That night everyone understood how the fraternity wherever it finds itself can contribute to evangelization and to the future of the world only if it adopts an attitude of profound listening, of minority, of solidarity with the poor and of respectful dialogue with all religions and cultures.

During a farewell ceremony held in the house of the Bishop of Udon Thani the friars prayed together in the words of an ancient mystic of the Buddhist tradition:

May the rain of burning coals and of stones and the rain of weapons
become a rain of flowers.
May the poor, benumbed by cold, find warmth and compassion
and may coolness come to all who are exposed to scorching heat.
May the sick find healing
and may an end come to all the violence in the world.
May the fearful live in peace
and may the oppressed find liberation and justice.
May prisoners discover a new way of life
and may all who are sorrowful find courage and hope.
May the disinherited possess the earth
and may all live in friendship and respect.
For the only wealth that always grows bigger
when it is given away with both hands
is love and peace.

Thereupon all returned spiritually strengthened and inwardly enlightened to their own provinces and fraternities scattered throughout Asia and the immense Pacific Ocean, while the Minister made his way back to Rome to the hill redolent of the sweet scent of jasmine.

Ad laudem Christi. Amen.

Hermann Schalück, O.F.M.
Easter 1994

Imagination and the Journey of Francis

ILIA DELIO, O.S.F.

INTRODUCTION

The gift of the imagination is a powerful capacity of the human person that essentially influences our world, our relationships with others and our relation to God. The images we form of the world indicate how we experience the world. The Incarnation underlined a radical breakthrough for the human imagination because it opened up a new horizon for humanity — that of the infinite love of God. Jesus in his ministry appealed to the imagination by challenging his disciples to change their lives by changing the images of their lives. Through the use of parables, Jesus revealed new images and new potentials for his followers. The life of Francis of Assisi, itself a parable, is a response to Jesus' challenge. The cross of the crucified Christ became for Francis the image on the horizon — that which opened him up to the eternal love of God. The following article, gleaned from the notes of Fr. Joe Doyno, explores the image of the cross in Francis' life and how this image influenced his spiritual journey to God through the gift of his imagination.

THE MEANING OF IMAGINATION

In the early period of Greek philosophy, imagination was considered to be a lowly faculty associated with the senses and what appeared to them. The Greek word *phantasia*, from which the English "imagination" is derived, was the word used to describe this faculty.¹ It was St. Augustine who translated *phantasia* into the Latin *imaginatio* and raised it to a new level of meaning. Indeed Christian philosophical/theological tradition regarding the power and significance of the imagination can be traced to Augustine's *De Trinitate*. In this work Augustine states that just as the will is related to the vision of the outward person in the focusing of one's attention so is the *imaginatio* in internal vision the expression of the will and its desire. The imagination, according

Sister Ilia, a professed member of the Franciscan Servants of the Holy Child Jesus in North Plainfield, New Jersey, is a doctoral candidate in historical theology at Fordham University. Sister Elia's dissertation, under the direction of Ewert Cousins, focuses upon Bonaventure's Christ mysticism. This article happily resulted from a trip to do some research at the Franciscan Institute.

to Augustine, is no passive power of reproduction, rather it sets to work refashioning the contents of memory along the lines of the will's interest.² Augustine made an important contribution to the theory of imagination by distinguishing between simple sensory image and that related to memory and will.

In contemporary terms, imagination is defined as "the ability of the awake mind to produce symbolic functions without effort."³ It is a bipolar faculty which gives shape to objects not present to the senses or to the memory.⁴ At one pole, imagination is a necessary tool for organizing all of our daily perceptions of the world. It enables us to recognize things in the world as familiar, to take for granted features of the world, so that we may identify the reality that we encounter in our conscious lives. At the other pole, imagination is creative. By its means we see the world as significant of something unfamiliar and treat the objects of perceptions as symbolizing and suggesting things other than themselves.⁵ In this sense, it is not a simple or single faculty but rather the total resources in the human person which go into forming one's images of the world. The imagination is the foundation of creativity because it is an action of the mind that produces a new idea or insight. Out of chaos the imagination can frame a thing of reality, a thing which comes unheralded, a flash of something fully formed.

The thirteenth century Sufi mystic, Ibn al-'Arabi, stated that the creative imagination is ontologically rooted in God. Just as the Platonists and Stoics perceived God as the artist shaping the world, so too, Arabi held that by imagining the universe God created it. Creation, therefore, is an act of the divine imaginative power. This divine creative imagination, according to Arabi, is essentially theophanic. It is the same theophanic imagination of the Creator that renews creation from moment to moment in the human being who is created in the image of God. Thus our manifest being *is* the divine imagination; our own imagination is imagination in God's imagination.⁶ In this respect, the human imagination has the powerful function of projection and exploration in regard to what is possible to us, a possibility which is nothing less than participation in the divine life.

THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION

For the Christian the Incarnation grounds the meaning and importance of the imagination in the Christian life. The Incarnation, encompassing the entire mystery of Christ from birth to death, is the scandal of particularity — the experience of the ultimate coming through finite reality. It is God's entry into the details of human existence. Karl Rahner states, in the light of Christian faith, "the very commonness of everyday things harbors the eternal marvel and silent mystery of God and his grace."⁷ When God took our world to himself in the Incarnation, he entered the world's history as a perfect human being taking that history up into himself and summarizing it (*Eph* 1:10). In the Incarnation,

the eternal Word took the whole of humanity and the whole cosmos with its being and its historical development as his body: all realities, all values and all orders were joined into one in him. Thus all domains of human life have been raised in Christ into living unity with God. The whole thrust of the Incarnation is a breakthrough for the human person's imagination for perceiving, experiencing, and understanding the reality of one's new relationships with God, the world, self, and others. It is the imagination which reaches out toward the horizon of infinite possibilities by opening up the human person to the experience of the ultimate coming through finite reality.

Faith in the Incarnation is the belief that particulars of life are vessels of grace. It underlies a relationship with God who in Jesus has become immersed in this world. Faith, as a definite "yes" to life in its concreteness, requires the imagination since faith lives from hope and imagination provides a content for hope. The imagination is essential to Christian faith because it leads one to the concrete where one lives and experiences truth — that truth which affects the whole person, which embodies depth and mystery, and which calls for participation. Participation in life-events underlying personal transformation is made possible by the imagination when it is opened up to experience the world. Faith itself is a form of imagining and therefore of experiencing the world. To believe that the poor are blessed, for example, puts an entirely different light on things. Faith, as a life of the imagination, provides a structure or context of the world and as such precedes, supports and evokes every other context. Faith is not distinct from experience: faith and experience are integrally related to each other and as such can give rise to a new vision of reality.

In the Gospel, the relationship between faith and experience is aptly expressed in the parables, those stories which take the listener to the point where the course of ordinary life is broken and where faith and experience are challenged to reach out to the infinite horizon of God. It is in the parables that we see how Jesus' ministry was one which addressed itself most powerfully to the imagination of his hearers. He invited and empowered his disciples to reconstruct their lives with God introducing them into profound and new depths of intimacy through faith. He fired the imagination of his hearers with hope, with dreams of innocence and reconciliation, and with love and joy. In the midst of images drawn from daily life, he fathomed new potentialities for his disciples — the boundless love of a merciful father, the treasure of a lost coin. A strange world of meaning was projected which challenged their everyday vision by both revealing the limits to the everyday and projecting the limit-character of the whole.⁸

In his appeal to the imagination, Jesus exposed his followers to risk and to vulnerability in undergoing the surrender and entrusting themselves to unknown

horizons. His call to Matthew to follow him, for example, posed a challenge to the tax collector and his self-image among fellow Jews. Peter had his imagination fixed in the literal; it was unfree: "I shall never let you die." Conversely, the Pharisees could not imagine anything other than their own self-centered world. But through the parables, Jesus exposed new possibilities and freed the creative imagination from the burden of its own past for anyone who accepted him. By evoking decisive changes in the disciples' vision of the world, of others, of God, and of themselves, Jesus signified that conversion takes place at the deepest level of one's self-image. Conversion is a daily process whereby the image of one's self is always questioned. The parables signify that only by changing the images of one's world can a person experience conversion and thus change his or her existence. The relationship between faith, experience, and the imagination, therefore, is summarized in the process of conversion — that daily process which opens one up to the infinite love of God.

IMAGINATION IN THE LIFE OF FRANCIS

Although Francis of Assisi never sat at the feet of the Master, he was perhaps the most perfect imitator of Christ in the history of Christianity. This perfect and literal *imitatio Christi*, while springing from the roots of faith, was much more than faith alone. Rather, it was the fruit of a creative imagination grounded in the love of God. In his encounter with Scripture, Francis grasped the meaning of the Incarnation as the scandal of particularity and found his path through images of the finite to the infinite love of God. He made use of images in the form of drama, parable, and exaggeration and in doing so Christified imagination providing a paradigm of faith within which one could experience or imagine the world.

In order to understand the power of the imagination in Francis' life one must begin with the place of his birth, the mystically charming town of Assisi. It is here that the drama of the Poverello as a drama of the creative imagination was brought to life. Anyone who has had the joy of spending time in Assisi can easily identify with the unusual description Romano Guardini gave of his experience of this remarkable place. Guardini described a tension built into the very contours of Assisi's masses of stone buildings together with its topographical setting. On the one hand there is the clarity of the "hewn hardness of stone, row on row, the simple cubical masses suffused with light standing in the purity of wind and brilliant sunlight." This, he says, "touches the soul with the mystery of great depth. Every form standing forth freely in the light and pure air creates a desire just to be there and be embraced by its mystery — to be one with them in clinging so deeply to the little city on the side of a hill." But there is also another pull. Again and again the streets emerge into small squares and the wide view of the Umbrian plain meets the eye. The marvelous panorama of

the Umbrian plain that extends from Perugia to Spoleto with its hills rising in soft light has the power to draw our imaginations into the unknown and unseen. "It is impossible," says Guardini, "to describe how the power of the form of nearby things felt in all the fibers of one's being suddenly stretches out into a great distance of yearning and infinity."

Francis grew up in this tension and became a young man in whose soul echoed the call of far places while living in the circumscribed present. But that faraway call seemed to resonate more deeply in him than the desire to enter into Assisi's contours. Dreams and visions of himself returning in glorious triumph from far away military accomplishments took hold of his imagination and stretched it into unreal fantasy. It may be that his father's desire for distant journeyings to the fancy cloth marts of France resonated with particular force in his imaginative personality. We know also that the songs of the troubadours found particular resonances in his heart and stirred his imagination. Whatever the reasons, Francis was filled with an imagination that had surrendered to fantasy and let himself be overcome by dreams of glory mounted in knightly splendor on a chosen steed. His path to glory was away from Assisi; even his revelries at home in the city were the acting out of fantasies of greatness that set him above the everyday humdrum of the city's struggles. His search for glory would not allow his imagination to tolerate anything but self-serving and unreal visions of grandeur. Francis' imagination was to be reborn, restored, deromanticized, brought down to earth; it was to undergo a painful and purifying process that would bring it to that happy tension whereby paradoxically the embrace of the concrete, everydayness of reality would be the actual entry into the imagined glory of that anticipated homeland we call heaven.

Francis' imagination had to submit itself to experience to be purified and restored to balance.

The process is well known. Defeat in battle and a year's imprisonment followed by a long illness led to some sobering realizations. When he looked far afield for consolation, he discovered that nature had lost its appeal and failed to arouse his imagination. Celano records that "he wondered therefore at the sudden change that had come over him" (*1 Cel 3*). Yet he could not resist the romantic call of another promising military engagement. "He still looked forward to accomplishing great deeds of worldly glory and vanity," says Celano, and puffed up by a gust of vainglory, vowed that he would go to Apulia to

increase his wealth and fame. This was terminated by a dream, a vision of a palace of armor covered with crosses and the voice that said, "Francis who can do more for you, a lord or his servant, a rich man or a beggar?" When he replied that a lord or a rich man could do more, he was asked, "then why are you abandoning the Lord to devote yourself to a servant. Why are you choosing a beggar instead of God who is infinitely rich?" (2 Cel 6)

"He met a leper and made stronger than himself, he kissed him." This was the rebirth of the imagination of Francis.

Francis took his fantasies into a cave and submitted them in pain and groanings to God. He was so exhausted with the strain that one person seemed to have entered and another to have come out. That led to a radical letting go of that which enabled him to pursue his lavish dreams — extravagant military journeys made possible by the money from his wealthy father's cloth business. Francis learned how all of his dreams were conditioned by that symbol of money and power. He would literally divest himself of cloth and in doing so begin to narrow down his imagination, call it back to a new experience of reality. The cross of Jesus was slowly taking hold of his inner mind and it began to exercise its demands upon him as previously cloth had done. He would move with it and into it facing up to himself in a radically existential way. He spoke of a spouse "more beautiful and more noble than you have ever seen" — one which would "surpass all others in beauty and excell all others in wisdom" (1 Cel 7). A new image was taking shape within him. Yet, he hid in fear from his father; his vision of his father beating and embarrassing him publicly paralysed him and forced him to hide. But after long prayer, the image of the crucified asserted itself, and he boldly emerged in public as a new person.

Then came that awesome occasion when he made the break with his father, and with that cloth which had exercised so great a control over his fantasy life. In public he stripped himself, returned his clothes to his father, and professed that only God the Father would from then on rule his life. But as sincere as he was, as joyful and free as he felt, as capable as he was of sustaining with joy the attack of robbers, Francis was still a bit of the romantic. He had not restored that tension of Assisi; there was something of the concrete reality that his imagination could not tolerate, a reality that could not possibly lead him to

God because for him it was "bitter"; it was sin itself. Francis' imagination had to submit itself to experience to be purified and restored to balance. The leper stood in its way. So greatly loathsome to him were lepers we are told that he would look at their houses only from a distance of two miles and hold his nostrils with his hand. But one day came the remarkable encounter when "he met a leper and made stronger than himself, he kissed him" (2 Cel 9). This was the rebirth of the imagination of Francis. This was for him a deep, penetrating transformation. What had seemed bitter was changed into sweetness of body and soul. The total Francis was bathed in grace. The hideousness of the leper, that which his imagination could not tolerate, became an encounter with God. Incredibly, in this most rejected of created reality was to be found and experienced God through grace. The path to glory, to grace, was in and through the particular, the concrete, no matter what its shape or contours. Francis had implicitly grasped the meaning of the Incarnation through the cross which had become imbedded in his imagination in the most existential way possible. From now on, he could never tolerate in himself or in his brothers any fantasizing

Just as Francis' spiritual journey was marked by various encounters with the cross, so too, his imagination was shaped by the power of the cross.

that would allow them to leap over the limits of the concrete to get to instant glory. Rather, he came to the realization that the limited concrete is the path to glory and salvation. It was in and through Christ through the mystery of the Incarnation that he would overcome once and for all any mistrust of the finite and of the human and any desire to escape into an unreal and unrealizable dream world where his soul might perpetually dwell with no pain to his body. Francis and his brothers accepted the tension of Assisi. This tension had taken hold of their Christian imaginations in a most productive way: in travelling and journeying they looked not for the fantastic but for the concrete opportunity to serve the world by "word and example." And in every concrete episode of life whether it be a sinning brother, a sick brother, a poor person, a leper, a rich man, or a Saracen, they experienced an opportunity to encounter God. Francis and the brothers could dream and imagine but they would dream only one thing — that wherever they would find themselves, nothing would stand in the way of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

FRANCIS' JOURNEY AND THE POWER OF THE CROSS

According to Bonaventure, the life of Francis cannot be spoken of and interpreted independently of that religious experience which revealed to him the mystery of Christ crucified. This experience brought about a transformation of his inner vision so that he almost always looked upon the wounds of Christ with the eyes of his mind. The principal structural element of Bonaventure's *Legenda Major* is the seven appearances of the crucified Christ. The progression is important. It moves from the appearances of an empty cross, to the vision of the crucified, to the voice of the crucified in the first three visions. These are all external visions and are prior to his dramatic conversion experience. In the next three visions, the image of the cross is projected from or within Francis, showing that he had taken into himself the meaning of the crucified Christ. These six lead to the seventh: the stigmata, Francis' final identification with the Christ of the cross. Bonaventure gives us the significance of the stigmata by stating, "the true love of Christ had transformed his lover into his image . . . the image of the Crucified" (*LM XIII:5*). Indeed love had fired the imagination of Francis, and in his conversion process he surrendered his imagination to the power of the cross.

Just as Francis' spiritual journey was marked by various encounters with the cross, so too, his imagination was shaped by the power of the cross. His first encounter with the Crucified was a sense experience; the imagination played a humble role in reproducing and recollecting concrete images of this experience. The kiss of the leper, for example, and the renunciation of his possessions before the bishop were dramatizations of the cross impressed upon his imagination. As Francis experienced conversion through participation in these events, he became more like the Crucified — the image impressed on his memory and will. He saw the Crucified in all the concrete daily episodes of life, and this single image sparked his love for God and neighbor engaging and capturing the imaginations of those who followed him and who saw in him the example of "conversion to God." Through the power of the cross, Francis' imagination became refined, stimulated, and strengthened to receive the light from on high. The poet Dante said that the imagination is not a faculty in the service of the intellect but a means with which God communicates divine truth to people. This is made possible, the poet claimed, only by the "light . . . which is given form in heaven, of itself, or through a will which sends it down."⁹ Francis received this light when toward the end of his life in the midst of impending blindness he composed the *Canticle of Brother Sun* singing the praises of God in creation whose wisdom and glory he had perceived. The power of the cross had shaped his imagination to receive the divine light, to share in the imagination of the Creator and thus to experience the divine truth. On the mountain of La Verna, this divine light flooded the poverello's imagination

revealing itself in the form of the six-winged seraph of the crucified Christ. The image of the cross — that image which occupied the center of his converted life — now imprinted itself in his flesh; the veil between Francis and Christ had been pierced, and his imagination had been shot through by the divine light. His conversion was complete. He no longer had to imagine the Crucified, rather, his imagination had led him back to the center of all life — all eternal life and temporal life, the perfect gift and Giver, the fountainhead of goodness. Francis became one with the crucified Christ. Thus through the gift of his imagination and the shaping of it through the cross, the Poverello's life was converted from a life of revelry to one of imitating Christ who hung poor and naked on the cross. That the world of Francis and the images of his life were forged into the image of the cross and that this image directed his journey back to God, recapitulates the notion of Bonaventure: "there is no other path than through the burning love of the Crucified."¹⁰

CONCLUSION

Imagination is an inborn gift, a capacity of the human person that allows one to be open to new possibilities and new horizons in life. The Incarnation as a radical event in the world brought the imagination to a new level of significance when Jesus challenged his disciples to change the images of their lives and reach out to the infinite love of God. Through the use of parables, Jesus indicated that conversion takes place in the concrete episodes of our lives — in the images we form of ourselves, our world, and of God.

Francis of Assisi is one who listened to the parables of Jesus through the Word of God and accepted the challenge of conversion. Although by nature he had a lively imagination and could easily drift into dreams of grandeur, he was seized by the image of the crucified Christ and freely appropriated it as the image of his own life. Through the power of this image his life changed from one of dreams and fantasies to one of imitating Christ. The image of the Crucified as the ultimate love of God manifested in the poverty of the cross altered his vision of the world so that in every concrete particularity of life, whether it be the hunger of a brother or the suffering of a leper, he saw only the love of God. This image, therefore, opened him up to the infinite horizon of God. Francis lived from an understanding of image that corresponded to biblical-image thought whereby image was not merely likeness but a genuine actualizing of a reality, a rendering of a spiritual vision in a concrete way. He made use of the Christ image through drama, exaggeration and parable to draw others to the love of Christ and in doing so Christified imagination. His dramatization of the Gospel was not merely an acting-out of events but an experiential participation in the life of Christ. The imagination of Francis, following the footsteps of

Christ, received the greatest gift of divine light on the mountain of La Verna where he became one with the image of the Crucified, the seal of his life. Here his imagination not only leapt to the infinite bounds of the love of God, but standing poor and alone on the solitary mountain, Francis entered into the love of the creatively imaginative God.

End notes

- ¹ Gerard Watson, "Imagination and Religion in Classical Thought," in *Religious Imagination*, edited by James P. Mackey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986), 29.
- ² St. Augustine, *De Trinitate (The Trinity)*, introduction and translation by Edmund Hill (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990), 11.3.11.
- ³ Silvano Arieti, *Creativity: The Magic Synthesis* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 37.
- ⁴ Robert Avens, *Imagination is Reality* (Irving: Spring, 1980), 18.
- ⁵ Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), ch. 2; cf. S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, edited by J. Shawcross (London: Oxford, 1907), ch. XIII.
- ⁶ Henry Corban, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 191; cf. Coleridge, *Biographia*, XIII. It is interesting to note that Coleridge defines imagination as a "repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."
- ⁷ Karl Rahner, *Belief Today* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 14.
- ⁸ David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 138.
- ⁹ Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio* 17, 16 quoted in M. W. Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Medieval Thought* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1927), 420.
- ¹⁰ Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey Into God*, translated by Ewert H. Cousins, Prologue 3.

* * *

GROWING OLD

Waves pounding relentlessly on the shore,
Every day taking just a bit more,
Inevitable erosion of age
Humbling the mighty, dumbfounding the sage.

Dorothy Forman, O.S.F.

The Blue Cross

"The cross of the response"

JOSEPH WOOD, O.F.M., CONV.

Most Franciscans would agree that really only since 1982, the 800th anniversary of the birth of Saint Francis, has there been a more serious scholarly pursuit of the richness of our Franciscan heritage. The rediscovery of the *painted literature* of the Franciscan movement has been a further benefit of our scholarly and meditative studies.

Franciscans and lovers of the Franciscan story may be eternally grateful to the Canadian Capuchin, Marc Picard and his mentor, Dominique Gagnan, for their research regarding the symbolism in the Cross of San Damiano. With their publication, *The Icon of the Christ of San Damiano*, Casa Editrice Francescana, these two authors have given rebirth to the *cross of the call*, and have provided the tools for the modern viewer to hear the San Damiano speaking again. After years of being neglected, it would be difficult now not to find the San Damiano Cross mounted somewhere in a prominent location in all of our friaries, convents and parish churches.

While living in Assisi for several years, further research and meditation has brought to light the other half of Francis' conversion story, *the response to the call*.

After Francis heard the voice of Christ speaking to him on that autumn day in 1204, "Go and rebuild my house ..." he never mentions the Cross of San Damiano again. The San Damiano was the *cross of the call* which passionately led Francis to convert his life. But his *response to the call* was to go forth and serve the glorified Christ in every crucified person, especially the poor, the dispossessed and the lepers of his day.

The Blue Cross, then, is one more rediscovered treasure of our communal pristine youth, too long forgotten by our Franciscan family. Painted by an unknown artist shortly after the completion of the Lower Basilica in Assisi (1230) where Francis is buried, the Blue Cross is the artistic synthesis of Francis' free response to the call of the San Damiano Christ. The Blue Cross was as much a

Readers of The CORD will welcome this second contribution of the author on the subject of Franciscan iconography. Our December, 1993 issue carried a detailed study of an icon of St. Clare which he co-authored with his confrere, Ciaran McNally. This present article offers enriching insight into the remarkable impact of our tradition on the artistic presentation of the mystery of Jesus.

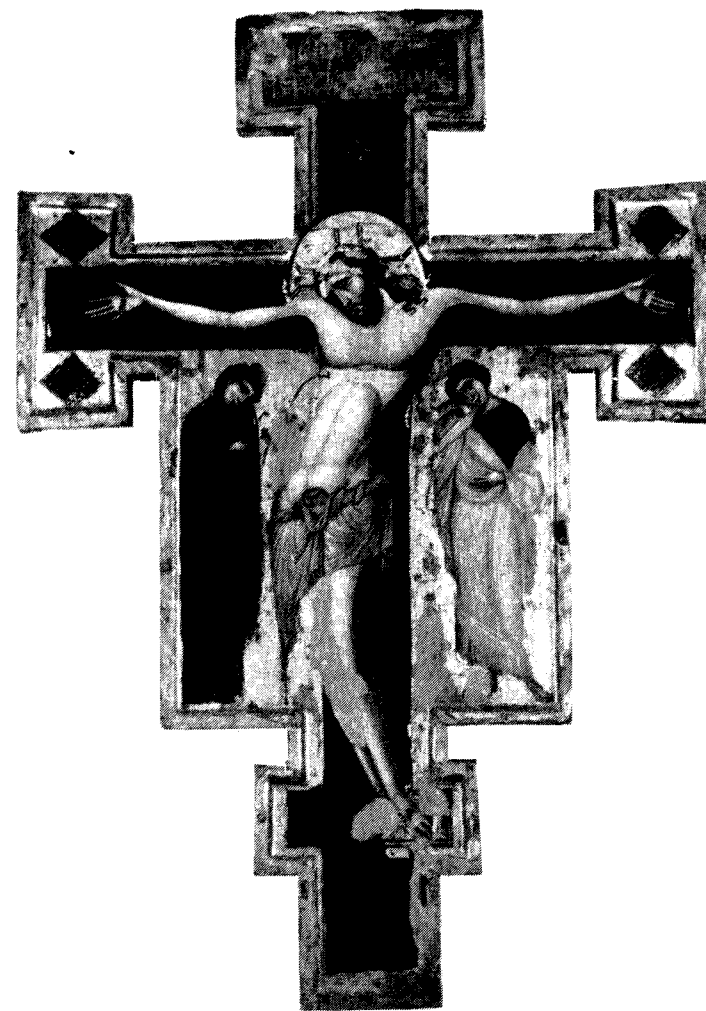
part of Franciscan evangelization as any of the world famous frescoes in the Basilica for which it was painted. The Blue Cross bespeaks the Franciscan vision of God — incarnational theology — which led a society out of the Middle Ages into rebirth, the Renaissance.

Originally, the Blue Cross was suspended from the vaulting above the *pontile*, an ornamental wall which functioned as an iconostasis separating the nave from the choir. For centuries the Blue Cross was the focal point of the portal of the *pontile*, the narrow passageway to the sanctuary where Francis' body rested securely below the high altar.

It is unfortunate that the Blue Cross, or even a replica, no longer hangs in this original position. Because of age and need for preservation, the Blue Cross is now on display in the museum of the Basilica. And yet, even though the *pontile* was also dismantled because of liturgical and theological developments, a study of the original meaning and purpose of the Blue Cross is no less potent for us today.

Even though the Middle Ages were 1200 years beyond the resurrection, the Franciscan movement was reconfirming for the multitude of pilgrims visiting Francis' tomb that the Old Testament had *become* the New Testament. The God of paradoxes had been born, had died and is resurrected. Everything in the new order has been reversed from the old order. No longer is there an "eye for an eye," but now we are called to "turn the other cheek." No longer is God all powerful, but he is weak, born as an infant. No longer is God the Lord of armies, the Lord of hosts, but now he is the God of the shepherd, the God of the prostitute and tax collector and the God of fishermen. Therefore, the Franciscan movement, in its attempt to "rebuild" the weakened Christian faith, is credited with initiating a reversal in the art conventions of the day — art being the form of communication for a society that could not read and write.

The style of painting before the Franciscan movement was greatly influenced by the Eastern Empire which was called Byzantium. Byzantine art adhered to strict colour conventions: red represented humanity, blue represented divinity. If one looks at the San Damiano Cross, one has the overall impression of the colour red. Christ is human; He is a man. And yet, the *text* of the San Damiano is the Gospel of Saint John, Christ is portrayed as resurrected, triumphant, in complete control of the elements. The *text* of the Blue Cross, on the other hand, is the Christ of the Synoptic Gospels; He is completely at the mercy of external elements; He is crowned with thorns, spat upon, jeered. The Christ of the Blue Cross is not resurrected, He has died. Blood spills from his side. At first, the medieval viewer may have been confused by the reversal of the tradi-



tional colours. The colour blue bespoke divinity, but Christ is depicted as dead. Is it a contradiction? Is God weak? Did God fail?

The plainness of the Blue Cross, as compared to the busyness of the San Damiano, satisfies the medieval quandary. The cross on which we are gazing offers one simple truth, one simple message: *this is true glory, true divinity — to give one's life for another.* Our God suffers with us. The God who gave us the greatest gift of all, free will, was crucified by men who freely used that gift. A mystery of love which remains a mystery to logic.

John the Beloved and the Virgin Mary, standing at the foot of the cross, are not like the John and Mary of the San Damiano. These two holy people, although wearing blue garments, representing their heavenly status, are not shown as rejoicing in the future resurrection. The John and Mary of the Blue Cross, having their faces cupped in their hands, the traditional imagery of meditation, are looking at the viewer but pointing to Christ, sadly admitting that God/Christ/Jesus really was human — like us — and He died. He was not merely pretending to die on the cross as several of the heresies of the Middle Ages believed.

The mourning depiction of John and Mary is not the end of the story, however. The medieval pilgrim, poised for a happy ending, and now more attentive to a new manner of perception, would perhaps recognize yet another new artistic convention. The loincloth, which was a neat priestly liturgical garment on the figure of Christ in the San Damiano, has now become a bulky unfurled banner. Although at rest, it is clearly a type of standard, impatient for victory. The male anatomy of Christ becomes commonly accented in such a manner because of a renewed, more healthy view of the goodness and beauty of the human form. The banner-loincloth proclaims that there is still life in Christ, the seed is but hidden, veiled in death, as in a field lying fallow, patient for renewed cultivation. There will be a resurrection!

The four diamond shaped designs near the hands of Christ, also offer hope to the perceptive medieval pilgrim. These four diamond shapes may be understood as haloes for allegorical figures representing the cardinal or moral virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude. Also, the four sided design could represent the four last things: death, judgment, heaven, hell. The four sided shapes near the hands of Christ could also represent the four corners of the earth of the four winds; Christ's compassion is all encompassing, North-South-East-West.

The Blue Cross, as the mirror of Francis' theology, is the artistic beckoning to his followers: go forth and serve the glorified Christ in every crucified person. Francis, the joyful mystic, had discovered the greatest Christian reversal of all, "he needed to suffer the great pain of his age, because not to suffer, especially to miss out on the suffering of the world, was not to live."¹ *A mystery of love which remains a mystery to logic.*

End note

¹ Hampl, Patricia. *Virgin Time*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1992) p. 121.

A New Reading of the Rule of 1223 (*Regula bullata*)

JAVIER GARRIDO

In the name of the Lord!

Our history as friars minor began in Assisi, through the mercy of God, at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Francis and his movement took part in an experience that was formalized in writing in 1223. Approved by the authority of the Church, this text is still the definitive document defining our identity today.

Chapter 1

Our fundamental program is to believe in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and to observe it by living its message, its manner of being and acting, and its messianic options of celibacy, poverty, minority and obedience. We want "to follow His footsteps" by identifying ourselves with His love for the Father and humanity to the deepest degree possible.

We receive the Gospel from the Church and we live it out in communion with the Church. At times we provoke conflicts, without wanting to do so, with our style of life. Our position within the Church, in as much as it is a religious institution, is that of minors; therefore, we promise to obey especially the pope and bishops who work for unity, rather than be separated from our brothers and sisters.

We are dispersed throughout the world, but we feel ourselves to be a fraternity because we profess the same life and rule and obey the minister general, who is the successor of our first brother, Francis.

Chapter 2

No one can be a friar minor if he is not called personally by the Lord. This supposes a process whereby our evangelical project is assimilated and, with the accord of the minister provincial, culminates in incorporation into the fraternity.

The CORD is very grateful to Timothy J. Johnson, OFM Conv. for his translation of a thought-provoking contemporary rereading of the Rule of 1223. The author, Javier Garrido, published the original under the title "La forma de vida franciscana ayer y hoy" (Centro de Franciscanismo de Espana, 1985). Fr. Timothy's translation was from the Italian version of Ginepro Zoppetti which was published by Edizioni Messagero (Padova, 1987).

We do not demand anything from our candidates other than those conditions which facilitate their true experience of conversion to the Gospel. Firstly: a sense of revelation and gift of God which is received within the Church. Secondly: the option for celibacy, that is, the breaking of those ties which are not founded on adherence to Jesus. Thirdly, and above all: a break with the system of power and possession which characterizes the "anti-kingdom."

We leave to the discernment of the candidate how he ought to concretize his breaking away; however, we believe that the authenticity of his vocation depends essentially on this growth in interior freedom, a freedom in which the Holy Spirit guides him into direct obedience to the words of the Lord.

Therefore it is necessary that the friars and ministers manifest the same freedom, that is, a great disinterest toward every other motivation which is not the will of the Lord alone.

In this phase of formation marked by discernment and challenge, both the candidate and the friars live the dynamic characteristic of this type of life: they have not entered into the conversion process in order to fulfill laws of perfection and to belong to a privileged socioreligious group, but rather, they have placed themselves under the lordship of God, moved by the breath of his Spirit, creator and animator of this fraternity.

Profession represents the determining moment of the vocation. The fraternity embraces the new candidate with joy. Now he may be called "brother" in the fullest sense of the term. He experiences the bonds which give a definitive sense to his life: belonging to the family of friars minor; identification with the spirituality, charism, and mission of Francis; a commitment of fidelity to this rule; lifelong belonging to this institution in which God's design on his personal history is effectively incarnated.

No one is able to opt for the Kingdom in the way Francis did if his faith depends on that which he left behind or the fears which arise from calculating his possibilities. In order to make profession it is necessary that one has experienced the absolute character of the call to follow Christ, the faithfulness of the Father, who loved us first, and the force of the Spirit that works within our weaknesses.

We have to be a sign of the Kingdom in a secular world by means of our option for social minority. We have to identify ourselves as an evangelical community not in order to adopt religious, institutional signs, but in virtue of our style of existence: voluntary social marginalization, poor dwelling place, humble style of dress, and a precarious type of life.

What does our radical choice serve if our hearts are filled with ourselves and we believe ourselves to be better than others? Minority is understood by means of a clear conscience which enables us to acknowledge our sinfulness

before the Lord as we are overcome by the superabundance of His mercy. It is in this experience that the intimate happiness of our vocation grows as well as our presence among humanity.

Chapter 3: 2-10

Among the elements and aspects which shape our form of life, the primary and most essential one is that of our relationship with God. The Catholic liturgy comes first because our Lord gave us such faith that we are able to live that gift that he offers of Himself in Christ Jesus, who died and rose again: the Eucharist, incomprehensible mystery of the body and blood of the Son of God, sacrifice of reconciliation and fraternity; the Word, spirit and life; and the liturgy of the hours, the response which the Spirit awakens in the heart of the Church.

Therefore we organize our schedule so that the principal encounter of the fraternity may be before the Lord. We are not monks who dedicate themselves principally to worship but we do subordinate everything to the spirit of prayer and devotion. Every fraternity selects its privileged moments in which it dedicates itself to the one thing necessary, that is, to empty itself of that which is not our essential and total Good: every day; at the end of every week; every month; every year . . . since it is our style to leave ample margin to personal initiative, every friar is to search for his space of solitude in order to encounter the Lord face to face.

Our most profound desire is to "pray always," be it in times of rest or times of action, in favorable as well as adverse times. We know that it is a grace of the Lord; but, in as much as it depends on us, we attempt to remove every impediment to the action of the Spirit. We keep watch over external stimuli, distractions, and at times we experience the desert, fasting, and prolonged periods of listening to the Word of the Lord.

We are not contemplative, however, who separate themselves from the world. We have learned from Jesus the liberty of love that subordinates ascetical practices to mercy and service of neighbor. The normal mediator of our asceticism is the state of material indigency and social dependency we have chosen.

Chapter 3: 11-15

We are sent into the world which is our cloister: streets, fields, offices, places of harmony and controversy, missions, beaches, shanties, hospitals. . . . Our mission begins when we enter into the condition of our confreres, brothers and sisters — especially those who suffer.

We want a new humanity, egalitarian and fraternal, reconciled within ourselves and with God, according to the peace promised by the prophets and announced as a gift from Jesus, the Messiah. We do not have any illusions

about this instable, violent, and unjust world. We are conscious that this world can only be transformed by those whose love exposes them to persecution and deprivation. Our method is to be scandalously evangelical: to live the beatitudes of the Kingdom in peace, peaceful and balanced, meek and humble. We believe that this love, that does not avenge itself and appears passive, is more powerful than death.

We subordinate the word to practice. Preaching urges us on, but we want to proclaim and actualize the Gospel, especially with our lives. We are pleased to draw near to those who are devoured by anxiety and wish them, with simplicity and frankness, the peace of the Lord, but we do not want to fall into the temptation of efficiency, not even with the pretense of pastoral motives. We have to remain minors in spite of the pressures, especially those within the Church and those of the "prudent" friars of the fraternity. We prefer the use of simple means, even though the expensive means appear to be more convenient for the duties which are considered necessary.

We make ourselves present in the culture, but without ideological power. We dedicate our lives to the promotion of justice, but without prominent social positions. We will announce the Gospel, but we value the person more than his or her belongings to the faith. Our most secure road is fidelity to our mission of minority and fraternity, taking on the mode of life belonging to the most unfortunate.

Chapters 4: 2 — 6: 7

Analyzing the powers that enslave men and women, we see that the first one is money. We would be like Pharisees if we were to limit ourselves to depending on the friar ministers for monetary support, or on the other hand, if we were to accumulate money in banks and live free from every insecurity. Our option is to create an economic model at the margins of a system based on property so that we can satisfy our necessities and still allow our future material needs to be in the hands of God.

The first principle: we live from the work of our hands as poor salaried workers. This is our normal way of subsistence which allows other friars to dedicate themselves freely to the care of the sick, to preach, to pray. . . . Work does not define our identity. It is a grace of the Lord, as is everything in the life of the friar minor. The important thing is that we work according to God's will, and consequently, with loving dedication.

The second principle: not even the results of our work belong to us. We do not want to claim anything before human tribunals. We would thus separate ourselves from those who perhaps would not even be able to exercise the right of appeal. To accept the principle of ownership leads, sooner or later, to substitute pride for the following of Christ and, on the institutional level, to accumulate rights that guarantee the future. We could end up having to turn to violence in order to defend our rights.

The third principle: the positive expropriation of any form of capital (the house in which we live, that which remains of our work, institutional or pastoral benefices from where we work . . .). Perhaps this is too much? Humanly speaking, yes; but it is the only way to render effectively our fidelity to the poverty and humility of Jesus. Perhaps this would expose us to shame before other religious institutions, and what is even worse, it might make our evangelical option appear to be crazy. It is the moment in which our faith is put to the test, the moment to contemplate the Lord who made himself poor in this world. We have faith that the Lord will not abandon those who put their trust in Him, even when it concerns material necessities.

This socioeconomic model is naturally the fruit of the wisdom of the Kingdom. We do not think that it is in any way applicable to other forms of Christian life, and even less to the society in which we live. It is our heritage as friars minor, that which Francis left us, and it is born from the profound inclination of the one who is Jesus' disciple. It is the disciple who prefers poverty to riches, expropriation to rights.

We have not created this model of life as an alternative at the margins of society or as a nostalgic return to earlier times. To the contrary, we want to be a critical model (from the inside) of the ruling system, in solidarity precisely with its victims,

Chapters 6: 8 — 7: 5

Poverty and minority leave us undefended before the implacable powers of this world, like lambs among wolves. We find our support in the Lord; the warmth of the community helps and consoles us like the warmth of a fireplace.

Everyday we are happily surprised and full of gratitude before the marvel that is the fraternity. It is the closest sign we have of the saving grace of the Lord. We are brothers because the Lord has called us to be so and has brought about the miracle of love among us. Therefore we justify our evangelical project to the degree that we are brothers in reality and with our actions.

We have a very particular sense of our fraternity. We do not understand it as a group of friends nor as work group nor as a religious community presided over by God's representative, but rather as a family of spiritual brothers in which everyone can be himself and manifest to another his needs with trust. The quality of our interpersonal relationships is the most important thing to us.

We appreciate profoundly the psychoaffective component of the fraternity. Without this mutual affection, comprehension and acceptance, community life would seem to be more a simple living together or a spiritual community of individuals that a true fraternity. We have a special sensitivity which leads us to the avoidance of paternalism and dependency. A certain individual-

ism can even be a danger for us. In this case, however, we do not mitigate in any way another essential value of the community: that one share all one is able to do and possesses. From this point of view, it is poverty which saves the fraternity in that necessity provokes abnegation and expropriation of self creates a relational dynamic.

In our fraternity, the preferred ones have to be "the little ones"; that is to say, the sick, the discouraged, those who provoke conflicts, those disgraced by their infidelity to their commitments, those who feel marginalized, and those who have been victimized by the sinful structure of our institution or the abuse of power. We are able to be a sign of the Kingdom only if "the golden rule" (do to others what you would have them do to you) regulates our relations. The ideal of a reconciled humanity begins in one's own home.

The fraternity is not made by projecting our infantile needs on to others in the search for an ideal of love without conflict. To the contrary, the unconditional forgetting of self is the necessary point of departure for love. It is necessary to avoid getting angry and losing a sense of peace by being scandalized by the mediocrity or weakness of a brother. It is necessary to love like a mother, and even more than a mother, since the fraternity is sustained in the final analysis by the gratuitous love of God.

In as much as we try to confirm in a visible way the mutual affection and communal desire to live the Gospel, so too will love find a place in us — that love which "believes all, hopes for all, supports all," that love which overcomes evil with good, as Jesus did when he was offered up for sinners.

Chapter 8

Our fraternity is relational as well as institutional. We have a common life project for which we are all responsible. We elect from among all the friars, however, one to be minister and servant of the universal fraternity. We commit ourselves to obey him and he helps us to bring to completion, to the degree it is possible, our evangelical vocation.

Our chapters take place during Pentecost since the Holy Spirit is the principle guide of the fraternity. As we come together from various places we feel our brotherhood. We treat those things which are useful for the common good and in a particular way we encourage each other to remain faithful to our choices. We discern the will of God in the historical circumstances in which we live and commission certain friars to fulfill special duties. We correct the abuse of power or the irresponsibility of the friar ministers and, if necessary, we remove them from their positions.

We are aware that the institution is one of the most direct menaces to our project of evangelical minority. The institution has a need for authority to reach its ends, but it is easy to pass from authority to power.

The fraternity has grown so much that it is divided into provinces. Each

one has an ample margin of autonomy. This responds to the desire to maintain a decentralized, more participative institution, where people and not functions are important.

Chapter 9

Among us there are certain friars who have received the particular mission to preach. They express with words that which all try to proclaim with their lives. But these, in addition, unite themselves to the apostolic ministry of the Word, which by the command of Jesus, gives life to the world.

In this we also have to be minors. And even if we are well prepared and have the charism of preaching, and the pastoral necessities clearly demand our word, we have decided to live in communion with the Catholic hierarchy. Truly we believe more strongly in the efficacy of love which searches for the last place than in the efficacy we possess. With the same logic, when bishops call us to collaborate in their ministries, we prefer the marginal or those services the others do not desire.

The friar preacher does not hold any privileged place in the fraternity. Here there is proper equality and expropriation. The preacher has to be disposed to put aside his office at any moment. The one who preaches is no better than the one who keeps quiet, and the one who runs a parish is no better than the one who cleans the house. Therefore we make sure that our formation does not promote classes, that the offices rotate as a sign of fraternal solidarity, and that duties are for a certain time period in order to avoid the temptation of power.

Preaching has to be faithful to revelation — but we take care to ensure that it be fitting especially to our life choice. We do not refute theological investigation, but we prefer the living word which directs the heart. We can be part of a preexisting parochial institution but we prefer to go about freely, dedicating ourselves to those most abandoned. The important thing is that our word resembles that of Jesus; simple and clear, so that while it spreads the joy of salvation it also provokes conversion and ultimate decisions.

It is necessary that what we preach has been previously heard and contemplated in prayer. When it devours us like a fire from the inside, our word will be the spirit of the risen Jesus. It will be a prophetic word to denounce and save, to uproot and plant. By means of the Gospel we are made servants of all people and that same Gospel gives us the liberty to speak both "in season and out of season."

Chapter 10: 2-7

Within the fraternity, the relations between the friar ministers and the friars under them in obedience constitute the test of our vocational maturity. Be we one or the other, we all part from the principle of love for minority. We

would be living a lie if deep down we continued to think in sociojuridical categories, preoccupied by our respective competences and in a defensive attitude. We all serve the same life and rule in the same spirit of obedience which induces us to wash each others' feet.

This does not take away the fact that, in practice, given our limits and our sins, tensions exist. The friar minister exercises his service in fraternal correction according to the spirit of the Gospel. In his use of authority he should not protect himself by separating himself from the friars and thus try to acquire for himself a sacred power over their consciences. On the contrary, he promotes fidelity with his life and, by taking personal notice of each friar and encouraging them, helps them as well as he can to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

The friars in obedience to the minister ought to remember their original proposal to observe the Gospel by living in obedience. In their profession they have denounced in a definitive way, for the love of God, to follow their own will. They no longer belong to themselves. The friar ministers, the other brothers and circumstances are the concrete situations that mediate for us the opportunity to lose our lives in order to gain them in Christ.

Obedience is not for us, however, a system of security or of ascetical perfection. Our manner of life among people and the respect for others, which characterizes our relations, leaves us at the mercy of our initiatives. This requires from us that we establish our vocation of obedience and the spiritual experience of discernment together, so that in all things and through all things we do the will of God.

At times certain provocative situations arise: an abuse of authority places a brother in a condition that gravely menaces his fidelity to the fundamental project of our life, or a friar feels called in conscience to realize a certain mission, or the spirit of a fraternity, in general, is so decayed that the institution has to be reformed from the roots. . . . These conflicts demand the spiritual maturity of the one who has reached the paradoxical synthesis of the sons of God: the friar has to disobey but he would prefer to suffer persecution rather than separate himself from his friars, or perhaps, he will submit himself blindly in the abandonment of faith. It is not possible to systematize with moral rules the mystery of Christian obedience as it deals with the living God.

