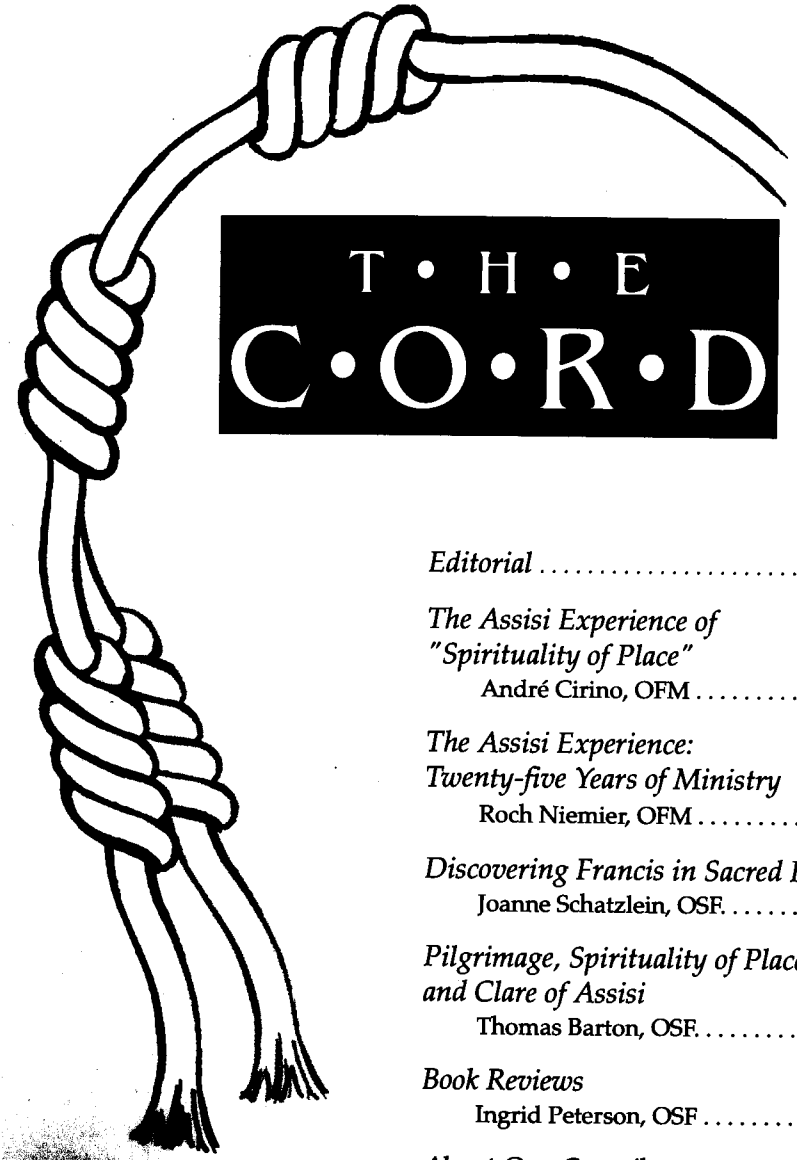
A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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   (1Cor. 13:6).
   (RegNB 23:2).
   (2Cel 5:8).
   (4LAg 2:13).

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Editorial

"Pilgrimage . . . was often taken to be sacramental in the Middle Ages; certainly, it often mediated grace to the changing person in a changing world."[1] The notion of pilgrimage, for our own times, has many manifestations. Certainly there are still thousands of persons who embark on "holy journeys" with the intention of seeking help from God and the saints for their troubled lives. While these journeys may lack some of the extremely risky possibilities of medieval pilgrimages, they nevertheless have their own discomforts and even dangers—and thus can be experienced as true penitential practices leading to significant conversion of life.

There are those pilgrims, too, who travel to sacred places, not so much to seek alleviation of their own personal misery, as to enjoy a companionable association with others who share their faith—with saints who have gone before us as holy models and with fellow travellers who understand the sense of blessing we enjoy by actually being together in an acknowledged holy place.

Pilgrimages have had a significant place in the human experience from time immemorial. The human spirit is a questing spirit, a restless spirit, caught continually in the tension-producing paradox of loving this life and wanting to escape from it in some way. We are, as Peter Steele says,

> *cohaeredes et sodales* of our Lord himself, the only human being to have loved this life, his life, our life, perfectly, the only non-alien, and the only one to have been able to be unconditionally committed to a Life not describable in the terms of this world.[2]

Francis of Assisi understood this perfectly. Can we imagine anyone more appreciative of, more comfortable and more "at home" in this world than Francis? But to us, his followers, his admonitions ring out over the centuries:

> As pilgrims and strangers . . . serve the Lord in poverty and humility (Reg B 6:2). Let them [the followers] always be guests [in their dwellings] as pilgrims and strangers (Test 24).

This itinerant lover of the Crucified Lord made pilgrimage a way of life, believing that this was the way spelled out for us by him who called himself the Way.

If our way of life is a pilgrimage, how fortunate we are when we can celebrate that in an explicit pilgrimage experience. For the past twenty-five years this opportunity has been made available in a particularly attractive form in The Assisi Experience or the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs. This issue of *The Cord* extends congratulations to the Pilgrimage staff and offers our readers a number of reflections on Franciscan pilgrimage written by members of that staff. We thank them and wish them well as they continue this gifted ministry to the Franciscan Family and its associates.

Endnotes

[1] Peter Steele, "A Spirituality of Change," *The Way* (Jan., 1994) 47.
[2] Steele, 53.

> Pilgrimage . . . in the Middle Ages . . . mediated grace to the changing person in a changing world. . . . What must have gripped the imagination of millions was the matching of the heart's quest with the body's venture, both of them under the aegis of heaven's cruising Dove, and on the trail of a footslogging Christ. . . .
>
> Had our Lord needed, like so many millions of his followers, to carry identification papers, 'homo viator' would have appeared in them. It was he who was the primal pilgrim, he the primal quester. His bloodline can be seen in those who embrace the same style.
>
> (Peter Steele, "A Spirituality of Change," *The Way* [1994] 47-48.)

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The Assisi Experience of "Spirituality of Place"

André Cirino, OFM

"Does geography have anything to do with spirituality?" Keith Warner recently asked. In Franciscan spirituality, he answers, it does.[1] The late Eric Doyle had also addressed the issue when he wrote that in addition to the writings of St. Francis and the early written sources about him and his message, "there remains still one more source: the city of Assisi itself. It is one of the holy places of the earth."[2] Additionally, Doyle proposed that anyone who wanted to "penetrate the mystery of St. Francis, . . . really ought to visit Assisi."[3] For modern Franciscans, the journey to such a holy place means making *pilgrimage.*

In the fall of 1986, a group of pilgrims participating in The Assisi Experience made their way through San Damiano; the presence of thirteen Poor Clares among them made this a historic visit. Moving slowly through the monastery, the group eventually came to the large dormitory of St. Clare, where a cross and fresh flowers always mark the place where the Lady Clare met Sister Death. As the pilgrims entered the room, no explanations were given, no comments were made by the Pilgrimage directors. As the Poor Clares found themselves standing in this sacred place, which up to that moment they had envisioned only in their imaginations, the majority of the sisters were in tears. They had connected with a *sacred place.*

The directors of The Assisi Experience programs have for the last twenty-five years predicated their work on the concept of the spirituality of place. In these programs, *sacred places experienced in the context of pilgrimage* form the foundation of a profound religious experience. What follows is an elucidation of our understanding of a spirituality of place, based upon an examination of Franciscan sources and modern interpretive writers.

Pilgrimage

The concept of *pilgrimage* informs the entire Franciscan story. We know that in Francis's understanding of the Gospel, "Jesus was a traveler, a pilgrim on the way. . . . Francis uses the expression 'follow the footprints of Christ' five times in four writings." Other writers have likewise commented upon the Scriptural picture of Jesus as pilgrim; Kajetan Esser held that this theme was at the heart of Francis and of Franciscan spirituality.[4] The Gospels themselves (Lk. 2: 41-42; Jn. 2:13; 5:1; 7:10) show us Jesus observing Jewish law concerning pilgrimages.[5] And we know from various sources that Francis made pilgrimages to Rome and to the Holy Land (1Cel 8; L3S 10; LM 1:6 for Rome; 1Cel 55; LM 9:5-9 for the Holy Land). Francis and the early companions visited the tomb of Peter after they received approval of the primitive Rule, and Brothers Bernard and Giles journeyed to the shrine of St. James at Compostela (1Cel 34; 1Cel 30). St. Clare's mother Ortolana made pilgrimages to Rome and to the Holy Land (Proc 1:4; CL 1); Bishop Guido of Assisi was on pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Michael at Gargano when Francis died (2Cel 220). Pilgrimage is undeniably embedded deeply in our Franciscan roots.