Chapter 10: 8-15

From all that has come before one sees that evangelical radicalism is the profound dynamic which animates our rule and life. This radicalism can give the deceptive impression to search more for the fame of certain radical forms than the authenticity of the Kingdom, which, in the end, does not consist in either scarcity or abundance, but in the joy of the Holy Spirit. But how can we explain to those who have a vocation different from our own that, by means of his ineffable grace, the Lord has wanted us to be his disciples — even to the

point of losing everything and considering it all garbage so that we can find ourselves anew in Him and know the power of His resurrection and participate in His passion? It is "the hour" that no proposal of radical fidelity could choose. And in this sense, no friar minor is able to seize it. But why else do we sense, despite everything, this profound attraction of love to the point of identification with Jesus in the hour of the glory of absolute Love?

This journey asks a continual conversion from us which needs to be renewed everyday. The fruits of our flesh are pride, vainglory, and envy. We attribute everything we do and say to ourselves, we appropriate for ourselves the good that God does. Therefore we feel more joy for our pastoral successes, of for our personal maturity, or for the grandness of our institutions, of for our spiritual progress, than in disgrace and contempt.

The fruits of our flesh are avarice, preoccupation, and solicitude for this world. We feel more joy for the material success and social status that we have achieved — and even for the social-economic promotion of the poor for whom we are committed — than in persecution and injustice suffered for the love of Jesus.

The fruits of our flesh are defamation, murmuring, and the preoccupation of being considered important in our own fraternities. We feel more joy when our plans for the province are carried out, or when our ideological party dominates, or for the warmth of friendship and understanding that a companion offers us, or because we are appreciated by those in authority, or because we are admired for our culture and form of life — than in the uselessness, anonymity and weakness which opens for us the hidden treasure of "true and perfect happiness."

Perfect happiness is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Easter Jesus. The first thing that the Spirit teaches us is that we are to center our lives on that which counts, the reign of God and His justice, until we learn to consider everything else as excess. Then the Spirit stirs in us a sense of the absolute, not in a generic sense, but by means of an interior calm and insatiable attraction, which leads us to desire God alone. The Holy Spirit also brings about within us the spirit of prayer and devotion. We pray continually that the living flame be ignited in us and consume, purify, and transform everything. The same atmosphere, that of love, envelops everything: fusing the presence of the Lord and one's own heart. From now on, love will be one's passionate destiny until death. We will desire and do things others would consider to be crazy because all of life becomes a yearning to be identified with the crucified Jesus. Sickness, humiliation, persecution, injustice, slander . . . martyrdom. Joy and suffering inexplicably fuse in this atmosphere of love.

Chapter 11

Our type of life dedicates us to the Kingdom and demands from us a great sense of freedom. It is necessary to watch over our affective bonds. To what end will our freedom for the poor assist us if in the end we are bound by the subtle ties of the heart?

We do not live out our celibacy behind fortified walls. We are inserted in a society where women are being emancipated more and more, and where sex is no longer considered taboo. Now is the time to live our chastity with joyful liberty, but intelligently, so that the world feels itself unmasked.

There are some commitments which bind us with particularly tight bonds: belonging to the same religious family, a long-term pastoral relationship, relatives, shared living conditions, shared friendship. . . . It is not possible to stabilize precise rules; the friar minor lives on this earth as a "pilgrim and stranger."

Chapter 12: 2-3

Our fraternity does not exist for itself, but to promote the universal fraternity, the new humanity of those children who call God "Father" and ask for the definitive coming of the Kingdom. Mother earth is our sister; the water and the wind, the moon and the sun, together with fire and death are also our sisters and brothers. Those who suffer, those who do not believe, and all of humanity are our sisters and brothers as well. It is normal, therefore, that we are poised from the beginning to break ethnic, social, cultural, and religious barriers. We are moved by the creative and redemptive love of God which embraces us all. The Gospel, which unites all of creation, presses us to announce it with our lives and words.

Some friars feel themselves to be inspired by God to live this missionary vocation in difficult situations which could lead to martyrdom. We must discern these cases since heroic aspirations often hide obscure motivations. However, if the vocation is authentic, we come before the Lord with grateful hearts since He wishes to bring to consummation in such a way our evangelical ideal.

Chapter 12: 4-5

It is not easy to carry out our rule and life to the end. It is not a series of regulations and it is open to arbitrary interpretations. It is so essentially evangelical that it must necessarily create conflicts. We have to be a prophetic sign in the Church and in human history which, consequently, obliges us to be clear-sighted in respect to our centers of fidelity.

Our fidelity is both single and double at the same time. On one hand we have to give ourselves to the Lord and His will while, on the other hand, we are minors in the Church and our ultimate strength depends on our adherence to the Catholic faith. We have to be a voice of the Gospel that judges the Church but we also have to subordinate all of our efficacy to love which sacrifices itself. We do not ask anything else other than the freedom to observe the poverty and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ; yet, we decide to remain in institutions and concrete situations which do not always favor the incarnation of our radical project of life.

Only the Holy Spirit can bring about this synthesis. We entrust our fidelity, then, to the Spirit alone.

YOU LORD

In the recesses and cul-de-sacs of wood and leaf and mud and stone
I'm wandering
Waiting.

Silenced by the God-presence around me.
Always twilight-never grey but golden sheaths
dip and flow branch to branch, over and beside me.
The trees, their envelopes sculpted rough or peeling shiny smooth
beckon me to touch.

Timidly exploring folds of crusty pulpy skin
I embrace as though an old, old man
the bent and twisted body in my arms.

It is you Lord - no other artist's brush or pen
could ever be so strong, express such will to Be!
The tiny growing things, all roundness greenness
curiously prodding upward
reaching for warmth,
curling, unfurling, little trumpets heralding your Glorious Name
I see the miracle unfold before me
Each soft flower of each furry moss a separate living creature
in itself.

From moist and seeping pockets climbing,
the tender newlings gently press, green soft insistent opening,
blinking toward the sun.

And you again Lord - the mystery of birth
from mud and dirt bursts forth the child of the Spring-seed
the Easter sown, the gently harbored, nurtured new.

It is you Lord - always You, and on my knees
I bend to touch and welcome You.

Mary Zablocki, SFO

Book Reviews

Room For One More: A History of Franciscan Sisters, by David Flood, O.F.M., 1993, Missionary Sisters, West Paterson, NJ, 140 pages. \$10 plus \$1 for postage.

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

Father David Flood, O.F.M., a noted Franciscan historian, has written the story of the Missionary Poor Clares known as the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. The author traces the history of this group of women religious from their founding in 1910 to the present. Much of the material for this work was obtained from the archives of the Congregation as well as from conversations with individual members of the Congregation. The writer makes much use of the records of the various General Chapters of the Sisters. Throughout the book, Father David emphasizes the Franciscan roots and charism of this group of Sisters.

In 1910, Bishop Amandus Bahlmann, O.F.M., Prelate of the Diocese of Santarem in Brazil, wanted to have women religious to work in his diocese. He received approval from the abbess of the Conceptionist Ajuda Monastery in Rio de Janeiro to have four of her nuns come to Santarem to begin a new foundation. The Conceptionists are a group of cloistered Poor Clares founded by St. Beatrice da Silva in Spain in the Fifteenth Century. Bishop Bahlmann went to Rome to get approval to have the four nuns live "outside the cloister." He then traveled to Germany in search of a teacher, going to the Poor Clare Monastery in Muenster. The abbess in Muen-

ster put him in touch with Elizabeth Tombrock, a teacher who had recently applied for admission to the Poor Clares. Elizabeth was a good teacher who had felt the call to become a Poor Clare, but since she wanted to teach and to be a Poor Clare, she did not know how a teaching career could be combined with a cloistered life. Bishop Bahlmann's desire to begin a new enterprise in Santarem with devoted religious solved her problem. After Elizabeth Tombrock had been clothed in the attire of a Poor Clare postulant, with the name Sister Maria Immaculata, she and Bishop Bahlmann set sail for Santarem. In Santarem, the four Ajuda Conceptionists entered the newly established convent and Sister Maria Immaculata began her novitiate. Thus began the Conceptionist community calling themselves Missionary Poor Clares of the Immaculate Conception. One of the nuns from Ajuda, Mother Coletta, was named abbess of the new community. The new novice, Sister Maria Immaculata, began the study of Portuguese and learned it rapidly.

The new community of Poor Clare Missionaries began almost at once to teach the children of Santarem and to reach out to the adults. Mother Immaculata would spend the day in the school and then go out and walk among the poor of the area where she would notice their poverty and other needs. It was never a surprise among the Sisters when she would return to the convent and school with an orphan or a hungry person. Her mind-set was that there is always "room for one more" (P. 102). The readiness of Mother Immaculata to recognize the needs of the people and to try to alleviate them brought her and her Sisters to

the attention of the civil officials of Santarem. The Sisters soon became an important part of the community. The interest and care that the "holy women" showed to everybody in the community made them welcome among all levels of society.

The Missionary Poor Clares were first a foundation of the Conceptionist Poor Clares. The Conceptionists are a cloistered Order. Bishop Bahlmann had obtained a dispensation for his nuns to live outside the cloister, but most of the legislation for the Conceptionists still covered the Missionary Poor Clares. In 1922, the Order in Santarem was suppressed and Bishop Bahlmann was authorized to found a diocesan congregation for its members. The bishop founded the Congregation of the Missionary Poor Clare Sisters of the Immaculate Conception with Mother Immaculata as Superior General. The Congregation was aggregated to the Order of Friars Minor and adopted the Rule of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. The nuns of the Poor Clare Monastery in Muenster objected to the name Poor Clare in a missionary congregation, so the words "Poor Clare" were eliminated from the name of the congregation.

From their very beginning, the Sisters received their primary support from Germany. When the First World War caused devastating effects on the German economy, Bishop Bahlmann and Mother Immaculata sought and obtained help from the New York Franciscans. Although Bishop Bahlmann and Mother Immaculata came together to New York, when the bishop was ready to return to Santarem, Mother Immaculata had become ill and had to remain in the United

States. When it became evident that Mother Immaculata's health was not going to get better, the motherhouse of the congregation was established at St. Bonaventure, NY and later moved to West Paterson, New Jersey.

The community continued to increase in numbers and in areas of ministry. First, they ministered in Santarem, then in other locations in the State of Para in Brazil. As the Sisters went out to other countries, e.g., Germany, United States, China, Africa, the congregation found it beneficial to divide itself into provinces, especially because of the diversity of languages and culture.

After the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the document *Perfectae Caritatis* called for all religious to renew themselves, personally and corporately. Renewal was to be brought about by reflection upon the original spirit of the founder(s). Such a task of reflection by the Sisters would necessarily lead to Mother Immaculata. The Council document on *The Church in the Modern World* called upon religious to update themselves to the world. The two documents led to a crisis among the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. For the longest time, religious were taught to "strive for perfection" and to "shun the world." Now they are encouraged to be "in the world" but not "of the world."

Centering their attempt at renewal on Mother Immaculata and the beginnings of their Congregation in Santarem, the Sisters discovered that the renewal of their religious life could be accomplished most effectively if they could continue to remember and to emphasize that faithfulness to the mission that led

to the foundation of their community would assure their continuation as a congregation. That mission was exemplified in Mother Immaculata and the first sisters. The mission of the congregation was well expressed by Mother Immaculata when she applied in 1916 for incorporation in the State of Para. She stated that she and her Sisters "dispensed education and alleviated need" (p. 29). The General Chapters of the Congregation since the Second Vatican Council reveal a true updating of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and a realignment of their places of mission.

This reviewer found **Room For One More** to be an interesting story. Father David Flood has caught the central feature of the process of a Franciscan congregation discovering its roots and making the adjustments that the renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council required. The author's ability to sift through the volumes in the archives of the Congregation attests to his patience and thoroughness of study. What the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception have achieved is carefully presented in a readable and interesting fashion. Other religious congregations will benefit from a reading of **Room For One More**.

Your Life Story: Self-Discovery and Beyond, by Edward J. O'Heron, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1993, paper, 181 pages.

Reviewed by Daniel Hurley, O.F.M.,

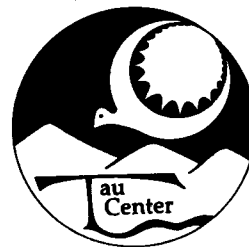
Fr. Edward J. O'Heron, a priest of the Diocese of Syracuse and chaplain at the State University of New York at Cortland, has written a book about self-discovery emphasizing the place of imagination in the search. "I invite you

upon a journey to and beyond self-discovery through the use of your imagination" (1). In twelve chapters, the author shows how the reader can use the power to form images to come to an awareness of his/her personal identity as well as his/her relationship with others. Imagination and memory are closely related: both are ways of forming mental images that assist one in growing in an awareness of self.

Each of the twelve chapters concludes with a series of questions for reflection and discussion and with an exercise for the reader to use for his/her own understanding of the subject matter of the chapter. After the exercise, the author lists a few references that deal with the subject material just reflected upon. This arrangement of the chapters suggests that the author sees his book being used in group gatherings.

Father O'Heron displays an acquaintance with many spiritual writers and many authors of literature. His references to these writers help the reader to reflect more deeply on his/her spiritual journey toward self-understanding and toward an appreciation of the wonderful work of God's creation, our inner selves.

This reviewer recommends this little book to all those who are striving to love God and one another. Each reader will be surprised to discover how much one's imagination means to a person. In a society that emphasizes the rational over the imaginative, a book that displays the benefits of the right-brain function while recognizing the importance of the left-brain function is a real contribution to a spiritual reading library.



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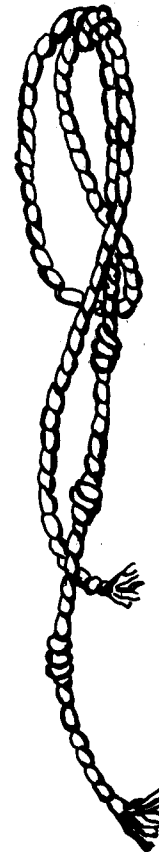
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Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

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 Clerics¹
EpCust: Letter to Superiors¹
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful¹
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin: Letter to a Minister
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order
EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of the People
ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father
Form Viv: 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
¹I, 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).

Clare and Chrism

BISHOP JEROME HANUS, O.S.B.

Our attention, during this celebration of the Chrism Mass, is focused on two important aspects of our Catholic faith: the sacred oils of the liturgy and the service of priests. Throughout the entire history of the Church, Christians have gathered to receive these gifts and to thank God for them. We stand in that tradition of saints and sinners.

This year, 1994, is the eight hundredth anniversary of the birth of one of those saints - Clare of Assisi. We all know that Saint Clare was a great woman of the Church, deeply devoted to Christ, famous for her dedication to evangelical poverty in the radical spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi.

But I think it is instructive to ask Saint Clare what she thought about the sacramental oils and about the priesthood. What would Clare say to us, if she had the chance to speak about the Chrism Mass?

First, in regard to the oils which we use in the sacraments: Saint Clare was baptized in the cathedral church of Assisi, in the same font where Francis had been baptized. Here she was marked with the oil of catechumens and anointed with the sacred chrism. Her mother insisted that she be named Clare as a prophetic gesture. Her life was to become a clear light (*clara luce*) whose rays would illumine the whole world. She was to be a lamp whose oil was always burning, waiting for the Coming of Christ.

A few years later, at her confirmation, she was again anointed with chrism and received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Remembering her character as a youth, one biographer commented that "filled with the unction of grace, she dispensed abroad the sweet fragrance of virtue, as a vessel of sweet-smelling spices, even when closed, fills the air with its aroma" (Marianus Fiege, *Princess of Poverty*, Long Prairie, MN: The Neumann Press, 1991, p. 35).

The Most Reverend Jerome Hanus, OSB is bishop of the diocese of Saint Cloud, Minnesota. He delivered this homily at the Chrism Mass in the Cathedral of Saint Mary on March 24, 1994.

One of the great miracles of her life involved oil. The monastery's supply of this essential material was totally depleted. When informed of this, "Clare took the vessel used for oil, and with great humility, first washed it with her own hands, and then placed it outside (the monastery door. . . . Then) through the all-powerful intervention of God, and the prayers of St. Clare, the vessel was found filled with-oil" (p. 47) and the community's supply of oil was assured.

Finally, in her last illness, she longed to receive the sacramental anointing. By this time, she had become quite famous. Priests and bishops were competing for the honor to anoint her. But her close friend, Rinaldo dei Signori, performed the service. He was a cardinal! She received the viaticum from the Minister Provincial. Then even the Pope came to visit her on her deathbed. She marveled about how Christ came to her first in the sacraments and the in His Vicar (p. 73-74). What a consolation that was to her. But even in this solemn moment, when she noticed that Friar Juniper was present in the room, she asked him to do his act. He was the renowned Jester of the Lord, and he "filled Clare with new joy" (p. 75). All of these delightful details show us how much Clare treasured the sacred oils used by the Church in its liturgy.

The other focus of our celebration this evening is the priesthood. Looking at the life of Saint Clare, what attitude did she have toward the gift and vocation of the ordained priesthood?

Two incidents are revealing. At one period in her life, something was bothering the relation between the Franciscan priests and the Poor Clare sisters. We don't know the details. But the Pope (Gregory IX) decided to take action. He strictly forbade any ordained friar to visit the monastery of Clare and to preach there, without his explicit permission. At the same time he said that the lay brothers could continue visiting the sisters, in order to help them harvest their crops, take care of the livestock, and repair their buildings.

Saint Clare reacted, her biographer says, "with great bitterness" (p. 65). In her dismay, she immediately discharged all the lay brothers, complaining that the Pope had taken away those who furnished the community with the bread of the soul. She wondered whether the Pope thought that physical nourishment and material concerns were necessary, while the ministry of priests could be reduced, restricted, and nearly eliminated. If she couldn't get the Word of God proclaimed by the priest friars, she didn't want the manual labor offered by the lay friars.

Needless to say, the Pope backpeddled in a hurry. He didn't want to be blamed for the starvation (material or spiritual) of a convent of nuns! The biographer writes that he immediately revoked the prohibition and left the matter in the hands of the Franciscans" (p. 65). Smart man!

Clare knew that the spiritual life cannot be sustained or enhanced if people do not hear God's Word preached effectively. She valued highly the ministry of the ordained, whether they were teaching or celebrating the Eucharist or going forth on mission to convert the non-Christian peoples of the world. A church without priests was inconceivable to her.

A second incident from her life reveals even more powerfully and poignantly the appreciation Saint Clare had for the service that clergy provide in the Church - whether that be priestly ministry or preaching by deacons. It was a dream that Clare had one day. She was climbing the ladder of ascent into heaven. At the top of the ladder stood Francis who as we know was most likely a deacon. "When (Clare) reached St. Francis, the saint bared his breast and said to Lady Clare: Come, take and drink. . . . After she did so, what she tasted was so sweet and delightful she could in no way describe it" (*Process* 3, 29).

The image is powerful. Clergy are to nourish the faithful with the rich food which comes from God, the spiritual nourishment contained in God's truth and grace. Priests, deacons, and bishops are to mediate God's Word in such a way that it gives life and strength to the faithful. God's truth must become the fiber and warmth, the blood and energy of every believer.

The image which pictures the relationship between clergy and faithful is an unusual and challenging one. "To suck at the breast is everyone's primitive experience. In her vision, Clare relives, with Francis, that same primitive experience of total rapport and affectivity. . . . The relationship between mother and child is an intense relationship of exchange between one who gives and one who receives" (Marco Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993, p. 146).

The essential features of this relationship, Clare believed, should characterize the pastoral service of the ordained. Priests have a most sacred responsibility. They must satisfy the hunger of the new-born with spiritual milk (cf. 1 Peter 2:2) until the faithful grow into the fullness of the mature Christ. Their magisterial function, however, must be performed in a sensitive, caring, maternal fashion.

It is because they have such a vocation, that priests are anointed with sacred chrism at their ordination. Through the imposition of hands, through the invocation of the Holy Spirit, they are empowered to continue the mission of Christ. They are "sent to bring the Gospel to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners" (*Lk* 4:18f).

We thank them for their dedicated, caring service. And with Saint Clare, through this liturgy, we thank God for the special gifts we have received - the holy oils of our sacraments, and the holy priests serving in this local Church.

Clare: Mirror of Humanism

MOTHER MARY FRANCIS, P.C.C.

Into that space and down that path which opened out of the high Middle Ages into the burgeoning Renaissance came two figures unlikely by worldly standards to become notable influences in the humanism just then beginning to gather its savants and its disciples into a new philosophy centered upon man. The young Assisian minstrel turned troubadour of God and the girl of aristocratic earthly plenteousness turned princess of poverty were to shine out first in Assisi and later throughout the world as entirely God-centered. Francis and Clare the saints of Assisi which became and remains world-famous simply because of their having lived there, might seem hardly to qualify as humanists. Yet, that is precisely what they were in the profoundest sense.

The newly-reawakened fascination with the ancient Greeks' accent on beauty, truth, and goodness burst like a meteor upon the society of St. Francis' and St. Clare's time. It burgeoned into a whole fresh galaxy of works of art, of music, of poetry. Men grew heady with the wine of their own achievements. And with continuing acceleration, men and women placed themselves at the center of creation. Thus falsely positioned, the glittering and intoxicating productions of mind and spirit which proliferated in the school of humanism cast their own shadow upon the very beauty they created, drew a web of unclarity over truth, and laid a threat to the goodness which can flourish only in God. All that was best in humanism as philosophy and attitude and life-principle became endangered, often enough fatally so, by wrong positioning. The greatness of man threatened to supplant the greatness of God. And the immediate result was the dwindling and drooping of mortal greatness after its re-rooting in un-Deific soil.

To St. Francis and St. Clare, it was given as a readily historically-recognizable reality to be outstanding Christian humanists. Whether as poet, his own

Mother Mary Francis is no stranger to readers of The CORD. In addition to being Abbess of the Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Roswell, New Mexico, Mother Mary Francis has been influential in establishing new monasteries throughout the United States and Europe. She is also a prolific writer on the spirituality of the Second Order.

eyes blind, singing a canticle to Brother Sun; whether as musician with his own kind of Stradivarius; whether as dramatist on Christmas Eve at Greccio, Francis sang, played, dramatized the centrality of God. And then, after him, came St. Clare. As today come after Clare the 18,000 strong who are called to be Clarian humanists. Centered on God, cloistered in God, they reach out to gather the whole world, as she did, into an easy embrace with arms of concern rendered universal by reason of their "clinging to the poor Christ" (2 LAg) as the center of their lives and the only meaning of all men's lives. Clinging to Christ, one necessarily embraces all mankind as meaning and destiny lie in Him alone.

Clare's God-centered humanism unfolds in every chapter of her brief *Rule*. Without ever abdicating her own authority, she consults her Sisters in all matters of consequence whether it be concerning the reception of new members, debts to be incurred, officials to be elected, or whatever. She presents unequivocal reminders to the Sisters that from a vow of obedience there follows a strict obligation to obey. You made a promise to the Lord, declares Clare. Observe its consequences. Then, from this clearly-articulated God-centered truth, she passes with ease to an equally lofty directive, humanistic in the deepest and realest sense: the abbess is to have "a close friendship" (*Rule*, X) with all the Sisters whom she is called and elected to serve as handmaid.

It is only in their God-centering that humanistic values can avail for growth and for happiness and be of any real human avail. Clare highly accents humanity, sometimes describing clearly its more inglorious expressions as when she deals with serious offenders against the form of religious Profession who remain adamant in the face of the abbess' admonitions (*Rule*, X), only to add almost airily that one ought not to worry about such things, as that would hinder love (*Rule*, X). This woman whose eighth centenary of birth we celebrate this year had a marvelously clear view of humanity's exalted possibilities and likely lapses because she was centered in Christ. One assuredly gets a better perspective on the human condition when one has put on the mind of Christ which is exactly what Clare did. Neither carried away by the exaltation of humanity nor disillusioned by the inadequacy of humanism as such, she became a clear mirror of true humanism, its possibilities made viable in Christ-centering, where its inadequacies are supplied by his saving grace and its failures redeemed in his Blood.

Thus, showing herself a clear mirror of true humanism, St. Clare was undeniably a high lyricist and a firm realist. She less speaks than sings as she invites her Sisters to that glorious climax of humanism which is to be lifted above one's own human possibilities.

This is that height of most high poverty who has appointed you, my most dear Sisters, heiresses and queens of the kingdom of heaven. . . . Let her who leads you into the land of the living be your portion. Totally clinging to her, most beloved Sisters, desire for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and his most holy Mother to have nothing else forever under heaven (*Rule*, VIII).

For Clare, it was, as with St. Francis, always a matter of all or nothing. There existed for them no middle road of compromise. Half-heartedness was not for them whose human hearts are revealed to us as most truly human because of being identified with Christ. "The Christ of Umbria!" said the folk of Assisi in describing St. Francis. "Footprint of the Mother of God" has become the description of St. Clare.

What is required of our human condition that it be exalted in Christ was less set down by Clare than sung out by her.

With how much solicitude and with how much enthusiasm of mind and body ought we to keep the commandments of God and of our Father Francis, so that, with the Lord helping, we may give back to Him the talent multiplied! (*Testament of St. Clare*)

Clare's God-centered humanism unfolds in every chapter of her brief Rule.

One has to exercise care, she cautions, if one is to exceed one's own possibilities by the power of Christ. What He gave, Clare declares, must gather interest. What it all reduces to and ascends toward she sets down in a simple, all-demanding poetic reach beyond what secular humanism ambitions: "Always be lovers of God and of your souls and of all your Sisters. . ." (*Blessing of St. Clare*).

Clare's poetic flights are always undergirded with her firm realism. For our humanity to be exalted, it must be aware of all that demeans it. In the way of life she gave to her Sisters, she makes clear demands and issues solemn warnings.

The Sisters shall not claim anything as their own (*Rule*, VIII).

If, the enemy goading her, any Sister shall have sinned mortally against the form of our profession . . . (*Rule*, IX).

Well aware of the enemy's goading, she lifts a warning finger of love:

Let us be on our guard, then, that if we have set out along the way of the Lord, we in no way at all turn away from it at any time because of our own fault or negligence or ignorance (*Testament of St. Clare*).

Because St. Clare's thoughts indeed dwelt in heaven, she had by that very reason a much clearer understanding of the human situation.

I direct and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ that the Sisters beware of all pride, vain glory, envy, covetousness, care and solicitude about this world, detraction and complaining, dissension and division (*Rule*, X).

Showing herself a clear mirror of true humanism, St. Clare was undeniably a high lyricist and a firm realist. She less speaks than sings as she invites her Sisters to that glorious climax of humanism which is to be lifted above one's own human possibilities.

For Clare, well-practised in humanism and beyond many humanists, knew that unity remains vulnerable. She took precautions. She was unembarrassed by the nomenclature of fallen humanity's proclivities.

It is St. Clare, eight hundred years old and entirely new, who is offered to young persons of our century as indeed a mirror of true humanism which inevitably draws youthful hearts but is too often merely secular and, therefore, inadequate to their ideals. As it was with another great lyricist, Francis Thompson, so it is frequently enough for young people increasingly disenchanted with worldly values and false promises: a reaching out for "linked fantasies in whose blossomy twist / I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist."¹ And it will always be for today's youth, as it was for Thompson, a discovery that fantasies, even though telling of beauty, even though offering a certain allegory of truth, even while laying claim to being essential goodness, are inadequate: that the "blossomy twists" in which humanists delighted always prove "failing, — cords of all too weak account / for earth with heavy griefs so overplussed."²

It is the joy which emanates from the happy lifelong effort to allow Christ to lift humanity above itself into the fullness of his plan which attracts young

women today no less than in St. Clare's day to "lay down their shining hair" at the feet of Christ and follow a medieval saint as modern as today or even as tomorrow.

This light burned only, sent no fissured atom Shivering down some miles of naked space. This light just flickered, faithful, till the final Sputter of yearning burst her drift of flesh.³

Man-centered humanism made a large mark in centuried history. But it gave us too often a blurred beauty, a less than fullness of truth, an uncertain goodness. The man-at-the-center driving philosophy of our century fails perhaps more notably in its offering a distortion of beauty, a confusion of truth, a self-seeking which is a caricature of real goodness with just enough philanthropy added to attempt a presentation of reality actually and painfully non-present. With Clare, it was not so.

She was a small light burning. All the arc lamps
Of noise are shattered, all the spotlights gone
Away to weep in their unhappy ruins,
But the Clare-candle whispers on and on.

Where was the famous dictum, where the flashing
Deed, the policy taken, history turned?
Who would remember Clare wrapped in her silence,
Once the bare feet were cold, the eyelids closed?

Who will remember Clare, after the gentle
Hands are still, the kept heart only stone?⁴

The readily-verifiable fact is that battalions of young women are remembering even unto our generation and this on every continent. Ours is again a strongly humanistic age too often understood as the positioning of men and women at the center of the world, the terrestrial world and the world of the person. It is an era notable for its attempt to exalt human possibilities as sufficient of themselves to achieve the fulfillment which actually lies in Christ alone.

Clare never hesitated to state clearly that the true fulfillment of one's humanity is not a matter of easy self-glorification and self-gratification but of struggle and suffering. "The path is difficult and the gate through which one passes and enters into life is narrow" (*Testament of St. Clare*). And yet, in the end, it is that narrow gate of which Jesus himself spoke (*Mt 7:13*) and that difficult path which He Himself took throughout his human life which opens on to true human fulfillment. One sees evidences of this clearly enough in our own day where amid the frequently frenetic pursuit of self-satisfaction which actually cannot long even superficially satisfy nor ever radically satisfy at all there is a growing fascination with the joy of those who have sought and found human fulfillment in Christ placed at the center of their lives.

Where an authentic Christ-centered humanism flourishes, though in human beings with notable signs of belonging to a fallen race, young girls of today will still find their way to the cloister as will also those asking prayers as they seek a meaning to life's perplexities and sufferings. This is the paradoxically humanistic cry of St. Clare's cloistered daughters today: "God is enough. God is enough, and everything else is not enough," their cloistered lives cry out to the world. And this because they find everything in Him.

Let me share with you some personal experiences. When we came to Roswell, New Mexico, in the United States of America, we made the foundation in this small Southwestern town for the spiritually intelligent reason given by the Archbishop that it was (at that time) "the least Catholic town in his historic but poor archdiocese." No one had ever heard of Roswell. "I wonder," mused the founding abbess, looking over her meager community of eight nuns, "if we'll ever grow to be twenty here." She answered her own speculative musing: "I guess not." But now there are thirty-five, and this after four foundations and one restoration. Over the vast expanses of the United States of America, St. Clare's enclosed life of prayer and happy penance reaches in a silent beckoning to girls from New York to California, from New Jersey to Idaho, from Michigan to Texas. The spiritual fascination of Clare's ever-youthful and vibrant ideal reaches into our universities and our business offices, into budding careers in nursing and teaching, into a beckoning literary world and onto the concert stage. They come to

It is St. Clare, eight hundred years old and entirely new, who is offered to young persons of our century as indeed a mirror of true humanism.

And who shall witness bear the very tender
Paradox, the irony of God:
That the Clare-light has filled the earth and heavens
Past flame and torch and glare and beam. . .

Those thousands strong who say no word, and lightly
Spurn the strange earth with their unslipped feet,
Who fling their gleaming hair away like laughter
And turn their faces toward a nameless spring.

And sing! because one small light flickered, faithful.
So the Clare-candle lights the weary world.⁵

That faithful flickering of the Clare-candle is newly set this centennial year in Africa, in Tahiti, in India; its persistent burning continued in more and more European lands. One of the newest is that in the Netherlands, sent forth from Roswell in 1990.

We felt singularly unprepared to go forth and abroad in 1990, our youngest foundation in the United States being only three and a half years old and ourselves feeling outstandingly disequipped to venture into a country indeed rich in Catholic tradition but with some of its Catholic membership presently suffering in striking measure a notable theological confusion and evidencing an increasingly-pervasive withdrawal from loyalty to the Supreme Pontiff and allegiance to the Church's magisterium. Nor did we know the language. Nor were we versed, much less steeped, in Holland's rich culture. These were some of the natural considerations that proposed as a verdict: impossible. Only there was the eye of God upon us. Only there was the voice of our Mother St. Clare in our hearts. So, forth and abroad we went, half a dozen strong, strong in dedication to the ideal of St. Clare if painfully aware of weakness in all areas other! We wondered, though we definitely did not worry, about how we would be received. Never could we have dreamed what the reception was to be.

"God is enough. God is enough, and everything else is not enough."

It required something of a managerial feat to get the six foundresses plus myself and the abbess of our young foundation in Belleville, Illinois, of the United States of America, plus our earthly effects organized and enplaned for the land from which, more than a century earlier, the Poor Clares had first come to plant the ideal of St. Clare in the New World. We were swept into the skies, and a great hush fell upon us. We were going to Holland, six of us to remain there. We were responding to the "*Venite*" of her whose voice still resonates in the hearts of her worldwide-flung daughters eight centuries after her first appearance on earth.

The hush on our hearts lifted into a chorus of gratitude as we deplaned and saw so many, many waving hands. A whole little company of "official welcomers" was there to greet us and drive us to the Poor Clare Monastery in Eindhoven where we were to remain for three days preparing for the dedication of our own little mini-monastery in Elshout. Never could we have dreamed what the special "Commission" set up to assist us, in company with our dear

Bishop, the mayor, other notables, and the townsfolk had prepared for us. Our arms were heaped with flowers as we left the monastery of Eindhoven to be driven to the outskirts of Elshout. Nothing at all had been divulged of what was to be. So, when we were invited to leave the little procession of cars, we were amazed to hear a band playing. And then the medieval pageantry began to unfold.

Round-eyed with wonder, we were taken to two horse-drawn carts, four of us enthroned in each. Everyone else walked. There were two bands playing. Guildsmen of the "*Onze Lieve Vrouwe Schuts*" (the Guild of Our Lady of Protection -- the title expresses Our Lady's guardianship) in their colorful uniforms marched beside us, before us, behind us. There was a children's corps holding raised batons and wearing pert plumed caps; they were to make a guard of honor for us as we entered the town hall holding the batons in a processional arch then each pair of batons smartly lifted as we passed through the archway. There were bridesmen leading the horses. And there was joy everywhere. The townspeople lined the streets, smiling and waving, some weeping. And, once in the town, there were welcomes and more welcomes from the Bishop, the Vicar, the Commission, the mayor, priests, religious, laity.

It was from Holland, I told the people, that our U.S.A. founding Mothers had come in 1877. Having been driven out of their native Germany by the *Kulturkampf*, the foundresses-for-America had been given sanctuary in Holland. Now, their Poor Clare daughters of a century and score of years later were coming in response to the call of Clare to repay Holland's favor and seek its hospitality again, this time in a new foundation. I told them that I was entrusting to them six measures of my most precious treasure, spiritual daughters. And I saw that they understood. The American ambassador to Holland had sent a letter of regret that he, too, could not have been with us on this day of dedication.

The band played for us again. The welcoming speeches continued. The smiles went on making their own arches of love over us. And then we were solemnly marched from the town hall to our own little monastery, *Clarissenklooster Maria Moeder van de Kerk*. But it was not yet done! On the lawns before our monastery, two of the guildsmen performed their historic ancient flourishing of the colors. Enthralled, bemused, we watched the two costumed men furl and unfurl the huge flags, leap over the flags, dance under the flags, thrust the flags "up in the heavens," bring the flags down to the earth (but never once touching the ground), while the drum roll went on and on, and the King and Queen of the Guild, costumed and crowned, stood with us to watch. Especially moving was the flower-lined entrance walk to our monastery with its boxes of vari-colored blooms set on high white pedestals. And at the front sidewalk and again at the entrance door were erected large, large flags: the

Dutch flag and the American flag. And in our hearts, the flag of St. Clare, once more unfurled. And that night, the midnight rising for Matins began in Elshout, we trust never to end.

When Mother Therese and I flew back to our youngest U.S.A. daughter house in Belleville, we were resuscitated from our exhaustion by the vision we saw. It was now 12:15 a.m. and two of the Sisters were waiting up to receive us. They had lighted up the chapel, so that we came toward that splendid "vision in the night." The golden-lit spread of windows revealed the cloister/chapel open grille before us. Throned upon that gold-green expanse was the near life-sized Crucifix, our Lord's arms spread wide in redemptive love and welcome for His weary pilgrims returned to this home from the new home abroad. We were swept into welcoming embraces. And then, for the other Belleville Sisters whom we would greet the next morning, there sounded the rising bell for the midnight Office. The rhythm of our Poor Clare life went on. It goes on. And now it goes on anew in Holland.

So there stand the donated giant-sized Dutch/English dictionaries next to the Bible, and our hearts go marveling back through the centuries to when a young Italian girl, Clare Offreduccio, went to build a dwelling place for God in an old building outside Assisi and then comes forward again to young Americans busy at building Him another dwelling place in Holland. I know that they, no less than St. Clare, have heard "that strange imperious call" in their hearts: "Leave your people and your father's house and go into the land that I will show you."

Mirror of humanism indeed is St. Clare, eight centuries old and every year her ideal newly-born on each of the cluster of continents. And this because she mirrors Christ. Her achievements for God and Holy Church are perpetuated in each century and on every continent because they spring out of the Heart of Christ. Her rich humanism endures because it is centered and rooted in God. Humanists in the mode she was and in the expression she is, her eighteen thousand daughters gather around her in this eighth centennial year to

Fling their gleaming hair away like laughter
Turning their faces toward a nameless spring,
To sing! because one small light flickered, faithful;
And the Clare-candle lights the weary world!⁶

End notes

¹ Francis Thompson, "The Hound of Heaven" (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, Ltd.)

² *Ibid.*

³ Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C., "Candle in Umbria," in *Where Caius Is* (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1955), 72.

⁴ *Ibid.* ⁵ *Ibid.* ⁶ *Ibid.*

The Dossal of Saint Clare

PACELLI MILLANE, O.S.C.

The Power of Images

The Fourteenth Century was a time when religious images abounded in the churches: walls covered with frescoes, carved pulpits, free-standing sculpture, painted panels, huge vaulted frescoed ceilings over the main altar with a large crucifix suspended from the ceiling. Margaret Miles quotes a thirteenth text, John of Genoa's *Catholicon*, which had summarized three reasons for the use of images:

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.¹

Images have the power to engage the emotions, and, thus, artistic representation is able to affect the will. At the very minimum, images instruct, but they are capable of drawing the beholder into ecstatic states of contemplation. Fourteenth Century worshippers were trained by the multiplication of images surrounding them to enter more deeply into the experience and to erase the distance between their own moment of existence and the event or figures of Scripture. They were encouraged to identify their own lives with past and future sacred events depicted in frescoes and to enter into the emotional intensity of religious paintings.

Images potentially can draw the worshipper into a participation in the qualities and way of life formulated by the image. Traditionally, religious affections have been formulated and trained by images. Religious training directed to the intellect through language does not engage the emotions as effectively. Through images Christians are moved to imitate and assimilate the strength, the courage, and the love they contemplate in religious art.

Contemplation lifts the person out of the familiar world and into the living presence of the spiritual world. This begins with a physical vision, and gradu-

Sister Pacelli, a Poor Clare from Valleyfield, Quebec, has recently completed her masters degree in Franciscan Studies at the Franciscan Institute. Her writings bespeak both her devotion and study, her prayer and reflection, her long spiritual and intellectual journey with Clare.

ally becomes a more concentrated seeing that eventually overcomes the conceptual barrier that exists between the visible and the spiritual world. Both intellect and affections need to be engaged in worship. Religion needs images to accomplish its task of formation by attraction; without artistic images religion is qualitatively impoverished. Secular culture very effectively captures our attention through the daily use of images in advertising, especially through television. Television bombards the viewer with images. Unfortunately, we often we don't realize how much it informs and forms our imagination. We need be more selective about what we take into our consciousness through our sense of sight. We are more accustomed or aware of the power of the word, whether read or spoken, than of the image or symbol.

Margaret Miles offers some interesting reflections on the use of images. We can approach images for much more than simple information; she says

The critical use of images involves understanding the particular message received from the painting; ultimately it means being able to articulate the relevance of this message to my present affective life.

One must not move too rapidly, however, from the use of an image to the critical use of that image. Articulation of the message received from the image must come as the spontaneous result of living with the image. One must look at the same image again and again until it has attracted, has drawn to the surface, all the associations, memories, and longings that originally gave the image its sense of importance for me. Then the personal message of the image can be articulated. Only in this way will critical understanding of the image not dilute its original visual/affective power.²

Importance of Images in the Medieval Times

Our study of Clare and Francis need be aware of the power and role of image within their culture. As Wayne Simsic points out:

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.³

Simsic explains that the medieval worshipper did not passively look at images but "participated" in them. Illiterate people enjoyed a visual sophistication that came from seeing many frescoes which helped them to understand the symbols. They were able to translate them into their own lives. This simple viewing as an entry into the mystery differs in approach from that of the analytical mind. One of the very powerful moments in the life of St. Francis occurred as he gazed on the image of Jesus on the crucifix in the church of Saint Damian.

Historiated Dossals

Historiated dossals of the saints, which are from the period of the 13th and first half of the 14th century, have not been given a lot of attention. They were usually commissioned of anonymous local artists for churches in provincial towns around 1215-1350. These panels emerged at the same time as the monastic reforms of the early 13th century, but did not receive the same kind of attention as the mosaics, the fresco cycles, or the large painted Crucifixes.⁴

In a visual manner, the historiated dossal narrates the life of the saint. It was thus another mode of popularizing the life of the saint. These dossals were not conceived in the abstract but followed a recognized model to commemorate the vocation, sanctity, miracles and obsequies of the individual saint. There were specific categories of holiness. Men were listed as Patriarchs and Prophets; Apostles, Evangelists and Disciples; martyrs; Pontiffs, Confessors and Doctors; and Monks and Hermits. Women appeared only as Virgins and Widows.⁵ The classification of a saint was fixed at the time of canonization.

The canonizations of both Francis and Clare took place two years after their deaths. The papacy authorized a legend to be written and encouraged the construction of large churches in their honor. We are fortunate to have the formal canonization process for Clare which offers documented evidence of her life as well as her holiness.⁶ Historiated dossals also present the life of the saint.

A feature common to the dossals is that they present a full-length portrait of the saint surrounded with panels which depict the life of the saint. The number of panels differs, as do the scenes chosen from the saint's life. There are ten historiated dossals for St. Francis, which far outnumber those of other saints. The Bardi dossal of Francis has twenty panels, and the one at Pescia has only six. The dossal of Clare, which has eight panels, is most similar to another dossal of Francis that is attributed to the shop of Guido da Siena in the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Siena.⁷ At times the sources for a particular dossal can be determined. For example, the dossal of St. Francis at Pescia by Bonaventure Berlinghieri follows Celano's *First Life*; the dossal in the Bardi Chapel at Santa Croce in Florence uses Celano's *Second Life* as its source. These dossals are dated 1235 and around 1250 respectively.⁸ Unfortunately, while these dossals of Francis have been studied, not as much attention has been given to the dossal of Clare.

Dossal of St. Clare

The historiated dossal of St. Clare is a painting on wood with the central figure of St. Clare surrounded by eight episodes taken from her life. It hangs high on the wall in the right transept of the Basilica of Saint Clare in Assisi. It



is easy to visit the Basilica and miss this lovely painting because of its placement. This dossal, according to Wood, was the first thirteenth century panel dedicated to a female monastic and the earliest surviving painting and narrative cycle devoted to St. Clare.⁹ It has been attributed to several different painters,

sometimes to Cimabue and more recently to the Saint Clare Master, or the "Maestro di s. Chiara." Wood has dated this anonymous panel of Clare in the 1280's because of the slightly damaged inscription discovered during the restoration of the dossal: "*facte fuerunt iste sub anno dni 128- / indic xi tepore dni Martini papae quarti.*"¹⁰ The inscription reads that it was done in the year of the Lord, 128-. The last numeral was lost, but it is thought to be 1283.

Fausta Casolini, who viewed the half-restored dossal in November of 1954, also dates the dossal from 1283. She describes the removal of an opaque film which sometime in the seventeenth century was stretched over the original painting.¹¹ This second painting, over the original dossal, presented a different image of Clare. Clare was depicted with an older and somewhat stern, tired facial expression. Her mantle was closed at the neck; her large, bare feet were showing; her hands did not have the long slender youthful fingers of the earlier dossal. The reproduction of this second painting can still be found in books. There is no indication of why the image of Clare was changed or by whom. Clearly, one needs to ask if the change was unintended, determined by the artist's talents, or a deliberate choice to present a different image of Saint Clare.

In 1954 the original countenance of Clare was restored in the central figure. Clare is shown again with a youthful face, standing very tall. The inscription is simply "Sancta Clarae." In this original version, Clare is robed in a simple gray tunic of the Order, gathered with a cincture, which falls gracefully to her feet with surplus length so as to cover them except for two toes. Her mantle is of pale olive green with a violet tone, very different from that worn today. It is similar to a large shawl that is double the length of the person. Her veil seems to create one unit with her poor mantle. Clare holds in her hand a gold and red cross similar to a processional cross. Her other hand points towards it.

It is interesting to note the use of color in the side panels. Clare is dressed in red in the first and second panel; Agnes is also dressed in red. The relative, who tries to take Clare from San Paolo, is dressed in red; whereas, Uncle Monaldo is not. The Pope, who is present for the burial ceremonies has red garments. The headwear of the Sisters at San Paolo is more sophisticated than that of Clare and her Sisters. Perhaps the poverty of the different groups was an important issue to be stressed?

All of the panels have an over-arching appearance of the city, and yet most of these scenes would have taken place outside of the city. Two angels hover above focused toward Clare. The side panels are the artist's reproduction from the Legend of St. Clare, the Process of Canonization, and/or another source.¹²

The narrative scenes begin with Clare's conversion in the lower left panel and continue up the left side of the dossal. Under four of the panels there are still discernible words or letters. From the incomplete words or phrases, Casolini suggests the following text:

The first panel (The Bishop Presents the Blessed Palm to Clare): in order that the Palm might be given to herself, Clare is delaying to come forward . . . as he saw this . . . with . . . Palms . . . it was observed

The second panel (Arrival of Clare at the Portiuncula):
No words are discernible here except a possible *ecce*.