In tracing the history of the phenomenon of pilgrimage, one learns that the idea of a holy journey precedes both Jewish and Christian traditions of pilgrimage. In classical terms, the Latin *peregrinus* denoted "a foreigner without citizenship"; later it referred to "one on a journey to a holy place or shrine."[6] The earliest attestation of a Christian pilgrim identifies Alexander, bishop of Cappadocia, as going to Jerusalem to "pray and know the holy sites." After 313, the year of civil recognition of Christianity, the Holy Land journey became the source for all other devotional journeys.[7] In the patristic era, becoming a pilgrim was considered on a par with the monastic state; in the following centuries *peregrinatio* acquired heavy connotations of an "ascetic wandering of the earth in exile, seeking a heavenly homeland."[8] By the time of Gregory the Great (d. 1085) it had been deepened to include an inner desire and subjective experience, according to Warner.

Benedictinism and Bernard of Clairvaux moved the idea of pilgrimage to a journey one undertook in the heart and a need to keep oneself unentangled from the snares of the world. Irish monks proposed pilgrimage as a penance for sins.[9] By the eleventh century, the notion of pardon had been attached to visiting a specific shrine. "When Francis exhorted his brothers to live as pilgrims and strangers in this world, he summoned images of Abraham, Jesus, and the holy men and women of the early Christian tradition."[10] Indeed, the idea of pilgrimage to the Porziuncola in Assisi each August 2 for the feast of The Pardon (*Il Perdono*) is built upon the larger Christian context of pardon for one's sins.

Francis did not conceive of pilgrimage as exclusively an inner journey, but as "an inner journey which corresponded to an outer one."[11] In the understanding of the late Joseph Doino, OFM, pilgrimage is "extroverted mysticism," and mysticism is "introverted pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is prayer of the feet while mysticism is interior footwork."[12] Doris Donnelly, a contemporary Catholic writer, further expands our notion of pilgrimage when she writes:

> Most pilgrims who undertake physical pilgrimages understand that it is their own interior incompleteness that leads them to seek contact with holy places and persons to do for them what they cannot do by themselves: to deliver them from fragmentation and effect a glimmer of wholeness which invariably opens unto God.[13]

There are five ways in which pilgrims and tourists differ. The distinctions between tourist and pilgrim are worthy of consideration here.

1. Pilgrims perceive an internal dimension to pilgrimage, while tourists are concerned with the external journey alone.
2. Pilgrims invest themselves; tourists avoid personal commitment.
3. The focus for the pilgrim will be affected by the pilgrimage. Tourists seek to remain untouched on a deep level by their experiences.
4. Both the journey and the arrival are important to the pilgrim, while only the arrival matters for the tourist.
5. Community is formed for pilgrims; community is not a *desideratum* for tourists.[14]

It seems that a deeper understanding of *pilgrimage* would serve well the People of God of the post-Vatican II era: our life is a Christian spiritual journey, we are a Pilgrim Church (Lumen Gentium 48).

Sacred Place

Beyond the notion of pilgrimage, a second concept holds our attention in The Assisi Experience. Recalling the 1986 visit of the Poor Clares to the dormitory at San Damiano, we see an instance of immediate apprehension of and encounter with the sacred place they had entered—the place where St. Clare slept, where she had spent many days and nights in convales-

cence from illness, and where she was embraced by Sister Death on 11 August 1253. These events and the place coalesced into a most powerful moment for the Clares; their tears gave witness to the depth of their experience with the spirituality of sacred place.

James Postell, teacher and architect, provides a rich explanation of sacred place: "**Sacred** has to do with both an inner and an outer presence—a spiritual power, an intersection of Heaven and Earth. **Place** implies human significance, human action derived from history, belief, ritual, and everyday . . . activity."[15] According to Postell, sacred places are **perceived as sacred** and serve to mark "important geographic, cultural, political, and religious transitions involving spiritual power. As such, their presence requires an attentive eye and open mind and heart.[16]

One of the first lectures presented to pilgrims in The Assisi Experience explains the focus of the pilgrimage—the spirituality of place. In bringing the pilgrims to so many places associated with the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare, the directors invite the pilgrims into an experience of the spirituality of these sacred places. Each pilgrim has a copy of *The Pilgrim's Companion*, a book containing excerpts of Franciscan sources as well as prayers, rituals, Eucharistic celebrations, and historical background on each Franciscan site in Rome, Rieti, Assisi, and LaVerna. Equipped with *The Pilgrim's Companion* and guided by the staff, pilgrims are invited to participate in an unfolding process at each of the sanctuaries. First, there is the historical visit: upon arrival at one of the sanctuaries, a staff member guides the pilgrims on an extensive historical visit of the sacred place. This is followed by the prayer experience: in each sanctuary the pilgrims are called to participate in prayer through celebration of the Eucharist or another ritual, or through a morning or evening prayer service. Thirdly, there is reflection time: personal time for reflection on the meaning of the particular sacred place is provided for the pilgrims. Always, the pilgrims are advised that the staff will be able to do the first two parts of the process with them, but the third part—the reflection—can only be done by the pilgrims themselves. It is precisely in reflection that the spirituality of the sacred place unfolds and is experienced.

Dr. Ewert Cousins writes of what he calls the "mysticism of historical event." During the Middle Ages there was in Western Europe an immense transformation in popular devotion, with a new focus on devotion to the humanity of Christ and the historical events of Christ's life. "Religious sensibility" of the era desired to "imagine and re-enact these events and to imitate Christ in the concrete details of his earthly life." According to Cousins, it was Francis of Assisi, "more than any other saint or spiritual writer," who helped transform religious sensibility this way.[17] This use of imagination has consequences for a spirituality of place. For each pilgrim, the meaning of a given place is colored and shaped by her/his own personality type, just as it was for Francis. When one looks at the types identified in the Myers-Briggs Preference Indicator and attempts to apply them to St. Francis, it may be conjectured that Francis was probably an ESFP—extrovert, sensate, feeler, perceiver. He "exhibited all the marks of the SP temperament, which is characterized by an attitude of openness and willingness to go in any direction the Spirit calls."[18] As an SP, Francis was especially interested in the events, and therefore in the places, of Jesus' life. "The events surrounding [Jesus'] birth, his hidden life, his baptism, his miracles, his passion, death, and resurrection will hold special interest for the SP."[19]

When a modern pilgrim moves into the reflective stage of the process described above, she/he is already situated in a sacred place and is prayerfully pondering historical events that happened there. Cousins considers this type of meditation a form of mysticism, the mysticism of historical event—that is, "a distinct form of contemplative mystical consciousness whereby one attempts to enter into a significant event of the past in order to tap into its spiritual energies."[20] The events of Francis's or Clare's lives offer opportunities for each pilgrim to enter into a mystical experience. According to Cousins:

> How should one assess this form of meditation? Is it a mere exercise of imagination . . . or is it rooted in deeper levels of the psyche and in the very structure of human existence? I believe that it is rooted in the very historicity of human existence and that it activates that level of the psyche whereby we draw out the spiritual energy from a past event.[21]

There are others whose work supports such a comprehension of reality. Historical events do not occur in a vacuum, they happen in places. Therefore, both event and place are conduits of spiritual energy—even in the post-modern world. A fine example of someone who experienced spirituality of place is Thomas Merton. In an insightful analysis of Merton's spirituality of place, Wayne Simsic maintains that Merton did not want simply to occupy a place, he wanted to be at home in it, dwell in it. "Through a solitude grounded in Christ, he discovered power and energy in the place itself. He found himself pulled toward places not so much out of emotional need or because he knew the place, but because the place knew him."[22] According to Simsic, Merton also remained "open to the energy of the earth."[23] This resonates with Franciscan spirituality, especially when one thinks of our Sister, Mother Earth (CantSol).

Simsic identified two interesting elements in Merton's spirituality of place: the telling of stories and the enactment of rituals. Stories seem to trigger the release of the spiritual energies of a place. According to Simsic, Merton found that "people who live close to the land embody their wisdom in stories. Stories preserve their relationship with the land and with the natural order."[24] In fact, Merton's own stories connected with Gethsemani Abbey "reveal the sacredness of the place to him and act as a reminder of the spiritual landscape hidden within the physical landscape. . . Stories knit his soul to the landscape, deepening his appreciation of and familiarity with it."[25] In a similar vein, The Assisi Experience makes constant use of stories from the rich storehouse of Franciscan sources. As the pilgrims move from place to place, they are encouraged to read these stories which recall the events of our larger Franciscan story.

Merton's rituals, according to Simsic, "anchored him in landscape" and "rooted him in the ground of Mystery" so that earth and sky stood within a deep primordial relationship with him. "Each gesture and action [of ritual] filled space with meaning . . . and became signs of his relationship with sacred space."[26] The Assisi Experience incorporates ritual in visits to the Franciscan sanctuaries. Many times, the ritual itself facilitates the release of the spiritual energy of the place in a way that lectures, homilies, or historical input are unable to accomplish.

A word about the most significant Christian ritual of Eucharist. One of the strongest elements of Christian pilgrimage is "the centrality of the Eucharist as the ritual that commemorates the roots of the community and reestablishes the identity of pilgrims and companions—breakers of bread."[27] Over the years in which The Assisi Experience has matured, rituals—especially the ritual of Eucharist—has played an increasingly important role in the experience of the spirituality of place. Celebration of the Eucharist at the various holy sites helps sustain a focus on Jesus Christ, the heart of the pilgrimage. Staff members consciously allude to how the lives of Francis and Clare constantly and unwaveringly point toward and conform to the life of Jesus Christ. Among the sources cited, two stand out: Thomas of Celano describes Francis as "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" (1Cel 115). Bartholomew of Pisa, near the end of the fourteenth century, wrote the *Book of Conformities*, in which he describes how Francis was conformed to Christ. Assisi pilgrims come to understand that the deepest reason for their journey to Franciscan Italy lies in their ability to see how the lives of Clare and Francis point consistently to Christ. Every pilgrim is on the way to meet Christ and to discover the glory of God in the face of Christ, even the crucified Christ.

Conclusion

In light of all that has been said, if we return once more to the experience of the Poor Clares at San Damiano in 1986, it is clear that the events which occurred in that sacred place, especially the death of St. Clare, were already part of the meditation of these women before they entered the dormitory. The historical events that had happened in that room centuries before effected a release of spiritual energy in each of them, bringing them to a mystical experience. When they found themselves in the sacred room, the place itself released its own energy, which brought them to tears—the external expression of a powerful interior movement. I recognized this movement because at one time I was privileged to accompany the late Carroll Stuhlmuller, CP, on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. At the church called "Dominus Flevit," "The Lord Wept," (Lk. 19:41), Stuhlmuller gave a lecture on the "Theology of Tears." In that lecture he proposed that in the experience of tears there is a movement of God. The Poor Clares at San Damiano underwent a profound experience of the spirituality of place, encountered a release of San Damiano's own spiritual energy, and entered into a mystical experience discerned by their tears.

Each Assisi Experience eventually comes to an end. The pilgrims pack their luggage (usually a bit heavier than at arrival) for the return home. The biggest item taken home, however, is the collage of memories, which, in the words of Thomas Rossica, weigh nothing, go easily through customs, and can be enjoyed for a long time.[28] It is the memories of sacred events, sacred places, and sacred experiences that will enliven the continuing pilgrimage through life toward the final "homeland."

Endnotes

[1] Keith Warner, *Pilgrims and Strangers: The Evangelical Spirituality of the Early Franciscan Friars*, unpublished Master's thesis (Berkeley: Graduate Theological School) 1.

[2] Eric Doyle, "Select Bibliography on the Life and Message of St. Francis," in *Francis of Assisi Today*, Concilium Religion in the Eighties, ed. C. Duquoc and Casiano Floristán (New York: The Seabury Press) 74.

[3] Doyle, "Select Bibliography."

[4] Warner, 53-54, citing Kajetan Esser, "Studium und Wissenschaft im Geiste des hl. Franziskus von Assisi," in *Wissenhatt und Weisheit* 39 (1976): 28.

[5] Warner, 54.

[6] Thomas M. Rossica, CSB, "Towards a Biblical Spirituality of Pilgrimage," *Catholic International* (December, 1994): 569.

[7] Warner, 13, citing F. Raphael, "Le Pélerinage, approche sociologique," *Les Pélerenages de l'antiquité biblique et classique à l'occident médiéval* (Paris: Librarie Orientatliste Paul Geunther, 1973) 11-12.

[8] Rossica, 569-70.
[9] Warner, 73.
[10] Warner, 76-77.
[11] Warner, 78. Emphasis added.
[12] Warner.
[13] Joseph Doino, OFM, "Pilgrimage: Reality and Illusion," lecture delivered at the annual Assisi Pilgrimage Staff Meeting, San Antonio, Texas, 2 January 1991.
[14] Doris Donnelly, "Pilgrims and Tourists: Conflicting Metaphors for the Christian Journey to God," *Spirituality Today* 44 (1992): 23.
[15] Donnelly, 21.
[16] James Postell, "Making Sacred Places," letter to Margaret Carney, OSF, 28 July 1995. Emphasis added. The point of reference for the letter was the renovation of the motherhouse chapel of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, Whitehall, Pennsylvania.
[17] Postell. He also cited the view of Mircea Eliade that sacred sites have a single origin and function: they were the meeting places of heaven and earth, the sacred center through which heaven and the underworld are joined.
[18] Ewert C. Cousins, "Franciscan Roots of Ignatian Meditation," in *Ignatian Spirituality in a Secular Age*, ed. George P. Schner (Toronto: Willrid Laurier University Press, 1984) 56.
[19] Chester P. Michael and Marie C. Norrisey, *Prayer and Temperament* (Richmond: William Bird Press, 1984) 69.
[20] Michael and Norrisey, 72.
[21] Cousins, 60.
[22] Cousins, 59-60. Emphasis added.
[23] Wayne Simsic, "Merton's Spirituality of Place," *Review for Religious* (July-August, 1994): 572. Emphasis added.
[24] Simsic, 575.
[25] Simsic, 573.
[26] Simsic, 574, 576.
[27] Simsic, 576.
[28] Donnelly, 33.
[29] Rossica, 573.

St. Francis wandered through the world like a pilgrim and a stranger. When the Lord had called him to live in accord with the form and pattern of the Holy Gospel, his body found no permanent dwelling place anywhere. . . . He became an itinerant, both in the literal and in the spiritual sense. . . . According to what we know from the early biographers of St. Francis, we may be assured that seldom has a man more deeply felt and more literally lived the words of St. Peter: "Beloved, I exhort you as strangers and pilgrims. . . "(1Pet. 2:11). St. Francis wanted these ideas—of strangeness and pilgrimage—to be so much a part of the life of the Friars Minor that he inserted them into the Rule. (Philotheus Boehner, OFM, ed., "Introduction," Itinerarium Mentis in Deum, Works of Saint Bonaventure II [St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1956] 12.)

The Cord, 47.1 (1997)

The Assisi Experience: Twenty-five Years of Franciscan Pilgrimage Ministry

Roch Niemier, OFM

Introduction

This article offers a look into the twenty-five years that The Assisi Experience has been in existence. To begin, however, it might be helpful to say a word about the following: 1) the Pilgrimage Focus, 2) the Pilgrimage Ministry, 3) the Spiritual Power of Places, and 4) the Franciscan Dimension.

The Pilgrimage Focus

Each program of The Assisi Experience emphasizes and fosters the pilgrimage dimension. These are not tours. People come on pilgrimage because they wish to have their lives profoundly affected. Pilgrims invest themselves and seek transformation. A pilgrimage leads one into new discoveries and a deepening of faith with an emphasis on experience through study, prayer, and leisure. Various levels of life are touched as one or another facet of the experience might be the key event which affects a participant in a significant way; for example, a ritual, a particular prayer service, a lecture, a meaningful place, some particular music, or simply allowing one's imagination to run wild while sipping a *cappucino* at a bar. The expression "conversion through travel" takes on meaning, as so many have testified.

The Pilgrimage Ministry

Pilgrimage work is a unique and specialized ministry. Staff members of The Assisi Experience share the privilege of walking with pilgrims on

this journey of discovery as God is revealed in surprising and profound ways. In addition to a professional attitude, humility and gratitude are also needed for balance— humility because of the awe engendered by being so invited into a pilgrim's journey and gratitude, which is the only possible response to such a gift.

The Spiritual Power of Places

The guiding principle of all the programs is the spirituality of Franciscan places. Places have power and awaken spiritual energy that is present because of events linked with these places. In the Franciscan tradition, one only has to mention places like San Damiano, the Porziuncola, the Carceri, Greccio, La Verna—to list only a few. All sorts of events connected with these places rise to the surface of consciousness, and one begins sensing the spiritual energy that flows. It takes little imagination to realize the spiritual power that is awakened when one actually visits these places with accompanying lectures, prayer, music, reflection, reading, Eucharist, and leisure. Thus, as one journeys to each Franciscan place and taps into the spiritual energy present there, the person is invited into an experience of God unique to the pilgrimage itself.

The Franciscan Dimension

Each staff person is a member of the Franciscan family, highly trained in his or her field of expertise. Likewise, each program carries the Franciscan vision and is a Franciscan experience because we journey to places in central Italy particular to the lives of Sts. Francis and Clare. We touch the living spirit of their amazing legacy. Moreover, all the participants are given exposure to the land (Italy) that gave the world these two great saints. In the process, one's "Franciscan" identity becomes clarified as each is drawn more fully into the mystery of the Gospel and Franciscan life.