The third panel (Clothing):
. . . because . . . Francis . . . he/she accompanies . . . and he shears
. . . and . . . she is taught . . . to lofty law.

The fourth panel (Clare Clings to the Altar):
No words are discernible.

The fifth panel (Episode of St. Agnes in two moments)
Only two words are discernible:
Clar in the first line; *qua* in the second line.

The sixth panel (The Miracle of the Multiplication of the Bread):
*Clare . . . following the miracle . . . she herself feeds the Sisters
from the middle of the bread . . . (cor Mon) . . . it gives way to*

The seventh panel (The Procession of the Virgin):
Only words discernible are *Sata Maria*.

The eighth panel (The Pope Incenses the Dead Saint):
*truly she was . . . to be venerated . . . because the pope does it . . .*¹³

Six of the panels focus on the rites of passage of Clare, four of these portray the movement or passage from secular life to religious life and two are expressive of her final passage from temporal life to eternal life. One panel focuses on the rite of passage of Agnes and Clare's intervention in the family struggle. And one panel focuses on a miracle of daily life when the Sisters did not have any bread.

These scenes from Clare's life include Francis. It is interesting to note that Clare is almost entirely excluded from any of the dossals or frescoes of Francis. In the panels of the dossal from the School of Giotto, Clare appears when the dead body of St. Francis is brought to San Damiano for Clare and her Sisters to touch and see. On the other hand, the artist of the Clare dossal does not hesitate to portray Francis in three of the panels with Clare. It is Francis, who cuts the hair of Agnes, while Agnes places her folded hands in those of Clare, while fixing her gaze in Clare's eyes in delight of blessed hope.¹⁴ The role of both Francis and Clare seem to be important as Agnes commits her life to God; the dossal reflects Clare's insistence that it was Francis who was her inspiration and guide.

Image Versus Text

Some details of the scenes portrayed in the panels of the dossal differ from the corresponding textual accounts found in the various writings or sources. We can note some of the differences; however, there is not sufficient evidence at this moment of history to make clear inferences from these differences.

Scene I shows Clare standing before the Bishop with a group of young women immediately behind her as though Clare had gone forth to meet the Bishop. The Legend says that "while the others were going to receive their palms, Clare remained immobile in her place out of shyness, and the Bishop came to her and placed a palm in her hands."

Many questions have been raised regarding this event of the palms. Was the Bishop in accord with the plan of Clare? Did Clare already have the plan worked out, or was this Palm Sunday ceremony the moment of her decision? Clare does not leave any indication of how or when she made the decision other than to tell us that it was Francis who influenced her. Perhaps these are small differences, but due to the fact that there is so little information about Clare, they become important.

Scene II shows Clare with six women behind her as she comes to St. Mary of the Angels to meet Francis and the brothers. The Legend relates that "she embarked upon her long desert flight with a virtuous companion." Was the possible departure of Clare known to other women in her family or to friends? Were they in agreement with it? Surely the fact that Agnes would so soon thereafter follow Clare indicates their similar desires; and according to the *Legend of St. Clare*, Clare was praying for the conversion of Agnes.¹⁵ Sister Cristiana, the thirteenth witness in the *Process of Canonization*, will say that she was in the house of Clare on the night of her departure. Possibly the scene portrays many companions accompanying Clare so as not to cause scandal since this young noble woman was breaking all the customs of her society in taking flight from her family home and even more radically in joining this group which was clearly beneath her social status.

It is interesting to note that in five of the eight panels Clare is portrayed with a halo representing her sanctity, and in the others she is not. Especially interesting is that it is missing in the San Paolo incident and before her investiture at St. Mary of the Angels.

The Dossal's Presentation of Clare's Conversion

The dossal does not present the entire life story of St. Clare; however it does image Clare's journey of conversion. Clare's conversion is truly bound

up with Francis, a message made clear from the historiated dossal in Santa Chiara as well as from the sources. But the images within the dossal move to suggest a process in Clare's conversion.

The first four scenes from the panels are about the time of Clare's conversion, and the fifth one is of the conversion of her sister, Agnes. Obviously Clare's conversion is not an internal struggle of turning from a life of sin or even from a mediocre life. The sources reveal that she was already living a holy life with deep concern for the poor. She had chosen not to marry and was already guiding some of the women who later followed her into San Damiano.

What was Clare's conversion? Even though Clare had gone to St. Mary of the Angels to be received by Francis and the brothers, she immediately goes to San Paolo. Why did she not flee to San Damiano immediately? Did she hope to become part of an established Order?

From the violence of her family, one can speculate that they were duly disturbed by this formal declaration of rejection of marriage. No doubt, the fact that she had crossed the established order of Assisi to associate herself with the movement of Francis even more inflamed the rage and anger. In doing this she was giving up all social status that had been hers as part of the nobility to which she belonged, although her family was not of high rank. It was their duty to uphold the honor of the family.

Clare's manner of conversion cannot easily be described because she was already holy; she does not evidence dramatic changes in her interior spiritual life. Further, few of her writings have come down to us; there are precious few expressions of her inner choices. Yet the dossal does present Clare's journey of conversion. The first four panels of the Clare dossal suggest a conversion process which involves four moments:

1. The initial decision to change the direction of her life is symbolized in the Palm Sunday ceremony.
2. The action of moving forth in a change of direction is symbolized by the flight to St. Mary of the Angels.
3. The actual verbalizing for oneself and others the new direction that is being taken is symbolized by Clare kneeling before Francis, who cuts her hair and gives her the robe of the penitent.
4. The inevitable struggle, either within or from without, that comes for anyone who makes such a deliberate choice of conversion is symbolized by the struggle with Clare's family at San Paolo.

The panel also presents an image of conversion in scene VII. The image of the death of Clare expresses the encounter between the created world as we know it and the eternal world. The portrayal of her two Sisters peering through the little window, watching as the entourage of Virgins comes to meet Clare, brings the two worlds together. Clare's magnificent red and gold robe, the crowns on the heads of the other virgins who are meeting her, all this implies a festive journey into fuller life and a complete separation from the temporal life. We are not asked to walk the ultimate journey of death at this moment of our lives, but conversion always involves a radical turning from what has been to something new.

Thus, the dossal offers us images of conversion. The first four panels image the process of conversion. The scene of Clare's death images the essence of conversion: Clare is called forth into new life. The dossal offers us images which potentially can lead us into conversion, images which can transform our imagination as we are called forth into new life.

End notes

¹ Margaret R. Miles. *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 66.

² Miles, 137.

³ Wayne Simsic, "The importance of the Images of Francis of Assisi for Worship." *The CORD* 39 (December 1989): 329.

⁴ For more detailed study of historiated dossals see the article of Jeryldene Wood, "Perceptions of Holiness in Thirteenth-Century Italian Painting: Clare of Assisi," *Art History* 14 (September 1991): 301-327.

⁵ Wood, 310.

⁶ For the account of the Legend of St. Clare, see Regis Armstrong, *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1988), 187-240. Other Legends of Clare, which are little known at this time, are the *Legenda Versificata* and *Tres Legendae Minores Sanctae Clarae Assisiensis* (Saec. XIII), in *AFH* 7 (1914): 39-54.

⁷ Wood, 324.

⁸ Wood, 306. See also Vincent Moleta, *From St. Francis to Giotto: The Influence of St. Francis on Early Italian Art and Literature* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983).

⁹ Wood, 301.

¹⁰ Wood, 324, footnote 22.

¹¹ Fausta Casolini, "Le sorprese della restaurata tavola del 1283," (Roma, 17 novembre 1955): 31-35. Unfortunately, the specific publication was not identified within the article which was furnished by Sister Chiara Anastasia, O.S.C. of the Protomonastery in Assisi.

¹² Casolini suggests that perhaps there was another source which was the inspiration for this dossal or that there is another codex that is yet to be discovered (p. 34).

¹³ Casolini, 34.

¹⁴ Casolini, 35.

¹⁵ Armstrong, 213.

St. Clare and Obedience: A Look at Chapter One of the *Rule*

MICHAEL J. HIGGINS, T.O.R.

I. The Place of Obedience in the Rule

... that out of love of the God Who was placed poor in the crib, lived poor in the world, and remained naked on the cross ... observe the holy poverty that we have promised God and our most blessed father St. Francis (Test C:45, 47).

There are several themes that come to mind when one studies the life and writings of St. Clare. Foremost among these are her all consuming Franciscan vision of vocation and its articulation in a life of prayer, poverty, and loving perseverance. Underlying all of these aspects of the saint is a love for God that was manifested in a open and obedient spirit. In order to more fully appreciate the richness of Clare's vision, and her embrace of poverty, it is important to understand how she lived and preached obedience.

The various levels of Clare's understanding of obedience can be clearly seen in her *Rule*, a type of verbal tapestry which displays the vibrancy of Clare's spirituality. As Clare diligently embroidered cloth with needle and thread, so in her *Rule* she verbally embroidered what she considered to be the essence of the Franciscan way of life.

On either side of the verbal embroidery of the *Rule*, Clare carefully stitched the borders with strong words of challenge to obedience (chapters I and XII). These form the background or foundation which holds together and supports chapter VI, the magnificent heart of the *Rule*. Even though the text was not divided into 12 chapters until after the time of Clare¹, this balance can be clearly seen in the number of verses which are stitched together in a tight pattern. As Margaret Carney points out, Clare placed the most important chapters in the physical center of her text.

Fr. Michael, a member of the Third Order Regular here in the United States, is presently in Rome. He is pursuing a doctorate in Franciscan Studies at the Antonianum.

The material corresponding to the first five chapters account for two hundred and ninety-six lines of the text. The material corresponding to Chapters VI-VIII accounts for one hundred and sixty-four lines. The material corresponding to Chapters IX-XII accounts for two hundred and sixteen lines. There is, therefore, a remarkable proportionality of length and density of the text to the inner theological and spiritual logic it expresses.²

This observation of chapters VI-VIII as the heart of the *Rule* is born out with even a cursory examination of the substance of these chapters.

<i>The Rule of St. Clare</i>				
Chapter 1	II-V	VI-VIII	IX-XI	XII
Obedience to God, to the Church, to Francis, and to the successors of Francis and Clare	II New Members III Divine Office; Fasting; Sacraments IV Election of a new Abbess; Office of Discreets V Silence and the Grill	VI The Promises to St. Francis and the Embrace of Poverty VII Mode of Working VIII Poverty; Alms; the Sick	IX Discipline for Sin; Externs X Admonition and Correction XI Care of the Cloister	Connection and friendship with the Friar Minors; Cardinal Protector; Obedience to the Church.

Those elements that Clare saw as essential to her embrace of the Franciscan life (promises made to St. Francis, the embrace of poverty, the place of prayer in daily life and work, the fact that the sisters are to acquire nothing of their own, alms, and the treatment of the sick sisters) are present in chapters VI, VII, and VIII — the physical center or heart of the *Rule*. These are surrounded on either side by chapters that deal with daily life and discipline in the monastery.

The whole tapestry is held together by the first and last chapters, both of which deal with obedience or submission to God, to the example and teaching of St. Francis, and to the authority of the Church.

II. Chapter I and Obedience

It is with this tapestry of Clare before our eyes that we now turn to an investigation of Chapter I of the *Rule* and Clare's understanding of obedience.

Chapter one in Clare's Rule reads as follows³:

Latin

English

1. Forma vitae Ordinis Sororum
Pauperum quam beatus Franciscus
instituit, haec est:

The form of the life of the Order of the
Poor Sisters that Blessed Francis estab-
lished is this:

2. Domini nostri Iesu Christi
sanctum evangelium observare,
vivendo in obedientia, sine proprio
et in castitate.

to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord
Jesus Christ, by living in obedience,
without anything of one's own, and in
chastity.

3. Clara, indigna ancilla Christi et
plantula beatissimi patris Francisci,
promittit obedientiam et
reverentiam domino papae
Innocentio et successoribus eius
canonice intrantibus et ecclesiae
romanae.

Clare, the unworthy servant of Christ
and the little plant of the most blessed
Francis, promises obedience and rev-
erence to the Lord Pope Innocent and
his canonically elected successors, and
to the Roman Church.

4. Et sicut in principio conversionis
suae una cum sororibus suis promisit
obedientiam beato Francisco, ita
eamdem promittit inviolabiliter
servare successoribus suis.

And, just as at the beginning of her con-
version, together with her sisters she
promised obedience to the Blessed
Francis, so now she promises his suc-
cessors to observe the same obedience
inviolably.

5. Et aliae sorores teneantur
semper successoribus beati francisci
et sorori clarae et aliis abbatissis
canonice electis ei succedentibus
obedire.

And the other sisters shall always be
obliged to obey the successors of
Blessed Francis and Sister Clare and the
other canonically elected Abbesses who
succeed her.

The focus of obedience for Clare, as shown in these five verses of Chapter I can be summed up in the following areas. Obedience, according to the saint, is to be given to:

1. God
2. The Church
3. St. Francis
4. The successors of St. Francis
5. Clare and future abbesses

It is important to note that, as pointed out above, these themes (apart from a direct reference to future abbesses) are echoed in Chapter XII, the other border of Clare's tapestry, and are also clearly present in her *Testament*.

1. Obedience to God

Throughout Clare's writings, in an attempt to describe her relationship with God, she refers to herself as "an unworthy servant of Jesus Christ" (1 *LAG*: 2), "most lowly and unworthy handmaid of Christ" (3 *LAG*: 2), "unworthy servant of Christ" (4 *LAG*: 2; *RCl*: I:3), "a lowly servant of Jesus Christ" (*LEr* 1), and "servant of Christ" (*TestC*: 37; *BCl*: 6). These titles highlight the Christocentric nature of Clare's spirituality and the fact that she saw herself as a maidservant of Christ - that is, as one who listens to and follows the dictates of Jesus, the master.

The obedience to Christ was, for Clare, the ultimate obedience. She understood this relationship, or disposition of heart and mind, to be the measure against which the whole of her life and vocation must conform. Whatever was in accord with this embrace of Christ as master and her own response to the prompting and inspiration of God was to be joyfully accepted. Anything that was not in accord with the divine will was to be resisted with tenacity.

The obedience to Christ was, for Clare, the ultimate obedience.

Examples of this are abundant in the life of Clare. In many respects she was very obstinate and headstrong. She did not easily conform to the expectations of the society of her day or to the expectations of her family. The dramatic scenes of the young girl slipping out of her house in the middle of the night to meet Francis at the Portiuncula, the selling of her inheritance, the confrontation with her uncle at San Paolo as she held on to the altar and claimed sanctuary, and her support and prayers when Agnes faced a similar confrontation, all confirm the tenacious nature of Clare's personality.

This steadfastness also continued in the realm of Clare's relationship with the Church. She refused for many years simply to accept the various rules that were given to her by different popes and finally wrote one herself. She fought for the privilege of poverty, the connection with the Friars Minor, and finally for the approval of a rule which would safeguard these essential elements of her Franciscan vocation. She even went so far as to threaten a hunger strike if the friars were allowed not to serve the sisters at San Damiano.

Present in all these examples of Clare's stubbornness is her deep conviction that she was following the will of God. This disposition of humble listening to God's will and an overpowering desire to follow it, regardless of the personal cost, is a constant and unifying element in all these events. Clare's conviction that God was leading her to embrace a specific way of life provided a horizon against which all her decisions were made. Thus it seems clear that Clare embraced poverty in order to imitate Christ, to serve him with the totality of all she was in response to her strong conviction that this was God's will for her.

2. Obedience to the Church

Even with Clare's confrontation with the Church hierarchy, she constantly wanted to live a life in submission to the Church and asked her sisters to do likewise. This exercise of obedience to the Church, according to Clare, was a challenge to persevere in vocation and establishes the framework within which the following of Christ is to be lived. She states in Chapter XII:

Let the sisters be strictly bound to always have that Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, who has been designated by the Lord Pope for the Friars Minor, as Governor, Protector, and Corrector, that always submissive and subject at the feet of that holy Church and steadfast in the Catholic faith, we may observe the poverty and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His most holy Mother and the Holy Gospel we have firmly promised (vv. 12-13).

Even while she fought for various ecclesiastical permissions for her way of life, most notably the privilege of poverty and the approval of her *Rule*, she wanted to be a part of, and obedient to, the pope and the Church. On one hand she recognized the importance of canonical approval to protect her vocation and those of her sisters. On the other, she recognized, as Francis had before her, that through its sacraments (most notably the Eucharist) the Church brought to the world the very presence of Christ.

Clare in no way wanted to live outside the authority of the pope, mediated through the Cardinal Protector. In this she displays her own deep conviction that God's will is mediated through the Church. It also shows her to be in accord with the consistent teaching and example of St. Francis.

Even though Clare's *Rule* shows a tremendous dependence on the writings and rules of St. Francis, she did keep significant aspects of the *Rule* of Hugolino and the *Rule* of Innocent IV. As Carney points out:

While it is clear that the actual verbal dependence upon the *Rule* of St. Benedict in the text is minor in comparison with her complete dependence upon Francis' *Rule* texts, it is equally clear that Clare had used Benedictine - or more generically, monastic - customs and wisdom in the governance of her community.⁴

Among these customs include: the acceptance of older candidates (II:5 from *Reg.Ug.*); the place of perpetual fasting for the sisters and its dispensation of the young, sick, and extern sisters (III:8,10 from *Reg.Inn.*); the authority of the abbess (IV:8-9 from *Reg.Ug.*); communal discernment (IV:18 from *Reg.Inn.*); the place and discipline of the grill (V:9-15 with adaptation from *Reg.Inn.*); personal property and the abbess' duty to the sick (VIII:7-9, 12 from *Reg.Inn.*); the importance and discipline of the enclosure (IX:1-3, 5-7, 9 from *Reg.Ug.*); the requirements for the visitor and the place of outside workers in the enclosure (XII:2-3 from *Reg.Inn.*). Overall, it is apparent that Clare accepted the general form of religious life that was contained in the rules given to her by Hugolino and Innocent. She wove these threads of Church tradition and canonical structure into the overall tapestry of her vision of Franciscan life.

Thus, as she had done when she accepted the title of abbess from Francis and then changed it through her own special touch, Clare produced a creative synthesis of the traditional aspects of religious life for enclosed women through the spirit of her own Franciscan insights. In this process, it seems that Clare tried very hard to be obedient to the Church and what the pope expected of her. At the same time she persistently clung to the essentials her Franciscan vision. Clare states in her *Testament* before her final blessing:

Let us be very careful, therefore, that, if we have set out on the path of the Lord, we do not at any time turn away from it through our own fault or negligence or ignorance, nor that we offend so great a Lord and His Virgin Mother, and our blessed father Francis, the Church Triumphant and even the Church Militant. For it is written: "Those who turn away from your commands are cursed" (*TestC*: 74-76).

Here again we can see the influence of St. Clare's commitment to the will of God, and her own definite ideas about how this commitment should be lived out.

The exercise of obedience to the Church, according to Clare, was a challenge to persevere in vocation and establishes the framework within which the following of Christ is to be lived.

3. Obedience to St. Francis

Clare refers to Francis as "our most blessed father" (*TestC*: 5, 24, 30, 36, 48, 50, 52, 58, 77, 79; *RCl* I:3, VI:1), "true lover and imitator" of Christ (*TestC*: 5), "servant [of God]" (*TestC*: 7), "our blessed father" (*TestC*: 7, 40, 42, 48, 75; *BCl* 7), "holy" (*TestC*: 16, 32), "blessed" (*TestC*: 27, 58; *RCl* I:1, 4,5, VI:10, XII:7), "holy father" (*TestC*: 37), and "our holy father" (*TestC*: 38, 47), "our pillar of strength and, after God, our one consolation and support" (*TestC*: 38), "blessed father" (*RCl* VI:2). It's interesting to note that 20 times in 18 different verses in her *Testament* (or in 23% of the 79 verses) Clare refers to Francis as "father." This is by far her favorite title for the person whom she regards as the instigator and guide of her vocation and the model of gospel life for herself and her sisters. In calling Francis "father," Clare was invoking the idea that Francis was the founding force behind her vocation and that of her sisters. She was also alluding to the fact that they were heirs of the form of life that Francis had embraced and had handed on to the sisters.

Clare also refers to herself as "the little plant of the holy father (Francis)" (*TestC*: 37) and "little plant of the most blessed father" (*RCl* I:3, *BCl* 6). Again,

these titles highlight the saint's recognition that the direction for her vocation was intimately tied to the instigation and guiding force of St. Francis. She reminds her sisters in her *Testament*, "the Lord gave us our most blessed father Francis as a founder, planter, and helper in the service of Christ and in those things we have promised to God and to our blessed father..." (v. 48).

Obedience to the example and teaching of Francis was, apparently for Clare, tantamount to obedience to God. She saw in Francis a person who gave up everything, including his own will, to embrace the fullness of the gospel message. Following Francis meant for her and her sisters to follow him in the way of evangelical self denial and conformity to Christ.

In her *Rule*, which relies heavily on the text of Francis' rules, Clare is adamant in protecting the vision and way of life of St. Francis. While she incorporated sections from previous rules, as has been mentioned above, she in no way wanted to deviate from the form of life that had been given to her by Francis. Both in his writings and in his example of a radical conformity to the teachings and person of Christ, Francis became a special guide for Clare in her own embrace of God's call. Clare saw in Francis the fulfillment of what she deeply felt to be her own vocation. Thus, it was in obedience to Francis and his ideals that Clare lived and understood the Gospel form of life.

Obedience to the example and teaching of Francis was, apparently for Clare, tantamount to obedience to God.

4. Obedience to the Successors of St. Francis

It can be safely assumed that St. Clare saw something of supreme value in her way of life and the life of the sisters at San Damiano. This became for Clare, as it were, her inheritance. Before leaving her family home, she had sold her family inheritance and accepted a way of life that traded physical riches for spiritual riches. Now Clare wanted to pass this treasure on to the sisters with whom she shared life and to those who would embrace this way of life in the future.

Time and time again we willingly bound ourselves to our Lady, most holy Poverty, that after my death, the sisters, those present and those to come, would never turn away from her (*TestC*: 39).

Her *Rule* and *Testament* show her preoccupation in safeguarding this valuable gift. It is clear that the discipline that would be the strongest safeguard for protecting and transmitting this precious inheritance was obedience: to God, to Francis and his successors, and to future abbesses.

In this regard it is significant to note that three times in the *Rule* Clare speaks of her connection with the Friars Minor in no uncertain terms. Chapter I states that the sisters "shall always be obliged to obey the successors of Blessed Francis..." (v. 5); Chapter VI, in words attributed to Francis and addressed to Clare and the sisters, reads, "I resolve and promise for myself and for my brothers to always have that same loving care and solicitude for you as [I have] for them" (v. 4); finally, Chapter XII, accepting the promise of Francis, states "Let our Visitor be taken from the Order of the Friars Minor according to the will and command of our Cardinal...in support of our poverty, as we have always mercifully had from the aforesaid Order of Friars Minor, in light of the love of God and our blessed Francis" (vv. 1, 6-7). Clare clearly saw herself and her sisters as part of the total Franciscan family and insisted on preserving that familial connection. Since this was a canonically approved rule, Clare was also attempting to hold Francis' successors to his promise that they would always provide "loving care and solicitude" for the sisters.

As part of Clare's obedience to Francis, which continues with his successors, Clare also challenged the sisters to persevere in their commitments and never separate themselves from the *Rule* or their embrace of holy poverty. She states in her *Testament*

But how blessed are those to whom it has been given to walk that way and to persevere till the end. Let us be very careful, therefore, that, if we have set out on the path of the Lord, we do not at any time turn away from it through our own fault or negligence or ignorance (*TestC*: 73-74).

Her own perseverance led Clare to refuse the counsel and guidance of popes and, it can be assumed, those who tried to pressure her to accept a way of life that was not in accord with her promises to God and to Francis.⁵ "So I commend and leave my sisters, both those present and those to come, to the successors of our blessed Father Francis and to the entire Order" (*TestC*: 50).

5. Obedience to Clare and to her own successors

Much of what has been said in the previous section can also be said about Clare's insistence on obedience to the abbess. Again, it was her way of protecting the wonderful gift of vocation and the promises made to God and Francis to live a poor life.

Obedience was understood to be a foundational feature of religious life. Clare states that after a period of probation, during which time the form of life is to be explained to a new sister, "let her be received into obedience, promising to observe perpetually our life and form of poverty" (*RCI* II:13). In this Clare follows Francis (cf. *Rnb* II:9; *Rb* II:11) and is in accord with the tradition of religious life - obedience was understood to be the necessary foundation for a life in community. It was also recognized as an essential disposition for the embrace of the form of life of the institute.

Having said this, it is also important to recognize that Clare approached the exercise of authority with an attitude of service and love. Clare's view of her own position was as a "useless servant of the enclosed Ladies of the Monastery of San Damiano" (1 LAg: 2), "the useless and unworthy servant of the Poor Ladies" (2 LAg: 2), "servant of the Poor Ladies" (3 LAg: 2), "useless handmaid of His [Christ's] handmaids in the monastery of San Damiano" (4 LAg: 2), "handmaid of the Poor Sisters - although unworthy" (TestC: 37), "mother and servant" (TestC: 79), and "a sister and mother...although unworthy" (BCI 6). These titles demonstrate Clare's concern to maintain a stance of humble service in her relationship with her sisters. Although she does not repeat this self description in the *Rule* the way she describes the role of abbess certainly is in harmony with a servant mentality for the abbess. It is with this concept of authority that Clare challenges those sisters who would follow her as abbess. They were to have no special privileges in the monastery, instead they were required to live the same kind of life that the other sisters lived "especially in whatever pertains to the church, the dormitory, refectory, infirmary, and clothing" (RCI IV:13). The abbess was thus to lead more by example and holy life than by authoritarian rule.

She should strive as well to preside over the others more by her virtues and holy behavior than by her office, so that, moved by her example, the sisters may obey her more out of love than out of fear (RCI IV:9).⁶

The sisters in turn were required to obey the abbess because, as a result of their embrace of holy poverty, they have given up their own wills (RCI X:2; TestC: 67; RegB X:2). (In this Clare follows Francis' teaching that one's own will was an appropriation of what rightly belongs of God and a self exaltation that leads to sin [cf. *Adm* 2].) The sisters are therefore "firmly bound to obey their Abbess in all the things they have promised the Lord to observe and which are not against their soul and our profession" (RCI X:3; cf. also RegB X:3). The binding force of these promises was such that even if one of the sisters were to leave the monastery, for whatever reason, she was still bound to live a life of poverty.

If the sisters spoken of ever leave and go elsewhere, let them be bound, after my death, wherever they may be, to observe that same form of poverty that we have promised God and our most blessed father Francis (TestC: 52).

The abbess in her turn is challenged to remember that she is a servant to the sisters. "For this is the way it should be: the Abbess should be the servant of all the sisters" (RCI X:5). Her main role, it seems, is to maintain the life of poverty that Clare sees as essential to the life at San Damiano and to encourage the other sisters to do the same. As she states in her Testament, "so, too, the others who will succeed me in office should be always bound to observe holy poverty with the help of God and have it observed by the other sisters" (TestC: 41).

III. Summary

Clare was obedient in her life and insisted on the same kind of obedience from her followers. Essentially Clare's understanding and embrace of obedience can be divided into the following sections (listed in order of importance):

- I. Obedience to God through an embrace of the example of Christ and in response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- II. Obedience to Francis; most especially through a vibrant response to his example and an embrace of his teachings.
- III. Obedience to the Church; to the pope, his successors and to the successors of Francis, and to her own successors.

Ultimately Clare's obedience was to the will of God and to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This divine will was, according to Clare, most clearly expressed in the life of Christ, who emptied himself and embraced poverty in obedience to his Father's will. Francis, in his life, embraced the fullness of this divine example and through his life and teachings showed others how to do the same. This became the framework against which Clare measured her life and the life of her community. Whatever was in conformity to the will of God, as expressed in the life of Christ and the example of Francis, was to be embraced with joy of heart and great tenacity. Anything that was not in accord with this will was to be resisted with as much tenacity. Finally, the form of life can only be preserved by obedience to the Church and to the successors of Francis and Clare. By this ongoing obedience, St. Clare was establishing a way in which the tremendous gift of her form of life, her vocation, would be preserved and enjoyed by the sisters she lived with and those she knew would be sent by God.

Ultimately Clare's obedience was to the will of God and to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Given Clare's desire to protect the gift of her way of life for future generations, it seems a real tragedy that the *Rule*, as she wrote it, was used only for a short period of time. In 1263 Pope Urban IV approved a new *Rule* for the second order, here officially entitled "Poor Clares," which allowed community ownership of property, perpetual revenues, and a special vow of enclosure.⁷

Endnotes

¹ The introduction of *Chiara d'Assisi: Scritti* by Marie-France Becker, et.al. (Vicenza: Edizioni LIEF, 1986) states that, "The division in twelve chapters is nevertheless very old and was created as a compliment to the *Regula bullata* of the Friars Minor. As with the Rule of the Friars Minor, this division corresponds more to a preoccupation for symbolism (twelve Apostles, twelve tribes of Israel) than to the content of the text or to a division according to clear topics. The division of the *Rule* in twelve chapters is not original..." (p. 26).

Also Margaret Carney in her book, *The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi & Her Form of Life* (Quincy, Illinois: Franciscan Press, 1993) points out that "Modern texts divide the *Rule* into twelve chapters, although this division did not exist in the original Bull. This structure was added later in an obvious attempt to make the text conform in appearance to that of the *Later Rule* (*RegB*). But this chapter arrangement results in an artificial grouping of elements and can mislead the reader into perceiving relationship where none originally existed" (p. 82-83).

² *Ibid.*, p.92. Carney also states that: "Knowing Clare's constant application to her spinning and needle-work, it is not difficult to imagine that the labor of redacting the Rule was not a separate and unrelated exercise, but the application in language of her skill in spinning and embroidering" (p. 93).

³ The Latin text is taken from *Chiara d'Assisi: Scritti* by Marie-France Becker, et.al. (Vicenza: Edizioni LIEF, 1986) pp: 134, 136. The text in **bold letters** shows Clare's dependence on the writings of St. Francis. It must be noted that this chapter is based in great part on Chapter I of the *Regula bullata*. The English text is taken from *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, Introduction, translation and notes by Regis Armstrong (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 62.

⁴ Carney, 74-75. Carney points out as well that Clare's attempts to apply "Franciscan norms to a stable community living in a fixed dwelling" were, unfortunately, all but ignored by the Friar Minors in their own evolving experiences of fixed community life.

⁵ Clare goes so far as to exhort Agnes of Prague to never abandon her way of life and that the counsel of Bro. Elias should be closely followed so that she "may walk more securely in the way of the commands of the Lord..." (2 *LAg*: 15). And further, in what may be a reference to *Cum relictis saeculi*, a Bull from Gregory IX which allowed Agnes to accept revenues and possessions, Clare adds "If anyone would tell you something else or suggest something that would hinder your perfection or seem contrary to your divine vocation, even though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel!" (2 *LAg*: 17).

⁶ This is repeated in the *Testament*. "I also beg that [sister] who will be in an office of the sisters to strive to exceed the others more by her virtues and holy life than by her office, so that, stimulated by her example, they obey her not so much because of her office as because of love. Let her also be discerning and attentive to her sisters as a good mother is to her daughters..." (*TestC*: 61-63).

⁷ Cf. William Short, *The Franciscans*, (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier Press, 1989), 24.

The Depths of the Mirror

Clare, within your heart
A flame-star blazed
this inner sun rose gold
from out a night
of suffering in union with your spouse
who out of love for us
was struck and scourged
and died amidst the anguish of the cross.

Transpierced with Him
Your union was complete.
His fire leapt, suffused
consumed your being
until you were a living torch
of praise.

Sister Marion-Celeste, P.C.C.

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

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

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

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

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

Zikomo Zambia! Reflections from Africa

TIMOTHY J. JOHNSON, O.F.M., CONV.

A gentle, mild breeze embraced me as I stepped onto the tarmac in Lusaka. That initial experience in Zambia came to typify the tenor of my brief sojourn in the heart of Africa. The warmth of the people and the spaciousness of the land speak of peace in the midst of a continent ravaged by the twin plagues of war and famine. Indeed, I didn't need to look far beyond the border to the chaos of Zaire and Angola to realize that this land has been uniquely blessed.

Zambia - no longer simply a word for a far distant point on a map where our friars have labored for many years in relative obscurity. In the following months this place called Zambia became incarnate in the faces of countless men and women and the simple beauty of their land. These images remain vividly alive in the memory of my heart.

It was with the Poor Clares that I first recognized the attractive, appealing power of African Christianity. There must have been at least two hundred Franciscans at the monastery who gathered to mark the Feast of Saint Francis with a day of prayer and relaxation. During the Eucharist, one of the Poor Clares professed her final vows. The ceremony was replete with symbols which spoke of the solemnity, risk, and promise of religious commitment. For example, the newly professed sister received a tree branch to remind her of the call to be fruitful. Her head was also circled with smoking embers to recall her consecration. But what I remember most was the vase she carried to the altar during the rite of profession. At a certain point she sang her promises and threw the vase to the ground. As it shattered I could see that flowers, which had been hidden inside the vase, were now strewn at her feet. The power of the symbol was overwhelming.

Fr. Timothy, a regular contributor to The CORD and a member of the summer faculty of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, went to teach for a semester at the Franciscan Center in Zambia. Here he shares some reflections on his sojourn in Africa.

The earnest students who gathered for a twilight Eucharist celebration at St. Bonaventure College opened my eyes to the present richness and future promise of the Conventual community in Africa. We were outside because, once again, there was no electricity and the chapel was dark. The blessing of the moment was apparent, however, as we prayed in silence and song. The temperate breeze and the sounds of the evening contributed to a spirit of reflective thanksgiving. As I stood at the altar and looked into the faces of the friars, I was captured by their peaceful attentiveness. These young, talented men have much to give to the Church. Already in their singing of the psalms and their liturgical ministries they reveal an appreciation for worship. Their ability to reflect upon, discuss, and preach the Scriptures, which I had experienced any number of times with them, demonstrates a love for the Word and People of God.

The commitment of our friar missionaries also speaks of a great love of God's Word and People. These men manifest a pioneering spirit seen in years of dedicated service in a land far from home. They have, I believe, much to be proud of as they look back over the years at the fruit of their labors. Conscious of God's blessings, I hope they can rejoice in what God has accomplished through their sacrifices. The efforts of these men to live the dream of Franciscan life in Zambia has given birth to an entire new generation of young African men willing to dream again of the Gospel life. Like others of their generation, the older friars are now faced with the challenge of passing on the burden of leadership to the next generation of friars. It is a slow transition requiring patience, hard work, and the willingness to accept the strengths and weaknesses of the young and old, foreign and native friars, alike.

There is certainly no lack of patient acceptance and hard work in Zambia. One day I saw a woman on her knees diligently scrubbing a floor with a baby strapped to her back. When I looked more closely I noticed that the baby was sleeping. The ability of the baby to sleep so soundly as her mother worked struck me. No wonder, as someone suggested to me, the people are able to deal so well with what seems, at times at least, to be nothing other than a constant series of inconveniences, delays, frustrations, and setbacks. For example, when the bus broke down on the way from Ndola to Lusaka hardly a complaint was heard - even though the bus carried no spare and we were forced to hitchhike the remaining distance to Lusaka. I couldn't help but wonder what would have taken place had this situation been transposed to the United States. Yes, once again, I was reminded that my expectations and limitations are much different than the people of this land.

I remember, too, another trip from Ndola to Lusaka marked by the haunting, mesmerizing sight of grass fires in the darkness of the still night. Black and red, two popular colors in African liturgical vestments, were predominant while driving one evening with a young American Mennonite couple. Now almost

licking the side of the highway, now dancing on the distant horizon, the fires wove back and forth across my field of vision. I'm told the reasons for the fires are many. As the rainy season draws near, the fields are set aflame to produce a fertile ash. This same ash impedes the passage of snakes. The burning also leaves rodents dead in their holes which provides another source of food. One friar suggested to me that the origin of the fires had a deep psychological reason. Sparsely populated, the Zambian bush can be the home of fear born from isolation. When the fields of tall grass are burned, spaces open up between villages dissipating the sense of isolation and fear like so much smoke from a fire long cold and dead.

Isolation and fear were far from the faces of the children who greeted me at a Sunday Eucharist with the Poor Clares. Their engaging eyes, filled with wonder and quiet expectation, drew the best out of me. My African journey was now drawing to a close where it seemed to have begun. Once again the sisters, together with all those who came to celebrate the promise of Advent, mirrored for me the rich goodness and beauty of the African Church. In the presence of such blessings, Eucharist was the most natural response.

As I prepare to depart, words of thanksgiving again come to me and all I can really say is, "Thank you, Zambia! *Zikomo, Zambia!*"

* * *

"Seeding a New Hope"

DONNA BAIOTTO, O.S.F.

Today we stand on the precipice of a whole new millennium. This is only the third time this event has happened since the time of Christ. All of us are familiar with the change that a new decade brings about... few of us have experienced a change of even a century let alone of a millennium! Image for a moment what life was like twenty years ago in 1973: get a mental picture of cars, technology, Religious Life.... Now go back in your mind to 1893. What was life like then? The changes that have occurred over the past century alone have been mindblowing. It is overwhelming to imagine what changes the next 100 years will see, let alone the next 1000. Just as the world has changed dramatically between the year 1000 and 2000, one can imagine that in 3000 life as we know it won't exist. We are the first Franciscans in history to stand on the precipice of a new millennium. Francis did not even face this call for change. As we change millennia we are called to a radical conversion from mindsets which governed the past and to adapt ourselves to the present and future. As with any movement we can enter into this change process with a deep sense of God-rootedness in our Franciscan life or we can let the tides of change shape us. We can actively shape our future or passively let the future happen to us... and as futurist writers warn us, if we do not change radically, our Franciscan life will not live to see the next change of millennia. If we are to participate actively in this shaping we must have a firm grasp of our timeless Franciscan values. We can use them to enlighten this change process.

A new program created by the Spirit and Life Committee of the Franciscan Federation and designed by Gabriele Uhlein, Wheaton OSF, is the "Seeding A New Hope" experience. Integrating the transformative elements of religious life from the LCWR/CMSM study with the essentials of our franciscan evangelical life, this program is offered throughout the USA. Sister Donna Baiotto OSF of Denver, Colorado gave this address to her own Assembly in June, 1993 after having participated in the Seeding A New Hope Program in Tampa, FL with the Federation Committee. Many Federation communities are designing the Program as an Ongoing Formation opportunity.

Sister Donna Baiotto, OSF is a graduate of the Franciscan Institute presently in ministry at the Magdalen Damen Center, Denver CO, for Single Women with Children. She is a member of the Midwest Province of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity.

Bonaventure in his work the *Tree of Life* gives us a definite perspective on what is most human and timeless by showing us what is within the heart of God and how we as human creatures can become "images of the Godhead" (*Third Letter of Clare to Agnes of Prague*, 13). Bonaventure shows Jesus' heart as one which is driven by compassion. In one place he says it is "bathed with tears" (*Tree of Life* 13). In another he says:

The good Jesus, wept for us in our misery not only once but many times. First over Lazarus, then, over the city and finally on the cross, a flood of tears streamed forth from these loving eyes. Not forgetting compassion, when the crowd was singing a hymn of praise, he lamented over the destruction of the city (*Tree of Life*, 14).

Jesus' experience was on a deeper level than most people's experience. He looked at the reality of people's lives and was deeply moved. He saw reality/injustice clearly when most people hardened their hearts. He felt the pain of the human condition without denying it or covering it over with defense mechanisms. He allowed his experience to be one of compassion, not anger or hatred. Bonaventure describes the scene where Jesus is taken by the guards as:

How readily Jesus' spirit was to face his passion was clearly evidenced by the fact that when men of blood together with the betrayer came by night with torches, lanterns and weapons to seek his life, he spontaneously hurried to meet them, showed himself plainly and offered himself to them. That human presumption might know that it can do nothing against him unless he permit it, he cast these evil guards upon the ground with a word. But not even then did he withhold his compassion in anger" (*Tree of Life*, 18).

Jesus retains the ability to see injustice clearly and yet respond with a heart of compassion even to those who perpetrate that injustice.

Bonaventure's description of a person who is most human is one who is able "to groan and cry out in spirit" (*Tree of Life*, 23) against injustice. He describes the scene at Jesus' death in terms of the heart of those seeing the event:

Oh human heart, you are harder than any hardness of rocks, if at the recollection of such great expiation you are not struck with terror, nor moved with compassion nor shattered with compunction nor softened with devoted love (*Tree of Life*, 29).

Bonaventure tells us then that the human heart is fundamentally compassionate, capable of deep empathy, able to sense another's pain, capable of tears in the work for justice. It is the compassionate heart which is capable of feeling the pain that exists in a child's life who has been abused and neglected. But this compassion does not stop there, if it is the compassion of Jesus. It takes on

an active element. It advocates and works for alleviation of that child's pain. According to Bonaventure that is who God is, and that is who we are to be.

According to Bonaventure, God was driven to enter into the human experience not so much as to "save" us, but Jesus came because of this compassionate nature and drive to experience life in the same manner as those who God loves.

Clare describes another foundational concept in the spirituality of our Franciscan life when she says:

... so great and Good a Lord... on coming into the Virgin's womb, chose to appear despised, needy, and poor in this world, so that people who were in utter poverty and want and in absolute need... might become rich in Him by possessing the Kingdom of Heaven (*First Letter to Agnes* 19, 20).

Bonaventure calls this the co-incidence of opposites. In knowing the opposite sides of someone we know the truth of that person. So to know the totality of God we need to know the Almighty... and its opposite... the powerless. As a member of the Godhead, Jesus was great, powerful, almighty, omnipotent. The motivation, if you will, of a God who is almighty and comes into the human experience is to save, draw one out of sin, in a sense, to eclipse humanity. This God can do everything because of an intrinsic strength. One who is powerful acts differently than one who is powerless. Clare fell in love with the powerless Christ. In the above description of the Poor Jesus, Clare tells us how Jesus became transformed into the opposite and calls us to do the same. She says that "so great and Good a Lord... chose to appear despised, needy and poor." Clare knew well what power was like from her family... but she chose to reject it and follow the poor Jesus. The God whom Clare describes is found in the opposite of the Almighty. This Jesus is poor, despised, and needy. This Jesus is weak. This Jesus is powerless. This Jesus is vulnerable and dependent. The motivation of this God for coming into the human experience is a profound compassionate love. God comes as servant. One who stands under rather than dominates. One who frees by the love given rather than through coercion.

So the Franciscan perspective is one which sees from a stance of powerlessness. It feels what the powerless feel. It is driven by compassion. It sees the reality that exists between those who have power and those who are controlled by that power. It is free of the denial which allows power differentials to remain intact. It is critical for us as Franciscans to carry these two characteristics of the Crucified into the next millennium. They are the characteristics which will shape our presence within the next 1000 years. So now let us take five of the ten transformative elements and shine the lights of compassion and powerlessness on them.

1. The first transformational element is *contemplative attitude toward life*. From the Franciscan stance of compassion and powerlessness what does our contemplation look like as we enter this new millennium? Jeanne Schweikert in her book *Toward the New Millennium: National Vision of Religious Life* says "Our prayer is radical and authentic when it leads to a personal regrounding which affects our disposition, leading us to a new perspective and new attitudes." What better perspective can we have but that of Clare:

Place your mind before the mirror of eternity! Place your soul in the brilliance of glory! Place your heart in the figure of the divine Substance! And transform Your whole being into the image of the Godhead Itself through contemplation, so that you may feel what God's friends feel (*Third Letter to Agnes of Prague*, 12-14).

What Clare invites Agnes to do in the letter is to place herself as it were before the mirror, and actually **feel what God's friends feel**. Contemplation to Clare is a deeply emphatic process of feeling what God's friends feel. It gives birth to compassion within one's heart.

As we move into the year 2000 what are the friends of God experiencing? Do we know? What do our women's hearts feel? What do the countless women in Croatia who have been beaten and raped feel? The oppressed masses in El Salvador? The gays and lesbians in Colorado after the vote on Amendment 2? Women in society in general and in the Catholic church in particular? Abused children? What is the living body of the earth herself experiencing? This new millennium calls us to open our spirits which is in our nature as women and let the experience of others enter into us, to feel what the poor feel. Many of us then will have to give up our ways of hardening ourselves, or of dealing with things only in our heads. What does our Franciscan sense of compassion and of powerlessness show us in relationship to this element as we move towards the year 2000? Do we as Franciscans "groan and cry out in spirit" as we contemplate?

"Oh human heart, you are harder than any hardness of rocks, if at the recollection of such great expiation you are not struck with terror, nor moved with compassion nor shattered with compunction nor softened with devoted love."

2. The next element, *spirituality of wholeness and global interconnectedness*, moves us into "compassionating" with the world. From the Franciscan stance of compassion and powerlessness what does our sense of the whole look like as we enter this new millennium? Awareness of other cultures, peoples, world events has been heightened with the blossoming of technology. Because of television especially, we much more easily see ourselves as part of a global community. We are aware of the suffering of the Blacks in South Africa and of their years of fighting for justice. With the Franciscan

heart an injustice perpetrated on a person across the world becomes an offense to us. So too our awareness of the earth has changed dramatically. Many writers today say that the earth is Gaia, a living organism in her own right. Gaia Mother Earth. Did Francis not have that same sense when he wrote of Sister Mother Earth? Of Brother Sun and Sister Water? If we feel compassion as Francis did that these elements are a living vestige of God, then how can we *not* conserve? How can we *not* stand up for environmental issues? Would we let a person we love drink toxic chemicals? Then why do we let Sister Water become filled with them... as we do nothing?