The Assisi Experience: Twenty-five Years

History

The Assisi Experience was initiated in 1972 by Damien Isabell, OFM, of the Sacred Heart Province, USA. Originally the program invited young friars preparing for final profession in Sacred Heart Province to journey to the places of Francis in Italy and, through prayer and study of the Franciscan sources, to awaken more fully the depth of commitment to which they

were heading. By 1974 the program included friars from other provinces who were directly involved in formation and vocation work or seeking a renewal of Franciscan life. In the next four years groups of Secular Franciscans and Franciscan Sisters came to enjoy this experience. Until 1978 there were only homogeneous groupings, numbering from six to fifteen each. In 1978 the program expanded and became heterogeneous, numbering up to forty or more per group and composed of friars, Franciscan Sisters, and Secular Franciscans. The staff also expanded at that time to four members.

In 1981 Damien Isabell relinquished the directorship of the programs because of a commitment to the missions in Zaire, Africa. Roch Niemier, OFM, became director at that time and holds the position to this day.

Slowly the program offerings developed as did the expansion of the staff. In 1983 the office operated only one program, but today offers anywhere from six to eight programs each year between March and November. There is a staff of twelve men and women. There are three types of annual programs.

1) The flagship of the programs is the Franciscan Study Pilgrimage, a 24-28-day program which explores in-depth all the major places of Francis and Clare in Rome, Rieti, Assisi, and La Verna. It is supported by lectures, prayer, rituals, and Eucharist, with ample time for reading, reflection, and leisure.

2) The Franciscan Pilgrimage to Assisi is a 12-16-day program which covers the major places, providing solid input, prayer, and Eucharist. A rich Franciscan and spiritual experience, it is designed for those who can get away only for a short time.

3) The Franciscan Leadership Pilgrimage is a 10-day program for CEOs, Administrators, Board Members, and Major Superiors of Franciscan institutions. Since the administration of these institutions is no longer the principal responsibility of vowed Franciscan religious, this pilgrimage has a particular appeal to members of the laity who have been called to shoulder the task of directing Franciscan institutions and their mission. Thus the program helps participants clarify the Franciscan vision and values that shape the philosophy of one's institution.

These three programs are offered annually, but other singular offerings have been given over the years. During the Clare Centenary Year (1993-1994) unique pilgrimages were designed to focus on the life and spirituality of Clare, even though significant input on Clare is offered in each of the programs. A retreat experience at La Verna was designed around

Bonaventure's Itinerarium Mentis in Deum. For the year 2000 specialized programs are being prepared to usher in the new millennium, such as a Franciscan Pilgrimage of the Arts, a Franciscan Pilgrimage on Solitude and the Mystics, and a Franciscan Pilgrimage of Light. In 1998 the Franciscan Bernadine Sisters are planning a program to help center on their charism and spirituality with particular attention given to Bernadine of Siena. And for 1997, individualized pilgrimage programs are being planned for 1) the fiftieth anniversary of Bishop Timon-St. Jude High School in Buffalo, New York, 2) the General Superiors of the Franciscan Federation, TOR, during their bi-annual meeting in Assisi, 3) an Academic Franciscan Pilgrimage for students from Quincy University, Quincy, Illinois, and 4) a Franciscan Experience for the Franciscan Ministries Foundation of Aston, Pennsylvania.

Developments

1. Addition of New Places

All Franciscans know of the traditional places of Francis and Clare, and the pilgrimage programs guide participants to and through all of them. Over the years, however, other places have been added that many may not know of or ever visit. For example:

Lago Trasimeno, where Francis spent an entire Lent alone on one of its major islands, the Isola Maggiore. Our ritual of the loaves, in memory of Francis, brings alive his freedom of spirit and life of penance.

La Foresta, the unknown or unvisited sanctuary of the Rieti Valley, now beautifully restored and a center for helping young men reclaim meaning and balance in their lives by bringing balance back into nature.

Bastia, the first place to which Francis took Clare after she left her home on Palm Sunday night, 1212. The local people to this day preserve the memory of St. Clare's presence. The chapel contains the same altar she clung to as relatives tried to force her "back to her senses." Poor Clares who are with us renew their commitment while clinging to the same altar.

Tagliacozzo, the resting place of Thomas of Celano, Francis's first biographer, about one and a half hours east and a little north of Rome. Our Conventual brothers warmly welcome us and provide the setting for our initial exploration into Franciscan sources during the Study Program.

2. Contemplative Days

For the first sixteen or seventeen years the Study Pilgrimage ended with the participants being sent, in groups of four or six, to one of the hermitages founded by St. Francis in central Italy—Montecassale, Celle di Cortona, Santa Maria di Valdisasso in Valleremita, Poggio Bustone, Fonte Colombo, Speco di Narni, Colfano in the Marches, and others. More recently, however, we build contemplative days into the movement of the program, with specific opportunities provided at Poggio Bustone, Lago Trasimeno, and the Carceri.

3. Reaching Beyond the OFM and USA Perimeters

At first the Pilgrimage Programs were designed and intended only for OFM Friars. Within three years that changed. Now they include all members of the Family and beyond: Secular Franciscans, Third Order Regular Communities (more than sixty different congregations to date), Poor Clare Sisters of various Federations and branches, Conventual Friars, Capuchin Friars, Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn, Franciscan Brothers of Peace, Lutheran Franciscans, Anglican Franciscans, Diocesan Clergy, Presbyterians, and persons with no religious affiliation. The fascination for Francis and Clare is simply unmatched.

Early on, The Assisi Experience also began welcoming Franciscans from all over the world. Participants have traveled from forty different countries including: England, Ireland, Italy, the Philippines, Australia, India, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Zambia, South Africa, Jamaica, Peru, Thailand, Brazil, Canada, Japan, Singapore, Kenya, the United States, Belgium, Zaire, Zimbabwe, Bolivia, New Zealand, Jordan, Malawi, St. John/Antigua, Mexico, South Korea, Israel, Guatemala, Austria, Dominica, Pakistan, Lithuania, Uganda, Germany, Malta, Scotland, and Taiwan.

4. Pilgrimage Guidebook

For a number of years staff members produced their own Pilgrimage Guidebook. In 1991 a more permanent edition was put out with a final draft available for the 1995 season. This 450-page book, the *Pilgrim's Companion to Franciscan Places*, is now the mainstay for all participants. It is a collection of Franciscan and Biblical readings, descriptions of places with historical information, texts for Eucharist, rituals and prayer, and music, all of which are used throughout the programs.

Staff

Current staff members include: André Cirino, OFM, (1984), Carolita Greiner, SSSF, (1992), Hedwig Amati OSF, (1988), Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, (1990), Joseph Wood, OFM Conv, (1996), John Wojtowicz, OFM, (1985), Margaret Carney, OSF, (1996), Ramona Miller, OSF, (1985), Robert Hutmacher, OFM, (1995), Roch Niemier, OFM, (1976), Tod Laverty, OFM, (1990), and Thomas Barton, OSF, (1993).

Five of the twelve members have been trained in Franciscan studies at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, New York. Others have done graduate work in Franciscan studies at the Antonianum in Rome. In addition to each one's professional expertise, there is a commitment to the Franciscan vision of reality, a comfortableness in living in a foreign environment, a working knowledge of Italian, an eagerness to enter into a pilgrimage each time one has to lead, and an ability to work together with a team. Most have also published books or articles dealing with various Franciscan topics.

Staff members have also shared their vision and gifts in other parts of the world, in countries such as India, South Africa, the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Ireland, England, Lithuania, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.

Former staff memebrs are: Aaron Pembleton, OFM, Damien Isabell, OFM, Larry Landini, OFM, Murray Bodo, OFM, Siobhan O'Dwyer, FSP, and Vianney Devlin, OFM. The long standing contributor from this grouping is Aaron Pembleton who died February 4, 1995. Aaron had been with the programs for twenty-two years and specialized in history and Franciscan saints. He has left his imprint on the staff with his love for history and the Church. His enthusiastic and vibrant spirit continues to be felt in Assisi and Rome as so many of the local people remind us.

Conclusion

The future of The Assisi Experience is dependent on the quality of its staff rooted in a life of faith and prayer, coupled with a dedication to excellence and professionalism. It is also dependent on the spirit of humility and gratitude which each one brings. A high level of administrative and organizational skills has contributed to the development of the program and will be required for its future effectiveness.

In addition to all the above, Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs Inc., the corporate title for The Assisi Experience, has expanded into other areas of the world: the Holy Land, the California Missions, and Mexico. Drawing upon its twenty-five years of experience, the pilgrimages to these parts of the world include the same quality, dedication, and principles: a highly trained staff, preservation of the pilgrimage character, a focus on the spiritual power of places and maintaining the prominence of the Franciscan dimension.

(For details about up-coming Pilgrimage Programs, see the ad on page 47.)

Sister Clare Ellen, OSC

DISCOVERING FRANCIS IN "SACRED PLACES"

Joanne Schatzlein, OSF

Introduction

During the past twenty-five years men and women of the Franciscan family have made pilgrimages to Assisi for one reason; there remains a deep hunger within them to come to know both Francis and Clare more intimately. Many of them have read numerous biographies about these two saints. Some have studied and researched the lives of Francis and Clare, the history of the Franciscan Order, and the numerous elements of Franciscan spirituality. Others have simply dreamed of opportunities to touch more deeply into the charism. Whatever their background may be, the Pilgrims desire to enter into the "Spirituality of the Places" and come to know Francis and Clare in new and deeper ways.

There are several reasons for this pilgrimage phenomenon. First, scholars and translators have made written source material on Francis and Clare available to us in English.[1] Secondly, many Franciscans attended the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University receiving Masters Degrees in Franciscan Studies and enriching their respective formation programs with Franciscan information unknown to our Brothers and Sisters who made their novitiates prior to 1950. Thirdly, centers for ongoing study continue to emerge. Within my own Congregation, Cardinal Stritch College is creating a Franciscan Center with hopes of providing opportunities to learn more about the life and charism of Francis and Clare.[2] Finally, during the past fifteen years Franciscans around the world have celebrated two significant events; the eight hundredth anniversary of the birth of Francis in 1981, and in 1993, the eight hundredth anniversary of the birth of Clare. In conjunction with these events, Franciscan scholars authored numerous books and articles which serve to enlighten us about the richness of our founders and their charism.[3]

The spiritual lives of the Pilgrims have been enriched, then, with libraries containing Franciscan books and periodicals, formation programs providing intensive introductions to all aspects of the Franciscan charism, and resources available for further study. Yet the hunger within is not satisfied. Thus the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program office receives record numbers of applications each year from people wanting to journey to Assisi in order to be in the sacred place, hoping to meet Francis and Clare in new ways.

Early in the pilgrimage we visit Tagliacozzo, the burial place of Thomas of Celano, a biographer of Francis. In an opening lecture in that place, several traditions through which we come to know Francis and Clare are introduced: written tradition consisting of the many sources alluded to above; pictorial tradition embodied in the frescos and paintings of Francis and Clare which we study on pilgrimage; and oral tradition as handed down through the local people who feel Francis and Clare walked their streets only yesterday.[4] While these traditions are critically important, the focus of our pilgrimage is to reveal the character of Francis and Clare in the very places central to their lives.[5] In touching the stones, in imagining and ritualizing the dramas which unfolded for Francis and Clare in these sacred places, these Saints poignantly come alive for us, uniting us with the experiences of the local people.

Four sacred places—Assisi, Poggio Bustone, St. John Lateran in Rome, and LaVerna—make Francis's life become something real and tangible. Francis's personality and temperament emerge through living stones and concrete structures.

Some have speculated that if Francis were assessed using the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory, his temperament would likely be described as extroverted (E), sensate (S), feeling (F) and perceptive (P).[6] If Francis's personality was indeed extroverted and sensate in his relationship with the world, it seems that the Pilgrims are more likely to discover him in visiting concrete places. If Francis "acted out, dramatically and externally," his inner reality, the Pilgrims remain poised each day to take part in the drama of Francis's life.[7]

Assisi: Chiesa Nuova

Assisi is the place of Francis's birth. In wandering the tiny side streets in Assisi it is not difficult to imagine Francis finding his way through the

town. Piazzas have changed and some houses have been rebuilt, although fragments of the thirteenth century remain, most notably visible in the Rocca Maggiore, the castle standing high above the town. One also sees remains of the wall built to enclose the commune of Assisi and protect it from outside invaders. There are ancient Etruscan wells and a museum where one can visit the ruins of the Roman Forum underneath the Piazza Commune. These places of antiquity remind us that the challenge of the pilgrimage is to pull back continually the various layers built up over time.

One of the first visits we make when we arrive in Assisi is to the Chiesa Nuova, the place many scholars consider to be the site of Francis's birth and the location of his father's cloth shop. In this place we introduce the controversies existing about where his birth actually took place.[8] Inside the church we see a statue depicting Francis put in chains by his father Pietro. This scene invites us to consider the dysfunctional Bernadone household. In the sanctuary of the Chiesa Nuova, which according to tradition was the location of Francis's bedroom, hangs a depiction of the dream Francis had of armaments he would eventually acquire (1Cel 15). To the left of the sanctuary, steps descend along a thirteenth-century street where Pietro's cloth shop may have existed. Can we suggest to the Pilgrims that Francis actually lived here? Not with the many unanswered controversies. However, in this sacred place we do meet Francis in concrete and tangible ways.

We experience the relationship between Francis's birthplace and the heart of the Assisi commune. We understand why his father Pietro would have wanted his cloth shop closer to the central piazza where folks would have easy access to his merchandise. Surrounded by stores of all kinds, we can imagine Francis engaged in his father's business.

We also see Francis in a neighborhood and realize the closeness of Bernard of Quintavalle's house, allowing us to speculate about their early childhood relationship. We can imagine his escapades down narrow side streets, en route to school or church, or up to the Rocca in his teenage years to participate in its destruction. We come to know Francis who was son of Pica and Pietro and brother to Angelo, and we wonder about the events that might have taken place inside the Bernadone household as we listen to the local townsfolk of today prepare *pranzo*, discipline their children, and chat with fellow Assisians during siesta time.

Finally, in the *piazza* in front of the Chiesa Nuova, as we gaze upon the sculpture depicting Lady Pica holding the chains from which she freed Francis, and Pietro holding the clothes Francis returned to him, we sense the pathos in their hearts. They parented a son who had seemingly lost his mind in God, responding to the confusing dreams which took place in his own bedroom. Pica and Pietro hold hands in a gesture which communicates powerfully to us that Francis was first and foremost a family member whose actions affected his parents, his brother, and his neighbors. We sense the confusion, the pain, and the disappointment. But we know that God's plans don't always make sense in this world. We touch the chains in Pica's hands and pray that, like Francis, we also may be freed to pursue God's call, no matter what it may cost us to do so.

Poggio Bustone

It took years for Francis to understand God's call. Most often the call came when he was in seclusion. Francis was captured and isolated as a prisoner of war. Being ill, Francis returned home after Pietro paid his ransom. But Francis would never be the same. He sought out places of prayer and solitude. His mind wandered. When not in the cloth shop Francis would be in caves, abandoned churches, on top of Mt. Subasio, or in the swamp of the Umbrian Valley. It was in these places that God directed Francis to rebuild churches, abandon his present way of life, and call God alone his Father.

Having dramatically stripped himself of his past life, Francis left the comforts of home and began to attract followers. He remained quite unsure of what he was to do and questioned whether in his sinfulness he could carry out God's will.

His search for solitude led him outside of the Umbrian Valley into several sacred places in the Rieti Valley. Our Pilgrims visit four of these hermitages: Poggio Bustone, Greccio, Fonte Columbo, and La Foresta. Beginning in Poggio Bustone, they are introduced to new aspects of Francis's character.

Situated high in the mountains which surround the Rieti Valley, the town of Poggio Bustone clings to the side of a ridge. Oral tradition handed down through the local people recalls Francis's visits and how he would greet the people by saying "Buon giorno, buona gente. . . . Good day, good people!"[9] The name of the town means "a hilltop (*poggio*) enclosure (*bustone*)." It is not uncommon to see hikers using a *bastone* or walking stick to aid them in their journey through this hilly region. During Francis's frequent travels to the "enclosures" in this valley, one assumes that he too made use of a *bastone*.

The b*astone* was an object familiar to Francis (2Cel 7, L3S 7). Thomas of Celano and the Legend of the Three Companions tell of a story in Francis's youth where the *bastone*, a symbol of leadership, was passed on to him. It was an honor to receive the b*astone* but it also carried a responsibility. The

leader paid for the feasts![10] The biographies speak of Francis falling behind his companions and entering into a mysterious and mystical experience which will change his life. His friends note his dream-like gaze and wonder if he has fallen in love with a "lady." Francis responds "You are right: I was thinking of wooing the noblest, richest, and most beautiful bride ever seen" (L3S 7). I've wondered if Francis perhaps recalled these various moments of his youth in his frequent visits to Poggio Bustone.

This hermitage presents a physical challenge. To climb above the Convento of San Giacomo to the cave where Francis stayed is difficult. There is no easy path and steps are steep over boulders and tree roots. It can seem unending. But the view of the mountains is breathtaking. On a sunny day the lush green of the forests, the blue of the sky, and the warmth of the sun lift one's spirit immediately to God. But in an instant fog can roll in and hide it all. Storm clouds can suddenly appear with rolling thunder and pouring rain, drenching the unprepared pilgrim. It is this uncertainty and this rugged environment that reveal Francis to us in concrete and tangible ways.