What does our Franciscan sense of compassion and of powerlessness show us in relationship to this element as we move towards the year 2000? Do we as Franciscans "groan and cry out in spirit" in relation to all persons of the earth and in relation to Gaia herself?

"Oh human heart, you are harder than any hardness of rocks, if at the recollection of such great expiation you are not struck with terror, nor moved with compassion nor shattered with compunction nor softened with devoted love."

3. The next element is *poor and marginalized as the focus of ministry*. From the Franciscan stance of compassion and powerlessness do we know what the poor, the friends of God feel as we enter this new millennium? Through this element we are called upon to go beyond contemplation and the sense of oneness and to put our energy into our society where there are power imbalances. Perhaps this is the element which is closest to the Franciscan perspective because it brings us face to face with the Crucified Jesus of today. As Jesus did not deny the violence that he was experiencing at his death nor where it was coming from, so we too are called openly to see where injustice exists and to focus our energies there. As Francis could not ignore the class system which kept the lepers captive, so we too are called to identify the persons and groups in our society who are held captive also by unjust systems. And like Francis we are called actually to live with them. This means peacefully and without judgment living with gay and lesbians, the homeless, abused kids, women who have been hurt by the power structure within churches or society. The temptation for us is to take the comfort we experience as Americans and allow that to sedate us so that we cannot be filled with compassion... and we forget the poor... the friends of God. As we move into the new millennium and make decisions about retirement, our individual ministries, or those we sponsor as a community, can we remember what the friends of God feel, or will we spend our energies and resources on those who are not poor? This is especially tempting as we watch our own resources dwindle. We are tempted to opt for security and financial stability because our times are so uncertain. But can we ground ourselves in the compassion of God? What does our Franciscan sense of compas-

If we do not change radically, our Franciscan life will not live to see the next change of millennia. If we are to participate actively in this shaping, we must have a firm grasp of our timeless Franciscan values.

sion and of powerlessness show us in relationship to this element as we move towards the year 2000? Do we as Franciscans "groan and cry out in spirit" in relation to the poor and marginalized, in relation to the friends of God?

"Oh human heart, you are harder than any hardness of rocks, if at the recollection of such great expiation you are not struck with terror, nor moved with compassion nor shattered with compunction nor softened with devoted love."

4. The next element is *change of the locus of Power*. From the Franciscan stance of compassion and powerlessness what does our sense of power structures look like as we enter this new millennium? Francis showed acute awareness of the power differential that existed in his day when he addressed letters to the Rulers in the secular society as well as letters to the clerics. In all of them he called for conversion from the stance of power back to the stance of the powerless Jesus. In the *Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples* he blatantly says to them in a warning "And when the day of death comes, everything which they think they have will be taken from them. And the wiser and more powerful they may have been in this world, so much greater will be the punishments they will endure in hell."

Our world is fraught with power imbalances. Our Catholic church is fraught with power imbalances. This reality is disturbing to many of us and it is an area where we have great resistance and denial. We were taught as children not to question or doubt the authority and teaching of the hierarchy, so even to think of doing this fills many of us with guilt and a sense of shame. We think that any type of questioning is disloyal and morally wrong. Yet that is what Francis did, that is what Jesus did. Their actions are acceptable to us. We know the prophetic nature of their questioning. Our resistance is what insures a childlike faith, when in this new millennium, what is needed is adults of conscience speaking out of a sense of compassion, for the powerless, whoever they may be. It calls us to switch our own locus of power and to feel what God's friends feel. It calls us to examine where we are coming from: do we come out of a one-up-man-ship stance in our everyday lives and thus live our own version of a hierarchical structure? Be it in our thoughts, attitudes, relationships, or lifestyle? Our Franciscan heritage asks us to become again "*minores*," those

who see others not on hierarchical planes but who see and revere all persons as having equal and profound dignity. *Minores* see from the stance of Jesus when he was at the most powerless time of his life. *Minores* see what the powerless see. *Minores* love as the powerless love. Francis examined his own affinity for powerplays and effected a deep personal conversion. From that deep spiritual experience he recognized the same affinity for power in the Catholic church of his day. That felt knowledge coupled with his love for the Catholic church drove him to call it to the same change he had experienced... to let go of what was not really of the Poor Jesus. What does our Franciscan sense of compassion and of powerlessness show us in relationship to this element as we move into the year 2000? Do we as Franciscans "groan and cry out in spirit" in relation to the powerless within the churches and society?

"Oh human heart, you are harder than any hardness of rocks, if at the recollection of such great expiation you are not struck with terror, nor moved with compassion nor shattered with compunction nor softened with devoted love."

5. The next element is *Prophetic witness*. This one draws from the preceding four elements. From the Franciscan stance of compassion and powerlessness what does our sense of prophetic witness look like as we enter this new millennium? Jeanne Schweikert in her book *Toward the New Millennium: National Vision of Religious Life*, describes prophetic witness as implying:

the need for ongoing social analysis in order to be aware of the "consciousness and perception" of our own cultural reality. Only then can we engage in theological reflection on that reality which leads to alternative perceptions, visions, and dreams. It is the alternative stance that is at the heart of a prophetic mission. Judgments about situations and decisions for action are influenced by this alternative stance. The call to prophetic action then expresses itself in the form of critiquing the existing social order and by presenting alternative ways that offer hope to the people.

The "alternative stance" for us as Franciscans is not hard to discern. It is what we have been discussing... the sense of compassion and powerlessness, in a world which has become hardened and obsessed with wealth and power. What do the friends of God feel? Francis' witness came in word and in deed. He verbally challenged the power structures of his day, but he also set up an alternative stance in the form of his itinerant lifestyle for the friars, and in the form of the Third Order lifestyle for the laity. In effect he showed the society and churches of his day that there was another way to live and to do things.

A powerful example in our day which is a prophetic witness against power, wealth, and competitiveness, is a collaborative effort where eighteen communities of religious women have formed the *Intercommunity Housing Association*, a not-for-profit corporation in St. Louis. For 30 years the Sisters of Loretto ran a school and day-care in the building. When the corporation was formed the Loretos gave the building; other communities gave revenue; and others gave personnel. From their combined efforts they achieved together what none of them could accomplish alone. They began a housing complex for people who had been living in substandard housing or who were homeless. Through this prophetic action they created a new model... a feminine model... which comes out of collaboration and not competition. It allows the friends of God to be remembered. What does our Franciscan sense of compassion and of powerlessness show us in relationship to this element as we move into the year 2000? Do we as Franciscans "groan and cry out in spirit" in relation to the people who have no voice and need a prophetic witness?

"Oh human heart, you are harder than any hardness of rocks, if at the recollection of such great expiation you are not struck with terror, nor moved with compassion nor shattered with compunction nor softened with devoted love."

The main contention of the CMSM/LCWR Assembly which discerned the transformational elements was that for any religious community to be viable in the new century it must have integrated these elements into its present day reality. I think it is plain for us to see that, as Franciscans, our authentic spirituality not only fits into the needs of this new millennium, but we can also help create a profound renewal. Our primary values as Franciscans are timeless values which are based not only in scripture but are also based within the compassionate and powerless heart of God... and are thus mirrored within each of us. Our call is to discern how much of our daily living, attitudes, and perspectives are shaped really by our charism and how many of them have been created and shaped by false structures, values, and prejudices from the environment around us. It's a tremendously difficult task because it calls us out of our traditional role as women who have been taught to deny the truth of our own spirits. It is also difficult because we are the first Franciscans in history to experience such a change in paradigm. It calls us to be like our foundress, Magdalen Damen, who knew in her soul what her call was and who would not be dissuaded from this truth by others who tried to deny her. As we know from her many trips to the bishop, she would peacefully yet persistently repeat and restate her beliefs until they were heard and respected. It calls us to be like Francis who opened his spirit to the whole of creation and who could "groan and cry out in spirit" for the friends of God. Can we then re-shape our lives so that we give life to Francis of Assisi in the new millennium?

Duns Scotus and Teilhard De Chardin The Cosmic Christ: Two Visions, One Voice

SÉAMUS MULHOLLAND O.F.M.

There is in the minds of some scholars of both Duns Scotus and Teilhard de Chardin a discoverable affinity between their vision of Christ at the centre of the cosmos. Authors such as N.M. Wildiers and Christopher Mooney SJ¹ have intimated such. Certainly both Scotus and Teilhard have been criticized for their seeming failure to give an adequate place and role to sin in their systems, and where Scotus emphasizes the motive of the Incarnation, Teilhard emphasizes the motive of the Redemption.²

However, while these differences would be interesting to pursue at a further time, I would like to emphasize the positive aspects of their Christocentricity, not with a view to side-stepping important and not easily resolvable issues in their work, but rather to stimulate interest in the harmony of their visions.

It goes without saying that when we speak of Teilhard and his thought we are speaking of a 20th century scientist, not a theologian/philosopher like Scotus. It is important to bear this in mind as this was how Teilhard saw himself and wished to be thought of by others³; and so his thought must be presented in his own terminology. At the same time my purpose is to try to show the affinity between Scotus' doctrine of the Primacy, and Teilhard's concept of Christ the Pieroma, or Omega Point.⁴

Father Séamus Mulholland was recently appointed Visiting Lecturer at the Franciscan Study Center in Canterbury, England. This article is an abridged version of a lecture given at the International Conference on Scotus in Budapest, Hungary, last November. Father Séamus' poetry and articles have appeared in *The CORD* over the past several years.

Teilhard's Thought In Brief

Teilhard's thought is extremely complex, and the crowning point of his life's work was his masterpiece *The Phenomenon of Man*. It is not a book about theology or metaphysics, but about the science of humanity, and he intended it as an introduction to an explanation of humankind and, implicitly, as a basis for theologians and philosophers to work and reflect upon. Teilhard's thought is based on *phenomena*, that which is observed.

Teilhard is a scientist, and as such he takes as *scientific fact* the process of evolution⁵, and he takes the whole manifestation of humanity in the cosmos as the basis of his reflection. In Teilhard this means that the cosmos has a propensity which drives it from the simple to the complex, which he calls *the law of complexity-consciousness*⁶. This being so, the cosmic phenomena must be explained, and such an explanation lies not just with externally observable phenomena, the *without* of things but also with the *within* of things.

This may be explored further by looking at a concept which predominates Teilhard's thought i.e. *Genesis*, or *Becoming*. The law which governs that *genesis* is the law of complexity-consciousness. This means that the more anatomically complex a thing is, the greater its degree of consciousness. What Teilhard is suggesting is that consciousness does not come from the *without* of anything, but from the *within*; in other words consciousness is not brought into matter from outside but is one of matter's fundamental properties.⁷

This is further explained by Teilhard when he distinguishes two types of energy: *Tangential* and *Radial*.⁸ The former unites an element with all others of the same complexity as itself in the cosmos, and the latter pulls the element to even greater complexity i.e. forwards. This being the case, it follows that the emergence and development of life is governed by the same law of complexity-consciousness and is produced by interior energy i.e. the within of the thing.

The evolutionary development of matter Teilhard calls *Cosmogensis* and this creates the *Geosphere*. The law of complexity-consciousness leads in turn to the development of life-forms, *Biogenesis* which is the *Biosphere*. Eventually, there is the development of thought, *Noogenesis*, which is the *Noosphere*, the 'thinking' layer around the cosmos. This last phase in evolutionary development is crucial, for it is nothing other than consciousness so concentrated upon itself that the limit between the biosphere and the noosphere is crossed and a new order of self-consciousness evolves: Humanity. Thus, in Teilhard's vision, Man is the crowning point of the evolutionary process and the Noosphere the work of the whole of nature.

Christ: The Omega Point In Teilhard

It has been necessary to outline briefly Teilhard's schema in his own terminology in order both to do justice to him and to understand his vision. Teilhard says that the cosmos is moving towards even greater complexity-consciousness. Yet, after all these transformations from life to consciousness, is there nothing left? Has the cosmos stopped developing or do we simply move in cycles? Either nature is closed to the demands of the future, in which case *thought*, the fruit of millions of years of evolution, is stifled and stagnant, or else an opening does exist — that of the Supersoul above our souls. Between these two extremes of pessimism there is no middle way because progress is all or nothing. On neither side, says Teilhard, is there any tangible evidence in support of hope: there are instead only rational invitations to faith.⁹

We are now at the center of Teilhard's thought: the vision of *Christ the Evolver*, and it is here that Teilhard and Scotus begin to move together in harmony. It is in the realm of thought and self-consciousness that evolution now begins to take place. In others words, says Teilhard, humanity has to become *MORE HUMAN* and this he calls *Hominization*.¹⁰ Consciousness must go on developing since it is now self-reflective (the law of complexity-consciousness) and the end point towards which humanity is moving in consciousness development is *Point Omega*.

This is the goal and the totality of his development. Both the fact of evolution and the development of the cosmos postulate and require an axis, a center, and that center is Christ the Evolver, Point Omega. Teilhard titles Christ in this way because it is He who pulls or directs creation forwards towards its end point, and the emphasis in Teilhard's thought here is the greater unification and spiritualization of the universe — through Christ the universe is becoming more Christified. Teilhard believed that St. Paul made reference to Christification when he wrote of the fullness of Christ, the *pleroma tou Christou*.

The Affinity Between Scotus and Teilhard

We need at this point to ask ourselves a question: Did Teilhard ever study Scotus? Certainly if one were carefully to read G. Allegra's book, *My Conversations with Teilhard de Chardin on The Primacy of Christ*,¹¹ (well worth a study in itself) it would be clear that not only had Teilhard studied Scotus under Fr. Allegra's direction, but quickly came to see the points of contact between himself and Scotus. Close reading of the text shows Teilhard engaging in a journey through Scripture, especially Sts. John and Paul, the Fathers, and Scotus himself. Indeed, on more than one occasion during the discussion of Scotus' doctrine, Teilhard exclaimed *Voila, la theologie cosmique! Voila, la theologie*

d'avenir.¹² This was the theology that Teilhard himself hoped for: a theology of the future, a cosmic theology.

The points of harmony and affinity between Scotus and Teilhard are close at this point when they speak of Christ as the center of the cosmos. Scotus' vision of the predestination to grace and glory, or Christ, the Incarnation of the Word, which forms the basis of the Primacy doctrine,¹³ has similarities with Teilhard's conception of Christ as Evolver/Omega Point. Scotus argued that creation was made for and through Christ; He is its beginning, its middle and its final end. As the entirety of creation came to be through Him, so it is directed towards him and being brought to its final fulfillment. Here Scotus and Teilhard are speaking of a cosmic Christ — a Christ who stands at the apex of created reality. A Christ who in holding the Primacy and as Evolver is the focus and locus for all futurity and existential facticity. And though the context of their separate visions differ, Incarnation in Scotus is prior to redemption: in Teilhard Christ must be redeemer since it is a work of the whole of Christ (Teilhard would not accept an abstract Christ). The medieval theologian/philosopher and 20th century scientist speak with one voice but in different terminology.

One Christ, Differing Cosmic Visions

We need, at this point, to introduce a word of caution and, in a sense, a justification. Regardless of the affinity between Scotus and Teilhard, their visions of the cosmos differ as *static* and *dynamic* respectively. Indeed, one would not expect Duns Scotus even to imagine the dynamic cosmos of Teilhard de Chardin. Yet, perhaps even here Scotus has something to say to the world of science today because the work of contemporary cosmologists evinces the fact that we seek to understand our cosmos ever more closely and to give answers to the pressing questions that challenge and confront us in relation to our beginnings, our place and our role in that same cosmos — and our ultimate destiny.

Setting aside these differences, though bearing them in mind, there is still one important similarity between Scotus and Teilhard which repays further research and study: the place of Christ in the cosmos. The work and thought of Scotus makes it clear that for him the universe is utterly and absolutely inconceivable without Christ; the same is true of Teilhard de Chardin. In both their visions Christ is the alpha and the omega, though more strongly developed in Teilhard. For both Scotus and Teilhard the cosmos was made for and unto Christ; He is its axis and completeness. He is its reference point and its goal. The more I study Teilhard the more interesting it is that the Scripture texts he uses to support his thesis are the same ones used by Scotists to expound and support the Primacy doctrine.

In the same way, Teilhard is convinced that his vision of evolution moving towards Christ Omega Point is a development of the Pauline texts. I would argue, even more so today, that even given Teilhard's dynamic vision of the cosmos and the findings of contemporary cosmology, the vision of Christ in Scotus still stands and may even be strengthened and enriched. As I see it, the Teilhardian vision is a development of both Paul and Scotus.

Neither Paul nor Scotus knew anything of evolution or cosmology as it was known to Teilhard. Even since then we have progressed, and we could surely argue that not all the implications of the doctrine of the Primacy were known to Scotus. But we, after all, have had another 600 years to reflect on Scotus' doctrine and nearly 2,000 to reflect on Paul. Yet this is no way detracts from either Paul's or Scotus' thought: the Pauline texts were understood by Scotus as being the inspired word of God. And both Scotus and Teilhard found in them their visions of one reality: the utter centrality of Christ in the cosmos. From totally different thought patterns, from totally different phenomenology's, from totally different times, cultures and backgrounds, the medieval Franciscan and the 20th century scientist both arrived at the same conclusion — that Christ is the meaning, center and final scope of the whole of created cosmic reality, whose role and function as Son of God is predestined from all eternity and not occasioned by sin, as if it was only in a guilty humanity that Christ had any role to play (and a moral and juridical role at that) i.e. Redeemer.

The Uniqueness of The Incarnation And Contemporary Science

In Scotus and Teilhard, through their exploration of the Pauline texts, theology and science have a meeting point and there is something of a unity and harmony. As Franciscans we can only thank God that Scotus' doctrine has contributed to the making of a better world, even if we ourselves, like Scotus, have not yet realized its full meaning and impact and potentiality. The harmony between Scotus and Teilhard gives us an indication that a closer relationship between theology and science is possible, even desirable, and more so today. The research of contemporary cosmologists and evolutionists gives us a cosmos whose size is staggering: we cannot cope with numbers such as 1,000,000,000,000,000 or imagine that a star — one star in a galaxy of hundreds of millions, in thousands of millions of galaxies, is millions and millions of light years away from us. The mind reels and staggers at our cosmos. Our horizons open up to new vistas of understanding and as our universe expands so too does our understanding of it. Perhaps this is what Teilhard meant when he spoke about *hominization*, humanity becoming more human, reaching out beyond himself to grasp the mystery of its own being. For Scotus and Teilhard in different centuries, at the highest point in this cosmos stands Christ.

Contemporary cosmology raises another question — as did evolution for Teilhard, as did the Scholastic debates on the motive of the Incarnation for Scotus. It is a question which in the past may well have been hypothetical, but which today needs to be addressed as a serious issue: If there is life on other planets in other galaxies, in other solar systems, has Christ only appeared on this planet or could there be a series of Incarnations on other worlds?

These are serious questions and cataclysmic mistakes have been made in the past because of theology's refusal to listen to science (Galileo). But perhaps the answer to these questions lies in posing another: Is the human person Jesus the center of the cosmos with primacy over all things? The whole thrust of Scotus' doctrine and Teilhard's conclusion is a resounding YES and this is crucial for our faith today. Contemporary cosmology will not wait for theology, and perhaps Thomists and Scotists need to sit down and raise their discussions to new levels.

The points of harmony and affinity between Scotus and Teilhard are close at this point when they speak of Christ as the center of the cosmos.

However, given my limited knowledge of Scotus, Teilhard and cosmology I would say this: It seems that once we grasp and understand that Scotus' doctrine is not hypothetical but is discoverable from Holy Scripture, in which Christ is first in the mind of God and thus the reason and explanation of the cosmos — and for Scotus and Teilhard it means the entire cosmos — then it is a useless question whether there could have been or could be Incarnations in other worlds. The reason is that there is simply no necessity for them because the Incarnation of the Word of God is nothing other than a unique, once-and-for-all event.

The Incarnation, while taking place within a specific historical moment is nevertheless of profound cosmic significance whereby Christ is not just the center of *sacred history*, but the center and meaning of *all human and cosmic natural and evolutive history*. Scotus asserts that Christ is foreseen first in the mind of God as being closest to the end before the foreseeing of sin. Given this, the Incarnation is not dependent upon the fall of any one part of that creation. Thus the fact that Christ would still have come even if there had been no sin attests to the uniqueness of that Incarnation. If there is life on other worlds, as there probably is, they also share in the once and for-allness of the Christ-event; and that means the *totality* of the Christ event since it is He and He alone

who holds the primacy over ALL things. Thus, the cosmic nature of Christ's primacy, the Incarnation, the cosmic significance of His saving death and resurrection in which the whole of created reality is redeemed renders any other Incarnations unnecessary. The Incarnation is already foreseen by God, before creation and before the fall in sin, so too is the remedy for that fall, the Passion and Death and Resurrection of Jesus. It is in His Incarnation, Death and Resurrection that Jesus is constituted Lord of all Creation in love. For us this must also mean any other life forms share and participate in the fullness of Christ. John Duns Scotus spoke to the genius of Teilhard de Chardin, and has much to teach the world of science today about the beginning, center and end of the cosmos which science seeks to explore and understand, that we too might ultimately understand ourselves.

End notes

¹ N.M. Wildiers, *An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin*, German edition 1963, Trans by Hubert Hoskins, 1968, New York; C. Mooney, *Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ*, USA, 1968.

² See the discussion of this topic in Mooney, op. cit., p. 130.

³ Teilhard said, "I am neither a philosopher nor a theologian, I am a studier of phenomenon, a physicist in the old Greek sense." *Nouvelles Litteraires*, 11 January 1951, Interview.

⁴ Reference to this abounds in Teilhard's works; see, for example, *The Phenomenon of Man*, English translation, pp. 267-8; also *L'esprit de la terre*, 1931, *Ouvres*, VI, 52-7.

⁵ There are differences of opinion as to whether evolution is fact or theory, see for example: *How I believe*, Harper and Row, 1969; *Let Me Explain*, Harper and Row, 1972. A discussion of whether or not Teilhard is in fact a biological evolutionist is found in M. Motto: *The Omega Point and Teilhard de Chardin*, Rome, p. 9.

⁶ On the Law of Complexity-Consciousness see Wildiers, pp. 74-79, in Teilhard, *Phenomenon of Man*, p. 49, 55, 60-61, see also C. Mooney's treatment of the matter, pp. 45-49.

⁷ *Phenomenon of Man*, p. 78. In Teilhard the genesis of life on earth belongs to the category of absolute unique events which, once they have happened can never be repeated.

⁸ Both Wildiers and Mooney give good summaries of these two forms of energy. Wildiers, pp. 74-79; Mooney, pp. 44-45, 75-76.

⁹ Teilhard, *The Future of Man*, Harper and Row, 1969, p. 192.

¹⁰ *Phenomenon of Man*, pp. 100-107, see also *On The Trend and Significance of Human Socialization*, 1948, 2 which was a lecture delivered in New York.

¹¹ Franciscan Herald Press, 1971.

¹² Allegra, op. ci., p. 27.

¹³ For the Scotus texts: *Ordinatio*, III, dist. 7 q. 3; 32, n. 10; *Opus Oxoniensis*, I d. 18, q. 3 n. 31.

The Life Of Penance Logical Outcome Of The Mystery Of The Passion

DOMINIC SCOTTO, T.O.R.

We live in a world of signs and symbols. Our entire process of earthly communication is based upon signs and symbols, be they words, looks, actions or objects. Within that process of communication they function on two different levels at once, and yet mediate between them. A person receives a letter from a very dear friend. Enclosed within the letter is a photo of the loved one. Although both letter and photo belong to the material, inanimate world, they nevertheless make a deep impression upon the receiver. Reading the words and looking upon the photo produces a profound impact upon the mind and emotions which do not belong to the physical world but to a different level of reality. While the letter and the photo remain simply material objects, they nevertheless exist in the emotional or mental world as well, and act as a bridge between both levels. Through them the receiver is effectively placed into a sensitive, intellectual connection with the missing loved one. One can almost feel the absentee's presence as he reads the words and gazes upon the photo although the presence is purely emotional and mental.

On the other hand, sacred signs and symbols while essentially performing the same function, communicate and mediate for us the presence of the Lord, a function essential to our spiritual life. Although these signs and symbols are composed of familiar physical forms such as sacred objects, fire, oil, water, etc., they effectively link our physical reality to the spiritual reality of God's presence.

On an even more meaningful level are the liturgical, sacramental signs and symbols which are brim full of real meaning. They are sacramental in the precise, theological sense of the word because not only do they symbolize grace, namely, human participation in the life of God, but they actually effect it.

At the very heart of the liturgical, sacramental life of the Church is the Eucharist. This sacrament, under the species and appearances of bread and wine

Father Dominic has written several articles for this periodical which he serves in a special way as member of the Editorial Board. This timely article offers Franciscans a grace-filled opportunity for reflection.

offered in sacrifice, becomes really and substantially the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It is a symbolic representation of the one sacrifice of Christ, but a symbol which makes the reality of Christ's sacrifice really present in a sacramental manner. Bread and wine, basic signs and symbols of the staple foods of man's natural life, through the Eucharistic celebration as sacred meal, become truly sacramental as they are transformed into the Real Presence primarily to nourish us in Holy Communion.

In Baptism the ritual use of the signs and symbols of works, gestures, water and oil on the physical level become the signs, symbols and instruments of one's actual entry into the community of the disciples of Jesus the people of God, heir to the kingdom of heaven, reborn into His redeeming death, animated by his spirit, actually sharing in His sonship, and carrying the seed of his glorious resurrection and future immortality. All the sacraments may be seen in this very same light.

It is in this very same sense that we are able to refer to Christ as the sacrament of the encounter with God. As the Word made flesh, Christ becomes the mediator between God and human beings. He and the Father are one and no one can go to the Father except through Him (Jn. 14:6-7). Therefore, Christ in his humanity, as the Word made flesh, becomes the primordial sacrament par excellence in that He not only symbolizes and communicates the Father's love for all humankind, but He actually effects that love in his Paschal Mystery.

We truly live in a world of signs and symbols, those that communicate to us within our human, secular experience, and those wonderful, sacred, grace filled liturgical signs and symbols that form a living bridge between the now and the not yet, between God and man.

For Saint Francis of Assisi all the great phenomenon of nature as well as all the material elements of the universe spoke to him of God. Through these signs and symbols the divine presence became real for Francis. For him all nature was a reflection of the loving God who had created it and Francis respected and loved it as such (Cel. 1:81).

There was a certain sign and symbol which held a very special place in the heart of Francis and that was the sign of the Tau, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the year 1215, five years after he and his first band of followers had traveled to Rome to seek the approbation of their new Rule from Pope Innocent III, the Pope convoked the Fourth Lateran Council. Francis, at that time the head of a family of nearly five thousand brothers, most likely found himself in attendance at least in the capacity of an observer, to receive the instructions and admonitions of the Holy Father. This Council was essentially one of reform for the Church and undoubtedly Francis was deeply touched by it since all his later works seemed to be so strongly influenced by its spirit.

Commenting on a text from the prophet Ezekiel (9:4-6), the Pope called upon all those present to mark themselves and all Christians within their ministry with the sign of the Tau, a symbol of penance and of the cross. The Pope went on to affirm that as the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet the shape of the Tau indicated a cross and as such would be symbolically borne upon the heads of all those who manifested its radiance in their own lives. Those who truly embody this life of penance must affirm within their own lives the words of Saint Paul, "as for me, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world ..." (Gal. 6-14). The Pope then exhorted all present to be champions of the Tau and of the Cross. Concluding with the affirmation that God does not will the death of a sinner but his conversion, the Pope then admonished all the participants to go forth and to preach penance and forgiveness everywhere.

This seemed to be the perfect message for Francis, and it was most likely at this time that he chose the Tau as the symbol of his penitential life and as the resume of all his preaching. Consequently, it became the concrete sign and symbol of the participation of his Order in the reform of the Church and of souls called for so forcefully by the Pope. From that point onward the Tau would serve Francis as a personal signature for his life and works as both Celano and Bonaventure testify (2 Cel. 106-109, LM. VI:1-9; LM X, 7-9), and as a precedent for the day when on Mount Alvernia the stigmata would reproduce in his very flesh the spiritual power of this mystical letter already imprinted upon his heart.

Today there are only three short writings of Saint Francis in existence which he wrote with his own hand on two small pieces of parchment. One of these, which is preserved in a reliquary at the Sacro Convento in Assisi, bears on one side Francis' "Praises of God Most High." On the reverse side it bears the famous "Blessing of Brother Leo." This side of the Chartula carries not only the blessing which Francis wrote for Brother Leo, but also a large and thickly drawn letter T, the sign of the Tau, which extends downward and across the center of the parchment. Celano saw in Francis' use of this sign a moving expression of his deep love for the Cross of Christ and undoubtedly this was most likely the symbolism intended by him.

Therefore, the Tau became for Francis a very sacred symbol, a constant reminder to him of the Cross of Christ and of his need to be continually transformed through a penitential life into the image of the suffering and crucified Christ. For Francis the symbol was rich and brim full of meaning, signifying something very dear to him, and he sought to embody its significance in his own life and in the lives of all his followers.

To sum up the spirituality of Francis, in all simplicity we would have to say that essentially it is the imitation of Christ offering himself on the Cross as

a sacrifice for the salvation of all humankind and ultimately for the glory of the Father. For Francis Christ was the great sacrament of the encounter with the Father. In His humanity, as mediator between God and humankind, He was the visible image of invisible divine love and grace, who had lived out the essence of this mediatorship in sacrifice, the supreme sacrifice of the Cross. Therefore, the essence of Francis' spirituality, of his unique life force, is imitation, resemblance, coalescence with Christ in his life and work, and most particularly in His passion and death. For in that very passion and death Francis realized that Christ had fully affirmed what He had preached, "if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Lk:23).

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Throughout the life of Francis, beginning with his conversion and concluding with his death, the vision of the crucified Christ becomes progressively well defined with the clearest revelation achieved in the full vision of Alvernia and of the Transitus. While immersed in prayer at San Damiano it was the crucified Christ who spoke to him and initiated him into a life of total self denial for the love of Christ crucified. From that inspired moment onward, through a life of prayer and self denial, the cross became central to his life. The Tau became his personal signature, and as he sought to live out its deepest meaning in his life he was slowly but surely drawn to its full realization on Mount Alvernia. It was there that he was divinely sealed by the six winged seraph, Christ himself, with the authentic signs of his own passion. Francis understood only too well that just as he had sought to imitate Christ in all that he did in this life, so he must also seek to conform himself to the suffering and agony of His passion before he departed from this world (LM XIII, 2). He had indeed become a sign and symbol himself in that his whole life was so closely integrated into the life of Christ, particularly into His passion and death, that in his life, in his work and in his death he made Christ present to all whom he touched. And so it must be the goal of all his followers to seek to do likewise.

In the opening section of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, of Vatican II, we find the following statement:

Since the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament — a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men —

she here proposes, for the benefit of the faithful and of the whole world, to set forth as clearly as possible, and in the tradition laid down by earlier Councils, her own nature and universal mission (LG, Chap. I, 1).

Likewise, the Council intended that each member of the Church and each group within the Church should, with the guidance of this document become more fully aware of its true position within the Church. Different chapters of the Constitution deal with the various states and functions among God's people so that each group may clearly understand its true role. For example, Chapter III deals with the Hierarchical Structure of the Church, while Chapter IV treats of the Laity. But that which concerns us most directly is Chapter VI on Religion, and what is their true role within the Church and the world.

The Church has traditionally looked upon consecrated persons as authentic images of herself, and the bonds by which they vow themselves to the faithful practice of the evangelical counsels become a complete and vibrant expression of the union that exists between Christ and His bride the Church (LG: 44). The Constitution is even more specific in pointing out that religious life is a striking expression of the holiness of the Church and therefore "this practice of the counsels gives and must give in the world an outstanding witness and example of the same holiness" (LG: 39). Religious, therefore, are to be living signs and symbols of that holiness which the Church is commissioned to produce in all of its members. As such, the religious state lived faithfully must clearly demonstrate to all the faithful the unsurpassed breadth of the love of Christ the Lord and the infinite power of the Holy Spirit marvelously working within the Church. Consequently, the profession of the evangelical counsels must shine before all the members of the Church as a sign and symbol of God's holiness which should in turn inspire them to an effective and prompt fulfillment of their Christian vocation (LG: 44).

Ultimately, the people of God have no lasting city here below, but are striving to achieve the fullness of the kingdom of God. The religious state in its embrace of the evangelical counsels must more clearly manifest to the faithful here below the reality of that same kingdom that is to come. In a special way, therefore, religious are called upon to be living signs and symbols of the end product of all salvation history, namely the kingdom of heaven.

While in the world as part of the pilgrim people of God they are, through their profession and living out of the evangelical counsels, not of this world. They must bear witness by their lives to the other worldly, the kingdom to which all humankind is destined. This is the eschatological role of religious life (LG: 44), and it is a role essential to the life of faith of all the people of God.

In the midst of a world that is filled with violence, division, hatred and distorted values, the consecrated religious has an especially important role to play. Within all this spiritual darkness which seeks to reject and ridicule the life of faith in the world today, the religious is called upon to be a light shining on a mountain top, to be a reassuring beacon to all people of faith. As such all religious must truly be signs and symbols of the kingdom that is to come. However, not only must they bear witness to the end time, but in a sense they must be sacramental signs as Francis was, not only signifying holiness but actually effecting it in their own lives. There must be a faithful relational clarity between the sign and that which is being signified.

Unfortunately, when this relationship is badly distorted or does not exist at all, then the power of the symbolic value of a religious life has lost its true meaning. To lose that significant affiliation because of human respect, political correctness, or human pride would be a tremendous waste of God's grace. When this occurs, then instead of being a counter sign to the false values of this world, the religious becomes a co-signer of those same false values, actively seeking to bend the Church to fit his or her own needs and to conform it to the prevailing social climate. This not only destroys the true significance of a religious life, but is also the cause of great scandal and harm to the people of God.

Therefore, it is especially urgent today that as Franciscans, we are not only sincerely seeking to be true signs and symbols of the Kingdom, but in a special way we must all be signed with the sign of the Tau. Our holiness must be lived out by seeing Christ in all things and everything in Christ, to dedicate all of our efforts for Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in that Christ stripped of all on the cross. This is the heart and soul of our Franciscanism. Each of our Franciscan virtues rooted in our vowed life, and every Franciscan activity flowing out of the observance of our Rule, has its source, its meaning and its definition in the Cross.

But how should we interpret this embracing of the cross of Jesus Christ, this identification with Francis in the passion and death of the Lord? Fundamentally it must be expressed in the true purpose of our lives as Franciscans, namely, to live in penance.

When the first friars ventured forth to preach penance in central Italy and were asked by the curious people of the region who or what they were, they simply identified themselves as penitents from the town of Assisi. Similarly, in the opening words of his Testament, Francis affirms the ideal that had guided him as God's inspiration to embark upon a life of penance. This goal which Francis had pursued his whole life long with such commitment under the guiding hand of God and had set before his brothers and sisters as the ideal to follow, was first and foremost the life of penance.

This life of penance is not to be interpreted in a narrow sense of the term implying hairshirts and the practice of all kinds of physical severities. While we know that Francis often undertook such external penances and practiced them to the highest degree, it was not what he had in mind when he spoke of, and strove for, a life of penance. What he did have in mind was something greater and deeper since he understood "penance" and "doing penance" primarily in the sense of gospel *metanoia*. This translates into a change of mind, heart and direction, the complete and unceasing renewal of a person who tends to God with his whole heart, mind and soul. It is a radical sensitivity and receptivity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit with a concomitant response of one's whole being. It is in this state of ongoing conversion that every follower of Francis must become a living sign and symbol of that transformation into Christ our savior, especially into his passion and death.

In his "Letter To All The Faithful" Francis is very explicit in relation to this very point:

And it was the Father's will that His blessed and glorious Son, whom He gave to us and who was born for our sake, should offer Himself by His own blood as a sacrifice and victim on the altar of the cross; and this, not for Himself, through whom all things were made, but for our sins, leaving us an example that we may follow in His steps (*Omnibus*: 93-94).

In these simple, faith filled words is contained Francis' entire theology of the Cross. In them he presents to his brothers and sisters the "life of penance" as the logical outcome of the mystery of the passion. His words are an invitation and a challenge to all of us to meditate on that mystery and to examine our own lives in the light of that great truth. It is the Cross that must lead us into the mystery of the inner life of the Church. And it is the Cross in its full meaning and power that must be communicated faithfully to all the people of God through the sign and symbolic value of our own lives.

Virgin Made Church: Holy Spirit, Mary, and the Portiuncula in Franciscan Prayer

PETER SCHNEIBLE, O.F.M.

The experience of God documented in the writings of Francis of Assisi and in the biographies and stories of his life are so rich and deep that it is difficult to describe them from one point of view. For instance, one of the more obvious characteristics of Franciscan spirituality is its Christocentrism. Francis makes it quite clear that he is trying to follow in the "footprints" of Jesus Christ. While much insight can be gained by examining Francis' religious experience from this perspective, closer examination of his spiritual theology discloses that his focus on Christ is really just a part of a Trinitarian understanding in which the Holy Spirit has a vital role. There are also other surprises in Francis' spiritual life. Clearly his relationship to his father was a crucial element in his understanding of God. After his renunciation of this relationship before the bishop of Assisi, he vows to call only God his father. Yet, the writings of Francis are full of maternal images as well, and he develops a close relationship to Mary, the Mother of God. Finally, poverty is an important element in Francis' spirituality. He practices strict poverty and encourages his followers to imitate him in the practice of this virtue. He is very upset on his return from the Holy Land to discover that the brothers have acquired substantial buildings for friaries, and he fights this trend (ultimately unsuccessfully) as contrary to the poverty that is so essential to his experience of God. Yet, he tells his brothers always to keep the church of St. Mary of the Angels, the Portiuncula, where the Order began.

This paper will show that these paradoxes are related. The Holy Spirit played an important role in Francis' religious experiences, particularly his conversion after encountering the leper. I believe that Francis came to understand this experience of God through his prayerful reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in the Annunciation to Mary and through his life of prayer and fraternity at the Portiuncula. An understanding of this connection will help us to re-envision the role of Mary and the place of prayer in our Franciscan charism.

Fr. Peter, a member of Holy Name Province, teaches Biology at St. Bonaventure University. He has studied at the Franciscan Institute and presently participates in the ministry of formation by assisting in vocation work and by living in one of the pre-novitiate houses.

The Role of the Holy Spirit for Francis

That the Holy Spirit is a central element in Francis' spiritual life can be seen by the many references to the Spirit in his writings. In his *Later Rule* for the friars he advises, "let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working . . ." (*RegB* X:8). Francis sees all else in reference to this and warns that other activities must not interfere with the following of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In advising St. Clare and her sisters, Francis tells them that cultivating the interior life of the Holy Spirit is more important than any work they might do in the world outside their monastery (*Cant Exh*, 3). Francis also emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in giving spiritual advice to those who wanted to follow him while remaining in the world. First, he proposes five practices to remove the people from their natural inclination to the ways of the world and to introduce them to the life of God. These preliminary steps make a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit within the person. "Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, since the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them" (*Ep Fid I* 1:5-6). The culmination and ultimate purpose of Francis' use of the term "Spirit of the Lord" is seen in the beautiful prayer at the end of his *Letter to the Entire Order*:

Thus,
inwardly cleansed,
interiorly enlightened,
and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,
may we be able to follow
in the footprints of Your beloved Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ.
And, by Your grace alone,
may we make our way to You,
Most High . . . (*EpOrd* 51-52)

The Holy Spirit enables us to follow in the "footprints" of Jesus Christ. And it is in the power of the Spirit and the imitation of Christ that we are led to the Father who is "Most High." Thus, we are enabled to enter into the very life of the Trinity.

The early biographers of Francis also realized the importance of the Holy Spirit in his life and that of the brotherhood. St. Bonaventure describes an incident in which a learned doctor of theology is amazed by the wisdom and insight into Scripture that Francis, a man of little schooling, had. Bonaventure points out that Francis, "through the abundant anointing of the Holy Spirit, had their Teacher within himself in his heart" (*LM* XI:2). Thomas of Celano, the first biographer of the saint, states that Francis saw the Order in relation to the Spirit. "Upon the foundation of constancy a noble structure of charity arose, in which the living stones, gathered from all parts of the world, were erected into a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit" (*I Cel* 38).

Francis' conversion was a gradual process, occurring over a span of at least several years. Certainly, one of the crucial elements in this process was his embrace of the leper, which is mentioned so prominently in his Testament (*Test* 1-2). Lepers engendered horror and revulsion in Francis. Given the terrible effects of this disease, this may be natural on a human level, but it had more profound spiritual implications. In Francis' sinful state the leper seemed to be beyond the love of Christ. Inspired by his resolution to conquer his selfishness, Francis runs to embrace the leper (*LM* 1:5). He finds himself overwhelmed by God's love, by an experience of the Holy Spirit. In the leper he sees that the most dehumanized person is taken up in the love of God. He also finds Christ embracing his sinful self totally. This is a completely undeserved gift. Aware of the invasion of God's love, Francis becomes a man inflamed with love for God, a man of desires.

The Place of Mary in Franciscan Spirituality

Being a person of prayer, Francis would naturally seek an explanation of his profound experience with the leper in his relationship with God. Being a person of the Middle Ages, Francis would be familiar with Scripture, even though he was not well educated. His writings give ample evidence that he was well versed in the Bible. He was also imbued with the language of liturgy. "Francis' prayer is firmly rooted in Scripture and liturgy."¹ Through these resources he undoubtedly sought to understand the meaning of what he had experienced.

Under the influence of St. Bernard and the Cistercians, meditations on the humanity of Jesus were common in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Francis took up this practice, but focused particularly on the birth and death of the Lord. The Incarnation was a central focus in his meditations. The birth of Jesus so took over his thoughts and imagination that he created the practice of a living creche for Christmas in the village of Greccio. Thus, it is likely that Francis meditated on the infancy narratives in Luke's gospel. Given his experience of being overpowered by the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit following his embrace of the leper, Francis may have been attracted to the Annunciation in which Mary is "overshadowed" by the Holy Spirit (*Luke* 1:26-38). This was certainly a central event in the Marian theology of Bonaventure. The wide variety of his writings on Mary (theological, Scriptural, liturgical and mystical) "are profoundly one at the core: they all turn around reflection on the central event of Mary's life, the Annunciation."² Furthermore, Bonaventure saw the Annunciation as a paradigm for the understanding of God's relationships with humanity.³ In this he may have had an insight into Francis' own thoughts.

Immediately following the Annunciation in Luke's gospel, Mary goes to visit her kinswoman Elizabeth, who the angel told her had conceived a son. A remarkable exchange occurs between these two women. In response to Elizabeth's greeting Mary sings her song of praise, the Magnificat, in which she gives voice to her reaction to God's intervention in her life. Luke presents Mary as one of the *Anawim*, the lowly of God, who have no earthly power. "But the God of Jesus breaks into this barrenness and fulfills the promise, bringing new life where it was judged impossible by every human standard."⁴ The Magnificat clearly indicates how God acts in the world on behalf of those considered unimportant. "God uses the weak to confound the strong, the lowly to dethrone the mighty, the poor to despoil the rich, the virgin to show that the divine sonship is not the work of the flesh but the gift of the spirit."⁵ Francis may have understood God's action through him on behalf of the leper in terms of this prayer of Mary. In fact, Francis' own description of this incident in *The Testament* is phrased in an antithesis reminiscent of those in the Magnificat. "I had mercy upon them (lepers). And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body" (*Test* 2-3). Elizabeth Johnson describes the Magnificat as "a hymn of liberation, fiercely on the side of the oppressed, and fearlessly indicating the powerful who abuse those considered 'non-persons'."⁶ The lepers were such non-persons in medieval society and for the pre-conversion Francis. The "powerful" Francis was changed forever by God's intervention on their behalf.

Out of littleness comes greatness, out of poverty comes richness, out of virginity comes motherhood.

The image of Mary presented in the Magnificat has much in common with Franciscan spirituality, particularly with regard to humility and poverty. "Mary proclaims that there is nothing of herself that is to be honored or acknowledged, but only what God has done. Again this is the constant message of Francis, which was expressed so clearly . . . In Admonition XIX."⁷ As mentioned above, the Magnificat describes Mary as being one of the *Anawim*, the poor of God. "The poverty of the *Anawim* is perceptive and open to the Holy Spirit of God and it recognizes that all goodness and grace come from Him."⁸

Bonaventure studied the Annunciation and the Magnificat extensively in his *Commentary on Luke*. In the Annunciation the Virgin Mary is made fertile by the action of the Holy Spirit. Bonaventure also examines the manner in which Mary praises the Lord in the Magnificat. She praises God for the divine mercy shown in the redemption of humanity and the generosity shown in the

gift of the Holy Spirit.⁹ Bonaventure's emphasis on the Spirit seems to follow Francis' own concentration on the third person of the Trinity.

If Francis was in fact influenced in his conversion by the Annunciation and the Magnificat, it would help to explain why Francis was so attracted to Mary. Thomas of Celano tells us that "toward the Mother of Jesus he was filled with an inexpressible love, because it was she who made the Lord of majesty our brother" (2 Cel 198), Francis also put the Order under her protection. Bonaventure points out that Francis prayed to Mary, and that it was through her intercession that "he conceived and brought to birth the spirit of the truth of the Gospel" (LM III:1).

The Mother of God appears extensively in the writings of St. Francis. The Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a litany of praise to Mary. The Office of the Passion contains an antiphon, to be repeatedly used during the praying of the office, that praises the Virgin Mary. Such repetition would have inserted a strong Marian influence into the life of the friars. Mary is mentioned often, if briefly, in the other writings of Francis. Most often these references are in the conjunction with a reference to Jesus. "Francis' love of our Lady formed one whole with reverence and love for the poor Christ."¹⁰ This connection of Mary to Christ was proper theology in Francis' day and still is in our post-Vatican II church.