Francis came to this place with eight young men who were attracted to his new and outrageous embrace of the Gospel life. His way of life did not as yet have papal approval. Knowing the need for such approval, Francis hesitated. Realizing his own sinfulness and unworthiness, he became concerned about the future for his followers. Perhaps he was uncomfortable with this new *bastone being passed* on to him. Whatever the case may be, after praying for God's mercy, "little by little a certain unspeakable joy and very great sweetness began to flood his innermost heart" (1Cel 26).

On the mountain of Poggio Bustone the Pilgrims learn that Francis had doubts, that the road which he trod was full of difficulties. One moment the direction seemed clear and in another instant it was as if future dreams were hidden in a dense fog. The Franciscan way of life includes moments of mystical communion with God and at the same time the harsh realities of life on this earth. Murray Bodo describes this dual experience in, *Francis, the Journey and the Dream*:

> All his life [Francis] had known the tension between the vertical ascent to God and the horizontal journey of love reaching out to all on earth. He knew that without prayer, true love was impossible, and he learned from living that without love prayer became self-centered and barren.[11]

When one puts sticks of wood together vertically and horizontally, one can see the symbolic form of a cross. The Pilgrims discover the implications of the Cross in the visit to Poggio Bustone. The radical realization is

that the **Cross** was Francis's *bastone;* the Cross was his guide on the journey. As followers of Francis, this b*astone* passes on to us! Believing in everyone's unconditional salvation through Jesus Christ who died for us on this Cross, we have a deeper appreciation for Francis's greeting given to the people living in the town of Poggio Bustone, "Good day, **good** people!"

Rome: St. John Lateran

Any visitor to Rome is amazed at the congestion of people, the erratic and constant traffic, the frenzied pace and the ever-present risks of being robbed (as has happened to Pilgrims and staff alike!). In the midst of this Roman chaos, one could rightly ask how the Pilgrims ever come to know Francis in this city. It is certainly one of the most physically and emotionally exhausting places. Yet a visit to Rome remains an essential way of discovering Francis, a man of the Church. Through visits to significant places in Rome, his spirituality begins to unfold.

The center of Catholic Rome is the Basilica of St. Peter. The centers of tourist Rome are the Spanish steps, the Trevi Fountain, and the Piazza Navona. None of these sites would have existed as they are in Francis's time. Francis did visit a small shrine which is now St. Peter's Basilica, where the apostle Peter was believed to be buried. It was here that Francis exchanged clothing with that of a poor person (L3S 10). And Francis may well have wandered past the ruins of the Roman Forum and the Coliseum. But our most fruitful search for Francis leads us to an open field of grass directly in front of the Church of St. John Lateran. I call it the "field of dreams," " for here the audience hall once stood where Francis visited Pope Innocent III to receive affirmation of his rule (1Cel 32-33, L3S 46-53). In the course of this visit both Francis and Innocent sensed in dreams what God was leading Francis to do (1Cel 32-33, 2Cel 16-17, LM 3:9-10).

The building where Francis had his papal audience is gone. All that remains is a mosaic apse from that ancient papal dining room. Today the Church of St. John Lateran stands in magnificent splendor at one end of the grassy field. Innocent dreamed of Francis holding up a much simpler church than what the Pilgrims see today. On the opposite side of this "field of dreams" stands a statue of Francis with his companions. This statue was commissioned by Mussolini and placed opposite the Church of St. John Lateran in 1926 in an attempt to make peace with Italy. And so between an imposing church and a statue built in an attitude of reconciliation, the Pilgrims meet Francis of Assisi.

For many of the Pilgrims this grassy field between church and statue is

a most fitting place. On the one side, Franciscan religious men and women are intimately connected with belief in and loyalty to the Church of Rome. On the other side, an ongoing search for reconciliation exists, particularly for women who long to have their voices heard by Church authority. In Rome Francis somehow models for us the importance of being authorized for mission in the name of Jesus Christ, while at the same time making choices faithful to that mission. In his dreams, Francis understood that ultimately it is God who authorizes and that if the motive for mission is truly Gospel-directed, Church authority cannot challenge. Indeed, Francis experienced Innocent's approval of his way of life despite the fact that Francis stood in total contradiction to the clerical lifestyle of his time.

Putting all these pieces of the story together brings many of the Pilgrims to the point of reconciliation with the Church. As they stand behind the statue of Francis and see his arms raised as if holding up St. John Lateran, they also see themselves in the companions depicted with Francis—some forging straight ahead with Francis, seemingly undaunted; others with faces covered in fear; and still others looking back, wondering if they ever should have left Assisi.

But our final gaze in this place returns to the grassy field between the Church and the statue. For here it was that over eight hundred years ago Francis stood filled with dreams and visions, audacious enough to test them in the papal chambers and simple enough not to recognize the challenges to the Church represented in his utter poverty. His dream was to live the Gospel life. How could that dream not come true?

La Verna

Throughout the years following papal approval of his way of life, Francis visited many towns throughout Italy. We know he also traveled to Spain and to the Middle East in hopes of enduring martyrdom, always eager to identify himself ever more closely with Jesus Christ. He continued to preach penance but would find himself more and more frequenting hermitages in order to remove himself from the dissatisfaction growing among his brothers. Those within the Order questioned the wisdom of his harsh lifestyle, disagreeing with the severity of the Rule and the itinerant lifestyle. Those outside the Order considered him a saint and made provisions for his needs.

One person who came to know and love Francis was Count Orlando of Chiusi.[12] Orlando knew of Francis's love for solitude and his preference for places of incredible beauty. In the Tuscan Valley, well north of Assisi, Orlando owned a mountain which was treacherous and isolated. He knew

Francis would appreciate its solitude. And so on May 8, 1213, "Orlando, Count of Chiusi . . . freely gave, donated, and conceded without any obligation to Friar Francis and his companions and Friars both present and future . . . the mountain of La Verna, today sacred, so that the aforesaid Father Francis and his Friars might be able to dwell there." This donation was confirmed in writing by Orlando's sons on July 9, 1274.[13]

This place contrasts sharply with the Rieti and Umbrian valleys. There is a roughness and wildness about it. The weather here is totally unpredictable. Pilgrims have arrived at this site in the cold frost of a winter-like morning and by noon the sun has burned off the chill causing one to work up a sweat while climbing the mountain. On some days the view stretches over the hills to the sea beyond, and on other days the fog is so pervasive that one can barely see three feet ahead. Journeying up the mountain of La Verna on such a day is dangerous, with precipices and crevices unknown to the uncertain climber. In fact, a story is told of a group of ten novices who lived in the friary at La Verna who went up the mountain during the night to pray. Only nine returned in the morning. One had fallen to his death.

It is in this rough and rugged place that we encounter Francis in the midst of some of his most difficult battles. Each boulder with its craggy edges must have typified the Brotherhood whose attitudes had become an obstacle to living Francis's ideals. Francis's life continued to hold mystery and uncertainty. Though viewed as a saint, Francis felt far from worthy, and the mists of Poggio Bustone followed him to La Verna.

The movie, *Francesco*, directed by Liliana Cavani, portrays this time of Francis's life most poignantly. Having argued to retain key values in his Rule of 1223, much to the chagrin of articulate and educated friars, Francis goes to La Verna, ill, depressed, and feeling very much alone. Leo is his only companion. On top of this mountain Francis cries out to God, "Parlami. Parlami. Speak to me."[14] In this most turbulent time of Francis's life, God indeed has compassion for Francis and speaks, blazing the Stigmata into Francis's hands, feet, and side. Bonaventure vividly describes this event as divine wisdom being "ploughed into the flesh of Francis" (LM 13:10) by the "finger of the living God" (LM 13:5). Through his suffering and continued faith in God, Francis has been transformed into an *Alter Christus*.[15]

The climb up the Penna of La Verna is a long and arduous one. The Pilgrims pause often to catch their breath, to reflect on the ruggedness of this place. They have to choose constantly which path to take, and after an hour of climbing they often wonder if they will ever arrive at the pinnacle. In this climb they understand the difficulty of Francis's journey. Francis is no longer the gentle saint depicted in the movie Br*other Sun and Sister*

Moon.[16] Rather, Francis is a human being; sometimes a warrior and at other times depressed. One feels close to this man who came to La Verna in utter distress. In that bonding with Francis, the Pilgrims realize with awe that in the midst of all these difficulties, Francis still finds time to see his brother Leo's distress. Francis writes in his own hand a Blessing for Leo, piercing a red Tau through the middle of Leo's name, compassionately reminding Leo that he too has been saved by the Cross.

Leaving the mountain, the journey back into the world is filled with mixed emotions. There is the desire to remain immersed in the challenge of the place and a reluctance to leave. Yet there is a need to "go home" to the world awaiting the Pilgrims' return. After Francis's peak encounter with God, which has been likened to Richard of St. Victor's third moment of perfect burning love, Francis immersed himself into the world for two more years, moving into the fourth and most perfect moment of burning love.[17] Francis needed to communicate God's compassion to his world which was also distressed and in need of God's love. During those two years Francis would write some of his most loving thoughts to Leo (Letter to Brother Leo, Blessing for Brother Leo), summarize his vision of his life in the Testament, and compose his most famous work, the Canticle of Brother Sun. The Pilgrims are directed to do the same; to leave the mountain and to blaze the Cross of Christ compassionately through a world awaiting their return.

Assisi: The Tomb of Francis

Toward the end of the pilgrimage, the Pilgrims visit one of the most sacred places on the Franciscan journey. Hidden beneath two floors of the Basilica of St. Francis, which houses art treasures from the medieval period, lies the tomb of St. Francis. As one enters into this sacred place there is a quiet, subdued presence, and a mixed fragrance of lilies and beeswax candles which decorate the altar, above which lies Francis's coffin. The quiet is broken by the footsteps of the thousands of people who visit this tomb each day. Some come in silent awe; others come out of curiosity, chatting their questions to their neighbor. Some whisper the story of Francis to their children whose eyes are open wide, seeing a burial place and perhaps encountering the mystery of death for the first time. Others just move around the tomb, blessing themselves or perhaps kneeling on the step of the altar, directing their prayers in silent petition to the Saint. If the din gets too loud, a friar promptly "shushes" the crowd and silence returns.

Some of the Pilgrims find the tomb, with its constant movement of people, distracting and difficult to pray in. Those who visit the tomb during the Feast of St. Francis on October 4 find it nearly impossible to get to the tomb unless they are willing to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the massive crowds, inching their way a mini-step at a time toward the entrance to the tomb.

In the five years I have journeyed with Pilgrims to Assisi, I have spent countless hours at the tomb of St. Francis and find it to be one of my favorite places. Perhaps I am feeling the privilege of living in a time during which the Tomb is visible to the public. Perhaps it is because it is one of the few sacred places of Francis which remains open during siesta time. But the main reason I sit in this sacred place so often is that I find myself identifying with all the different persons visiting the tomb, realizing that I have been one with them in their curiosity, their awe, and their prayerful petitions.

I explain to the Pilgrims an imaginative prayer which I do at the tomb. I ask them to place themselves inside the coffin with Francis and listen to the prayers and comments of the people as they process past, kneel, and venerate the spot. How would they, the Pilgrims, respond to each supplication? How does Francis in his everlasting glory intercede for these countless faithful?

If the Pilgrims are lucky enough to find some quiet time at the tomb, for what do they pray? Do they consider that Francis is buried here surrounded by his Brothers Leo, Rufino, Angelo, and Masseo, with Lady Jacoba at the entrance to the tomb? Is it not fitting that in this most holy resting place of Francis, we too should be surrounded by the people of God who are our companions on life's journey?

Death continues to be a mystery and we ask many questions. Answers seem few. But perhaps like Francis, we come to embrace the final moment of life as "Sister Death" when we visit his tomb. Perhaps the gift of being in this place is to understand that with the reality of death, we can begin to associate the peaceful hush, the fragrance of lilies and beeswax, and the assurance that even in death we are never alone. In the tomb we encounter Francis the Saint, who, after a lifetime of walking through Assisi's streets and journeying to distant places like Rome, Poggio Bustone, and La Verna, is now at rest, making intercession to God for us and wishing us "pace e bene" one last time. Here at the tomb the Pilgrims perhaps know that the hunger that has brought them on pilgrimage is finally satisfied through union with Jesus Christ who has transcended death and will bring each of us, like Francis, into the joy of everlasting life.

Written in the Rieti and Umbrian Valleys, June 1996

Endnotes

[1] The most significant text is the *English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. Marion A. Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

[2] Cardinal Stritch College, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, is expanding a Franciscan library, establishing a series of lectures on Franciscan topics, increasing the number of Franciscan courses available for credit, preparing a program of faculty development in Franciscanism, and establishing a Franciscan Chair. Cardinal Stritch College is located in Milwaukee, WI.

[3] Books produced during this time include *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady (New York: Paulist Press, 1981); Margaret Carney, *The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and Her Form of Life* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993); Ingrid Peterson, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993); *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

[4] In 1992 I visited Isola Maggiore on Lago Trasimeno. While walking along a path which borders the lake, I met an older woman named Irenea, seated on the step of a small chapel which shelters an ancient wooden statue of Francis. The chapel commemorates the spot where, according to tradition, Francis arrived for his retreat on the island. Irenea brings her lace crocheting and sits at this spot for one reason; she wants to share this Franciscan story with all who pass by. She leads people to a stone and points out the places where Francis's arms, hands, and knees left their imprint upon his arrival in 1211/12. She is fully convinced of the truth of this tradition.

Another woman who shares oral tradition with the Pilgrims is Vittorina Penacchi Sbaraglini. She lives in Bernard of Quintavalle's house and retells the moments of Francis's visit there. She is not a practicing Catholic and does not intend to speak authoritatively. She simply shares what has been handed down to her through her family history.

[5] Eric Doyle, *St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981) 33.

[6] Chester P. Michael and Marie C. Norrisey, *Prayer and Temperament: Different Prayer Forms for Different Personality Types* (Charlottesville: The Open Door, Inc., 1984) 69-78.

[7] Sister Frances Theresa, *Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi* (London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 1993) 10.

[8] Three sites are referred to in the scholarship of Omer Engelbert and Arnaldo Fortini: 1) the San Nicolo site, located behind the Post Office in the Piazza Commune; 2) the Francescuccio site, the "stable" located on the ground floor of Francis's nephew Piccardo's home where, like Jesus, Francis would have been born; 3) the Chiesa Nuova site which several medieval documents designate as the location of Pietro's cloth shop. For further discussion see: Omer Engelbert, *Saint Francis of Assisi* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1965) 407-419, and Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroads, 1992) 88-9, footnote q.

[9] For many years the phrase, "Buon giorno, buona gente," could be seen inscribed on a white stone in a wall of the city. It was just recently removed during renovations.

[10] Fortini, 129-37.

[11] Murray Bodo, *Francis, the Journey and the Dream* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1988) 46-7.

[12] Fortini, 547.

[13] Translated from Saturnino Mencherini, *Codice Diplomatico della Verna e delle SS. Stimata* (Firenze: Tipografia Gualandi, 1924) 38-39.

[14] *Francesco*, 155 min. Karol Film/Royal Film co-production. Munich, 1989. Also reproduced by Istituto Luce/Italnoleggio, Rome, 1989 for RAI T.V.

[15] The mysticism of this historical event is presented in an article by Ilia Delio, entitled "Toward a New Theology of Franciscan Contemplation," *The Cord* 46 (May-June, 1996):136-9.

[16] *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, 16mm, 120 min. Paramount Pictures Corp. Hollywood, CA: 1972.

[17] This moment in Francis's life was powerfully described in a talk entitled "The Transitus: From Cherubim to Seraphim," given by Wayne Hellman in 1986 at the Franciscan Gathering in Tampa, FL. See also Richard of St. Victor, "The Four Degrees of Passionate Burning Love," in *Selected Writings on Contemplation*, trans. Clare Kirchberger (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1957).

Pilgrimage, Spirituality of Place, and Clare of Assisi

Thomas Barton, OSF

As religious were called to renew and refound in the spirit and charism of the beginnings of their institutes, very many gifts have been presented to us in the years following Vatican II. One of these significant gifts has been the development of the concept of pilgrimage to the Franciscan holy places, especially those which specifically relate to the persons of Francis and Clare of Assisi. In this writing I will focus on the person of Chiara di Favarone, known to us as Clare of Assisi, and those places especially associated with her life.

Pilgrimage has been described in many ways. The definition which best explains pilgrimage to me is "extroverted mysticism, prayer of the feet."[1] In his initial letter to prospective pilgrims, Roch Niemier, OFM, Director of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program, explains that pilgrimage is "a moving out of one's known environment into another and at the same time a moving out of one's ordinary mind set into another in order to 'know the mind of Christ Jesus.'" I would add—"and to participate in the experiences of Francis and Clare."

Pilgrimages take on many forms and can be done for any number of reasons. "We do not choose to make a place sacred. A sacred place chooses us."[2] In fact, an ordinary trip may in time take on the dimensions of a pilgrimage because of what the person experiences. Any place may have something to offer, may teach us its own spirituality.