Mary also appears regularly in the writings of Clare of Assisi. In several places her rule instructs the sisters to follow the poverty and humility of Jesus and Mary and so does her Testament. The Rule also presents the love of Jesus and Mary as a motivation for the life of poverty (Reg CL 2:18). Further, Clare advises Blessed Agnes of Prague to stay close to the Mother of Christ (EpAg III, 2:18).

Bonaventure's writings concerning Mary are extensive and varied. One of his favorite themes is that of Mary as the perfect model of the Christian soul. Mary received the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation. So the soul receives the Holy Spirit by grace. In *The Five Feasts of the Child Jesus* Bonaventure reflects on the infancy narratives and further develops the comparison between Mary and the soul. "In a sort of dialectical motion, attention shifts from the historical Mary, Mother of Jesus, to the spiritual Mary, the Christian soul, and then again to the historical Mary, who is also spiritual . . . She should therefore serve as model and companion in the mystic journey of the soul as 'spiritual Mother.'"¹¹

In both the writings of Francis and of Clare the binary references to Jesus and Mary stress their poverty and humility, the same virtues seen to be so prominent in Mary in the Magnificat. Possessing neither material goods nor one's works and very self creates a total emptiness in the soul. In Mary this emptiness is filled by the gift of the Holy Spirit and she bears Christ physically. In Francis, Clare, and other disciples, meditating on the mysteries of Christ's life enabled the Holy Spirit to fill the emptiness with the spiritual presence of Christ. "His comprehensive understanding and practice of the way of humility and poverty of Mary enabled Francis to become pregnant with Jesus or to conceive him in his heart."¹²

This idea of poverty and humility leading to the conception of Christ points to several unique images in Francis' writings. In the antiphon from *The Office of the Passion* Francis calls Mary the spouse of the Holy Spirit. He seems to have been the first to use this term. Mary is the handmaid who accepted God's will for her. She is also the one who through the action of the Holy Spirit brings Christ into the world physically.¹³ This same dynamic can be at work spiritually in the lives of all believers in Christ. "We are mothers, when we carry Him in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and when we give birth to Him through His holy manner of working" (EpFid I 10). The working of the Holy Spirit enables us to conceive Christ spiritually in our hearts for the benefit of our own spiritual life and to bring Christ to "life" in our world for the benefit of others.

This ministerial (and therefore ecclesial) dimension of the work of the Holy Spirit in Mary and in us is made more explicit in *The Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary* where Mary is called "the virgin made church." Mary is involved in the founding of the church because she is the instrument used by the Trinity to bring about the Incarnation.¹⁴ Through her (though still a virgin) Christ entered the world and through Christ (and therefore through her) the church was founded. Her fecundity leads to the birth of not only Christ but also of new believers in her Son. Thus, Francis' image can be seen on both Marian and ecclesial levels. These dual layers of meaning are also seen in the other titles in *The Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Palace, Tabernacle, Home) which apply equally to Mary and to the Church.

The Portiuncula

What happened through the Holy Spirit physically in Mary can happen spiritually in other humans. Just as she gave birth to new believers by bringing her Son into world physically, so we can generate new believers by birthing Christ spiritually. This is exactly what happened to Francis. And the birthing process was centered in the church of St. Mary of the Angels, the Portiuncula. Before his experience of the leper, Francis repaired this church and came to live there. Bonaventure tells us that he specifically chose this church because of his love for Mary. (LM II:8) The name of the church may have had an influence in directing him to the experience of Mary in the Annunciation and the Magnificat in order to understand his experience with the leper. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, the biblical stories of Mary, and the church named in her honor worked together to complete his conversion. When he had given birth to Christ spiritually, his life became a model that drew people to him. And so in his virginal openness to the Spirit he became "church" also. "This little chapel was the womb in which the order was conceived and from which it was born."¹⁵ This location became the symbol of all the elements of Franciscan spirituality. It was dedicated to Mary, the humble and poor one who brought forth the Savior through the action of the Holy Spirit. Its name (Portiuncula) means little

portion; it was small and humble of stature. Francis and the brothers who came to live there desired to be poor, as Jesus and Mary were. Humility and poverty combine to create an emptiness that the Holy Spirit can fill with fecund power. The poverty and humility of the namesake and the residents are "concretized" in the structure itself. "The paradox imposes itself upon the self-image of the entire brotherhood. For, as Celano sums up, precisely in this place, the Order of Minors had its beginning, and with this very church as its foundation it grew in numbers to achieve its 'noble structure.' . . . Out of littleness comes greatness, out of poverty comes richness, out of virginity comes motherhood."¹⁶

Conclusion

Franciscan spirituality and prayer are Trinitarian. We are led to union with the Father through our following in the "footprints" of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The action of the Spirit is affective. We should not try to deny or repress our desires, just have them redirected by the Spirit as Francis did. In order to do this, however, we must provide a dwelling place for the Spirit. In this the Mother of God is our exemplar. The externals of Marian piety are optional. Imitation of her in making oneself into a dwelling place for the Spirit is essential. This involves humility and poverty to create an emptiness. It also involves the imitation of Mary in pondering in our heart the word of God and His actions in our lives (Lk 2: 19). Finally, we cannot deny the importance of location for our prayer. We and our Savior are incarnated into the world. The places we choose for our prayer will have to have an impact on its fruitfulness.

End notes

¹ Séamus Mulholland, "Our Lady in the Writings of St. Francis," *The Cord* 41 (1991), 151.

² George H. Tavard, *Forthbringer of God* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989), 185.

³ Tavard, 169.

⁴ Donald Senior, "Gospel Portrait of Mary: Images and Symbols from the Synoptic Tradition," in *Mary, Woman of Nazareth* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), ed. Doris Donnelly, 106.

⁵ George T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 266.

⁶ Elizabeth Johnson, "Reconstructing a Theology of Mary," in *Mary, Woman of Nazareth*, 83.

⁷ Larry Dunphy, "Mary, A Model For Franciscan Spirituality," *The Cord* 38 (1988), 136.

⁸ Mulholland, 154. ⁹ Tavard, 69. ¹⁰ Mulholland, 154. ¹¹ Tavard, 158.

¹² Dunphy, 135. ¹³ Mulholland, 152. ¹⁴ Mulholland, 153. ¹⁵ Dunphy, 132.

¹⁶ Joseph Doino, "Francis and Mary Revisited," *The Cord* 37 (1987), 142.

BRILLIANT BLESSINGS

The sun is full of starlights
And magnificence today
And I can hardly
Bear to think
Tomorrow will be
Winter once again
When today is full
Of brightness and
shimmering effulgence
Like a Springtime afternoon!
Today is full
Of dazzle-diamonds,
Glitters in pink puddles
On the city's sidewalks,
Golden honeydrops of
Window luminosity
And blazing blushes
Turning upward to
This sparkly afternoon
Catching brilliant blessings
Of exhilarating sun!

Rita Kristina Weinheimer, O.S.F.

OCTOBER, 1994

The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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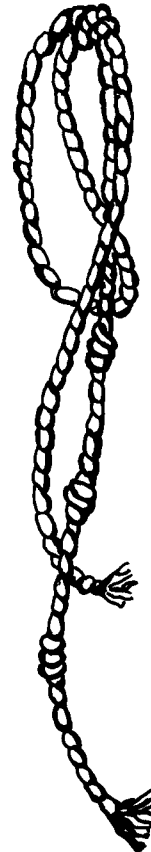
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The CORD

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Standard Abbreviations used in The CORD for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

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

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis	LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis
2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis	LMin: Bonaventure Minor Life of Francis
3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles	LP: Legend of Perugia
CL: Legend of Saint Clare	L3S: Legend of the Three Companions
CP: Process of Saint Clare	SC Sacrum Commernium
Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis	SP: Mirror of Perfection
Omnibus: Marion A. Habig, ed., <i>St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis</i> (Chicago Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).	
AB: Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., <i>Francis and Clare: The Complete Works</i> (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).	

New Fioretti Concerning The Beginning of the Year of Saint Clare in Africa

HERMANN SCHALÜCK, O.F.M.

**"The peace at the hearth of your hut outweighs the
enmity of the entire world"**

In the month of August 1993, as the Order of the Lesser Brothers was commemorating the first ten years of its new "Africa Project" and also when 800 years had passed since the birth of Saint Clare, Brother Hermann once more left his jasmine-scented hill in Rome and, having sought the consent of the other Ministers General and of the Mother Abbess of the Proto-Monastery of Saint Clare to spend the feast of Saint Clare in Africa, set out with Brother Peter for Kenya and Uganda.

In Nairobi all the Brothers of the Vice-Province of Saint Francis were awaiting their arrival, in order to recount to them something of their experiences, needs and hopes. The young Brothers of yon continent said to him, "Do not come bringing a full pitcher. Come rather with an empty calabash. We will show you how to fill it." And as he saw the numerous young brothers of all tribes and nations who wanted to join the Order in these days, he was reminded of the saying of Scripture, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'" (Zech. 8:23). Brother Ayele from Kenya sat one evening with Brother Hermann from Rome on a straw mat and drank tea with him. He said, "You are sitting with me on the same level. In Africa that is usually not so. Our chiefs are accustomed to sit higher than the ordinary people. I love my people, but I am also happy to be your younger Brother who sits with you on the same level." Brother Hermann spoke to them as they were all assembled about the oneness of Africa with the world-wide Brotherhood, and what in his opinion evangelization means: "to build a ship does not mean to weave the sails, to cast the nails, to shape the wood as a carpenter, to read the heavenly signs, but rather to waken in all those who

intend to sail in her the longing for the open sea" (Exupéry). Only by a longing for God in contemplation, he added, can the Brotherhood and the whole Franciscan Family initiate a new evangelization. Brother Expositus from Tanzania called out to him a proverb from the tribe of the Xeruba, "The peace at the hearth of your hut outweighs the enmity of the entire world." This gave the Minister the occasion to say in reply that indeed in the Order of the Lesser Brothers it is not a matter of writing ever new learned manifestos urging inculturation or contemplation, or directing lengthy appeals for peace to the whole world. More important is it to begin with oneself using quite small steps: to close doors quietly, to remember the name of a Brother or Sister, to avoid treading a flower needlessly underfoot, to learn respectful silence and at the same time to speak foreign languages, to show mercy and at the same time to be able to accept it, to know how to plant both rice and roses. During the liturgy at the conclusion of the African Chapter of Mats he thanked all in the name of the world-wide Brotherhood for the implantation of the Order in East Africa and Madagascar. He blessed everyone, white or black, young or old, in the name of Francis and Clare, with the words:

"May the Lord bless your work.
May your rice-fields and banana-groves always bear rich fruit.
May the meat and the milk of your zebus nourish the poor.
May your doors and your hearts always stand open.
May your voices and your drums ever praise and glorify the Lord."

* * * * *

Thereafter the Minister continued his journey. He sailed across Lake Victoria to the land of Uganda and after a tedious journey through an area beset by robbers and brigands arrived by way of Entebbe and Kampala and Mabara in Kashekuro, where the Brothers and the Bishop and a crowd of people from the villages of the surrounding Savannas awaited him. It was the Vigil of the Feast of Saint Clare, which was at that same moment also being celebrated in Assisi in Umbria with much incense and Gregorian chant and under the presidency of a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. Here in far-away Kashekuro there was a great gathering of the people with their cattle, to celebrate the Holy Eucharist with the Bishop and the Minister, while listening to the rhythmic beat of drums and tambourines. In his homily, which the Bishop personally translated into the language of his people, Brother Hermann likened the Gospel to a bush-fire which, having been lit in many places by many Brothers of Saint Francis and Sisters of Saint Clare, could one day soon enlighten the whole African continent. He also said that evangelization is what takes place when poor people joyfully recount to one another where fresh water and a plateful of rice and buffalo-meat are to be found. It is the task of Christians in Africa, so he continued, to dig many

new wells (*Gen 26:17-33*), to drink from fresh sources, to irrigate thirsty land also in Europe with water and hope, to watch over the garden of the Church and its basic communities and build on them, to live new visions of a brotherly and sisterly Church, to compose new melodies and sing new songs. He reminded them of the saying of the ancient Roman poet Ovid that poetry and music only arise from a heart that is at peace with itself. He begged Brother Richard from America, an older Brother who led the community, not to leave this place and quoted the African proverb, "When a wise man departs, it is as though a whole library has been destroyed."

At the end of the Mass the Bishop was so moved, that in the face of the whole assembly he knelt down and humbly begged the Minister General for the Blessing of Saint Francis and of Saint Clare for his diocese and all its people and all its cattle. And the assembled community was astonished at this gesture and thanked the Lord for this sign of a truly new evangelization.

Until late into the night, on the grass and between the banana groves around the church of Kashekuro, there rose the smoke from great pots of maize, banana, buffalo-meat and millet beer. Far into the darkness of the African night resounded the drums and the hand-clapping of the people.

* * * * *

The Solemnity of Saint Clare was celebrated by the Lord Bishop and all the Brothers from Uganda and Rome with the Poor Ladies in Mbarara. The Sisters greeted the Minister in the garden with symbols and words at once African and totally Catholic: a young Sister with the countenance of the Queen of Saba offered him a bowl of water, saying, "Here is fresh water, to bid you welcome. It is to tell you that we have awaited your visit as parched soil awaits the rain." Brother Hermann drank from the calabash and passed it on to the Bishop. A second Sister came up and said, "Accept this fruit of our land, a Colanut. I will break it into two, for me to eat one half, and you the other. The single colanut is to tell you that we were already bound to each other before you came." Then the Abbess came up and said, "Here is the tabouret ('the little stool'), on which you will sit in our circle not only as our guest, but as a part of our family. And we ask you to tell us in the assembly of our family, as is the custom in Africa, about your journey and about our great family." And so it was. As they all then sat under the great tree, the youngest novice asked him what the Friars Minor really understood by "Evangelization" in Africa, a continent with centenary traditions of its own. The Minister answered, "When we approach another culture, another people, another religion, we must begin by removing our shoes and sandals and remain a long time in silence. For the ground on which we tread is holy ground. If we do not do this, but instead come with our heavy shoes and loud words, we destroy the music and the hopes of the other; even worse, we

completely ignore the presence of God who was already there before we came." He explained that in the past few years Brothers have come from all parts of the world to Africa, in order to discover there the other half of their souls.

In his homily, during the celebration of the Eucharist, Brother Hermann recounted how he had asked his Brother Ministers, the Bishop and the Mother Abbess of the Protomonastery in Assisi for permission to be absent from the opening of the Year of Saint Clare in Assisi and rather be present in Africa, for there, too, Saint Clare and her heritage have to be commemorated. All were so overjoyed at hearing this, that they clapped their hands, let out loud whoops of joy, and sounded their drums and tambourines. He went on to speak of the three dimensions of contemplation. To begin with, we have to acquire "clear eyes" and a "pure heart" in order to recognize the Lord in the Scriptures and in the Holy Eucharist and in the Church. Then it becomes important to have contemplative eyes, open hearts, and open hands for the poor, through whom in a special way the Spirit speaks to the Church and to the family of Saint Francis and Saint Clare. Finally, contemplation will also transform our relationship with nature and creation, for everything created, even though deformed by human hate or human avarice, is a trace and a word from the Creator.

Following the mind of the little Brother of Assisi, he encouraged the Sisters of Saint Clare in Africa also to evangelize tired old Europe by their example. "Be patient in affliction, wakeful in prayer, persevering in your work, cheerful and happy in your dealings with the poor, grateful for all benefactions, tireless in your gratitude to the Lord of History. Have faith in the creative power of contemplation. For it is not flight from the world. It is the power with which all religions, together and with the help of God, will create a new, more just, more peaceful world." He ended by passing on to the Sisters in Uganda the blessing which he had himself received in Kenya: "Let the Peace at the hearth of your home outweigh the enmity of the entire world."

* * * * *

After all had fortified themselves in the monastery garden of the Poor Ladies with a frugal meal, the Minister of the Fraternity traveled back to Rome, crossing Lake Victoria, the waters of Aswan, the Gulf of Arabia and the Gulf of Naples, to pass some time again on his Jasmine Hill and to reflect on all those things which the Sisters and Brothers in Africa had taught him, both for his own benefit and for the edification of the Franciscan and Clarian Family throughout the world.

Francis of Assisi: Person of Graced Imagination

GILES A. SCHINELLI, T.O.R.

The Greek novelist Nikos Kazantzakis, whom you may remember from his passionate tale of Zorba the Greek, also wrote, in the early sixties, a biography of the little brother whom we honor this night in our gathering, Francis of Assisi. The spirit of that same individual animated that wonderful convocation of religious leaders from all over the world held in Assisi on this very day seven years ago (October 27, 1986)—what is now called the Franciscan Day of Peace.

In relating that familiar encounter of Francis with the leper—which he does through the eyes of Brother Leo whom the author uses as the narrator of the entire tale, Kazantzakis tells us that Francis although shocked by the sight and smell of lepers nevertheless runs to meet this leperman, embraces him, kisses him on the lips then wraps him in his cloak and carries him off to a leper hospital. During the journey—and Leo is accompanying him—Francis stops to uncover the leper and seeing that he has disappeared falls to the ground and begins to cry. The ensuing dialogue between Francis and Leo runs like this:

"Did you see, Brother Leo, did you understand?"

"I saw, Brother Francis, but the only thing I understand is that God is playing games with us."

"This, Brother Leo, is what I understand: all lepers, all cripples, all sinners . . . if you kiss them on the mouth . . ."

He stopped, afraid to complete his thought.

"Enlighten me, Brother Francis, enlighten me, do not leave me in the dark," begged Leo.

Finally, after a long silence, he murmured with a shudder:

"All of these, if you kiss them on the mouth, O God forgive me for saying this, they all . . . become Christ,"

The following talk was given at the Franciscan Convocation of Saint Francis College, Loretto, PA on October 27, 1993. Fr. Giles A. Schinelli, T.O.R. is a member and former Minister Provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province (Hollidaysburg, PA) of the Third Order Regular. Currently he serves as the President of the Franciscan Federation.

While it is clear that Kazantzakis takes creative liberties with the sources (*1 Cel 17b; 2 Cel 9c; 3 L3S 11b; LM I:5*) and is inclined to follow Bonaventure in the sudden disappearance of the leper and has Francis kiss the leper on the mouth rather than on the hand, his genius lies in his accurate perception of Francis' vision and spirit. For in this little episode, Kazantzakis pinpoints what we Franciscans have tried to say in so many different ways: that Francis was a person who took the Incarnation seriously. Or to put it another way, Francis was a practical man and concepts for him had real-life implications: — If Christ could become flesh, then all flesh could become Christ . . . and that meant all flesh . . . his flesh, lepers' flesh, crippled persons' flesh, sinners' flesh, non-believers' flesh, even the flesh of his own little brothers and sisters.

In Zen practice the koan — a paradoxical statement that confuses and upsets the ordinary rational mind — is given so that the spiritual seeker has an opportunity to break through to an entirely new level of insight into reality. The individual wrestles in his/her mind with the koan and eventually breaks through to the new understanding. The experience whereby Francis acquired his incarnational insight was similar except that his wrestling was with personal experience and not simply something he did in his mind. The collection of his life experiences — his life wrestlings if you will — are instructive both for us who have been given the task of keeping alive his precious legacy as well as for those who wish to understand his relevance in our contemporary world.

Time, of course, does not permit us to recount all of Francis' experiences but a few will suffice to hint at how Francis came to become convinced that if Christ could become flesh then all flesh could become Christ. And let us say clearly that for Francis (and for us too) this insight did not fall fully developed into his heart but rather developed and deepened as his capacity to understand himself, human life . . . and God developed and, more importantly, moved him to commitment.

If Christ could become flesh then all flesh could become Christ.

Recall his infatuation with chivalry, the excitement of being a knight and fighting for the right cause, owning a horse and armour and the intent of the young idealist as he set off for battle. Those experiences were matched with the reality of being a captured prisoner, of seeing and perhaps enduring the horrible indignities which prisoners of war were subjected to, his subsequent illness and

a long period of recuperation. Taken all together they became formative for Francis.

Recall his trip to the Holy Land in 1219 and his discovery, upon his return a year later, that the Order had begun to take a different direction and that friars he had trusted to guide the Order had misunderstood both his intentions and his ability to lead. Imagine his frustration and anger and glimpse if you can the reasons behind his desire to resign from his position.

Recall his touching letter to a Minister in which he tries to comfort this friar obviously overwhelmed with his responsibilities, attempts to speak to him in the words of the Gospel about forgiving those brothers who had fallen aside from their life commitment all the while searching for some practical solution when similar problems would arise in the future.

Francis' experiences were such that he could have easily become a cynic. They could have easily led him to make incessant commentary on the reality of original sin (the seamier side of life) as he saw it in himself, his brothers and the people around him. Why didn't he? Was it because he was at heart a romantic and preferred to look at reality, life, through rose-colored glasses and simply embrace all folks and all behaviors in the name of a certain naiveté and lack of critical judgment? Was it because he was by nature an optimist and easily given to habits of positive thinking. No, I don't think so!

Rather, I would like to suggest that Francis was a person of rare and graced imagination. His genius lies in the quality of his imaginative skill which I would equate with a certain kind of poetic talent. It was this imaginative ability which allowed Francis to understand a Gospel paradox: just as Christ had become flesh . . . so too all flesh could become Christ. Or to put it another way . . . all flesh could become Christ only if he, Francis, would allow it to be so.

Only if Francis could forgive those who imprisoned him and made him ill and kiss them on the lips by this forgiving action so to speak . . . only if Francis could forgive those who had tried to change the direction of the Order by correcting them but loving them at the same time and thereby kissing them on the lips, so to speak . . . only if Francis could turn the minister's thoughts away from going to a hermitage while at the same time showing that he loved him deeply enough to encourage him to practice the forgiveness of the Gospel in regard to the lapsed brother and thereby kissing him on the lips, so to speak . . .

Francis' imagination enabled him to understand the Incarnation. He did this on two levels, I believe. First on the level of history — Francis grasped that Jesus, Son of God had become flesh, one like us in all things but sin. The marvelous condescension of God in this activity truly captured Francis' imagination. We

all know the story of how he was so impressed by the poor circumstances of Jesus' birth that he wished to create some vehicle which would perpetually commemorate it. This was only the beginning. Down through the ages sons and daughter of Francis would write rhapsodic volumes about this core truth of our faith.

Yet Francis understood the Incarnation on another level — the level of invitation. It was here that his imaginative skill is most operative. This mystery of faith was not simply a historical fact. For him it was also an invitation. An invitation to participate in the mystery. Each time he could break through the patina of his experiences, move deeper into the circumstances and grasp the underlying reality — each time he could allow all flesh to become Christ — then the Incarnation was a palpable phenomenon.

Kazantzakis, in the prologue of his book on Francis, puts it this way:

Everywhere about me, as I wrote, I sensed the Saint's invisible presence; because for me Saint Francis is the model of the dutiful person, the person who by means of ceaseless, supremely cruel struggle succeeds in fulfilling our highest obligation — something higher even than morality or truth or beauty — the obligation to transubstantiate the matter which God entrusted to us, and turn it into spirit.²

The significance of Francis' vision is not difficult for us to appreciate in our time. We who are more educated, more technological, more globally aware, more political and more sophisticated still find that all the "mores" do not necessarily appease our appetites or assuage the human conflicts which seem to increase daily. Wars, ethnic cleansing, famine, racism, nationalism, sexism, exploitation, religious and political forms of domination — the world groans and the sound is overwhelming.

Added to this groaning, our fears and pre-conceived notions serve to isolate us and stifle our creative imagination. We are afraid of the homeless person who accosts us asking for a few cents and perhaps a kind word and find it impossible to understand how the number of these folks continues to grow. We fear the AIDS victim, easily expostulating moral principles yet keeping a healthy distance while understanding little of the politics or human desires involved. We fear the political implications of our faith and hence continue to pollute our world and ignore the global inter-connectedness we read about.

But wait! For Francis and for the religious leaders who gathered in Assisi seven years ago today, the message was not rhetoric. Rather it was action — one person at a time, one encounter at a time. Each person, each encounter an invitation to enter into the mystery of Incarnation. Each person, each encounter an opportunity to "transubstantiate the matter which God entrusted to us."

Perhaps a final story will best illustrate what I have been trying to say.

At the conclusion of his wonderful book *The Canticle of Creatures*, Eloi Leclerc shares with his readers the very poignant excerpts of his personal diary written in the spring of 1945.³ Apparently arrested and exiled by the Nazis, he records a month's horrendous journey in an overcrowded open boxcar on the way to Dachau. The details describe gut-wrenching hunger, exposure to the elements — particularly rain and cold, the mistreatment and cruelty of the guards, the horror of hoping that someone will die so that there will be more room, the discipline of not being allowed to stand, the filth and vermin and circumstances which visitors to the new Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C. are revisiting with heart-rending clarity and horror.

Francis was a person of rare and graced imagination.

A few sentences reference the sights and smells of spring — the budding trees high up on the mountain, the larks tumbling in the evening sky and the golden flowering of broom bushes. But the tone throughout is heavy, ominous:

There we were, thousands of persons abandoned to hunger, cold, vermin and death. The human being is completely crushed. Man, whom we up till now believed was made in God's image, now seems laughable: worthless, helpless, hopeless; a being caught up in a whirlwind of forces that play with him, or rather, pay absolutely no attention to him. That is how we see ourselves now — that and nothing more. Among the corpses that lie in the water of the car, eyes turned back, is a companion or friend. Everything we can see, every experience we must undergo, tells us we are in the grip of an iron law, handed over to the play of blind forces — and that this, this alone is reality (p. 233).

And yet, on the morning of April 26 when one of us (there are five Franciscans in this boxcar) 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* (p. 234).

In asking why this happens he replies simply saying:

Theories have no place in our utter confusion of spirit; they offer no shelter from the storm. The only thing that remains and is priceless in our eyes is the patience and friendship this or that comrade shows you. Such an act by

someone who, like yourself, is immersed in suffering and anxiety, is a ray of light that falls into the wretched darkness that envelops us. It re-creates you, makes you a human being once again . . . And when such an act of friendly help has been done to you, you in turn are able to do it for another (p. 234).

Would that the creative imagination of Francis of Assisi which gave birth to such insight be ours. Would that it be ours!

End notes

¹ Nikos Kazantzakis, *Saint Francis*, (Touchstone Books, 1962), 94-96.

² Ibid., 12.

³ Eloi Leclerc, *The Canticle of Creatures: Symbols of Union*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 227-236.

* * *

TO JOB

I too have spoken without understanding
Of things incomprehensible to me:

The usual winter storms and summer splendours
(Which Blake would call God's contrariness in love & cruelty)

But, I would know further God's primal plan for all creation
With and without human collaboration.

The dark mystery of death and suffering;
The profound beauty of transcendent grace.

The strange history of His covenant with Israel
His limitless thought for the universal race.

And yes, the depth of Francis' poverty and nothingness,
And the height, he knew, of God's supreme worthiness.

Sr. Clare McDonnell

Contemplation and Confrontation

MARIE BEHA, O.S.C.
ERIC LINDBLOOM, CAP.

"The North American Experience of Poor Clares" was the title of the session that started this man questioning what he knew of Poor Clares. I was curious, especially as a group of Poor Clares were new to my province.

"Contemplation involves confrontation" was a statement made by one of the Poor Clare presenters. This intriguing idea is not my everyday experience as a Friar Minor. I wanted to know more. Clare and Francis were collaborators. Second and First Order mythologies seem to say that the communities they founded were to minister to one another. So I tracked down the presenter, Sister Marie Beha, O.S.C., and we began to share more on the meaning of her insight and how we experience it in our respective communities. We invite you to join our dialogue.

My experience as a Capuchin Franciscan is that we claim a contemplative spirit. An easy way out here is to quote statements from our Constitutions. But my interest is in teasing out some lived experiences that led me to hope that the Clares could give some complementarity to the First Order.

That Capuchins be contemplative is a stated value not only from our official documents but from sampling the membership. What I experience of confrontation leaves much to be desired. A lack of confrontation can stem from men's issues of closeness. This would be heightened if the confrontation were positive.

Masculine is the primary experience of the First Order. Much has been written on men's issues and the men's movement. Learned lack of emotional

This article by Sr. Marie and Fr. Eric resulted from a dialogue begun at a breakout session at the August 6-10, 1992 Franciscans Network charter Symposium in Denver, Colorado. Sr. Marie, who has served her community in formation work and as Abbess, is a member of the Poor Clare community at Greenville, South Carolina. Fr. Eric, a member of the St. Conrad Province of Capuchins, has recently moved to Denver to develop a program for Aids Ministry. The CORD shares their thoughts and hope for dialogue.

awareness is part of the male backpack. Numbness of feelings can be characteristic. Francis seemed able to ring most of the chimes in his emotional carillon. His emotional variety could be an inspiration for contemplation by Friars who tend to nurture one or a few reactions.

Men and Franciscan men too commonly avoid feelings through distracters of television, drugs (alcohol and nicotine) or the occasional guest. Another effective distracter is politeness. Niceness is a virtue lest offense be taken or communicated. Triangulation or talk about another is more common than engagement one-to-one and strangles possible clear conversation.

My experience as a Capuchin is that house chapters are a regular recommendation. As I have mulled over this dynamic through the years, I see it as a decent up-dating of what used to be called colloquy periods. These were daily, regular gathering times for conversation. They could be hilarious or ponderous. But they did carry the expectation that we would regularly speak with one another.

If I understand the house chapter correctly, this is an opportunity to sharpen the edges of our lives as we try to live the Gospel in a local community, with ramifications on the provincial and world-wide spectrum. These could be good opportunities for men to get beyond ideas and concepts and on to the values and meanings of faith and experience. That would require contemplative confrontation of self before another. It would require leaving behind the safety ledges of intellectualizing.

Yet house chapters should be the last place for confrontation. This goes to the heart of the Gospel. Jesus gives the sticky technique of approaching another to question differences that are always present. If a degree of resolution is unattainable, then another person is employed in the confrontation. Only then is the community invoked. Am I contemplative enough to approach a brother with a question, complaint, grievance or compliment? A translation of Francis' advice that the brothers are to proceed two by two could be the act of confrontation.

When anyone is confronted, the initial and natural reaction is anxiety. The confronter could be met with denial, defiance or defamation. Can I go two by two with my brother or another in their anxiety? Am I willing to stay with another's natural anxiety and talk her or him down to a point where understanding lives? This is nurturance in essence and can require patience and endurance, which are culturally more feminine attributes. From what Marie has said, the cloistered sisters have contemplated themselves into a distinctly masculine, culturally attributed stance of being willing to confront.

Deborah Tannen, in her book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* speaks of how men report; women establish rapport. Could our sisters in Clare have something to teach us? Are Franciscan men willing to learn from our sisters? With the Second Order enclosed and literally rubbing up against each other and the First Order men often out and about, is this possible? Desirable?

To get beyond ideas and concepts and on to the values and meanings of faith and experience would require contemplative confrontation of self before another.

A Contemplative Confronts

When Eric approached me after the breakout session in Denver our discussion sparked a whole series of reflections. What began as a single-sentenced truism expanded into this article.

"Contemplation involves confrontation." That is what I said originally. Now I want to rephrase that to read, contemplation **requires** confrontation. Completely counter to the popular image of the contemplative as silent, withdrawn, and passive, the truth is that a person called contemplative must face up to reality, look it in the eye, see deeply, and then live out the vision. And this on many levels:

- 1) seeking God
- 2) facing self
- 3) discovering one's neighbor
- 4) unifying this vision in community.

In God, neighbor, self and community, confrontation must be joined. This is true for all Christians and particularly for Franciscans whose charism joins contemplation to action.

Confronting God

Face to face vision of God is the life-long goal of all Christian striving, the hope of all contemplative living. For the contemplative, seeing God is immediate and eminently practical. God is everywhere. Each moment is a given by God. It must be received in all of its reality, accepted as gift, and returned with thanksgiving.

Most people find their time too filled for much contemplation. Presence has another rhythm. We live and move and are in God's presence, allowing God to present Godself to us. This is contemplative confrontation. God is articulating in all the reality of our lives. God speaks love in warmth that comforts and food that nourishes. God speaks of joy in the surprise gift or the expected letter.

Receiving this word of God is basic to contemplative confrontation. Opening our hearts is the essential discipline. Are we looking? Do we want to see and hear? Or have we excused ourselves? More likely, we are into a purely functional mode. God gets a busy signal.

Confronting Self

Though the contemplative is always looking toward God, experience shows that this vision throws new light on self. As we grow we come closer to seeing ourselves as God sees us, as lovable. So basic is this development that any contemplation which does not bear this good fruit should be considered suspect.

However logical this statement, the reality about self often brings dismay to a novice in contemplative living. Issues unresolved in the past rise up and must be faced. My response makes all the difference. We can become frightened and resist, close our eyes and go back to where we were. What is needed is hope and a sense that the self one now confronts is the self that God has been calling and loving all along.

Confronting Our Neighbor

We see ourselves and our neighbor in God and God in all creation. That is the real truth and our vision is often clouded by sin. Specks in our neighbor take on the proportion of beams as we lose love's perspective. If only our neighbor were more perfect, we could be too.

Experience has shown every contemplative a litany of defective choices. We can let another's activity so fill the screen of our perception that we see nothing else. Contemplative confrontation begins differently. Prior to any attempt at criticism, it stands strong in love. This requires decisive prayer.

Standing in prayer is always the beginning of contemplative confrontation. It may not be the end. A particular relationship may not always be positive. Contemplative love does not mean that wrong is denied, ignored or unchallenged. How does this translate into action? The gospel suggests "If your brother or sister does wrong, go and take the matter up with them, strictly between yourselves . . ." (Mt 18:15)

Loving truth begins in the direct encounter with the other whose action is disturbing us. And not in grumbling to others. Beginning as soon as possible

after a specific incident, we limit ourselves to what we have noticed. Do not act on hear-say or generalizations like, "Everyone is concerned." Be careful not to impute motivation, "You don't care." Do not bring up a list of previous failures.

Limitations of enclosure allow the Sisters to know each other in depth. This makes it possible for us to support each other's weakness and maximize each other's strengths. But the same closeness that is the gift of Poor Clare community also puts a priority on responding to whatever could weaken this unity. Our groups are blessed with a healthy amount of pluralism. Difficulties can rise. Confrontation is called for so that differences do not build into divisions.

In contemplative communities, confrontation centers around what strengthens unity or could weaken it. The behavior at issue should be public, something many find objectionable. If we have any doubt about whether we are simply expressing our own prejudice, it may be wise to ask a reliable advisor for feedback. But this must be done in such a way as to respect the privacy of everyone concerned.

Persons in positions of authority in community may be able to provide some of this objectivity and add suggestions. Authority should not be used to avoid personal responsibility. Wise the authority figure who refuses to relay indirect complaints and insists on direct communication.

If contemplative confrontation is to be responsible it must also include a willingness to hear what the other has to say. Ask yourself: am I willing to be confronted in turn?"

Even with the best intentions, confrontation with our neighbor may not be effective. We need to accept this before we start. The other may be unable to change. We too may be unready to change. The truth is that all of us will have some changing to do, which brings us to community.

Completely counter to the popular image of the contemplative as silent, withdrawn, and passive, the truth is that a person called contemplative must face up to reality, look it in the eye, see deeply, and then live out the vision.

Confrontation In Community

Even private interchanges have a backdrop of community. For monastic contemplatives, community life takes on a particular urgency. We live together with the same Sisters and within the limits of enclosure. We confront God, self, neighbor with an intensity that makes our life realistic and rewarding.

In a Poor Clare community, when divisions cause serious damage, action must be taken. In the gospel approach, the initiative belongs to the offended party. While it requires strength to go to another and state simply and directly "I am having a problem," it may require more courage to face the reality that none of this may be enough. It is easier to settle for peace at any price. Gospel living suggests bringing a second or third party to the confrontation to provide greater objectivity and underline the seriousness of the situation.

If even this fails, the whole community may need to be involved in the confrontation. Here possible gain must be assessed against what are almost certain risks. Some of the difficulties to be considered: the shock suffered by the person confronted, the community's resources of time and energy, or the resulting disturbance of more or less innocent bystanders. On the other hand, perhaps the problem has already become so public that everyone is using excessive amounts of energy coping.

Hopefully a community devoted to contemplation will be so rooted in God that extreme measures will be rare. But they may be necessary. Even though contemplative love knows "no limits to its faith, its hope, its endurance" (*1 Cor.* 13:7), it has its priorities clearly in focus: the greater good of the whole body. A weak community damages the health of everyone, including the offender. A strong community builds up the health of each member.

Conclusion

Clare and Francis had different contributions to make to the Gospel project. Each represented different cultural expressions of being a woman or man. Thirteenth century women were primarily home-based while the men of that time were involved outside the home.

This still seems the case in the Second and First Orders: the Poor Clares and Franciscan men are represented by the home and the road. Being home-bound and road-based are different ways of approaching community issues. Can the First Order learn more effective ways of confronting issues from the Second Order? Can the Second Order be the teacher of the contemplative confrontation? Or will both lapse in silence? As stated at the beginning of this article, we invite you to join the dialogue, which is in itself confrontation.

How Francis Prayed

CLAUDE JARMAK, O.F.M., CONV.

To establish and maintain a personal relationship with anyone, some form of communication is not only necessary but essential. To express one's true thoughts, feelings and moods, to impart and interchange forms an integral part of communication. It is done in various ways: conversation, correspondence, body language, a smile, and even in silence, especially when two people love each other deeply.

The spiritual life is basically a relationship with God. In the gospel of Matthew Jesus describes this relationship graphically when he asks "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Extending his hand toward his disciples, he said "There are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father, is brother and sister and mother to me" (*Mt* 12:48-50). At the last supper, Jesus told his disciples "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you always" (*Jn* 14:16) and "Anyone who loves me will be true to my word, and my Father will love him. We will come to him; We will make our dwelling place with him" (*Jn* 15:23). God has not only invited us into a relationship with Himself, but also communicated fully with us by His Word, Jesus who said of himself "I have not spoken on my own; no, the Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to speak. Since I know that his commandment means eternal life, whatever I say is spoken just as he instructed me" (*Jn* 12:49).

In this relationship with God, an essential element on our part is communication. This communication is called prayer, which is nothing else but personal communion with God. Prayer can thus be defined as faith's answer to God who invites us to an intimate relationship with himself. In prayer God's initiative of love always comes first; our initial step is always a response to God's invitation.

St. Francis, after deciding to "follow in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ" by living the Gospel life, was a man wholly dedicated to communion

Fr. Claude Jarmak, a Conventual friar of the Province of St. Anthony, teaches Franciscan Studies at St. Hyacinth College and Seminary in Granby, Massachusetts. He offered these reflections on how Francis prayed to his brothers at their Provincial Chapter.

with God, that is, to prayer. Thomas Celano, in his *Second Life of the Saint*, writes that Francis "not only prayed, but became himself a prayer" (2*Cel* 95), inasmuch as prayer was no longer something he did, but something he lived. What he practiced, he prescribed for his brothers.

Sometimes we fail to realize the novelty and newness of Francis' movement. In the thirteenth century anyone called to a vocation in the Church became either a secular priest, a monk, a canon regular or a hermit. After his conversion, Francis himself lived as a hermit until that fateful day in the Porziuncola when he heard the gospel of the mission of the disciples not to possess gold or silver, not to carry a scrip or wallet or bread or staff. Francis was overjoyed and exclaimed "This is what I wish, this is what I seek, this is what I long to do with all my heart" (1*Cel* 22). He rejected all other life styles, and chose to follow the Gospel life of Jesus Christ. In his *Testament* he wrote: "No one showed me what I should do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel." Instead of running away from a wicked world, and hiding safely behind monastic walls, Francis sent his brothers into the marketplace to call the people of God to repentance and to proclaim the good news of the Gospel.

Combining the apostolic life of activity with contemplation, Francis realized the dangers inherent in such a life style. Lacking monastic structure, the life of prayer and contemplation can easily be supplanted by busy apostolic activity. That is why in the Rule Francis mentions the necessity of prayer not once but twice. In Chapter five, speaking about work, he warns us that work should "not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthly existence must contribute." And in Chapter ten: "Let the brothers pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and his Holy manner of working and to pray to Him always with a pure heart." After commissioning St. Anthony to teach theology to the brothers, Francis warns him "not to extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion with study of this kind." Not only work, but also the study of theology can be a hindrance to the life of prayer.

The gospel of Luke says that Jesus "told them a parable of the necessity of praying always and not losing heart" (18:1). In chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule*, Francis reminds the brothers in an exhaustive way of the necessity of praying constantly: "Let all of us, wherever we are, in every place, at every hour, at every time of the day, everyday and continually . . . love, honor, adore, serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and give thanks to the most High and supreme eternal God." His biographer mentions that Francis "was always occupied with Jesus; Jesus he bore in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in the rest of his members" (1*Cel* 115).

In his prayers Francis reveals his idea of God and of himself. Conscious of a personal, transcendent God, who loves him and invites him to a relationship with Himself, Francis thought of himself as a vile sinner, a creature in the presence of a Creator God who created him, redeemed him and would save him. He prayed "O, Our Father, our Creator, Redeemer, Consoler and Savior who are in heaven" (*ExpPat*). In the *Fioretti* we read that on La Verna, before his stigmatization, Francis kept on repeating the prayer: "Who are you my dearest God, and what am I?" In Chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule*, he writes "God has given and gives to each one of us our whole body, our whole soul and our whole life. He created us and redeemed us, and will save us by His mercy alone. He did and does every good thing for us who are miserable and wretched, rotten and foul smelling, ungrateful and evil." And in the Second Version of the *Letter to All the Faithful*, Francis wrote "And let us hold ourselves in contempt and scorn, since through our own fault all of us are miserable and contemptible, vermin and worms." Yet Francis and the early brothers had a healthy and good self-image, due to the fact that it originated not from self but from God, who "has given and gives to each of us our whole body, our whole soul, and our whole life" (*RegNB*, 23).

In addressing God in prayer, Francis was always conscious of the infinite difference between the Creator and the creature, that is, of the transcendence of God, who is beyond any categorization or classification, whether of time, place or space. In *The Praises of God* he speaks directly to God "You are holy, Lord, the only God, . . . You are strong, You are great, You are the Most High, You are the almighty King, You Holy Father, the King of heaven and earth. And in the first *Admonition*, he says "The Father lives in inaccessible light, and God is Spirit, and no one has ever seen God." In the *Canticle of Brother Sun* Francis addresses God "Most High, all-powerful, good Lord." In the *Letter to the Order* Francis calls God "Almighty, eternal, just and merciful." In Chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule*, God is "All powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God."

Francis was, however, not only conscious of God's transcendence, but also of His immanence, that is, His presence among creatures, His love and goodness. The inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the ineffable God makes Himself known to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. The transcendent One did not reveal Himself to satisfy our intellectual curiosity, but in order that we may participate in the very life of the Trinity. Francis, in chapter 23, of the *Earlier Rule*, after calling God "glorious, exalted on high, sublime and Most High," all transcendent qualities, adds that God is also "gentle, lovable, delectable and totally desirable above all else forever."

Some people experience God as Truth, or Justice, others as Omnipotence or Glory. Francis experienced God primarily as "Love" which he called "Good."

In his prayers, whenever Francis used the word "good," his poetical gift as well as his mystical bent become evident, for he rarely uses the word "good" only once, but repeats it to emphasize the point. Thus in *The Praises To Be Said at All Hours* Francis writes: "All powerful, most holy, most High and supreme God: all good, supreme good, totally good, You who alone are good." In the *Prayer Inspired by the Our Father*, he prays: "You Lord are the Supreme Good, the Eternal Good, from whom comes all good, without whom there is no good." In chapter 17 of the of the *Earlier Rule* he says "Let us refer all good to the Most High and supreme Lord God and acknowledge that every good is His and thank Him for everything, He from whom all good things come . . . for every good is His, He who alone is good." In chapter 23 of the same rule, Francis prays: "God, who is the Fullness of Good, all good, every good, the true and supreme good, who alone is good."

The foundation on which St. Francis constructed his own prayer life, and which is the keystone of Franciscan Spirituality, is the simple yet profound mystery that God is good.

The foundation on which St. Francis constructed his own prayer life, and which is the keystone of Franciscan Spirituality, is the simple yet profound mystery that God is good. It was the goodness of God, that is His love, which motivated all of God's work of creation, redemption and salvation. In *Genesis* we read that after He created light "God saw how good the light was" (1:3). God did the same after creating the earth and plants, and living creatures. At the end "God looked at everything he had made, and He found it very good" (*Gen* 1:31). It was love that prompted the Incarnation: "God so loved the world that He gave his only Son that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (*Jn* 3:16). It was love that prompted the Redemption: "Jesus had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end" (*Jn* 13:1). In chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule* Francis wrote "We thank You, Father, for as through your Son You created us, so also through Your holy love with which You loved us, You brought about His birth as true God and true man." Francis realized that God's love radiates throughout the entire drama of the plan of our salvation.

According to Francis, the foundation of our poverty is the total expropriation of self, and trusting dependence on God. The kenosis of Jesus who "did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at, but rather emptied Himself and took the form of a slave" (*Phil* 2:6) was for Francis the example of his expropriation. An integral part of Francis' poverty was the admission of

powerless helplessness without God. In *Admonition* eleven Francis writes: "A servant of God may be recognized as possessing the Spirit of the Lord in this way: if the flesh does not pride itself when the Lord performs some good through him, since the flesh is always opposed to every good." In fact, the more good one does, the more worthless he should consider himself, recognizing the power of God working through him. This is the reason that Francis often refers to himself as "your servant and little one" (*EpCust*), or "the least of the servants of God," (*EpCust*), or "a worthless and weak man, your very little servant" (*EpOrd*).

Prayer can be one of adoration, blessing, thanksgiving or petition. The prayer of adoration is the first attitude of one acknowledging that he is a creature before His Creator. We can easily understand why practically all of Francis' prayers are prayers of adoration. The prayer of blessing is one's response to God's gifts: because God blesses, the human heart can in return bless the One who is the source of every blessing. By the prayer of petition we express our relationship with God. The first movement of this prayer is asking forgiveness, like the tax collector in the Gospel.

Francis' prayers are full of adoration, blessing and thanksgiving. In the *Canticle of Brother Sun*, he says of God: "You are the praises, the glory, the honor and the blessing, and to You, Most High, do they belong." These four words, praise, glory, honor and blessing, are found in practically all of Francis' prayers. In the *Praises to be Said At All Hours* Francis prays "May we give you all praise, all glory, all blessing and all good things." In Chapter 17 of the *Earlier Rule* Francis says, "May He who alone is true God, be given and receive every honor, and reverence, every praise and blessing, every thanks and glory for every good is His, He who alone is good." In chapter 21 of the same Rule we read "Fear and honor, praise and bless, give thanks and adore the Lord God Almighty in Trinity and Unity." And in chapter 23 of this Rule, Francis writes "Love, honor, adore and serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and give thanks to the most high and supreme eternal God."

After Francis acquired a few brothers, they asked him to teach them how to pray. He told them to pray the Our Father and also taught them a prayer of adoration and blessing: "We adore You, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Your churches throughout the world, and we bless You, for through Your holy cross You have redeemed the world."

One of the most beautiful prayers of thanksgiving is Francis' *Canticle of Brother Sun*. "Praised be You my Lord, for the Sun . . . Praised be You, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars . . . Praised be You, my Lord, for Brother Wind and Sister Water . . . Praised be You, my Lord, for Mother Earth and Sister Death." Another beautiful prayer of thanksgiving is found in Chapter 23 of the *Earlier Rule*, sometimes referred to as Francis' great creed. He begins his prayer by

thanking God for being God. "All powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God . . . we thank you for Yourself." Who but Francis would have thought of thanking the Lord for being Himself? A real prayer of thanksgiving is entirely disinterested and rises to God, praises Him, and gives Him glory for His own sake, quite beyond what He has done, but simply because HE IS. Francis also thanks the Lord God for the gifts of creation, incarnation, redemption and salvation. Realizing that we can never thank God sufficiently, Francis writes: "we humbly ask that our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, give You thanks and it pleases You and Him for everything, through Whom You have done such great things for us."

There are only two examples of prayers of petition among the writings of St. Francis. One is the prayer which he recited before the cross at San Damiano, seeking what to do with his life: "Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me, Lord, a correct faith, a certain hope, a perfect charity, sense and knowledge so that I may carry out Your holy and true command." The other prayer of petition is found at the end of the Letter written to the entire Order: "Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant us in our misery the grace to do for You alone what we know You want us to do and always to desire what pleases You."

It is interesting to note that in both of these prayers of petition, Francis requests not material but spiritual gifts. In one he asks for the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, which establish our relationship with God; and in the other, he asks for the grace to carry out God's will in all things.

From his writings we learn what Francis prayed; from his biographer, Thomas Celano, we learn how Francis prayed. In his second life of the Saint, Celano dedicates a whole section, chapters 61 to 67, to how Francis prayed. He introduces the chapter with the words: "We give here a few of the great things about Francis' prayers that may be imitated by those who come after him" (2Cel 94).

Celano writes that Francis "always sought a hidden place where he could adapt not only his soul, but also all his members to God. When he suddenly felt himself visited by the Lord in public, he would cover his face either with his mantle or the sleeve of his habit." In public he would not make any noise or sighs. But when he prayed in the woods or solitary places, he would fill the forest with sighs, strike his breast, and pray out loud. Celano writes that "there he would give answer to his judge; there he would offer his petitions to his father; there he would talk to his friend; there he would rejoice with the bridegroom." It is interesting to note the words "answer" his judge, "ask" his father, "talk" to his friend, and "rejoice" with his bridegroom. Francis looked at God with reverential fear, but also with great affection and love.

Concerning meditation and contemplation, Celano writes that "often, without moving his lips, Francis would meditate within himself, and drawing external things within himself, he would lift his spirit to higher things. All his attention and affection he directed with his whole being to the one thing which he was asking of the Lord, not so much praying as becoming himself a prayer (2Cel 95).

Francis was not only assiduous in his private prayers, but also in the recitation of the official prayer of the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours. In his *Testament* he writes: "Although I may be simple and infirm, I wish nonetheless always to have a cleric who will celebrate the Office for me as it is contained in the Rule." And in chapter 3 of the *Earlier Rule* he writes "All the brothers, whether clerical or lay, should celebrate the Divine Office, the praises and prayers, as is required of them." Celano mentions that "Francis recited the canonical hours no less reverently than devoutly" (2Cel 96).

Francis' prayers are scriptural, Trinitarian, affective, adoring and thankful, faith-filled and simple.

To summarize, we can say that Francis' prayers are scriptural, Trinitarian, affective, adoring and thankful, faith-filled and simple. In his prayers he often uses passages from Sacred Scripture; they are centered on the mystery of God's plan of creation, incarnation, redemption and salvation. These works of God Francis attributes to the Trinity, and all of them motivated by the love and goodness of God. Francis' prayers are effective and not discursive. In discursive prayer, the influence of reason predominates. In affective prayer we find expressions of affection such as love, gratitude, trust, and surrender. Although his prayers are simple, they are mystical expressions of Francis' experience of God. If prayer is intimate communion with God, then words at times do not suffice to express this experience. Celano writes: "Francis was often suspended in such sweetness of contemplation that, caught up out of himself, he could not reveal what he had experienced because it went beyond all human comprehension" (2Cel 98).

On his deathbed Francis said to his brothers "I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours" (LM XIV, 3). The gifts and graces given to Francis of Assisi were different from those given to each of us, his brothers. Francis cooperated with these gifts, and prayed accordingly. As did his early brothers, so we too approach Francis with the request: "Teach us how to pray." Francis would tell us: "Naked, I have followed the naked Christ. May Christ teach you what is yours." May each of us be given this grace in prayer.

THE CLOTH MERCHANT'S TALE

I

Then laying his clothes at my feet
he walks away, just like that,
the sun dyeing the evening sky
as we lift eyes to watch Francesco
disappear from our sight.

He does not descend to the valley,
but stops half-way at San Damiano,
and that is the end of it.
My son, my pride, outside the walls,
trades between San Damiano
and the Portiuncula's lepers.
Threadbare, he rebuilds ruined churches,
shuns the cloth trade for stone.

II

"I will no longer say, 'Father,
Pietro Bernardone, but
Our Father Who are in Heaven.'"
A vicious slap in the face
which I will never forgive.

Not that Francesco would stoop
to beg my forgiveness. After all,
what has God's son to do with
a hard working cloth merchant who,
like St. Joseph, only tried
to teach his adopted son?

God's curse on such ingratitude.

And when my flesh has finally
putrefied, may my skull turn to
powder, lest Francesco fashion it
into a gargoyle's spout
to flush his guilt like rain
from the church's leaden gutters.

III

Lady Pica, my sometime wife,
goes out to the olive trees
now that her darling Francesco's
gone. She sits like stone,
except for her moving hands
sewing mad patterns into cloth.
Her flesh sags with fasting,
her mad son preaches love.

The house of Bernardone's undone —
frayed cloth, flawed stone.

Murray Bodo, O.F.M.

Book Review

Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring. By Henri J.M. Nouwen, New York: Harper Collins, 1994. 118 pages. Hard Cover \$16.00

Reviewed by Sister Frances Ann Thom, O.S.F., a Pastoral Minister at St. Mary's Church in Baldwinsville, NY, and a member of the Editorial Board for the CORD. She holds an MA in English and in Franciscan Studies.

"Is it possible to prepare for our death with the same attentiveness as our parents had in preparing for our birth?"

Henri Nouwen raises a question which is (lodged) in the heart of every person. A question which emanates from our commonality and our uniqueness. We all hold dear certain thoughts, feelings, dreams and visions which belong and have belonged to everyone who has lived, is living or will live. The author stresses the openness to the spiritual and the awakening to the reality of life when one perceives the approach of fewer and fewer years in one's life span. Just as we hope our lives in faith will be helpful to those whom we love, we further hope our deaths will be fruitful as well.

Nouwen's book is not just an insight into how to care well and how to die well, but it is a real breakthrough into the continuum of what we refer to as the Mystical Body of Christ. Nouwen tells us that "years after my mother's death, she continues to bear fruit in my life." Those of us who have experi-

enced the death of a loved one, can readily identify with this experience but are often reticent in speaking of this spiritual moment to others. Perhaps this is because we do not realize that this is a universal experience as well as an individual experience. We may think that others will shun us as being odd or others will think we are proclaiming ourselves as being spiritually above them. So we keep silence when we should share. Nouwen tells us that his mother continues to send him guidance by the Spirit of Jesus.

In the mind of Nouwen, the example of Jesus' dwindling popularity, powerlessness, and finally desertion by his friends, did not prove him to be a failure because the fruit of his teaching affected the feeling and thinking of people long after his death. In fact, "Jesus himself constantly referred to the fruitfulness of his life that would only become manifest after his death." We know this to be true of many famous men and women who were not appreciated while they lived but had a great impact upon history after their deaths. They did not see nor predict the fruit that would bud forth for others in later centuries.

The author has divided the book into two parts, 1) Dying Well and 2) Caring Well, and has sub-divided each part into three chapters. In the section on Dying the author uses the more universal pronoun "we" — as in all of creation we work toward our death. But in

the section on Caring he shifts to the second person — as if everything about caring depends on you, how you function in caring for others. He further gives us the overall view of personal association or assimilation into the existence of the dying person, then shifts to "these people keep sending the Spirit of Jesus to us and giving us the strength to be faithful in the journey we have begun." This wonderful exchange between dying and caring and dying of individuals has the movement of a mosaic in open space with no limitations but a continuous movement in perfect harmony, a true living out of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Nouwen touches upon the extreme materialism in our society when he states, "In our free market economy . . . human care is spoken of in terms of supply and demand. . . . the suffering person becomes the buyer of care and the care professional becomes the merchant of care. (Thus) the vision that underlies it (language) reduces the human person to nothing but a commodity in the competitive world of high finance."

"Care . . . is the loving attention given to another person . . . because that person is a child of God, just as we are."

The key to all of this is contained in our owning the fact of our own death. As Nouwen states, "When we who care are not afraid to die, we will be better able to prepare the dying for death and deepen their communion with others instead of separating them."

And again, "Caring for the dying means helping the dying to discover that, in their increasing weakness, God's strength becomes visible."

This is truly a book for our times! It is a magnificent jarring of one's materialistic complacency into the reality of the brevity of life and the necessity to live well, to give life, in order to be an effective instrument in the lives of others even after physical death.

Unexpected Answers. By Barbara Bartocci, Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1994. 168 pages, \$7.95

Reviewed by Sr. Frances Ann Thom, O.S.F.

Barbara Bartocci writes in a wonderfully easy style and uses incidents of real life which have meaning for all of us. She uses her own person as a main character, a spectator, a part of the crowd, but especially as a listener. She listens to many tales of strange and wonderful experiences of everyday life. Barbara combines animals and humans, humans and humans and, most especially, incidents from her own family life. The author develops serious themes such as loss, love and prayer but always with a bit of humor which helps to carry the characters through these deep experiences. Near the end of the book, the author asks, "What if you were told, 'You have six months to live?' How would you spend your time?" She suggests that it is a great exercise to keep us in touch with what counts. A further suggestion is to keep a list of things that make you happy. In

order to keep things in perspective this type of balance is necessary. The author maintains that awareness of the brevity of life, using each moment for happiness for self and others and being enthusiastic (having God within) will help us "... to find answers that go beyond any of our imaginings."

I guarantee that anyone who reads this book will not want to put it down until it is finished, will feel deeply with the characters, and may even shed a few tears of sorrow as well as joy and will feel inspired to continue to pray.

Nothing Short Of A Miracle. By Patricia Treece, Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1994. 226 pages, \$9.95

Reviewed by Sr. Frances Ann Thom, O.S.F.

Patricia Treece has given us a timely book about miracles. In the prologue she tells of the horrible accident which could have blinded a baby for life but through the prayers of those who believe the child grew up to become a priest who knows he represents one of God's miracles through the intercession of Mother Cabrini.

This book is a series of inspiring stories recounting healings that have taken place through the intercession of various saints because of the faith and devotion of believers. The author wishes to put before the mind of the world today the fact that miracles still happen. Miracles are not a thing of the past. She wishes to inspire all people with devotion to the saints and to the power of their intercession.

Not only has the author given us a wonderful collection of modern miracles but she has also documented and researched these stories for evidence of their authenticity. Following fifteen well-chosen stories the author has given a listing of the calendar dates on which the feasts of these saints occur, an Appendix to guide the reader to more information about these saints, as well as a bibliography of sources.

The Angelic Doctor. The Life and World of St. Thomas Aquinas. By Matthew Bunson. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1994. 1168 pages, appendices and index. Paper, \$9.95.

Reviewed by Julian A. Davies, O.F.M., Professor of Philosophy at Siena College, Loudonville NY, and an Associate Editor of this review.

The author succeeds admirably in achieving the goal set by the sub-title of his work. He divides the life of Thomas into six periods and locates him in time and place and political, ecclesiastical and social context. His account of Thomas' being kidnapped by his brothers as he fled North to join the Dominicans and his subsequent escape from the castle two years later out a window and in a basket-- like St. Paul makes fascinating reading. He traces Aquinas, academic career at Paris and at the Papal Courts. He highlights Thomas' role in defending the right to existence of mendicant orders like the Dominicans and Franciscans, and their right to teach at

Paris--or anywhere. The author also explains the nickname "dumb Ox" given him by his classmates. Dumb meant silent, quiet, not stupid. Ox refers, of course, to Thomas' girth.

The author delineates nicely the elaboration of the relation of reason and Revelation which is one of Thomas' major contributions to the Church and also explains Thomas, middle way between the extremes of Averroism and Augustinianism. I think he could have given a better definition of Averroism in his helpful glossary and a fuller explanation of the precise errors which caused such alarm in the Christian community--the denial of Divine Providence, personal immortality and creation in time. The chronology in the beginning of the work and the listing of Thomas' writings and the list of suggested readings are valuable. The short exposition of Thomas' system is accurate but far too compact for the reader to acquire much more than vocabulary.

The Angelic Doctor is very readable, and would be a fine supplement to a course in Aquinas. Philosophers who know Thomas only as a thinker would do well to read this book which reveals Thomas as a genuine mystic.

The Catholic Answer. Book 2. By Rev. Peter M.J. Stravinskis, Ph.D. S.T.L., Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1994. 238 pages, inc. Indices. Paper, \$9.95

Reviewed by Julian A. Davies, O.F.M.

Whether you are a pre-Vatican II Catholic, a baby boomer Catholic, an inquirer of another or little faith, this collection of answers to questions about Catholic Practices, Doctrine, Liturgy, Morality, and Scripture is a valuable source. Father Stravinskis seems to answer not only the question, but the question behind the question, as in his reply to "Why all the changes?"

The author is a man of the law, a canonist. He is very well informed on liturgical law as well. A couple of his answers will have to be changed in Book 3 when it comes out--altar girls are now allowed, and holding hands at the Our Father seems to be a practice that many Catholic people want to do in spite of a generally unknown prohibition by the Congregation of Sacraments and Divine Worship. His observations of the meaning of "local church" as "diocese," and the usage of "apostolate" for what laity do in lectoring, ministering the Eucharist, etc., instead of "ministry" were items new to me. I was also reminded that compassion means suffering with, and that priests who tell their people they do not have to keep the moral law which it is a hardship are really not suffering with their people.

I recommend this book. In future editions I would want the author to cite the exact sources and give the letters or parts of them he is answering, as sometimes that is needed to understand the answer.

Images of Jesus: Ten Invitations To Intimacy. By Alfred McBride, O. Praem, Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger, 1993. 229 pages, \$9.95.

Reviewed by Fr. Daniel Hurley, O.F.M., member of the Campus Ministry team at St. Bonaventure University and resident of Mt. Irenaeus Retreat Center.

Father Alfred McBride presents the reader with a wonderful book on spiritual self-discovery in **Images of Jesus: Ten Invitations To Intimacy**. The aim of self-discovery, the author says, is a fuller appreciation on one's relationship with Jesus Christ. To strengthen that relationship, Father McBride presents images of Jesus as found in the Gospels.

The author puts forth ten different approaches to appreciating who Jesus is for each one of us. The "images" are specific characteristics of Jesus that show how we can allow the image to become part of our own spiritual life. The first Chapter deals with the image of "Jesus, My Friend." The various ways in which Jesus related to different people in the Gospels show us how we can relate in friendship to Jesus and to one another. In similar fashion, "Jesus, My Healer" encourages us to become more aware of our capacity to relate in love to each other. In "Jesus, My Teacher," the author encourages the reader to picture Jesus as the teacher

who sends each one of us into our inner selves to "investigate ourselves, our approaches to life" (page 57). In other words, he urges us "to develop our capacity for meditative prayer" (page 57). The chapter entitled "Jesus, My Lord" emphasizes the divinity of Christ and at the same time reminds the reader that all of us are children of the same Father who sends his Spirit upon each one of us. Sharing that Spirit, we enjoy the gifts of the Holy Spirit (pages 87-91).

And so follow the other chapters: "Jesus, My Mentor," "Jesus, My Servant Leader," "Jesus, My Savior," "Jesus, My Evangelizer," "Jesus, My Cross-Bearer," and "Jesus, My Joy." Each chapter places before our mind's eye the image of Jesus in such a way that we discover more about ourselves and our capacity for growing spiritually in the different facets of our person.

Since all Christians are called to follow Christ, to imitate Christ, Father McBride helps us to discover how we can be true to our calling. The unassuming style of the author makes easy reading and each chapter concludes with practical suggestions and examples of putting into practice what we have learned about Jesus from the particular image. This reviewer recommends **Images of Jesus** to be used as a bedside reader to be picked up and to be read randomly, a chapter at a time.

Books Received

Baranowski, Arthur, ed. *Faith Sharing for Small Church Communities. Questions and Commentaries on the Sunday Readings.* Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993. Pp. 132, inc. Appendices. Paper, \$9.95.

Barkley, Elizabeth Bookser. *Loving the Everyday. Meditations from Moms.* Cincinnati, OH: Saint Anthony Messenger, 1994. Pp. 206. Paper, \$8.95.

Bartocci, Barbara. *Unexpected Answers.* Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1994. Pp. 168. Paper, \$7.95.

Busnon, Matthew. *The Angelic Doctor. The Life and World of St. Thomas Aquinas.* Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1994. Pp. 168, inc. Index. Paper, \$9.95.

Crews, Clyde F. *American Catholic. A Popular History of Catholicism in the United States.* Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1994. Pp. 166 with Index. Paper \$11.95.

Landis, Benson Y. *An Outline of the Bible Book by Book.* New York: Harper/Collins, 1994. Pp. 186, inc. Index. Paper, \$12.00.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. *Our Greatest Gift. A Meditation on Dying and Caring.* San Francisco: Harper, 1994. Pp. 118. Cloth, \$16.00.

Prejean, Helen. *Dead Man Walking. An Eye Witness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States.* New York: Vintage Books, 1994. Pp. 276, inc. Index. Paper \$12.00.

Schuster, O.S.B., Philip. *Seeking God's Will Through Faith, Hope and Charity.* Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1994. Pp. 140. Paper, \$9.95.

Stravinskis, Peter, M.J. *The Catholic Answer Book 2.* Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1994. Pp. 238, inc. Index. Paper, \$9.95.

Travnikar, O.F.M., Rock. *The Blessing Cup. 40 Simple Rites for Family Prayer Celebrations.* Revised Edition. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1994. Pp. 52. Paper, \$3.95.

Treece, Patricia. *Nothing Short of a Miracle.* Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1994. Pp. 226, inc. Bibliography. Paper, \$9.95.

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Christa Marie Thompson, OSF |
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| Jan. 14 and 15 | BECOMING "THE PEOPLE OF GOD"
Edward Coughlin, OFM |
| Feb. 11 | IN THE CLOISTER OF THE WORLD
Justin Carisio, SFO |

For complete list of programs, contact Center.

NOVEMBER, 1994

The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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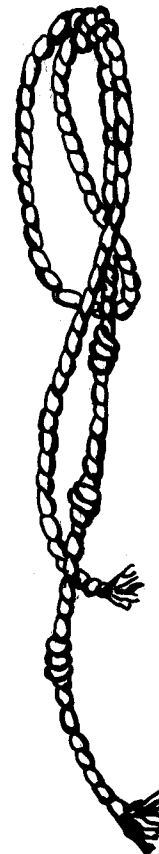
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The CORD

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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 Clerics¹

EpCust: Letter to Superiors¹

EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful¹

EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo

EpMin: Letter to a Minister

EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order

EpRex: Letter to the Rulers of the People

ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God

ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father

Form Viv: 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

VPLact: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy

¹I, II refer to First and Second Editions.

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

LCat: Catalog, First Life of Francis

LCat2: Catalog, Second Life of Francis

LCat3: Catalog, Treatise on Miracles

LCat4: Legend of Saint Clare

LCat5: Legend of Saint Clare

LCat6: Legend of Saint Clare

LCat7: Legend of Saint Clare

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

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

Francis and Clare, ed., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

Response to the *Lineamenta* in Light of the 1994 Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life in the Church

THE SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR OF SAINT FRANCIS

In the past twenty-five years, Franciscan life has witnessed an energy and revitalization of charism that is both gift and task.¹ In light of the 1994 Synod we offer the following responses to the *Lineamenta*:

Prologue

The Franciscan charism is a gift given to the Church through Francis and Clare of Assisi and their followers. The Franciscan life includes elements from both monastic and apostolic religious life, but has its uniqueness. The emphasis is on neither a common place centered on contemplation and the praise of God, nor on a common task centered on the concrete mission of service to the Church and world. It is rather on a common heart: a prophetic witness to Christ and the whole of his gospel.

Francis and Clare's life for the Church is a call acknowledging the primacy of Christ² with all its implications for a radical way of thinking. Their ability to read the signs of the times challenged them to embrace courageously a new worldview, giving birth to an evangelical movement for the enlivening of the Church.

Elements of the Charism

The Franciscan charism is always and everywhere unbounded. In Francis' own words, "The world is our cloister." With Christ, Firstborn of all Creation, nothing in creation is untouched by the Spirit of the Lord.³ Franciscans seek to proclaim the fundamental Goodness of God in all of life and creation. All of life and creation is a gift from God.

The essence of our life is our relationship with Jesus Christ. Our charism gifts the Church in the world, with a radically simple gospel call where we are

The CORD is indebted to Sr. Kathleen Moffatt, O.S.F. for her work on this issue which focuses upon the Third Order Regular. Sr. Kathleen, Executive Director of the Franciscan Federation Third Order Regular, compiled and edited these materials from the 29th Annual Federation Conference.

all sisters and brothers. Reverencing the Spirit's action and embracing continuous conversion, Franciscans live in mutual obedience to one another and affirm the role of minister as servant among them. This is the essential witness of the evangelical life, the prophetic stance⁴ which Franciscans choose to make for the church and the world.⁵

Grasped by Jesus Christ, "Franciscans follow a gospel form of life. We minister more by example than by words. In all forms of service, we reverence the person and seek to enhance the quality of relationships. The call to inculturate the gospel is at the heart of the Franciscan charism. Nurtured by our contemplative stance before God and the world, the sisters and brothers are called to be peacemakers⁷ wherever they are.

Franciscan Contribution to the Church and the World

With all of creation as holy ground, nothing can be ignored by Franciscans. The call to be one with all of creation and all people, especially with the marginal and the oppressed, is fundamental to our presence in the world. This presence is rooted in Christ and for Christ.

In our evangelical life we have no dichotomies. We are not sometimes contemplative and sometimes active; now in community and then in mission. We stand with the poor while not ignoring the needs of others. This life has been and continues to be pondered and inculturated. In each century Franciscans have tried to read the signs of the times and respond to them appropriately. However, some essentials remain constant. Franciscans and contemporary writers capture the essential characteristics of the Franciscan evangelical life. Francis' followers:

- Strive to live in a contemplative relationship to God and to all creation as sisters and brothers.
- Embrace a communal form of life among the people.
- Affirm the role of minister as servant among all.
- Uphold the rejection of violence of every kind, striving to be peacemakers wherever they are in all situations.
- Insert themselves in the world, not having specific works but ready for all kinds of service to promote the Gospel.⁸

The early Franciscans adopted a new worldview as their response to their day. In these times, as sisters and brothers, we are challenged and continue to be challenged to do likewise.

The coming Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life in the Church is a welcomed opportunity to continue the dialogue with our Church authority so faithfully begun by Francis and Clare eight hundred years ago. In this anniversary year of Clare of Assisi (1294-1994), we earnestly ask you to listen and respond with us as God's Spirit leads us in understanding and embracing the call to our evangelical life as Franciscans.⁹

End notes

¹ The mandate of the Second Vatican Council to re-appropriate the founder's charism led the Third Order Franciscans to review the Rule of 1927 against a backdrop of renewed biblical spirituality, an emerging knowledge of the writings of Francis, and the process of constitutional revision. During an International Assembly in Assisi in 1979, the International Franciscan Bureau and Commission were constituted as the bodies responsible to conduct the task of drafting and writing a new rule. On 8 December 1982, Pope John Paul II confirmed *The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis*. Franciscans in the United States have attempted to deepen their awareness and understanding of the Third Order Regular Franciscan heritage, thus the Franciscan Federation Third Order Regular of the Sisters and Brothers of the United States of America was founded in 1965. Membership in the Franciscan Federation consists of over 16,000 sisters and brothers who embrace the Federation's mission of peacemaking, concern for the poor, and care of creation in light of the TOR Franciscan charism.

² Col 1:15-18; Adm 5:1; RegNB XXIII:1; EpOrd 13; EpCler 3; EpFid 11:12; 3EpAg7.

³ Prologue of John 2-4, 10, 16-18; Eph 1:9-10; and Col 1:15-23.

⁴ 2 Pt 1:19 and Rm 8:18-30.

⁵ I.F.C. (*Conferenza Francescana Internazionale*) was established in response to the vibrant era of Third Order Regular collaboration in the writing of a new Rule, promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1982. This affirmation of the new Rule came from an international assembly of over two hundred general superiors. These sisters and brothers expressed the wish that a permanent structure be created to insure that the common bond of their Franciscan heritage and the cooperation achieved would continue effectively. In October 1985 such a structure was approved. Today, the IFC represents over 150,000 Third Order Regular sisters and brothers throughout the world. Membership consists of more than 426 autonomous pontifical and diocesan institutes.

⁶ Mk 1:14-20; Anthony Carrozzo, O.F.M., "The Church in Dialogue with the World," Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Formation Conference, July 1988; Michael Higgins, T.O.R., "The Charisms of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis of Penance," paper prepared for Adrian van Kaam at Duquesne University, December 8, 1988.

⁷ FRANCISCANS INTERNATIONAL - a non-governmental organization at the United Nations founded in 1989 is open to individuals of the Franciscan family, religious and lay, who personally subscribe to the values and the work of the UN; commit themselves to promoting UN activities in the three foci of *care of creation, peacemaking, and concern for the poor*; and work with other Franciscans as a local UN group.

⁸ *The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis and Commentary*. Pittsburgh: Franciscan Federation, 1982; Joseph Chinnici, O.F.M., "Evangelical/Apostolic Tensions," Saint Bonaventure, NY: Super Conference - Our Franciscan Charism in the World Today, July 1987; Video presentation by Joe Chinnici, O.F.M. in 1987 for Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, PA; Margaret Carney, O.S.F., presentation on the Franciscan Evangelical Life delivered to the General Assembly of the Sisters of St. Francis, Rochester, MN, 1993; Marie Dennis, Joseph Nangle, O.F.M., Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, Stuart Taylor, *St. Francis and the Foolishness of God*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993.

⁹ Walter Brueggemann says it well when he asserts: "God's new thing is not a grand religious act but an invitation to a fresh, dangerous social beginning." [Taken from Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel, Interpretation*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990: 27.

The Prophetic Heart: The Evangelical Form of Religious Life in the Contemporary United States

JOSEPH P. CHINNICI, O.F.M.

The Spirit is stirring in the depths of the Franciscan soul, much as the breath of the All Powerful shadowed the waters at the creation (*Gn* 1:2); or Wisdom danced before the throne and passed "into holy souls from age to age and produced friends of God and prophets" (*Wis* 7:27); or the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you" (*Jer* 1:4); or the angel saluted Mary and invited her into the fulfillment of the promises: "Do not fear, Mary. You have found favor with God. You shall conceive and bear a son and give him the name Jesus" (*Lk* 1:30); or a man of Macedonia stood before Paul and invited him: "Come and help us" (*Acts* 16:9); or the disciple John "heard behind him a piercing voice like the sound of a trumpet: "Write on a scroll what you now see" (*Rev* 1:10); or lastly, much as the Lord himself quickened the hearts of the people with the words, "Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to me." (*Mt* 12:50)

But this birthing takes time: seven days for creation; the length of history for Wisdom; a journey towards maturity for Jeremiah; nine months, a wedding (*Jn* 2), a requesting to see (*Mk* 3:31), a crucifixion, and a Pentecost for Mary; a lifetime of labors for Paul; the perspective of old age for John; a daily welcoming of the tree of the cross, with its groanings, its blossoms and flowers and fruits, for the disciples. And we, poor Franciscans that we are have been "at it" for less than thirty years. Our own process may be said to have begun with the Second Vatican Council's decree on the renewal of religious life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, October 28, 1965; it has now brought us to this day, twenty-nine years later.

Fr. Joe Chinnici, Provincial Minister of the Santa Barbara Province of the Order of Friars Minor, teaches at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, CA. Fr. Joe, author of the book Living Stones: The History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States, gave this keynote address at the 29th Annual Franciscan Federation Conference in Chicago on August 31, 1994.

Where are we? Let me attempt to address this question in three parts:

- drinking from the springs of remembrance by reviewing some key elements in the rediscovery of our Franciscan charism since *Perfectae Caritatis*
- presenting some reflections on the internal poetics of the evangelical life within the context of the culture of the citizens of our own large nation-state
- offering some brief suggestions, by way of conclusion, on how, in this context, we might continue to construct a social language, a structural skeleton for life's journey into Love.

I. THE SPRINGS OF REMEMBRANCE

Most of us are very familiar with the experience of Clare after the death of Francis. We must take seriously the lamentation of the sisters, who wept with grief as they peered through the little window at the opened coffin (*ICel* 116). Clare relates in her *Testament* how she feared in herself and for the frailty of others (*Test* 37-38). We catch a similar story about Giles, Francis' life-long companion. He spent St. Martin's Lent, from November 1 to Christmas, trying "to resign himself to the certainty that the Poverello would never again come to visit." The saint appeared to him in a dream, and Giles exclaimed: "Oh, Father, I wish I could have a talk with you." Francis replied, "If you want to talk with me, watch yourself."¹ *Stude tibi*: the words recall to mind the ancient monastic discipline of self-reflection designed to help people recover the lost covenantal image of themselves. The whole point is that Francis has not died: he lives on in Giles, and Giles can rediscover Francis by looking at his own experience.

It is the same message to us today: The first step in the recovery of the evangelical vocation is to be convinced that the Franciscan charism did not die on October 4, 1226. "Led by divine inspiration" (*TOR Rule* 2:1; *RegNB* 2:1; *RCL* 2:1) we carry it in our hearts. Yet we do not carry it in exactly the same way as did Francis, Clare, or Giles of Assisi. I mention this at the very beginning because one of the key experiences which many people shared after the Council was that the categories "contemplative," "monastic," "apostolic," and "secular institute" just did not fit our family. We seemed to share in all four forms. The lived experience and value of being "brothers and sisters" in community did not sit well with the purists of the apostolic form; "our cloister is the world" (*SC* 63) hardly resonated with traditionally contemplative religious; itinerancy scratched uneasily inside a monastic garment; the existence of an approved religious rule predated any twentieth century form of secular institute. When the contours of another option, the "evangelical religious life" were first outlined, the feeling emerged in many quarters, "this fits," "this is who we are." The reassuring experience was soon followed by the bewildering recognition that the "evangelical life" was not described in the *Code of Canon Law*, nor in traditional treatises on religious life; our formators did not know what we were talking about, nor did history convey to us any clear tradition, inheri-

tors as we were of a Franciscan rule shaped by an enclosed monastic form and stuffed into the apostolic body of the American Church. The cry, "that's it," was succeeded by "What's it?" This response needs to be shifted to the question: "Who are we?"

Let me review this history of the discovery of our evangelical religious heritage and its ambiguities by analyzing some of the key steps in the renewal process which has taken place since 1965. It seems to that the period can be broken into two parts:

1965-1981: a period marked by the renewal initiated by the Council, a series of extraordinary general chapters, experimental constitutions, and a focused attempt to recover the charisms of our founders and foundresses, both in the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was during this period that critical Latin editions of the writings of Francis and Clare were published and some of you participated in the international meetings for the rewriting of the Third Order Regular Rule.

1982-1994: a period of definition and reception. These twelve years began with the celebration of the eighth centenary of the birth of Saint Francis and have culminated this past year in a similar centenary for Saint Clare. The final *Rule* of the Third Order Regular Franciscans was given approval in 1982; subsequent years have seen a more precise definition of the "evangelical form of religious life," the adoption of definitive constitutions, and the publication of the first complete English language editions of the writings of Francis and Clare.²

In my reflections on the course of this history, the following points become immediately evident:

(1) The renewal initiated by the Council is only in its infancy. In the light of history, the reforms of Lateran IV (1215) and the Council of Trent (1545-1563), probably the most far reaching for religious life, took generations to establish themselves and underwent several mutations and enormous conflicts in the process. These earlier reforms did not contend with such basic issues as the rise of capitalism, industrialization, the revolutions of the eighteenth century, secularization, and the formation of a global church; they did not make any explicit call for a return to the sources.

Among ourselves, we are not yet dealing in any large numbers with the existential impact of the Council on people. In fact, while those who accomplished the major work of renewal in our congregations in the 1960's and 1970's have generally passed out of leadership, the first generation (those who grew up during the conciliar years yet knew the pre-Vatican II forms) has only begun to make its mark; and the second generation, those born during the years of the Council and generally unaware of the purpose and central points of the re-

newal, has not reached a "critical mass." Those of us of the swing generation must genuinely ponder: Are we answering questions no one after us is asking, refusing to address certain issues simply because they are not *our* issues, or are we trying to formulate the tradition so that the best of the past will not be lost yet will address a completely new group of people?

(2) It is clear that we are the first group of American Franciscan religious to have at our disposal critical editions of the sources; a life focused on a single *Rule* as opposed to customs, constitutions, and apostolic needs; and significant new understandings of the rise and growth of the penitential movement. Our nineteenth century forbearers knew nothing of the *Letters to the Faithful* or the evolution of the *Rule* from Nicholas IV (1289) through Leo X (1521). While the *Rule* of 1927 was framed in the context of the 1917 *Code* and incorporated some references to Franciscan sources, the 1982 *Rule* was shaped by a complete recovery of the sources and published before the 1983 revision of the *Code*. We now know in a critical way that significant foundresses such as Francis Bachmann (1824-1863), Ignatius Hayes (1823-1894), Alfred Moes (1828-1899), and others were formed by the constitutional and jurisdictional interpretations of their age. A Counter-reformation Church and the demands of the frontier structured their spiritualities.³ All of this seems to indicate that for enlightenment in our situation we can rely not on the way in which our forbearers envisioned religious life or interpreted its ascetical practices but only on their pursuit of its heart. Yet we have inherited both the renewal occasioned by a return to the sources and our nineteenth century roots.

There are two ways of reading our own experience. Caught as we are in the confluence of Franciscan and apostolic inheritances, which for the first time we are intellectually clarifying, we can feel a loss of identity and mission. Neither "apostolic" nor "evangelical," we can lose ourselves in the quicksand of second guessing, passing judgments from one ideological perspective or another. Our own society almost dictates this approach to us; its political and ecclesiological context begs for dualistic categorizations: male or female, person or fetus, fundamentalist or liberal, lay or religious, the priesthood of all or the ministerial priesthood, apostolic or monastic, active or contemplative. Mission statements, strategic planning, market analysis, product differentiation - all of these methods call for precise analysis and reification. We sit uneasily with ambiguity, irony, metaphor, the coincidence of opposites; we want a clear system, part of the inheritance, I suppose, of an ingrained scholasticism.

There is an alternative. As an historian, I would like to suggest a reread of our own tradition. It seems to me that Francis, Clare, and companions - and even to some extent the nineteenth century foundresses - found themselves in a similar situation, caught as they were in the confluence of a Gospel grace, the

pastoral project of the Church, the categorizations of the society, and the religious wilderness of the time. They discovered that it was the ability, under the inspiration of the Spirit, to hold all of the parts in tension that created their significant evangelical option. All of them refused to short-circuit their social, ecclesiological, and personal reality. They inherited not a scholastic system of *sic et non* but a monastic wisdom of both/and.⁴ Thus they remained in Assisi but lived on its margins; they identified with the *pauperes Christi* but refused the heretical option; they professed obedience to the Church, embarked on new initiatives, and embraced the consequences, placing the cross of Christ at the heart of the struggle over power and vision.

In a society where God has no publicly visible body and the Church very little credibility, the mission of evangelical religious is to open up the experience of God-with-us for Catholic Christians in the Church and for all our fellow citizens in their call to be human.

In such a framework, our contemporary experience poses for us a simple question: While we long for a coherent intellectual and practical position, is it not true that genuine religious life has generally caught fire only in the midst of long, hard, practical experience, the acceptance of life's ironies, the struggle with others to put heart and mind and behavior together, and the discovery of God in that very experience? In this view, the conflicts we experience are part of our evangelical life, not signs of its disappearance. They form the point of entry into the prophetic heart enfolded by Jesus and Mary, the disciples, and our forbearers.

(3) History indicates that in our contemporary experience the first articulations of the "evangelical form of religious life" occurred in the context of the two great *internal* dialogue partners in the process of renewal: the teachings of the Church - whether conciliar, papal, or congregational - and the return to the sources. Thus, the key years of 1982 and 1983 saw the celebration of the centenary of St. Francis, the English edition of his and Clare's writings, the promulgation of the *Codex Juris Canonici* with its application to religious life in *Essential Elements*, and the overarching presentation of "apostolic spirituality," sponsored by the USIG and supposedly applicable to most religious institutes. At that point in time, there was concern simply to articulate the distin-

guishing characteristics of the "evangelical option": a focus on Christ as the head of all creation, the presence of God's glory in human flesh, the goodness of all that exists, witness by word and example, the reality of being brothers and sisters with its consequences for governance and the structures of community, the existence within a congregation of a multiplicity of works based on the talents of each person, and the anthropological foundations of prayer.

Although it was recognized that all religious life is Gospel based, the term "evangelical" referred to the phrase uniquely placed at the beginning of the three rules (Francis, Clare, and the Third Order Regular): *vivere secundum formam s. Evangelii*.⁵ It stood for an alternate religious option, one which moved not from the needs of the world or canonical definition, but from a direct Catholic experience of the Spirit. The focus was thus on being in-Spirit, in-personed in Christ, the formulation in words of a particular experience of God, the recovery of a Franciscan specificity which had its own Scriptural, theological, and ecclesiological warrants. This thrust has continued up to the present in the response of the Federation to the upcoming Synod's *Lineamenta*.⁶

Thus, our vocation to celibate chastity in community needs to be interpreted in such a way as to reinforce each person's (married or single) unique call to desire, possess, and be possessed by genuine love . . .

I think it is important that we continue to stay focused on the fact that our "evangelical option" is a unique form of the religious life. It has been clearly contrasted, at least on a theological level, with its monastic and apostolic counterparts. The different historical records are clear; some of the anomalies between the current *Code of Canon Law* and the evangelical tradition are now being recognized in the Congregation for Religious. Yet, curiously, we Franciscans still seem unaware of the importance of these issues. On a practical level, we often float around in the soup of religious eclecticism. In some instances, the dominant themes continue to be taken not from a grappling with our own experience and tradition, as mixed as it might be, but from religious publications and national religious organizations to which we belong, both of which generally argue from the perspective of the very fine but different tradition of apostolic religious life. I cannot tell you how many times people have asked me to *define* "evangelical life."

The evangelical religious life means witness - witness as a Roman Catholic to the good Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It means taking seriously and

publicly naming the fact that God, who encompasses all things, is the personal heart of the evangelical life and the goal of our desires. It means talking about this search for God, a community of Three in One, whose Word became flesh in the womb of a woman, and giving it a social language which communicates to people *WHO OUR GOD IS AND WHO WE ARE*. It means making visible in the midst of struggle a poetics of love. If this is still elusive, perhaps some further guideposts along the way can be gathered by reflecting on some signs within our contemporary American culture.

II. EVANGELICAL POETICS AND AMERICAN CULTURE

I have tried to describe the incipient emergence of the "evangelical life" from the twin currents of the teachings of the Church and a return to the sources. In the last ten years, our experience has placed on our tables significant developments in another dialogue partner: American culture. Let me describe in this context what I think is the key issue which structures our evangelical poetics.

We live in an exceptionally violent and rancorous era within American culture - and we carry this violence around with us in our own bodies. Abuse and its partner in death, victimization, are the birth twins of a society imploding on itself. We have been here before, except that now we have no frontier which can act as a safety valve. The massive sea rhythms of nativism, spawned by the new immigration, severe economic distress, and the collapse of foreign purpose, have once again uncovered the deeper veins of prejudice in American life: racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, xenophobia. Bitter debates in the local and national political arenas, the move of the media towards tabloid journalism, character assassination by civil suit, procedural wrangling and economic lust in the judicial system, fratricide in the schools - all of these signs are both occasioned by and the cause of the collapse of people's confidence in every major social institution traditionally functioning as a mediator of values and vision: the political process, the legal and educational systems, the family, and the Church.

With no frontier - social, geographical, economic, intellectual, or spiritual - the passions and energies fueling the debates turn in on themselves, implode as nuclear matter implodes to create a social Hiroshima. My own historical sensitivities tell me that what is happening is a virtual attack on, even hatred towards, what it means to be human, what it means to be in relationship, what it means to be both infinite in desire and limited in capacity, full of grace and sin at the same time. Theologically, I think there has entered into our souls a deep prejudice against the Incarnation. We do not like the fact that we and our neighbor are human. The Church can serve as the bell weather compass, as we observe the body of Christ bleeding in our midst, the wounds caused by its own

members. In this atmosphere people reject the hard saying of the bread of life, refuse table fellowship with sinners, leave the neighbor by the wayside, and become scandalized at the water and blood flowing from Christ's side. This atmosphere breeds fundamentalism, gnosticism, reliance on authority, perfectionistic movements. It is also, thank God, the atmosphere in which the evangelical life first flourished - but will it today?

In reaction to this social fracturing, commentators and historians are now giving attention, as they were not in the 1965-1982 period, to the development of the good society, the common good, the public church, mediating institutions, the importance of religious discourse in American political life, and the cohesive force of shared symbols in community life.⁷ Younger people come in with these issues. For ourselves, questions of a common culture, the public significance of religious life, evangelical leadership styles, social mission, the need for congregational coherence, and the symbolic structures of fraternity have become clearer. The Nygren/Ukeritis study and the preparations for the upcoming Synod have made these issues even more evident on a general level.⁸

Our vocation to be poor, in such a way as to indicate that one becomes rich through interdependence . . .

A new question has thus been posed: How do we Franciscan religious in the cultural context of the United States construct a language of congregational social identity reflective of the distinctive elements of the evangelical life? In other words, while continuing to deepen our theological and spiritual articulations, we are challenged to fashion a formational pedagogy, the elements of a practical asceticism, a common social language, a structural skeleton which can embody our evangelical experience. Our workshops are designed to approach this task in four areas: authority, being brothers and sisters, praying, and mission. Let me offer in this address a general perspective with focus in two areas: a) our starting point; b) the recovery of the ancient disciplines.

Our Starting Point:

We often understand Francis, Clare, and the sisters and brothers of penitence as leading lives marked by specific religious characteristics: habit, withdrawal from the world, contemplation, life in community, the practice of the vows, works of charity. Thus we have learned to begin with what makes them

distinctive. But let us approach these practices not from the inside out, but from the outside in. Why is it that Celano in his *Legend of Clare* (Preface), can challenge all of his listeners (all Christians, the citizens of Assisi, Perugia, Rome, and elsewhere, perhaps even a passing infidel) with the following words: "Therefore, let the men follow the new male disciples of the Incarnate Word, [and] the women imitate Clare, the footprint of the Mother of God, a new leader of women." How does it come about that the *Legend* narrates such strong connections between Clare's life and the welfare of the city, or that even unbelievers responded to her public bearing, or that the citizens of the cities saw her life as mediating to them bodily health (21-23, *Process* 2:18, 4:11)? Why is it that Francis of Assisi, a man dedicated to virginity and living in a world with distinctive symbols of communal life, finds all sorts of people, married and unmarried, rich and poor, running after him? (*ICel* 37) What kind of self-understanding would enable him to write letters to the rulers of the people, the clergy within the entire Church, and all the faithful? What in Francis, Clare, and companions would others find so attractive as to be moved to listen to them? Surely, it would not be those elements which made their life distinctive, separate, consecrated into a race apart; it would instead, be characteristics which made their lives one with their fellow citizens.

Our vocation to community, in such a way as to model responsible life as a citizen of the world . . .

From this perspective, what is outstanding even in the early history of the Third Order Regular movement is not what makes it distinctive but what makes it universal: its emergence from the lives of ordinary men and women and their desire to live together for God and neighbor; its identification of the *Letter to All the Faithful* as one of its charter documents; its appeal to the rule of Nicholas IV (1289), where one searches in vain for specific definitions of religious life associated with enclosure and the practice of virginity. Instead, what is discovered in these documents are those elements culturally interpreted as symbolic of every Christian's call to holiness and every person's call to witness a human life with his or her neighbor.

Given this argument, I would simply like to say that in terms of the poetics of the evangelical life in the context of American culture, the challenge lies in our discovering a method of living together, a pedagogy of formation, a practice of asceticism, and a way of speaking about God which opens up to the

human desire for the truly beautiful, the joyful, the affectionate, and the free. In a society where God has no publicly visible body and the Church very little credibility, the mission of evangelical religious is to open up the experience of God-with-us for Catholic Christians in the Church and for all our fellow citizens in their call to be human. Thus, our vocation to celibate chastity in community needs to be interpreted in such a way as to reinforce each person's (married or single) unique call to desire, possess, and be possessed by genuine love; our vocation to be subject-to-all, in such a way as to build up each person's call to be free within the context of his or her social unit (family, neighborhood, city); our vocation to be poor, in such a way as to indicate that one becomes rich through interdependence; our vocation to community, in such a way as to model responsible life as a citizen of the world; our vocation to pray, in such a way as to unveil the presence of God in all people, things, and circumstances.

Our vocation to pray, in such a way as to unveil the presence of God in all people, things, and circumstances.

Paradoxically, the specific difference of the evangelical life lies ultimately in its witness to universality. This penitential vocation is very difficult in its rigor and discipline. It pursues only one truth: through faith, the finding of God in the condition of being human. In its prophetic center, this is a stance of faith. It means the total acceptance of the visibility of Love in the Incarnation, God's presence in limitation, imperfection, death, and even sin, and the crusade to make that love more visible. "God forbid that we should glory" save in this "cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Gal* 6:14).

The Recovery of the Ancient Disciplines:

Practically speaking, the pedagogical and formational methods which Francis, Clare, and others adopted to achieve their goal of making the experience of God visible were inherited from the long tradition of Western monasticism. The difference was that whereas the nuns and monks practiced their asceticism within the social model of the enclosure, and the hermits retreated to the hilltop, and the wandering preachers called for reform, the members of the evangelical alternative mirrored the fruits of these disciplines - a pure heart, humility, thanksgiving, courtesy, gentleness, peace, joy, patience, the blessing of persecutors, love (*RegNB* XVII:15, *RegB* X:8-11, *RCI* X, *TOR Rule* V:20, IX) in their life together as sisters and brothers and in the marketplace of the

city. The disciplines, they discovered through the grace of the Spirit, provided them with a means of addressing the knots of human existence which their own hearts shared with all of their fellow citizens: pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, cares and worries, detraction, complaint, anxiety, dissension, division, wrath, insult (*RegB X:7, RCI X:4, TOR Rule IX:30*). They knew at first hand the connection between the goal of their life - the incarnation of the poetics of love - the breaking of the addictions of social slavery and sin, and the necessity of a pedagogy for the Spirit. Thus, even if people did not agree with the brothers and sisters, they could see by their manner of life that an alternative economic structure based on gift-giving, the social sharing of the fruits of work, and communal living was accompanied by peace, joy, and dignity. Even if people still had trouble living with their spouses, they could at least see that the brothers and sisters were not afraid joyfully to embrace the cross of mutual engagement in their local "community of lepers." It was the democratization of the wisdom which they received which characterized the life of Francis and Clare.

What is the wisdom which we have received? Is it not true that one of our contemporary difficulties is the loss of a tradition of spiritual wisdom in our communities? There are, I think, many different historical reasons for this, not the least of which was the legitimate desire to rid ourselves of the vestiges of an oppressive institutional and sacralized structure. Was it not the experience of many of us in the 1960's, that although we found ourselves practicing daily meditation, examination of conscience, self-disclosure to the superior, silence, communal penances, chapters of faults, and cloister, the overarching subordination of life to order and efficiency coupled with a preoccupation with the control of sin had reduced these practices to formal impositions. The renewal of our life and its social mission dictated for many the rejection of what was termed "the monasticization of the Franciscan life." It is only now, thirty years later, that we are in a position to reassess the personal and communal basis for some of the ancient disciplines. The question now before us is, I think, which of these disciplines and values can legitimately serve our poetics of love? How do we interpret them today? We are engaged in a process of rediscovery.

It would be impossible here to present the application of all of the ancient disciplines, structures, and virtues to the creation of the evangelical option. At this point, let me simply list some of the more significant ones which consistently surfaced in the lives of Francis, Clare, and companions, and which I think might be helpful today.

1. Self-knowledge and self-disclosure. Have you ever wondered why the Franciscan sources are dominated by forms of speech which reveal both the personal experience of God and the barriers to its incarnation? Both Francis and Clare wrote *Testaments*; both engaged in revealing to their companions

"what happened along the way." One of the amazing facts about Clare is not that she had a dream of Francis but that she actually used it as a pedagogical device in the community.⁹ What would the practice of self-knowledge and self-disclosure look like today?

2. Mutual Mentoring. We are used to perceiving Francis as teacher in his admonitions and *Letter to Leo*. Would it be possible for us to see Clare as his "amma," in the ancient tradition of spiritual fathers and mothers? How might this tradition help us today, revealing to us how some of the strongest bonds of our communal life are the willingness to be mentored by those in our community who are spiritually wise and the experience of shared "example and edification"? Are not these realities related to the social task of witnessing?¹⁰

3. Mourning. The reality of "tears," is spread through the writings of Francis, Clare, and companions. It is a gift of the Spirit but is also intricately connected with their experience of the journey through the world, life in the marketplace of the suffering community and world. They are "mourning for lost salvation." Are we rediscovering the experience and meaning of tears in the contradictions of our life?¹¹ Can personal and communal tears wash away our sins?

4. Discretion. Discretion was the "*fons virtutum*" for the ancients, a chief characteristic of anyone in leadership and anyone who wished to distinguish vice from virtue in their experience. It constantly appears in the *Rules* of Francis and Clare under the rubric of "necessity." Who determines "necessity"? How is "discretion" incorporated into the daily experience of the evangelical life? What view of the human person does it presuppose?¹²

5. Pilgrimage. The overarching experience of being in "exile," "on pilgrimage," with its accompanying experiences, disciplines and virtues (loss of security, hardship, hospitality, travel together, perseverance, patience, desire for the promised land) is fundamental to the evangelical option and an image/rubric under which Francis and Clare view their prayer, their life in community, their mission in the world. What are the contemporary consequences of being on "pilgrimage"?¹³

6. Hesychia (solitude, freedom from disturbance). A prerequisite for "mindfulness of God" and keeping a "pure heart" is solitude and the creation of an atmosphere of peace. What role did this ancient discipline and way of praying play in the evangelical life of Francis and Clare? Is it possible to recover this tradition of "praying always" today? What structures of community would support it?¹⁴

7. Lectio Divina. "Life under the Word of God" surfaces constantly in the way of Francis and Clare, who reinterpreted in their own context the Benedictine tradition of "lectio." What is the role of Scripture, its reading and discussion, as

the interpretive base of life in formation programs and the daily practice of the evangelical way?¹⁵

8. *Contemplation.* Is there not a distinctive way of contemplation in the evangelical life, one which builds from the affections and personal social experience, through the Gospels, to participation in God's Love? How does our way of praying relate to the reality of being brothers and sisters on pilgrimage in the world?¹⁶

I believe that each one of these areas of life, founded in the ancient tradition, has a particular evangelical twist and application. We are only now in the process of rediscovering the true meaning of this tradition, its accompanying methods and pedagogy. Does it imply a "re-monasticization" of our way of living? I do not think so; it does imply that we are willing to abandon our eclecticism, to *resocialize ourselves*, and to bring out of our storehouse the flesh and blood of our tradition in such a way as to feed future generations.

III. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

I believe we are in a process of marrying and birthing, creating a family, becoming spouses, mothers, and brothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*TOR Rule*, Preface) It is not easy. Learning to love has always a dimension of embracing in darkness, where only the stars guide us. However, I guess I would like to make a plea that we continue to discover, and that we do this with all of our intelligence and practice, making use of the historical tradition and contemporary insights which have been given to us. We need to develop a poetics of love, a politics of how to live together, and a pedagogy of spiritual wisdom. And, in a society and Church which are rife with conflict, I think we need to do this a little more self-consciously:

- Is it possible for us to develop with the other members of the Franciscan family a general training program for our formators in the evangelical life?
- Is it possible for us to continue to create a forum, regionally and nationally, where we can be honest about what works and what does not work: in leadership, in mission, in prayer, in community life?
- Is it a worthwhile project for us to make a concerted effort to *reinterpret* the Franciscan intellectual tradition of the mystics and theologians?
- Is it possible for us to create handbooks, commentaries on the *Rules*, study guides, and practical tools for sharing, which will enable us collectively to move towards deepening the charism of the evangelical life?

Above all, can we develop more faith in God's presence in ourselves. It is true that as one philosopher, a specialist in John Duns Scotus, told me: In the Franciscan world, you do not acquire wisdom without breaking a few eggs in the process. But all of our *Testaments* and your own *Rule* end with a blessing. The Son of God, born of a woman, after all, did die for us. Isn't it a blessing to be human, to be Christian, to be Catholic, and to be Franciscan?

Endnotes

¹ As narrated in Raphael Brown, *Franciscan Mystic: The Life of Blessed Brother Giles of Assisi Companion of St. Francis* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1962), 121.

² I have tried here to list only some of the more well-known documentation, omitting the full information on numerous biographies of Francis and Clare. Obviously, each religious institute underwent its own process of assimilation of these issues. Publications on the "evangelical life" can be obtained from the Federation offices. Fuller bibliographical information can be found in the following:

A) For Church documents: Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, I: 1982; II revised: 1992).

B) For Franciscan sources: I. Omaechevarria, OFM, ed., *Escritos de santa Clara y documentos contemporaneos*, Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1970; Marion 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, 1972, 1983); Kajetan Esser, OFM, ed., *Die Opuscula des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi: Neue textkritische edition* (Grottaferrata, 1976); Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Ignatius C. Brady, OFM, eds., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982); Armstrong, ed., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

C) For Third Order Regular information: Raffaele Pazzelli, TOR, *St. Francis and the Third Order* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989); *The Franciscan Sisters, Outlines of History and Spirituality* (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University Press, 1993), especially chapter XII where development of the 1982 *Rule* is detailed and the research on the penitential movement listed, 202-203.

³ There needs to be a complete compilation of the number of studies completed on the foundations of the Franciscan life in the United States. Here, reference is made to Sr. Adele Francis Gorman, OSF, and Sr. Jeanette Clare McDonnell, OSF, *The Call and Response: A 125th Anniversary Tribute to Mother Mary Francis Bachmann, O.S.F., Foundress of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia*, n.p., n.d. [1980]; Brian de Breffny, *Unless the Seed Die: The Life of Elizabeth Hayes (Mother M. Ignatius, OSF), Foundress of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception*, n.p., n.d.; Sister Mary Assumpta Ahles, OSF, *In the Shadow of His Wings: History of the Franciscan Sisters* (Saint Paul, MN: North Central Publishing Company, 1977); Carlan Kraman, OSF, *Odyssey in Faith: The Story of Mother Alfred Moes, Foundress of Two Franciscan Congregations and Saint Mary's Hospital, Rochester, Minnesota* (Rochester, MN: Sisters of Saint Francis, 1980). Further information can be found in Pazzelli, *The Franciscan Sisters*.

⁴ The contrasts between the monastic/scholastic ways of thinking have great consequences for the ways in which we approach religious life. The classic exposition is Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961). See most recently, Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁵ The significance of this term has been well established in M-D. Chenu, OP, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, selected, edited and translated by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Duane V. Lapsanski, *Evangelical Perfection: An Historical Examination of the Concept in the Early Franciscan Sources* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1977).

⁶ The Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis, "Response to the Lineamenta in the Light of the 1994 Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life in the Church."

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⁸ See David J. Nygren and Miriam D. Ukeritis, "The Religious Life Future Project: Executive Summary," in *Review for Religious* 52 (1993): 6-55; Synod of Bishops, "The Consecrated Life and Its Role in the Church and in the World," in *Instrumentum Laboris* (Vatican City, 1994).

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¹¹ See: Irene Hausherr, *Penthos: The Doctrine of Compunction in the Christian East* (Kalamazoo, 1982); Joseph Pegon, "Componction," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique, Doctrine et Histoire* (Paris, 1953), II.2: 1312-1321.

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¹³ See: F. C. Gardiner, *The Pilgrimage of Desire: A Study of Theme and Genre in Medieval Literature* (Brill, 1971); Michael Casey, "Spiritual Desire in the Gospel Homilies of Gregory the Great," *Cistercian Studies* 16 (1981): 297-314.

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¹⁵ See: David Stanley, S.J., "A Suggested Approach to the *Lectio Divina*," in *American Benedictine Review* 23 (1972): 439-455; Jean Leclercq, OSB, "La 'Lecture Divine,'" in *La Maison-Dieu* 5-8 (1946): 21-33.

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Franciscan Evangelical Life And the Third Order Regular Charism

CLARE ANDREW D'AURIA, O.S.F.

INTRODUCTION

In 1983, the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (SCRIS) published the document, "Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate." This document was designed to aid the bishops of the United States in helping religious congregations whose "Institutes are engaged in apostolic works to live their ecclesial vocation to the full" (Letter of Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of the United States, 3 April 1983).

Since its publication, this document, addressing the two major forms of institutes of consecrated life - *vita monastica*, monastic life, and *vita apostolica*, apostolic life—has elicited numerous responses and has initiated much dialogue, especially among Franciscan scholars.¹ Much of this discussion centers around the distinction, unaddressed in the document, which places a different emphasis on the manner in which these institutes live out the common life. The Church, in fact, has always acknowledged the vital importance of each congregation understanding its rounding charism and encouraged its faithful observance in the life of the institute (Canons 577, 578, 598:1, 673).

It is in this spirit, then, that we speak of three types of religious communities with the different accents and possibilities of the common life:

The Monastic Society centered on contemplation and praise of God;

The Evangelical Fraternity centered on the spirit of simplicity, of benevolence and on a radical witness to Christ and His Gospel;

The Apostolic Congregation centered on the concrete mission of service to the world (*Concilium* 16: 5).

Sister Clare Andrew D'Auria, Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, PA is completing studies at The Washington Theological Union, Silver Spring MD, for an M.A. in Theological Studies. This paper was presented at a Chapter of the Aston Franciscans. Clare created the congregation's Companions in Mission Program while also serving as Assistant Provincial. She is the author of the Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Francis.

The purpose of this paper is not to develop the distinctions among these three in any kind of detailed way, although we will allude to such distinctions where appropriate. Our purpose, on the contrary, is to examine the concept of *evangelical fraternity* as Francis of Assisi understood it; to highlight its particular nuances as lived out in the Third Order Regular tradition,² and to develop some of its implication for the future of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia.

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF EVANGELICAL LIFE

Shortly before his death in October, 1226, Francis dictated his Testament. In this document, Francis reflects for himself and for his followers what it means to live the *vita evangelica*, the Gospel life. Appropriately, he begins by remembering his most profound initial conversion experience, that of embracing the leper:

The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them (*Test* 1-2).

Evangelical life begins in an experience of penance-conversion-metanoia: that profound, intuitive, and concrete experience of the goodness of God that impels one "in sin" (*Test* 1) to turn toward him in a loving faith response to the central Gospel call to "Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel" (*Mk* 1:15). Evangelical life is the ongoing process of surrendering to being "led by the Lord" (*Test* 2) and, in a spirit of constant and overflowing gratitude, finds its expression in the showing of mercy to all, in the living out of the *Shema* (*Dt* 6:4-5; *Mt* 22:37) in loving God and neighbor.³

Thaddeus Horgan says that "For Francis there is only one way to live evangelical conversion, and that is by living the Gospel literally."⁴ Francis uses two "vivid expressions" to explain "the dynamic way of life which he and his brothers were to lead at the inspiration of the Lord": first, to follow in the footprints of Christ (*RegNB* I:1; XXII:2); second, to live according to the form of the holy Gospel (*RegNB* XXII:41).⁵ This is the essence of evangelical life and it is integrally bound up in the ongoing experience of conversion. Louis Secundo clearly relates the two: "The style of the penitential life is thus for Francis and for his followers the way of living the Gospel and of conforming oneself entirely to Christ."⁶

It is important to examine these two expressions more closely because "each term expresses an important aspect of God's personal call to Francis and the saint's loving response."⁷

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE LORD

Francis follows Christ because he realizes that Christ is the only way to the Father (*Jn* 1:6; *Adm* 1:1): that in the mystery of God's plan--brought to comple-

tion in the fullness of time - all creation would be drawn into unity in him (cf. *Eph* 1:10). The creation of the world and its re-creation begins and ends in Christ. Francis understands that the most perfect expression of the Father's goodness is the Incarnation of his Son, Jesus Christ, who is for Francis "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creatures . so that primacy may be his in everything" (*Col* 1:15 ff).

In Chapter 23 of the Rule of 1221, Francis praises the Father in the profound prayer of one who has himself become a prayer (*2Cel* 95): "We thank you for Yourself" (*RegNB* XXIII:1). Throughout this almost mystical hymn on the generosity of God, Francis celebrates Paul's own message to the Colossians: all is created through Christ and for Christ - he who "is before all else that is. In him everything continues in being" (*Col* 1:17). Jesus Christ "lies at the center of all life and of all activity that pulses and functions in the universe."⁸

Christ, then, becomes for Francis the fullest expression of the Father's goodness and love. Because all creation comes into being *in* and *through* Christ, it is sacred for Francis and worthy of reverence (*Canticle*). This is especially true of the human person created and formed in the image of the Son (*Adm* 5:1).

All this, intuited by Francis through his own spirit-life, is later formulated by John Duns Scotus (d. 1308) and expressed as the doctrine of the absolute primacy of Christ.⁹ This doctrine concerning the reason for the Incarnation is considered the essence, the theological foundation, of the Franciscan concept of life.¹⁰ Eric Doyle summarizes the essentials of this teaching:

Stated quite simply, this doctrine in negative terms refuses to accept that sin can adequately explain the reason for the incarnation of the Son of God. In positive terms it teaches that the reason for the incarnation in the first place is God's free and eternal decision to have outside himself someone who would love him perfectly. This is Jesus of Nazareth who is God's masterpiece.¹¹

It is in, with and through this Jesus, firstborn of all creation (*Col* 1:15), that everything gives glory to the Father. Francis' own reverence and joy in the midst of all created reality explains his remarkable grasp of this truth. Francis recognizes the sacred presence within each creature, respects its uniqueness, and appreciates the enormous diversity of all of created reality. He is incapable of appropriating anything as his own - all is seen as gift from the all-good God. He sees *each* creature and *all* of them together as messengers of God through their very existence and can, therefore, welcome all as brother and sister.¹²

Through this awareness of God's goodness in Christ and in all of creation, Francis becomes a person of unceasing prayer (*2Cel* 165; *LM* 9:1). His faith

reveals the Christ who lives in him, prays in him, and leads him to put aside all care and attachment so that the Spirit can make within his heart a dwelling place (*II EpFid* 48; *RegNB* XXII:27).

This profound realization makes of him a *living* prayer, and thus he encourages his followers:

Let all of us wherever we are, in every place, at every hour, at every time of day, every day and continuously . . . love, honor, adore, serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and give thanks to the most high and supreme eternal God (*RegNB* XXIII:11).

For Francis, then, there is no dichotomy, but rather a genuine synthesis between action and contemplation. For, those of us who live the evangelical life, live constantly in the presence of God -whether in solitude or with others. We see and reverence God through the Christ in his word, in others, in creation, and in our own hearts. Prayer becomes adoration.¹³

LIFE ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL

Following in the footsteps of the Lord (*EpOrd* 51) means for Francis that he responds completely to the Father's love in the manner of Jesus Christ. This response of faith and repentance describes his total embrace of "life according to the form of the holy Gospel" (*Test* 14; *RegNB* XXII:41).¹⁴

This way of life is not focused on the common life of Ac 4:32, as in the monastic societies of his times; nor is it centered solely on the missionary discourse of Mt 10:5-14, as in the apostolic communities.¹⁵ The Lord reveals to Francis that he is to live the whole Gospel, simply and plainly (*LM* 3:8). For him such an observance of the Gospel centers on the great commandment of love of God and neighbor (*Mt* 22:37, 39; *I EpFid* I:1; *II EpFid* 81).

Evangelical life is not established around a common place as are monastic societies, nor around a common task as are apostolic congregations. It is rather formed around a common heart.

Being grasped by the person of the Gospel whose portrait is drawn in the Beatitudes, Francis can do no less than follow him with all his power and strength, with every effort, wish and desire (*RegNB* XXIII:8). St. Bonaventure tells us, "He received (*concepit*) the spirit of the true Gospel, in order to give birth to it" (*LM* 3:1).

OBEDIENCE

For Francis, giving birth means completely surrendering to the will of the Father as he allows himself to be led by the Spirit in a life of continuous conversion (*Mt* 1:15). Jesus Christ's self-emptying modeled the one and only response needed by Francis in discerning his way to the Father. It is the foundation of all he ever teaches in the shaping and preserving of his brotherhood.¹⁶

Essential to this obedience in its unique form is Francis' call to himself and his followers to "promise obedience to one another" (*RegNB* V:14). Beyond this original insight into Gospel life, Francis prescribes the traditional understanding of obedience understood by those of his times. Even in this directive, however, it is necessary to understand that, for Francis, obedience deals not with law but with revelation.¹⁷ Its goal is not common life, but the facilitating of the Gospel life of love. Obedience helps us to overcome selfishness, to free our hearts from all that is not of God so that the Spirit of God might dwell within, be inspiration, and act in us in absolute freedom (*SalVirt* 14-18).¹⁸

In Francis' view, then, "obedience begins before authority enters."¹⁹ However, for us to live the "true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*RegNB* V:14), Francis believes that what is inspired by the Spirit must be confirmed by the Church (*RegB* I:12). To act without confirmation is to separate ourselves from the Church and from the community/fraternity and to re-appropriate our will. This confirmation from the Church is mediated for Francis through the minister (*RegB* I:8; *RegNB* VI:6). In evangelical life, the minister wields no power (*II EpFid* 42). According to Wayne Hellman, "The ministers do not make obedience, but rather they serve and assist the friars in their obedience to the Spirit of the Lord."²⁰ Such obedience presupposes that both the minister and the members are free of selfishness and reverence the presence and revelation of the Spirit in one another. Then there can be true obedience.

Such relational obedience exists not only between ministers and members, however. Since the Spirit of God dwells in each one, the members obey one another and not just the minister (*RegB* VI:8). It is the Spirit that unites us in mutual charity (*RegNB* V:14). For this reason, obedience becomes the *structure* of evangelical life and Francis can speak of the novices as being received into the "realm of obedience" (*RegNB* II:9; *RegB* II:11). Evangelical life is not established around a common place as are monastic societies, nor around a common task as are apostolic congregations. It is rather formed around a common heart: "the firm will to accept one another in our differences, to respect one another and to walk together" united in love.²¹

From this perspective, *chapters* become essential as the means by which we come together to build up one another in mutual love and encourage one another to live the Gospel and the Rule which each of us has promised the Lord (*Test* 40). As Michael Crosby, says, "The core of Francis' theology of obedience . . . is the bond of mutual fraternal love, which is the means of achieving the highest Christian charity."²²

FRATERNITY

It is this bond of mutual love that forms the center of Franciscan evangelical life. To live the whole Gospel and to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ means, at its deepest level, to build up the kingdom by living in loving relationships (*RegB* III:10-14). Francis uses the word "fraternity" to identify this relationship that each of us has with Jesus Christ our brother.²³ From the outset, then, it is important that we understand the significance of this term and why Francis uses it.

The truth of our love is realized first in our life with one another, a life of essential equality. Thaddee Matura emphasizes that "the strongest and most demanding love is that which is required of me with regard to those to whom I have committed my life."²⁴ Such love presupposes an essential poverty, that active self-emptying love that frees our hearts from self-interest: that ongoing conversion by which we live without appropriating anything to ourselves. This kind of poverty facilitates the building up of the bonds of community/fraternity (*RegNB* VI:10). Its absence undermines and breaks the genuine bond. Eloi Leclerc explains how important this kind of poverty is for Francis:

Francis rightly saw that at the base of the rupture between persons there is always a shrinking back on oneself, a secret desire for appropriation that makes us see everything in terms of ourselves: our personality, our ideas, our project, or our interests When the secret desire for appropriation is thwarted, agitation, irritation, anger, and rupture are the result.²⁵

Because Francis recognizes that such "ruptures" will occur despite the best of intentions, reconciliation becomes essential to living in community/fraternity (*EpMin* 9-12). Realizing that Christ redeemed each of us to reconcile us with the Father by drawing all together in unity in himself, we are ready to forgive one another: to ask for forgiveness and to receive forgiveness. We make peace with one another in a spirit of kindness and humility. Since this relationship is the "circumstance in which we realize our living of conversion, or Gospel life, together,"²⁶ it is here especially that each of us begins to work toward reconciliation and unity in mutual love.

As Matura summarizes, "This profound acceptance of the other without preconditions, realistic and merciful, and exercised in fraternal equality, is to-

gether' with our love of God the central value of our Franciscan existence."²⁷ When we live in loving relationships the Kingdom of God is realized. It is to this that we witness. It is in this that we render our most important service to the Church and to the world.

WORKS OF MERCY

The love of God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, impels us to share in his mission: to build up the kingdom through our love of one another. Community/fraternity witnesses that the Kingdom of God not only is possible but has, indeed, already begun. Cajetan Esser affirms that "the Kingdom of God is thus established wherever God is made once more the center of the life of the individual and of humankind."²⁸ Christ our brother, is the center of this new world order because it is he who fulfills our most essential need - the need for God, the need for a loving relationship with God.

In his Sermon on the Mount, especially in the Beatitudes, Christ simultaneously draws a portrait of himself and of the kingdom which he inaugurates.²⁹ He presents a pattern by which those who follow him might live his life. Matura defines life according to the gospel as precisely that by which we receive brothers and sisters in the spirit of Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount.³⁰

To live the whole Gospel and to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ means, at its deepest level, to build up the kingdom by living in loving relationships.

Francis grasps the importance of living the Beatitudes, the values of Jesus Christ. He understands that attitude is all: we must become like a little child - lesser, minor - to enter the kingdom. When we recognize our poverty, our essential and creaturely need for God, the kingdom becomes present (*II EpFid* 61-62). We identify with and become brother/sister to the least (*Mt* 25:40) because these are the ones with whom Christ identified and for whom he is brother (*RegNB* 9:2; *1Cel* 76; *2Cel* 84-85). Leclerc expands on this point:

Living the Gospel means accepting to live with one's brothers and sisters, with all of them; not only with the holy and healthy ones, but also with the lame, the crippled, the mediocre and the sinful. In the midst of all such people it means bearing witness to God's infinite patience, his inexhaustible forgiveness, his constantly renewed grace for that is what God's heart is like.

When this kind of witness is given, then, and at that very point the Kingdom of God comes. The light of the Gospel begins to shine in a murky world.³¹

Assimilating the values of Jesus as outlined in the Beatitudes means, for Francis, ongoing conversion, that is, changing his own attitudes and concretizing these changed attitudes in deeds, in "fruits worthy of repentance" (*I EpFid* I:3; *II EpFid* 25). For Francis, however, the task in itself is unimportant. Evangelical life, therefore, has historically, in response to human need, addressed itself to a diversity of ministries. This is especially true of TOR congregations.³² What is paramount for Francis is the manner in which the deeds of mercy are accomplished: in a spirit of minority (*RegNB* VII:15-16).³³ The lesser brothers and sisters, aware of their own need for God, minister to the least of God's people, those identified in the judgment scene presented in *Matthew* 25. This ministry is characterized by mutuality and interdependence: we are sent to give and to receive.

Building this kind of kingdom where needs are filled and all live in essential equality as brother and sister is not an option for Francis but a Gospel imperative.³⁴ The sign that such a kingdom has begun is the presence of a "peace which the world cannot give" (*Jn* 14:27). When we profess evangelical life, we are committed to this kind of peacemaking, to building this kind of new world order that truly reflects God's goodness in Christ through whom all things were made (*L3S* 58).

COSMIC FRATERNITY

This movement toward unity in the Kingdom of Christ our brother, is a Journey not restricted to humankind alone. All creation moves toward fulfillment and, to all of creation, Jesus Christ is also brother. It is through, in, and for Christ that the world created and so it bears his footprints, an understanding that Francis intuitively and Bonaventure theologizes in his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. Francis experiences God's transcendent goodness in the gifts of creation (*2Cel* 165; *LM* 9:1).

Joseph Chinnici writes that, from the perspective of evangelical spirituality, "it is clear that the world, at the root of its existence is good; it is made through Christ and bears the marks of its Creator."³⁵ Thaddeus Horgan adds that, in such a world view, "There is nothing that is not holy, nothing that is not meant to be united and reconciled. The cosmic Christ is brother to everything."³⁶ Leclerc emphasizes that Francis is "not content only with praising God for his creatures, he fraternizes with them all. And this is new."³⁷ They are brothers and sisters to him and deserve his reverence because they share with him the same good and loving Father and the same redeeming brother, Jesus Christ.

Such a view does not imply that Francis fails to recognize the sin and darkness in the world. But "sin is related to what people do in the world and to it. Sin for Francis is, above all, appropriation, taking to oneself what belongs to God."³⁸ In fact, Francis equates conversion with leaving the world (*Test* 1-4), an image which means that, after his conversion, "he lives within the reality of God's gift; he sees the intrinsic structure and reality of the world, nature, people and himself *to be gift*. His task and that of his followers is to *receive, give thanks, bear witness* to this reality."³⁹ There is no place for the domination or exploitation of nature; we are stewards of the gifts of creation. Sharing, not consuming, is the mode of being in the world. Interdependence is the way to witness fraternity. Those who participate in political, economic, or social structures that foster appropriation and thus rupture cosmic fraternity need conversion and reconciliation because, as Leclerc notes, "To refuse fraternity with nature is also, to be sure, to render oneself incapable of fraternity between all persons."⁴⁰

In our working to create genuine relationships with one another and with all of creation, the Kingdom of God, already begun by Christ, will be built up toward completion; the world will be renewed in the life of the Gospel, in the life of ongoing conversion - in peace, in justice, and in love.

End notes

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² Since the Third Order Regular Rule is written in the words of St. Francis, references in this paper are only to the writings of Francis.

³ Margaret Carney, O.S.F., "De Vita Apostolica," Commentary on Chapter 9 of *TOR Rule*, [Originally written as a position paper to the Rome Assembly for approval of *TOR Rule*, March, 1982], 71.

⁴ Thaddeus Horgan, S.A., "Life According to the Holy Gospel," in *The Cord* 32(1982): 273.

⁵ Duane Lapsanski, *Evangelical Perfection: On the Historical Examination of the Concept in the Early Franciscan Sources* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1977): 66.

⁶ Louis Secundo, T.O.R., "The Mission of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis in the Modern World," in *Analecta TOR* (1978): 153.

⁷ Lapsanski, 258.

⁸ Efreem Bettoni, O.F.M., *Nothing for Your Journey* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1959): 99.

⁹ Michael Meilach, *The Primacy of Christ* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1964): 9-10.

¹⁰ Agostino Gemelli, O.F.M., *The Message of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1963): 87.

¹¹ Eric Doyle, O.F.M., *St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981): 61.

¹² Joseph Kiernan, O.F.M., "The Franciscan Charism and World Order," in *Grassroots* [publication of The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, PA, 1982], 128.

¹³ Damien Vorreaux, O.F.M., *First Encounter with Francis of Assisi* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1979): 56-57.

¹⁴ Helpful references on this theme from the *Omnibus of the Sources*: *1Cel* 22, 30, 32, 84, 209, 216; *2Cel* 62, 105, 115, 216; *L3S* 25, 29; *II EpFid* 11-13; *OffPass* 7.8; 15.13; *EpOrd* 51-52; *EpLeo* 3.

¹⁵ Chinnici, 6-7.

¹⁶ Cajetan Esser, O.F.M., *The Rule and Testament of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977): 65-66.

¹⁷ Wayne Hellman, O.F.M. Conv., "Obedience: The Vision of Saint Francis," in *The Cord* 26(1976): 342.

¹⁸ Vorreaux, 68.

¹⁹ Hellman, "Obedience," 343.

²⁰ Hellman, "Obedience," 346.

²¹ Thaddee Matura, O.F.M., "Fraternity: Human Reality and Gospel Sign," in *The Cord* 30(1980): 116.

²² Michael Crosby, O.F.M. Cap., "Obedience: The Fraternal Bond of Charity," in *The Cord* 31(1981): 294.

²³ Vorreaux, 69-72.

²⁴ Matura, "Fraternity," 112.

²⁵ Eloi Leclerc, O.F.M., *The Song of the Dawn* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977): 46.

²⁶ Horgan, "Life," 276.

²⁷ Matura, "Fraternity," 115.

²⁸ Cajetan Esser, O.F.M., *Love's Reply* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1963): 6.

²⁹ Segundo Galilea, *The Beatitudes: To Evangelize as Jesus Did* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984): 5-11.

³⁰ Thaddee Matura, O.F.M., *The Gospel Life of Francis of Assisi Today* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1980): 65.

³¹ Eloi Leclerc, O.F.M., *Francis of Assisi: Return to the Gospel* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983): 116.

³² Carney, 72.

³³ Galilea, 50-59.

³⁴ Thaddeus Horgan, S.A., "Prophetically Living Franciscan Penance" in *The Cord* 27(1977): 89.

³⁵ Joseph Chinnici, 16.

³⁶ *TOR Rule Commentary*.

³⁷ Leclerc, *The Song*, 16.

³⁸ Chinnici, 18.

³⁹ Chinnici, 18.

⁴⁰ Leclerc, *The Song*, 19.

Book Review

St. Francis and the Foolishness of God by Marie Dennis, Joseph Nangle OFM, Cynthia Lobeda, and Stuart Taylor. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1993. \$10.95. Reviewed by Patricia Hutchison, O.S.F.

In the Introduction to their book, *St. Francis and the Foolishness of God*, the authors state: "Throughout the history of the Franciscan community, whenever there has been a crisis, a shaking of the foundations in church and society, a new story of Francis has emerged." (p.1) According to the authors: "It is time once again to tell the story of Francis" (1).

St. Francis and the Foolishness of God is, according to the authors, addressed primarily to the "non-poor, the privileged of the world, the affluent of the late twentieth century" (7). Using the stories of Jesus and of Francis, the authors engage the mind, the heart, and the will of the reader. The stories of Jesus and of Francis, not only inspire the reader, but invite the reader to "imagine new ways of living out the gospel of Jesus Christ" (3).

Written by two women and two men - Catholics and Protestants, lay and ordained ministers - the book offers a richness of perspective and life experience. While the authors do not attempt to present a biography of Francis, they succeed in capturing with energy and fresh insight the "little man" whom so many for over eight

centuries have called Father, Brother, founder, saint, model, and friend. While not claiming to define or explain the Franciscan experience of life in community, they clearly and succinctly lay out the Franciscan ideal of community life as distinct from the monastic and apostolic traditions. While not undertaking a study of Clare of Assisi, they nonetheless, highlight well the role of Clare as partner with Francis and not simply follower and imitator.

Each of the eight chapters presents a particular theme and follows the same format to engage the reader first in the life stories of Francis and Jesus; then in a reflection on one's personal story (Our Stories); then in a reflection on the story of our contemporary world (Signs of the Times); and finally in a call to action (Invitation to Respond). The stories of Jesus are enriched by sound biblical scholarship. The stories of Francis are shaped by the insights of some of his most respected biographers. Yet, the authors present both stories in such a way that the reader is engaged actively in seeking personal meaning and original insights. The "Our Stories" section invites the reader to ponder his/her personal story using focused questions for prayer and reflection. The "Signs of the Times" includes excellent factual data and well-documented statistics to expand the reader's understanding of the contemporary theme. The "Invitation to Respond" leads the reader to

consider the type action to which faith may lead.

There is no mistaking the authors' attempt to move readers toward an ability to view their personal story and the world story from the perspective of the poor. Time and again Jesus and Francis are characterized as men who "journeyed toward the margins." Christ is described as beckoning to us "from the margins, in the human face of the poor, the 'least of these,' inviting each of us to join in the struggle" (34). The original Franciscan community is described as "a community seeking to be faithful to a call to live on the margins and intent on helping one another to be faithful to that difficult mission" (126).

Yet, *St. Francis and the Foolishness of God* is not only a call for action on behalf of justice and peace. Developing the biblical and theological notion of "the Fool," the authors portray both Jesus and Francis as examples who contradict the "wisdom" of the world with a profound and transforming "foolishness." The authors invite their readers to consider and imitate specific aspects of this "foolishness": identifying with and being evangelized by the poor; living in ongoing conversion; striving for community rather than individualism; risking intimacy as a support for selfless giving; overcoming violence by embracing each person as sister or brother;

reverencing creation as a reflection of the Creator; allowing suffering to grow into compassion and prophetic action; embracing the active-contemplative synthesis. They close with a powerful story from Eloi Leclerc's *The Canticle of the Creatures*, told from the prison of a train headed for Dachau in April of 1945. The story is, like the rest of this book, a tribute to the power of life over death, of hope over despair; a proclamation of the Cross which is the only passage to the Reign of God.

The authors suggest that the book will be most fully experienced when shared with others. I would suggest it as a valuable vehicle for faith sharing within religious congregations. Such sharing could lead to support of individual action or a decision for communal action on behalf of justice and peace. Those who seek to strengthen the Mission and Ministry aspect of institutions sponsored by Franciscan congregations should find the book an excellent resource; easily adaptable as a foundation for inservice for leadership, boards, and employees. Likewise, the book could be a tool for initial and ongoing formation in religious congregations. The book would also appeal to adult education and study groups of any Faith tradition. For everyone, the book offers a rich treasure for prayer and reflection, an invitation to conversion and personal and communal transformation.

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DECEMBER, 1994

The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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

I. Writings of Saint Francis

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

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

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

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

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

A Greccio Remembrance

LARRY JANOWSKI, O.F.M.

This is not a story about the first Christmas. We know all about that story. This is a story about Christmas eve in the year 1223 - 771 years ago tonight - in a mountain town in the Rieti Valley of northern Italy. It is a true story of a real people, but it is told in *imagined* words, words that might very well have been those of Giovanni Vilella, also known as John of Greccio.

JOHN When the prophet Micah said Bethlehem was "too small to be among the clans of Judah," he could easily have been talking about our town. Greccio is a jewel in the Rieti Valley, but still just a shrug of a town, of little importance to anyone who didn't live there.

Perhaps that's the reason this Christmas story had to happen there. God seems to have a soft spot for things and people who are ordinary and of little importance. Who would suspect that, in our little nothing town, among such ordinary people, God's love could come alive as it did that night?

[SONG: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"]

Just 60 miles north of Greccio is Assisi. Now there's a town! A proper city, with fortified walls and an even an old Roman citadel looming above it on the way up to Mount Subasio.

Of course all towns, even little ones have their well-known families and, in Assisi, *the* name was Bernardone, a name positively dripping with wealth and influence. And *the* Bernardone was Pietro, a very rich businessman - easily the wealthiest man in Assisi. His son, Francesco, was rapidly following in his father's footsteps.

Larry Janowski, a friar from Assumption Province, shares a Christmas drama with readers of *The CORD*. "A Greccio Remembrance" is presented annually by the friars and friends of St. Francis Friary and Retreat Center, Burlington, Wisconsin, as a holiday program before the celebration of Midnight Mass. It is arranged as a dialogue for two speakers, but a single skilled reader could easily take both parts. The text includes some suggested songs, which could be sung by a choir, the congregation, a combination of both, or quite simply and powerfully used as background melodies to present the images of the text to the imagination.

Of course, by the time the night I'm telling you about happened, things were much different for Francesco. He was already 41 years old, and he was rich no longer. Why not? Well, about 20 years before he had caused quite a sensation when he stripped himself naked in front of Bishop Guido and practically the whole town, and ended up giving all his fancy clothes back to his father.

That was when he and his friends decided to take up the gospel as a pattern for their lives, leaving everything else behind. Yet even after he left home to take care of lepers in Gubbio, none of us suspected the boy would one day become a saint, even if he was good and generous.

For all of his many virtues, for all of his father's wealth, he had a simple and practical side as well. It was the side I understood best. For example, Francesco once changed clothes with a beggar in Rome just so he'd know what it was like to beg for food and have people look down on him. And when he wanted to know what Jesus felt when he was hungry, he fasted. Simple. Practical. I like that.

I think most of us need to feel things to understand them. It makes sense, doesn't it? It's something like God becoming flesh . . . so we would know what God is like, so we could sense and feel the Love that God is . . .

Which brings me back to that night back in 1223. Francis was spending Christmas with his brothers at the little hermitage on our mountain. A few days before, he came to me. He was carrying what looked like a bundle of sticks.

FRANCIS (*Excited*) John, look at this!

JOHN At what? It looks like a bird's nest.

FRANCIS Yes. An empty bird's nest. Isn't it wonderful? Do you see the way it's still lined with down to make a warm place for the baby birds?

JOHN Yes. I see that. So?

FRANCIS It reminds you of Christmas, doesn't it?

JOHN (*Doubtfully*) It's a handsome piece of work. Well built. Probably a lark or sparrow, but, Francis, what does it have to do with . . . ?

FRANCIS (*Interrupting*) John, I have an idea and I need your help.

JOHN (*Suspiciously*) I'm sure you do. And what is your idea?

FRANCIS I want to celebrate Christmas in a new way, and this little nest has given me an idea.

JOHN You got this idea from that bird's nest?

FRANCIS Yes! Don't you understand? I want to arrange everything as the gospels say it was in Bethlehem. If we can actually see what it was like, we'll better appreciate the poverty of the birth of Jesus.

JOHN (*To the audience*) I had my doubts, but Francis could be very persuasive.

So, on Christmas eve there I was, half way up the mountain where the brothers had their hermitages. It was very cold and very late when I stepped out of the cave to look down over the valley. All the people of the town had been invited, but who knew if anyone would come?

I wouldn't have come myself if Francis hadn't asked me. It had been a hard year in Greccio. The harvest was poor, and there was much illness and it seemed that so many people had died in the last year. I felt for my neighbors, and—even if Francis didn't—I would understand if they did not feel like celebrating either in this strange and dark place.

[SONG: "A Time Will Come for Singing,"
Gentle Night, St. Louis Jesuits]

JOHN My mood was as dark as the moonless night. For that reason, the lights I began to see in the valley below stood out brightly as, gradually, people began coming out of their houses with torches and lanterns on long poles.

The lights formed little groups, like constellations of restless stars, and began to wind their way up the steep mountain slopes. It seemed as though, on that night, the stars were not in the sky, but in the valley — and they were floating up to us! Was this what the angels heard and saw looking down from heaven, as the shepherds made their way to where the star was hovering over Bethlehem.

[SONG: "Do You Hear What I Hear?"]

JOHN I looked around the cave at what the people would find once they got there. It wasn't much. Francesco's request had been very modest. There was only my own white ox, Olivia, and my neighbor's homely donkey. Oh, and a feeding trough filled with hay.

I said to Francis, "If you want to re-create the scene in Bethlehem, you should have gotten some people to act the roles of Joseph and Mary and the shepherds."

FRANCIS (*Shocked*) Giovanni! Who could dare represent those holy people? I wouldn't presume such a thing. Don't you see what we have prepared? It's a place for the infant Lord to lie. A warm place on a cold night. Only a place. That is enough.

JOHN When all those good people did finally arrive at the cave I could see from their faces that they did not know what to expect. The brothers had invited them, in Francis' name, to come to Mass in honor of the Lord's birth, but for an altar, there was only a large white slab of stone, and tied up in front of it were the ox and ass with the empty manger between them.

Some of the folks laughed and scratched their heads, but little by little, without anyone explaining it to them, I could see that they began to understand.

Like our Lord Jesus himself, Francis had a genius for using ordinary things to remind you of God so that even I could see it! Before our very eyes we could see the love of God because we could see how Love did not hesitate to come to us, even though his birthplace was so ordinary, so poor. As a matter of fact, the hay and animals and the cave reminded us that God seems most at home among the poor and unimportant.

Soon the walls of our little cave echoed the same kind of glory that the angels sang in the heavens over Bethlehem. "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth."

[SONG: "Angels We Have Heard On High"]

JOHN Then the Holy Mass began right over the manger, and when we came to the gospel, Francis sang it in his role as deacon.

If you knew him when he was young, you remember how Francesco loved to sing. His mother taught him the old French folk songs, and when his father returned from his journeys he brought along the modern ballads of the *troubadours*.

Of course, Francesco was older now. And because he sang only of God, all his songs were love songs. His voice was still sweet, and that Christmas Eve it filled the cave and drifted out over the valley where more of our friends were gathered because we couldn't all fit in the small grotto.

[Taped or "backstage" voice chanting just the first lines of the gospel in Latin or English.]

"In illo tempore: Exiit edictum a Cæsare Augústo, ut describerétur uníversus orbis. Hæc descriptio prima facta est a præside Sýriæ Cyríno: et ibant omnes ut profiteréntur singuli in suam civitatem."

"In those days Caesar Augustus published a decree ordering a census of the whole world. This first census took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone went to register, each to his own town."

JOHN (Over the singing, which fades.) Then Francis preached. Frankly, I don't remember what he said. He usually said the same thing

whenever he preached. He reminded us about God's love and about how we must turn from sin and embrace the gospel of Jesus.

I *do* remember that on that night, every time he said the words, "the Child of Bethlehem" or Jesus' name he smiled and touched the tip of his tongue to his lips as if he'd been eating honey and the sweet taste was still lingering there.

Then, toward the end of his homily, a strange thing happened. I had to rub my eyes. The manger was no longer empty. There was a baby in it! I swear it! A beautiful little baby with dark hair and rosy cheeks. (*Joy changes suddenly to alarm*). But it lay still as a stone. How it hurt to see the baby so still. It looked lifeless.

I found out later that no one saw this but me, and if I am crazy then so be it, but I swear that Francis saw the baby too. Not only that, but he walked over to the manger, bent down and, ever-so-gently, roused the little one so that it awoke smiling, as if from a deep sleep.

It began to come together for me then: the night, the child, the love of God, and even my friend, Francis. In his gentle, practical way, he was showing me how Christ had been lying lifeless and sleeping *in me* - in the emptiness of my heart - until the simple act of a simple man touched my heart, and the sleeping Christ came alive. I could see in a new way, how God so loved our world as to send his son to rouse us from our sleepy sins.

It didn't matter that others didn't see the child. What everyone *did* see was that we need to be like that manger, that sparrow's nest: Empty. A place for God to fill.

The Mass continued as usual, yet everyone said later that it was like no Mass they had ever been part of. Christ was not brought *down* upon the distant altar of our church; we could sense Christ *right among us*, among us ordinary people and in our very ordinary lives.

On that night of all nights, we could tell that "God was with us," and we could do nothing less than offer him ourselves, which, of course, was all he wanted.

[SONG: "In the Bleak Mid Winter"
(text: Christina Rossetti; music: Gustav Holst)]

JOHN I wouldn't be surprised if Francesco's idea of re-creating the scene of Jesus' birth caught on. In your heart, I mean. I wouldn't be surprised at all.

Being a Franciscan Priest: An Evangelical View

An Interpretive Translation of St. Bonaventure's *Apologia pauperum* 12:3-8¹

Translated and Annotated

by

ANTHONY M. CARROZZO, O.F.M.

*Around 1269 Saint Bonaventure responded to the critics of the mendicant movement at the University of Paris and elsewhere with his moving defense, the *Apologia Pauperum*.*

Among the concerns of those critics was the increasing presence of priests within the mendicant movement. In Chapter 12 of his work, then, Bonaventure turns his attention to this issue, arguing for the value of the mendicant priesthood, which he places in a beautiful evangelical context.

Such a reflection is as necessary today as it was in the 13th Century, for today some seem to see little or no room for priesthood within the fraternity.

Yet the fraternity, like the Church it is called to reflect, is priestly, as is wonderfully proclaimed by Peter (1 Pt 2:5). In fact, R. Gibson sees this universal priesthood as the foundation of religious life, when he writes: "In itself, the religious state is simply the full exercise of the universal priesthood of those who are baptized and confirmed. In effect, the essential act of this universal priesthood consists in the offering of a spiritual sacrifice by means of

*This paper formed the basis of a talk given by Fr. Anthony Carrozzo, Provincial Minister of Holy Name Province, to the friars throughout the province at their Regional Day gatherings. A collection of addresses, homilies, and presentations made between 1987 and 1994 on *Refounding in the Franciscan Tradition* by Fr. Anthony has recently been published by the Franciscan Institute.*

*which the Christian offers himself to God as a 'living and agreeable sacrifice.' (Rm 12:1) Religious consecration is no other than the full realization of this spiritual sacrifice. . ."*² *Such a view is evidenced in St. Francis' Letter to the Entire Order where he addresses all the brothers as "reverend and most beloved brothers."*³

*Within the priestly Franciscan fraternity, there is not only room for but also a warm welcome to those who exercise the ministerial priesthood, as is evidenced in the same letter, in which Francis addresses himself to all his priest-brothers "who are or will be or desire to be priests of the Most High."*⁴ *In doing so, however, Francis also addresses the behavior he expects from his priest-brothers, which should be priestly but not clerical, as is clear from his attitude toward the developing eucharistic praxis of his times.*⁵

It is in this context that we need to retrieve the Bonaventuran appreciation for an evangelical exercise of the one priesthood that we all share.

The ministry of the priest is to return⁶ God's People to Him. This happens through a seven-fold hierarchical infusion:⁷ teaching beliefs, renewing virtues, setting forth examples, interceding with prayers, attending to injuries inflicted by enemies, warning against insidious dangers, and beating back hostilities. There are seven metaphors in Sacred Scripture⁸ that reveal these priestly tasks: the architect, the farmer, the shepherd, the intercessor, the doctor, the watchman, and the leader.

First, the ARCHITECT. Scripture describes this priestly instructing in the faith in Paul's message to the Corinthians: *As a wise architect, I have laid the foundation (1 Cor 3:10).* The stones in the building correspond to the articles of faith in the soul in which Christ dwells: *Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: In whom all the building, being framed together, groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph 2:20-21).* So, as the builder is related to the building, the priest is related to the people by establishing and promoting the splendor of truth.⁹

Second, the FARMER. The priest assists God's people in renewing virtues by tilling the field in the spirit of St. Paul: *I have planted, Apollo watered (1 Cor 3:6).* If the people of the Church are a field and a paradise planted and vibrant with many virtues, the one who informs the people regarding right living can correctly be called the farmer, represented by Adam whom *the Lord God took and put into the paradise of pleasure to dress it and to keep it (Gn 2:15).*¹⁰

Third, the SHEPHERD, according to Jesus' words: *But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep... When he has let out his own sheep, he goeth before them (Jn 10:2, 4).* The priest does this when he becomes an example of holiness¹¹ before the people. Thus Peter, to whom the Lord said *Feed my sheep (Jn 21:17)*, exhorts priests to feed the people entrusted to them

by not lording it over the clergy, but by being made a pattern of the flock from the heart (*1 Pt 5:3*). This is the pattern then: the holier the life of the pastor, the better the life of the people.¹²

Fourth, the INTERCESSOR, who stands before God in prayer: *For every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in the things that pertain to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sin (Heb 5:1)*. The priest, then, pleads the cause of the people before God and also pleads the cause of God before the people¹³ entrusted to his care in the spirit of the Third Book of Kings: Keep this man and if he shall slip away, thy life shall be for his life (*20:39*). For this reason, the Wise Man says in Proverbs: My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, thou has engaged fast thy hand (*6:1*).¹⁴

Fifth, the DOCTOR,¹⁵ who heals injuries inflicted by enemies following the example of the Good Samaritan who bound up [the injured man's] wounds, pouring in oil and wine (*Lk 10:34*). The Samaritan represents Christ the Healer and those who cleanse vice in His Name.¹⁶ That is why Scripture counsels: Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sin, they shall be forgiven him (*Jam 5:14-15*).¹⁷

Sixth, the WATCHMAN, who warns against imminent danger in the spirit of Ezechiel: *Son of Man, I have made thee a watchman to the House of Israel (3:17)* and he adds: *If the watchman see the sword coming--that is, signs of imminent temptation--and sound not the trumpet,*¹⁸ and the people look to themselves, and the sword comes and cuts off a soul from among them: he indeed is taken away in his iniquity. And I will require the blood at the hand of the watchman (*33:6*).

Seventh, the PROTECTOR, who beats back hostilities like the noble Machabeus: *He put on a breastplate as a giant, and grit his war-like armor about him in battles, and protected the camp with his sword (1 Mac 3:3)*. The Church, comely as Jerusalem: terrible as an army set in array (*Cant 6:4*) is responsible for Solomon's litter surrounded by threescore valiant ones of the most valiant of Israel, all holding swords, and most expert in war (*Sol 3:7-8*).

Hence the sevenfold functions of the priestly office.¹⁹

If the Christian people presently resemble a building in shambles because so great a number have strayed, would any architect lay off those who work with him²⁰ in erecting and supporting its structure? Such an architect would have to be so wise that he believes himself to be self-sufficient or so foolish that he desires the complete collapse of the dilapidated Church.²¹

If the people are compared to a dry and rocky field,²² as happens when wisdom and virtue disappear, would any diligent and hard-working farmer fire the laborers who work with him, particularly those who freely offer their work and learning,²³ unless he is insane enough to want upon the land of [God's] people thorns and briars [to] come up (*Is 32:13*)?

If the Christian people are a flock, some of whom are wandering and lost, living in the midst of wolves, straying from divine laws, would any compassionate shepherd cast out those who were leading the sheep back to the road? Would he not rejoice with the Good Shepherd: *Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost (Lk 15:6)*.

If the people are like oppressed debtors filled with guilty feelings over their sins, would any sensible person be appalled by those who wish to ease their burden²⁴ through increased intercession with God, partly begging forgiveness and partly paying off the spiritual debt through their penitential lives?²⁵

If a spiritual plague exists so that *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is sad so that from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein (Is 1:5-6)*, would any faithful doctor dismiss well-trained orderlies,²⁶ unless he wanted to kill the wounded and the languishing?

If cruel enemies were everywhere and swords were vibrating over the heads of citizens, as often happens when Christian people are surrounded by many temptations, would any watchful sentinel, in the most terrifying darkness of a deep and horrible night, refuse to have others with him to guard the camp?

Finally, if there is almost constant turmoil among the faithful, besieging the Church to ferociously mangle, kill, and devour it, as happens on account of frequent scandals, continuing crimes, and tyrannical rules, would any prudent protector refuse the help of those who fight the common fight, who go so far as to expose themselves to risk and to sacrifice their very persons²⁷ *as a wall for the House of Israel?*

And so, the attitude of a priest toward the people²⁸ is to be the same as that of a father toward his son, of a mother toward her offspring, or of a nurse toward an infant. Paul obviously declares this in speaking of those who converted to the faith: *For in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you (1 Cor 4:15)*; in speaking of giving birth to them: *My little children, of whom I am in labour again until Christ be formed in you (Gal 4:19)*; and in speaking of feeding them: *I gave you milk to drink, not meat; for you were not able as yet (1 Cor 3:2)*. It is desirable for a father to sustain a vulnerable son, for a mother to foster a weak child, and for a nurse to feed a crying baby. So too it is a great consolation for a priest to care for God's people in these ways.²⁹ For this reason, the Lord says to the apostles and to their successors: *The harvest indeed is*

great, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest (Mt 9:37-38), suggesting that the clergy should not only bear patiently with mendicant priests, but ardently desire these evangelists to reap the multitude of the divine harvest.

End notes

¹ *Opusculum XI. Apologia Pauperum*. Cap. XII, pp. 317-318. Since Bonaventure used the Vulgate Bible, all Scripture quotes are from the Douay-Rheims Bible which is more revelatory of the nuanced metaphors that Bonaventure employs.

² Quoted in Allan Von Kobs, *Ordained Religious Brothers* (Roma: Gregorianum, 1993), 22.

³ *EpOrd* 2 (AB, 55). ⁴ *EpOrd* 14 (AB, 56). ⁵ Cf. Footnote 20.

⁶ Bonaventure uses the word "*reductio*," a term that he frequently uses (e.g. *De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam*) to refer to "the return," that is, the task of the Christian to give back to God the gift that has been given by God. Since all of life is a gift from God, it is our vocation to return the gift, worn and tarnished as it may be (cf. parables). In this text, the work of the priest is to assist in the return of the gift of God's people to Him.

⁷ Bonaventure is not referring here to an ecclesiastical hierarchy but rather to the mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius, who perceived a hierarchical pattern in all of creation. This Pseudo-Dionysian influence is obvious in Bonaventure's seminal work *De Triplici Via*.

⁸ It should be carefully noted that, throughout this chapter, Bonaventure presents the mendicant notion of priesthood in evangelical rather than sacramental terms. His vision, as a true son of St. Francis, comes from his appreciation of the lived Gospels.

⁹ The phrase "*splendor veritatis*" is not used in this text but it is clearly the meaning of the passage as is evident from Bonaventure's description of the seven stages of truth in *De Triplici Via*: *assensus rationis, affectus compassionis, aspectus admirationis, excessus devotionis, amictus assimilationis, amplexus crucis, intuitus veritatis* (3:3:3). Such a process connects quite brilliantly with this entire passage, for the Seraphic Doctor challenges the priest to assist God's people in the discovery of "the articles of faith in the soul. . ." In his *Conferences on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, when he observes that theology must be within the theologian, Bonaventure states that theology is "a pious knowledge of the truth apprehended by faith" (4:5).

¹⁰ To appreciate this passage fully, it is important to understand the Bonaventurian approach to "right living" outlined in the *Itinerarium*, Chapter 3, in which the Seraphic Doctor presents the journey into God not as a movement from sin to grace but as a movement from the Good through the Better to the Best. When the good soul encounters the best, it strives to be better. So the good Christian in the presence of Jesus, who is the Best, seeks to be better and the good Franciscan seeks the better through the example of Francis, the best *Forma Minorum*. So here the Seraphic doctor sees the field as *paradise and the garden of Eden*. Later he will deal with what sin has done to harm this gift from God.

¹¹ For the friar-priest, this may be the most frightening passage in the work. Like Francis, Bonaventure insists on holiness of life as the fundamental sermon to be preached.

¹² Priests who are prone to bemoan the mediocre ways of the laity need to carefully meditate on these few but stirring words of Bonaventure: we should not rail against their lifestyles but change our own!

¹³ The friar-priest, then, must be aware of both the needs of the people and the desires of God for His People.

¹⁴ Here Bonaventure points out that the priest has given "power to the people." Priesthood, then, is not a position of power but rather one of service. Such a notion can only be understood through a contemplative reflection on the writings of Francis regarding what it means to be a lesser brother and the observations of Bonaventure in *De Triplici Via* where he speaks of the necessity of the soul entering into a relationship to have "the desire for martyrdom" (2:3:8).

¹⁵ Compare to *Six Wings of the Seraph*, in which the Pseudo-Bonaventurian author writes: "The good Samaritan, finding the victim of the bandits lying abandoned and only half alive, poured oil and wine on his wounds. When a member of the community needs help, the head should offer the wind of fervent zeal and the oil of comforting brotherly love" (*The Character of a Christian Leader, a modern version of Six Wings of the Seraph*, translated by Philip O'Mara (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1978)).

¹⁶ One can only marvel at the gentleness of this passage! Bonaventure would have been most uncomfortable in the presence of Franciscan preachers of the 15th and 16th centuries who went into diatribes against the sins of the people. Here he presents the preacher as a doctor who gently and humbly cleans the wounds of the suffering. The image of a caring nurse also comes to mind as does that wonderful passage from Bonaventure's *Commentary on Luke's Gospel*: "[The preacher] must be motivated by a brotherly compassion. . . . As Gregory says: 'He who has no charity for others must never take on the office of preaching. . . .' He must have enkindled within him a sympathetic attitude towards others" (*Prola*:3).

¹⁷ The Seraphic Doctor uses this passage not with its usual sacramental overtones but to show how the priest should approach those in need of healing.

¹⁸ Bonaventure's gentleness does not mean that he does not confront sin and evil. He clearly addressed such difficult issues both within and without the Order, particularly in the spirit of the Rule of 1223:10. In his *First Encyclical Letter*, written after being elected Minister General, he not only urges the brothers "to root out what is evil, promote what is good, revive what is weak, and reinforce what is already strong," but he also writes "*Seeing myself as a sentinel for the House of Israel*, I have decided to write you briefly about certain matters. . ." listing evils that have developed in the Order [Cf. Dominic Monti, *Works of Saint Bonaventure* V (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute), 58-59]. In our present passage, he points out that, when the priest sees imminent danger, he would be remiss not to "blow the trumpet," that is preach about it.

¹⁹ Having presented this evangelical vision of the priesthood, Bonaventure turns to the issue at hand: the rejection of the mendicant mission by some of the secular clergy at the University of Paris. While responding to an historical situation, these paragraphs give a magnificent picture of what the Seraphic doctor sees as the Franciscan vision of priesthood in light of the seven evangelical images presented above.

²⁰ Bonaventure does not present the mendicant priesthood in opposition to the diocesan priesthood but in relationship to it. In doing so, he does see one as better than the other. They simply model different thrusts of the one priesthood of Jesus: one primarily sacra-

mental, the other primarily evangelical. This vision reflects Francis' unwillingness to allow his friar-priests to accept the evolving Eucharistic theology and praxis of his times as is evident from his *Letter to the Entire Order*: "I admonish and urge in the Lord that only one Mass according to the form of the Holy Church be celebrated each day in the places in which the brothers stay. If, however, there should be more than one priest in that place, let one be content, for the sake of charity, to assist at the celebration of the other priest" (*EpOrd* 30-31 in *AB*, 58). The position that prevails in the Order, however, is expounded by St. Bonaventure in his *Treatise on Preparing for the Celebration of Mass* (1:9) in which Bonaventure equates the celebration of Mass with reception of Holy Communion, urging the priest not to deprive himself of the effects of Holy Communion. But Bonaventure is not unaware of the fears of St. Francis and the dangers of his position so he urges the priest to consider his motives as he approaches the altar (1:14). For an enlightening analysis of Francis' *Letter*, see Octavian Schumucki's article in *Greyfriars Review* 3 (1989): 1-33.

²¹ Obviously Bonaventure has in mind the initial call of Francis: "Rebuild My House."

²² The Garden of Eden - Paradise - referred to earlier is not what it once was!

²³ The Seraphic Doctor sees the mendicant contribution to be two-fold: work and learning. From its beginning, the manner of Franciscan presence among the people was through daily work. An additional way of presence has developed, namely through the intellectual life, a cause of great controversy among some of the early followers of Francis and tremendous agitation among some of the faculty members at the University of Paris. Bonaventure, however, takes it for granted. See his much earlier work: *A Letter in Response to Three Questions of an Unknown Master* (Monti, *Works of Saint Bonaventure* V, 39-56), which C. H. Lawrence in his book *The Friars* (London: Longman, 1994) calls "A daring apologia for (a) new model of Friar Minor" (p. 58).

²⁴ Franciscan life and preaching should not add burdens to oppressed people. Rather the mendicant ministry should help to "ease the burden." This is done through prayer and penance on the part of the mendicant priest.

²⁵ While the phrase "through their penitential lives" is not included in the Latin text, it is clear from the context and the other writing of the Seraphic Doctor that prayer and penance are Franciscan means of conversion. Here Bonaventure hints at a priestly lifestyle for the mendicant - and particularly - for the Franciscan priest.

²⁶ While quite difficult to accurately translate, I believe the image of "orderly" best describes Bonaventure's notion of the lesser brother who is a priest.

²⁷ Again one is reminded of the Bonaventurian notion of "the desire for martyrdom." No one should seek ordination or be allowed to be ordained if he is unwilling to be sacrificed for the sake of the people. Particularly apropos to the mendicant priesthood, then, are the words of Paul: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (*Rm* 12:1).

²⁸ While some may view these images as paternalistic and maternalistic, they surely reflect Francis' approach to authority as described in his various letters. Further, these Bonaventurian images are evangelical and relational, that is, they are founded on the Gospel and in relationship with people.

²⁹ God's people are neither a distraction nor a detriment; they are a consolation IF priesthood is exercised as Bonaventure describes it here.

Christmas Eve at Greccio in 1223

ANN WEMHOFF, O.S.F.

Sometimes we make assumptions or take the information with which we are most familiar for granted. Consequently, we never go back to find out whether or not our impressions and memories are accurate. Sometimes also, because an experience was exceptionally good or exceptionally bad, the memory of it changes over time to become something other than what was originally intended. Is it possible that something like this could have happened to the Greccio experience on Christmas Eve in 1223?

Let us examine the Franciscan sources in order to understand more accurately what Francis really had in mind when he planned that celebration. What happened during the celebration? What was its effect on the people and the surrounding area? Can we draw some conclusions relevant to contemporary celebrations of Christmas?

Some background information might be helpful. Greccio is a small town about 45 miles south of Assisi. What do we know about the Greccio of the 1220's? Early biographers tell us that it was a place dear to the heart of Francis, and that he went there often. In the *Legend of Perugia* we read:

The brothers of the friary at Greccio were virtuous and poor, and the inhabitants of the country, despite their poverty and simplicity, were more pleasing to blessed Francis than those of the rest of the province. Consequently, he often went there to relax or tarry. There was an especially small, poor, and very solitary cell there to which holy Francis liked to withdraw (*LP* 34).

Celano also praised the virtues of the brothers and describes the environment at Greccio.

Francis liked to stay at the brothers' place at Greccio, both because he saw that it was rich by reason of its poverty and because he could give himself more freely to heavenly things in a more secluded cell hewn from a projecting rock (2 *Cel* 35).

We find in the *Legend of Perugia* how much the fervor of Francis and the brothers affected the men of the town.

This article is based on a talk given by Sister Ann Wemhoff to the Secular Franciscans in Lincoln, Nebraska. Sr. Ann, who is a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Colorado Springs, has studied at the Franciscan Institute at Saint Bonaventure University.

His example, his preaching, and that of his brothers were the reason, together with the grace of God, that many of the inhabitants entered the Order (*LP* 34).

In the same Legend we also read about the lifestyle of many of the women of Greccio after they had encountered Francis and his followers.

Many women took the vow of virginity and adopted a religious habit; each one had her own house, but they led a common life; they practiced virtue, mortification, fasting and prayer; one got the impression that they were living apart from the world and their relatives; despite their youthful age and their great simplicity, they seemed to have been formed by holy religious women who had been in the service of Christ for a long time (*LP* 34).

Later there is a description of the influence the brothers had on the entire town.

The Brothers at Greccio, as was the custom of the brothers at that time in many of the friaries, sang the praises of the Lord in the evening. Then, men and women, great and small, would come out of their homes, stand on the road before the town, and alternate with the brothers repeating in a loud voice, "Blessed be the Lord God." Even the little children who hardly knew how to talk, praised God according to their ability" (*LP* 34).

Celano, Bonaventure and the Legend of Perugia all tell the story of wolves and hail that ravaged the village until Francis promised that if the people would repent and confess their sins they would be delivered from these pestilences (*2 Cel* 35; *LM* 8:11; *LP* 34). All three also record that the people did repent and began to live holy lives. Consequently, they were freed from the pestilences. Given the high regard Francis had for the people of Greccio as well as their degree of cooperation and participation in the Christmas celebration of 1223 which will be described later, would it be wrong to speculate that the conversion occurred prior to this year? There is no way to prove this theory, and in fact, the written records would seem to indicate otherwise. However, we know that the people of that day did not record history as we do today, and either interpretation is possible.

In any case, it was this town of Greccio which Francis chose to transform into a new Bethlehem just three years before he died. Julian of Speyer, reminds us that, "The holy man...did not wish, if he could help it, to neglect even a jot or tittle of what was narrated in the books of the holy gospel" (*JS* 10:53; see also *1 Cel* 84). Bonaventure relates that before Francis carried out his dream he sought permission of the pope for a special liturgical celebration in Greccio. He did this because he did not wish to be accused of being an innovator (*LM* 8:7).

After he had obtained the pope's approval, and about fifteen days before the occasion, Francis called a friend of his named John who lived in Greccio. Celano describes him as a man with a good reputation who belonged to the

nobility but renounced his position to pursue nobility of soul (*1 Cel* 84). Francis explained his idea to John and asked him to gather the materials needed for the celebration (*1 Cel* 84; see also *JS* 53). Exactly what did Francis ask John to prepare? They are described in three sources:

The manger was prepared, the hay had been brought, the ox and ass were led in (*1 Cel* 85).

... who provided an ox and an ass, stable ... (*JS* 53).

... and then he had a crib prepared, with hay and an ox and an ass (*LM* 8:7).

Note that there is no mention of a Jesus, a Mary, or a Joseph - those figures which play such prominent roles in our Christmas cribs today. John was to prepare only a manger with hay, an ox, and an ass. Perhaps Francis knew instinctively that if the place and the people were properly prepared, Christ would come.

Precisely what did Francis have in mind when he proposed this celebration? Below are three quotations from various sources which give us the reasons why Francis chose to celebrate in this manner:

For I wish to do something that will recall to memory the little Child who was born in Bethlehem and set before our bodily eyes in some way the inconveniences of his infant needs, how he laid in a manger, how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he lay upon the hay where he had been placed (*1 Cel* 84).

Therefore, desiring to represent as faithfully as possible the lowly poverty of the infancy of the Savior born at Bethlehem ... (*JP* 10, 53).

... Francis decided to celebrate the memory of the birth of the Child Jesus at Greccio, ...

... his heart overflowed with tender compassion, ... Then he preached to the people about the birth of the poor King ... (*LM* 8:7).

Notice that in each source there is emphasis on the poverty which the Babe of Bethlehem was willing to suffer, rather than on the aspect of gift which has become so prevalent in our Christmas celebrations today.¹ Isn't it ironic that the celebration from which the business people of today expect to make a greater profit than at any other time of the year was popularized by someone who primarily wanted to recall the inconveniences which Christ suffered and the poverty that He was willing to endure for us at His birth? What a conversation piece we would present if we were to set up a crib at Christmas with only a manger, an ox, and an ass! Would we be able to defend it as an example of the poverty which Christ modeled for us as convincingly as do those who use Christmas for monetary gain? Could it provide a counter-cultural symbol allowing Christ to become present in a unique way into a world where material things are often more important than faith in our Savior?

Who was invited to the Christmas celebration at Greccio? What effect did it have on the surrounding environment? In the sources we read:

The Friars were all invited and the people came in crowds. The forest re-echoed with their voices and the night was lit up with a multitude of bright lights, while the beautiful music of God's praises added to the solemnity (LM 8:7).

The brothers were called from their various places. Men and women of that neighborhood prepared with glad hearts, according to their means, candles and torches to light up that night that has lighted up all the days and years with its gleaming star . . . The night was lighted up like the day, and it delighted men and beasts. The people came and were filled with new joy over the new mystery. The woods rang with the voices of the crowd and the rocks made answer to their jubilation. The brothers sang, paying their debt of praise to the Lord, and the whole night resounded with their rejoicing (I Cel 85).

Blessed Francis was there with many of his friars gathered around him. . . A great multitude of people, streaming together from various places, filled the night with an unaccustomed joy, and made luminous by candles and torches (JS 53).

Notice that not only the people, but the entire environment was involved in the celebration, including the woods, the rocks, the animals, and the quiet darkness of the night. The joy and excitement of the "Entrance Procession" has already been alluded to. As in preparation for many liturgical celebrations today, Julian of Speyer indicates that there was singing before the celebration in anticipation of the actual liturgy.

The friars also paid their debt of praise to the Lord, and all present acclaimed him with new songs of praise. Blessed Francis, however, was standing before the manger full of sighs of joy and suffused by an indescribable sweetness. Finally, when Solemn Mass was celebrated. . . (JS 53; see also I Cel 85).

What happened during the celebration? Julian of Speyer writes, "And so, with a new ritual, the festival of a new Bethlehem was celebrated (JS 53; see also I Cel 85). Celano, Bonaventure, and Julian of Speyer all tell us that a solemn Mass was celebrated. All three also relate that Francis participated as a deacon. He read or sang the Gospel and delivered the sermon (I Cel 86; JS 53; LM 10:7). It must have been a sermon that made a deep impression on those who heard it. Several years later, Celano describes it as follows:

Then he preached to the people standing about, and he spoke charming words concerning the nativity of the poor King and the little town of Bethlehem. Frequently too, when he wished to call Christ Jesus, he would call him simply the Child of Bethlehem, aglow with overflowing love for him: and speaking the word Bethlehem, his voice was more like the bleating of a sheep. His mouth was filled more with sweet affection than with words. Besides, when he spoke the name Child of Bethlehem or Jesus, his tongue licked his lips, as it were, relishing and savoring with pleased palate the sweetness of the words (I Cel 86; see also LM 8:7).

At some point during the celebration the Christ Child appeared, but He was seen only by John, and of course, by Francis.

The gifts of the Almighty were multiplied there, and a wonderful vision was seen by a certain virtuous man. For he saw a little child lying in the manger lifeless, and he saw the holy man of God go up to it and rouse the child as from a deep sleep. This vision was not unfitting, for the Child Jesus had been forgotten in the hearts of many; but, by the working of his grace, he was brought to life again through his servant St. Francis and stamped upon their fervent memory (I Cel 86; see also LM 8:7).

Julian of Speyer made the conclusion that this miraculous vision was a sign of divine approval of the entire celebration (JP 53). And why should this not be so? As Celano states:

There simplicity was honored, poverty was exulted, humility was commended, and Greccio was made, as it were, a new Bethlehem (I Cel 85).

Bonaventure gives three reasons why the vision should not be doubted, namely, the integrity of the witness, the miracles which occurred afterwards, and the truth indicated by the vision itself (LM 10:7). As mentioned earlier, the witness was John whose character was described previously. What were the miracles which Bonaventure referred to? Three sources relate that the hay on which the Christ Child had lain was used to cure both people and animals, and Bonaventure writes that it drove off various pestilences (I Cel 87; JS 55; LM 10:7). A reflection on the "truth indicated by the vision" would require a study beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that a person must believe that Christ really did come to earth for our redemption in order to understand that truth.

In summary, the celebration at Greccio was designed first and foremost to recall the humility, poverty, simplicity and inconveniences Christ was willing to endure for us. This was done by preparing an environment that was simple and uncluttered and then celebrating the memory of that event with the surrounding community. The people were involved not only in the celebration, but also in the preparation, each according to his or her means. Because of the Spirit present, not only the people, but also the animals and the entire environment felt the effects of the Divine presence on that memorable Christmas Eve and in the years that followed. What an example of abandonment and poverty that Christmas Eve celebration could provide for our celebration of Christmas in the world today!

End notes

¹ The emphasis on poverty is less evident in the *Legenda Major*, but this is understandable given the turmoil surrounding that subject throughout the Order at the time when Bonaventure was probably working on the *Legenda Major*. See: John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from Its Origin to the Year 1517* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press), 145.

THE CONTINUING CHALLENGE OF FRANCIS OF ASSISI

And Francis speaks:

"My Child, this is your Ancient Friend — your Father Francis . . .
We've known each other for many years . . .
You've always appreciated my direct manner . . .

My Son,

Have you the courage to Kiss the Leper?
Dare you to strip naked and call upon God Our Father?
Can you be Herald of the Great King?
Have you the strength to embrace Perfect Joy?
Are you Brother to all the creatures in my Canticle?
Will you preach to the Sultan in spite of fear?
Can you exorcise the demon known as Gloom?
Trust you enough to cast your cares upon The Lord?
Pray you enough to be Prayer itself?
Believe you enough to accept the Miracle of Greccio?
Love you enough to witness the Revelation of La Verna?
Is Easter real enough for you not to be intimidated by Sister Death?

My Son, take care . . .
one day you will have to give an account of yourself."

Fr. Gabriel B. Costa

The Charism and Contributions of the Franciscan Evangelical Life in Church and World

KATHLEEN UHLER, O.S.F.

I am pleased to be asked on this very special occasion in your congregation's life to convey some ideas which are central and critical to our present circumstances as Franciscan women religious in vital relationship with the Church and the world.

The evangelical life, we know, is not lived just by Franciscans, but by all religious who base their rule and life on the gospel. Yet, the Dominicans, Maryknolls, Daughters of Charity and Sisters of Mercy are not contesting, as we are, the designation of their congregations as apostolic in the revised Code of Canon Law.

Why are we doing so? Part of the answer is found in the meaning of the singular way we Franciscans live out the evangelical life - about which I will speak shortly. The other part to the answer flows from the documents of Vatican II, notably *Lumen Gentium*, chapters 6 and 45, and *Perfectae Caritatis*, chapter 2B. The relevant sections of these documents are excerpted and referenced in the "*Lineamenta*" for the 1994 world Synod of Bishops, which [was] held in Rome [in October].

The part of the answer that flows from the bishops' own document, the "*Lineamenta*," or outline of Synod issues and questions, underscores over and over again the autonomy of religious congregations. The bishops stress that the consecrated life belongs *not* to the hierarchy of the church but "unquestionably to the church's life and holiness" (II.14). Religious are the lubricant in the gears and inner workings, spelled H I E R A R C H Y, of the church.

Sr. Kathleen Uhler, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, has her doctorate in Philosophy and presently is working full-time with Franciscans International. Sr. Kathleen delivered this Keynote Address at the Closing Celebration of the 150th Anniversary for the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis in Springfield, Illinois on October 1, 1994.

The document goes on at some length, but truly instructively, to give a contextual definition for an extremely important but elusive term, "charism." And, I quote again from the text:

Through their particular experience of the Spirit, founders and foundresses have expressed in a unique way the essential elements of the consecrated life, so placing them as to highlight a certain aspect of the mystery of Christ, or a fundamental value of the Gospel, or a particular service to the church or others. In this way the diverse forms of life and the varieties of institutes came about. Today their vitality and ecclesial service depend on fidelity to the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out in their initial foundational charisms (II. 17).

This reminds me of the usage Robert Bellah and others make of the idea of "cultural tradition" in their insightful book, *Habits of the Heart*. One of the conclusions they reach is that cultural tradition provides the meaning of the destiny its members share.¹ A familiar aphorism, sometimes attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, also captures the same meaning: "the end is in the beginning."

The "*Lineamenta*" actually invites us to revisit the memories of our founding persons. Again, one is reminded of the concept of the "community of memory" described in *Habits of the Heart* as a "real" community whose members retell its story, its constitutive narrative, and, in so doing, offer examples of the men and women who have embodied the meaning of the community. The members of a community of memory allow themselves to be *encumbered* by their collective history - good and evil, glory and sorrow - and by adherence to the virtues of their exemplary forebears.²

In the "*Lineamenta*," the ideal of a community of memory is carried further to include the capacity to survive in a new age, to renew in harmony with the "genuine originality and special working initiative" (II.33) of the founders and foundresses. (And, by the way, it is laudable that great care seems to have been taken to use inclusive language in "*Lineamenta*.")

FRANCISCAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHURCH AND WORLD

Let us take a few minutes to retell some of the myriad ways in which exemplary Franciscans have made and continue to make contributions to the Church and the world. Here we are edified by some of the living exemplars of the marks of Franciscanism.

- Paulo Cardinal Evaristo Arns OFM has worked tirelessly with some success to free prisoners in Brazil and to stop the use of torture as a method of controlling them.
- Mary Minor SFO works through the legislature in Pennsylvania with a group called, Citizens Urge Rescue of the Environment (CURE) to prevent adverse human health effects from exposure to hazardous wastes.

- The Franciscan Sisters of the Poor Health System sponsors programs to heal the environment at each of their eight facilities. These efforts are detailed in their Social Accountability Budgets. A similar effort is occurring at Franciscan Sisters of Allegany Health System.
- An Anglican Franciscan brother in New Zealand is speaking out in behalf of the mature unemployed, those over 40, whose numbers are growing dramatically there.
- The Sisters of St. Francis of Clinton, Iowa have instituted a Prairie Planting project to combat soil erosion and to use only organic gardening methods on their 85 acres.
- As you know, because your congregation is such a good supporter of it, there is a Franciscan non-governmental organization or NGO at the United Nations called, Franciscans International.

Allow me to digress with a little of Franciscans International history: The goals of the U.N. Charter and the values of St. Francis are quite congruent. This has been acknowledged and celebrated ever since the day in 1945 when the U.N. Charter was signed, symbolically enough, in San Francisco. In 1981, an English friar, Eric Doyle OFM, dedicated his well-known book, *St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood*, to the United Nations and UNESCO. Shortly thereafter, Sister Elizabeth Cameron, now deceased, of the Clinton, Iowa Franciscans, introduced the idea of a Franciscan NGO to the Franciscan Federation Board, and the idea was nurtured there and became a reality in 1989.

Through this NGO, many Franciscans around the world are bringing the values, prophetic witness and the presence of Francis and Clare to general assemblies and caucuses and are making a discernible impact on treaties and resolutions. Some examples:

- Recently, at U.N. Headquarters in New York, during the Preparatory Committee meeting for the World Women's Conference to be held in Beijing in 1995, Anneta Duveen SFO collaborated in the origination of proposals on the health concerns of refugee women and on an international law requiring child support from the neglectful parent.
- In Brazil, during the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, Carmela Panini CF, of Brazil, served on the task force that drew up the NGO Treaty on the Peoples of the Americas, The Ethics Treaty, and The Treaty on Richness and Poverty.
- The head of the Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations, Archbishop Renato Martini, is a Third Order Regular member. His statements on the abolition of the world's nuclear military power strongly impressed the U.N. General Assembly Committee on Disarmament last fall.

- In other ways, Franciscans are raising awareness about the peace and justice issues of the day in their home countries. Often this is happening through the organization of national SFO commissions, such as in the USA on the environment and on the family.

As a fulltime staffer of Franciscans International, I am continuously informed about the activities of our Franciscan members on each of the five continents as their actions foment local and global systemic change and impact the lives of countless individuals. Indeed, Franciscans are changing the world.

Within the Catholic Church, on the other hand, the Franciscan influence or "lubrication" is felt by the hierarchy especially in these days. Since the promulgation of the revised Code of Canon Law in 1983, the First Orders have exercised loyal resistance to the Code's suppression of the friar-brother as general ministers and the Third Order Regular Franciscans have loyally resisted being fitted into either the apostolic or contemplative category of religious institutions. Thus, the Franciscan Federation's "Response to the Lineamenta" was drafted which has striven to clarify for the Church, as well as for the TOR, the nature of the Franciscan evangelical life.

The response of Church hierarchy remains to be seen in the matter of possible institutional forms for religious lay congregations beyond either contemplative/monastic or active/apostolic with a mission *ad gentes* (II.18.a).

THE UNIQUENESS OF FRANCISCANISM

The Franciscan life, whether individual or corporate, has never been tidy; but it has always had its uniqueness and charm. An in-joke among ourselves, often heard during the staging of grand events not unlike centennial celebrations, is the use of the expression, more like an expletive: "Seraphic confusion!" This is usually accompanied by the throwing up of arms and the rolling back of eyes. Indeed, it was only confirmed in contemporary times by color dynamics that the color of confusion is brown.

There are other ways in which the Franciscan evangelical life is unique. Let's look at a few of these.

- It is a movement. Much has been written about this, the plusses and minuses of being a movement, but suffice it to say that Franciscanism is meant to be an organism, not an institution. It consists of people working through concerted activities towards a goal, about which our charism has much to say and we will consider this shortly.
- It is a family — of men and women; of clerics, lay religious and seculars; of married and single persons; of active and contemplative lifestyles. In the Franciscan family, all members are relative equals.

- Peacemaking and conflict resolution are elements of our ancient Rules.
- It is ecumenical, consisting of members from denominations other than Catholic, e.g. the Presbyterian, Episcopal, Anglican and Lutheran churches.
- Historically, it has always kept close ties with the Islamic peoples.
- In short, the Franciscan movement is uniquely inclusive.

But, while we include many others, others even more disparate than these include us! This flip side of our inclusivity has been experienced by those of us who are privileged to work at the United Nations. We have been *universally accepted* as a natural fit, so to speak, in the embrace of the U.N. community. It is true that people from all walks of life feel an identity and an "at homeness" with Franciscans. They know Francis.

CHARISM

Now, let's consider the cause of these unique effects: our Franciscan charism.

For each Franciscan congregation of women religious, there is a double charism: that of Francis and that of their foundresses and founders. (To the charism of Francis there has also been added for many of us in the past ten years the co-charism of Clare.)

In Fr. Joe Chinnici's keynote address on the evangelical life at the 1994 Annual Federation Conference, we were reminded that, as Sister Death approached, Francis said to a distraught Brother Giles, "If you want to talk to me, study yourself."

We hear a confirmation of this manner of continual renewal through self-knowledge in the "Lineamenta" where, once again, the importance of each religious institute's founding charism is affirmed:

In the variety of inspirations and the particular features of each institute, the church acknowledges "the charisms of founders and foundresses," which "are revealed as an *experience of the Spirit*, transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and *constantly developed* by them in harmony with the body of Christ continually in the *process of growth*. It is for this reason that the distinctive character of various religious institutes is preserved and fostered by the church (II.16).

The Franciscan Federation's "Response to the *Lineamenta*" (RTL) serves us well as an articulation of the TOR charism at the close of the second millennium. It states succinctly: "The essence of our life is our relationship with Jesus Christ. Our charism gifts the Church in the world, with a radically simple gospel call where we are all sisters and brothers."

The flow of ideas is from essence to charism: form or essence leads to function or charism. All religious congregations enjoy the same essence - life based on Jesus' own life, the gospel life, the evangelical life. That we congregations function or flower uniquely in the gospel garden one from the other is due to our charism, that particular aspect of Jesus' life in the Gospel which our foundresses' and founders' inspired personalities exhibited *par excellence*.

Francis' personality is one of the most highly concentrated in all of history. He himself has become a symbol, a "representative character" of which Bellah speaks in *Habits of the Heart*. A representative character helps define the way people in a society organize and give meaning and direction to their lives. A representative character provides an ideal, a point of reference and focus, that gives living expression to a vision of life (39).

Since we're in the Land of Lincoln, I'll cite further Bellah's explanation: "Abraham Lincoln was perhaps the noblest example of the mid-nineteenth century American independent citizen." In his language, Lincoln was biblically eloquent and showed a profound understanding of democracy. Yet it was Lincoln the railsplitter who went from log cabin to White House rather than Lincoln the public theologian or Lincoln the democratic philosopher who captured the popular imagination (39-40).

Our charism, following Francis, is "a radically simple gospel call where we are **all sisters and brothers**" (RTL). Francis, the author of the *Canticle of Creatures*, was above all a radical egalitarian. It is the image of Francis and his Sister Birds that has captured the universal imagination and evoked the nature mystic archetype from our collective unconscious.

Your founder, Father Christopher [Bernsmeyer, OFM], is a representative character who embodied in a highly visible manner one or more Franciscan traits. Which are they for you? And, how do you integrate these traits with those of another representative character of your congregation, Our Mother of Sorrows [at Telgte, Germany]?

In the RTL, I suggest, there are three central strands to the cord or plait of our charism - continuous conversion; a common heart; and the contemplative stance. Let's consider each strand:

- At a meeting held recently, when asked what was the charism of the TOR, Kathleen Moffatt, OSF, executive director of the Franciscan Federation, replied immediately, "continuous conversion." When we are on a level with all that is created, we naturally participate in the give and take of lived experience as one in a dance does with one partner, then another. Accordingly, Franciscans live in mutual obedience to one another and affirm the role of minister as servant among them.

- Francis, allowing himself to be "grasped by Jesus Christ," (RTL), ultimately on Mt. Alvernia, replaced his own heart, so to speak, with that of Jesus. To be one with Jesus Christ, the Firstborn of all Creation is to **possess a common heart**. This is our greatest possession, and the greatest gift we might give in service of all. Thus, as Francis impressed upon us, we minister more by example than by words or deeds.
- Our charism of radical equality with all creation entails the joyful proclaiming of the Goodness of God, the Creator. We are led naturally to the door at the heart of the world, to the point of the source of all being. We await in our poverty God's good favor - to let us experience *le point vierge*, as Thomas Merton called it, the virginal point, or more loosely translated, the point upon which only one can stand. We assume each day the **contemplative stance** before God and the world. The radical unity felt in this simple, mystical Franciscan way of prayer compels one to make unity and peace wherever one is.

The contribution of Franciscans to the world, and more specifically, of yourselves as the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, who are now taking leave of a grand anniversary year and facing the future with renewed vigor and vision for the journey which you have called, "New Beginnings" - your contribution to the Church and the world will spring from our TOR charism.

But what can middle-aged, fortyish, fiftyish and beyond women do? We are thrust by Divine Providence into what I like to call the "Elizabeth position" - when Elizabeth found herself pregnant after she had outlived motherhood.

Not to worry! When we have a sacred memory, the charism of the founder or foundress, we have a destiny, a mission to fulfill in the Church and the world. In the words of the Preamble of the General Constitutions of your congregation: "The thoughts and the charisms of St. Francis, based on the gospels, are living and valid for each generation" (6).

With our charismatic eye, we can adopt a prophetic stance and view the signs of the times and see how we might counter the culture even while remaining busy at our individual or institutionalized ministries in healthcare, especially, or whatever it might be. Please bear with my attempts to use healthcare lingo with a touch of humor (intertwining some of Bellah's ideas):

1. We can by our attitudes **cure** others from thinking of commitments - from marriage and work to political and religious involvement - as forms of self-fulfillment rather than as moral imperatives (Bellah, 47).
2. We can **dilate** for ourselves the meaning and purpose of the intentional community as distinct from a "lifestyle enclave" which serves basically as a collective support for self-expression (71).

3. We can inoculate discussions of the new world order with a good dose of the notion of substantive justice, which encompasses long-range consequences (26).
4. We can assist in the delivery of a change in the meaning of work by showing its integrative value for all of life and not just for private gains (288-89).

Franciscans are empowered to make all of these contributions and more through the energy exchanged with the Divine in the core of the prayerful heart. The insight of the subtheme of this Assembly, "to celebrate Franciscan women, including (your)selves," is intertwined with the contemplative strand of our charism.

I would like to conclude this address with a poet's description of the contemplation of the celebrant self. In 1855, Walt Whitman, a Brooklynite, published his great tribute to America, the volume of poems which was to become his life's work entitled, "Leaves of Grass." (No, Whitman was not a Franciscan, but he had a contemplative, Franciscan heart.) Whitman was reflecting on the American scene, which was not unlike that found by your sisters when they arrived here in 1875. From the poem, "Song of Myself" in the first section:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
 And what I assume you shall assume,
 For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.
 I loafe and invite my soul,
 I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.
 My tongue, every atom of my blood, formed from this soil, this air,
 Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents
 the same,
 I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
 Hoping to cease not till death.

In section 30:

All truths wait in all things,
 They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,...

And, in section 31, a purely contemplative insight and source for the title of Whitman's life's work:

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journeywork of the stars,...

Finally, from section 48:

I hear and behold God in every object,
 yet understand God not in the least,
 Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.

End notes

¹ *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1985), 28.

² *Ibid.*, 153

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17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner Br. F. Edward Coughlin, OFM Date September 23, 1994				

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