Early in my own life I became aware of the spirituality of a place through my own parish church. The family home was a mere thousand feet from the Church of Our Lady of Angels, Brooklyn, New York. Every evening I had a wonderful experience. At precisely 8:45 the bells of this enormous house of worship would begin to strike the melody, "Holy God We Praise

Thy Name." My mother would turn down the volume of our black and white TV so we could listen and join the other parishioners in prayer. In later years, whenever I passed that church, I always recalled the bell tune and offered a prayer. (What I regret is that the bells are no longer rung at this hour due to the desire of a changing neighborhood not to be disturbed!)

Clare was a person to whom places spoke. She knew the spirituality of places. In this writing I will concentrate on her experience of pilgrimage and the spirituality of those places which she visited and in which she lived.

The Parental Home

Clare grew up in an Assisi caught in the turmoil of change. The family itself was prominent. They could boast of having seven knights. The family home was located on the Piazza San Rufino, the new cathedral of the city. We know that the family was a devout one. Clare's mother, Ortolana, was herself a pilgrim to both the Holy Land and to Rome. Such pilgrimages were almost always dangerous activities at that time. If we ponder briefly the spirituality of a home, thoughts of love and familial devotion might surface. If we ponder the type of home that Clare created at San Damiano, we might conclude that she learned much of what she fostered there from her own home near San Rufino. In the historical sources we see glimpses of the love that Clare learned in her family home. This is evident in the correspondence she had with her sister, Agnes, who was sent to the Benedictine Monastery of Monticelli in Florence to preside and lead it into the Poor Clare family.[3] It is evident, also, when Clare sent a child to her mother, Ortolana, to be healed. Ortolana was then a nun herself at San Damiano. This shows Clare's trust and faith in her mother's love.[4]

Today it is no longer possible to indicate clearly and precisely where the family home was. We have only a general idea. I was pleased to see groups of children playing soccer in the Piazza. Certainly a place where children play in safety is a place of spirituality. Also, I happily noticed that the child retrieving the soccer ball was a boy with Downe's syndrome. Would Clare not be pleased at that?

The Cathedral of San Rufino

Palm Sunday, 1212, was a day that Clare would never forget. It was a defining moment of her life. The entire course of that day set her on a pilgrimage, praying with Francis: "May we be able to follow in the footprints of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ."[5]

While Clare attended the Palm Sunday Mass with her family, her body was in Assisi, but her heart was in Jerusalem. Clare entered into the gospel story in such an affective way that she literally followed the Lord as he entered Jerusalem. Having placed the fabric of her life before him in this very place, Clare's life changed forever. In a mystical way Clare began to cry out: "Draw me after you; we will run in the fragrance of your perfumes, O Heavenly spouse! I will run and not tire" (4 LAg 31-32).

The historical sources tell us that, after her family's exile in Perugia, Clare's behavior demonstrated a very penitential character. On that Palm Sunday Bishop Guido went to where Clare was sitting in the cathedral and gave her the palm branch. What did that mean? Was he consenting to her abandonment of her familial home? The palm branch is a sign of martyrdom. Was Clare being given the sign to begin her life anew?

Pilgrims today find much to quiet their spirits in the Church of San Rufino. It is a quiet place where one may escape the bustle of the two great basilicas. It is not heavily adorned so that art seekers do not darken its doorways. San Rufino is a place for prayer. On pilgrimage the participants are offered the chance to renew their baptism at the same font where both Clare and Francis were brought to the faith.

The Portiuncola

Having abandoned her place in medieval society, as well as her family and friends, power and prestige, Clare fled into the cold dark night. How she managed to pass through the locked gates remains a question. Spiritually, almost literally, she became "nudus nudum sequi Christi" (naked following the naked Christ).[6] Friars came with torches to meet and escort Clare to the Portiuncola. There she was betrothed to Christ and vowed to follow his footprints for the rest of her life. There Clare cut her hair as her definitive act of embracing the penitential life, and there she donned the Franciscan habit of penance.[7]

Those privileged to visited the Portiuncola today do not see what Clare saw. At that time the vicinity was a marshy and treacherous swampland. In addition to mosquitoes and scorpions there might also have been outlaws, mercenary soldiers, and outcast lepers. Any one of these might have endangered her journey from the city.

Francis had received the Portiuncola on loan from the Benedictines. The Portiuncola, the Little Portion, was a place Francis prized above all others. He wanted only the most devout and observant of his brothers to live there. Above all else the poverty of the place was to be the model for all other houses. Clare met Francis at the Portiuncola and relinquished her

place in feudal society forever. Having received the habit she truly had no earthly place to call her own. Today the Portiuncola has been preserved by constructing the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels over it. Pilgrims celebrate the Eucharist inside the Portiuncola chapel itself. Once, at communion time, I went to the rear of the chapel to try to contain others who literally rushed the place in order to receive communion. Persistently one elderly woman pulled at my habit sleeve whispering something. One of the friars translated for me that she had received communion there every first Friday for the past sixty-three years! The woman was elated that she could receive there that very day, too.

The Portiuncola remains one of my personal favorite places for prayer. One late Sunday afternoon I walked there from Assisi for some time in solitude. Sitting on the floor by the open side door, I witnessed quiet groups of pilgrims, religious and laity alike, approaching to pray. One group particularly impressed me. They prayed the entire rosary and the angelus and listened to some few words of exhortation from their priest while kneeling on the hard rock floor. They had just come from Eastern Europe, perhaps Poland. Today the Portiuncola remains as it was for Clare, a place of refuge and spiritual quest.

San Paolo Delle Abbadesse

Having been received at the Portiuncola, Clare was brought by Francis to the Benedictine Monastery of San Paolo at Bastia. Francis believed that Clare would be safe there, it being a place of sanctuary. Certainly Clare was protected when the family discovered her location. Francis left Clare in Bastia; neither he nor any other Franciscan remained with her there. Pilgrims ask the question all the time. Where was he? We only know he was not there. In the confrontation with her family she was all alone. Only by exposing her shorn head and grasping the altar was she saved from being carted back to Assisi and the family home. At Bastia we see Clare face concretely the beginnings of the cost of discipleship. At Bastia she learned the sting of separation and the beginning of her following of the Rule. It was most likely at Bastia with the Benedictines that Clare learned to pray the Liturgy of the Hours .

Hedy Amati, OSF, a member of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Staff, believes that Clare experienced in this house of noble ladies the full effect of what it meant to be a poor, dowerless woman with neither power nor influence. Yet, for Clare, it was a place of safety and refuge.[8]

All that remains of San Paolo today is the church which now serves as a mortuary chapel. The rest of the monastery is gone. In its place is a cemetery. In recent years the Friars Minor from St. Mary of the Angels have begun to maintain the church. In June 1994 we celebrated the Eucharist there. I observed that two Poor Clare sisters were gazing intently at the altar. I invited them to come and touch the altar; they sprang from their seats and held onto the altar for the remainder of the liturgy.

In the place where Clare suffered persecution from her family, where she learned to pray the office, experiencing the beginnings of the cost of discipleship, people can once again come to pray for their departed. The Poor Clares today rejoice that this place, so significant to their own history and Clare's journey, is now open to pilgrims.

While Clare remained at San Paolo, and briefly at Sant'Angelo, Francis was rebuilding San Damiano to received Clare and Agnes. It was at San Damiano that Clare began the interiorization of her pilgrimage, having left Assisi for good.

San Damiano

San Damiano is a place where people have come to worship from time immemorial.[9] It was a place of worship even before the Christian era. In the crypt of the present church one can find the area where cultic worship, predating even Roman worship, took place.[10] Francis stumbled into San Damiano and experienced there the Lord claiming him and giving him the task: "Repair my house." Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., dates Francis's prayer for enlightenment from this place: "Most High Glorious God enlighten the darkness of my heart."[11] Can we wonder then that Francis brought Clare to this place? For forty-two years Clare gazed upon the Christ of the crucifix that spoke to Francis and developed her own style of Franciscan life, following his footsteps.

Within San Damiano there are four places of importance for Clare's spiritual journey. They are the refectory, the choir and church, the oratory, and the dormitory. In her lifetime there were as many as fifty nuns, from all classes of society, living the primitive Franciscan life in this place.

Refectory

Clare's place in the refectory is today marked always by a bowl of flowers. This place is closest to the kitchen. We have been told that Clare preferred to serve rather than to be served. Here in the refectory we see evidence of one who could have had others at her beck and call but instead chose to serve the entire community with her own hands.

As we peer into the refectory as pilgrims, we can reflect together on Franciscan service in society today. How do we serve others? How do we serve those with whom we live? Do we allow others to serve us?

Choir and Church

Daily life at San Damiano was punctuated by the praying of the liturgy of the hours and the celebration of the Eucharist. Seven times daily, every day, the nuns gathered to praise God through psalms and canticles. In time the nuns began to remember events only in respect to the liturgical calendar. Joseph Doino, OFM, of happy memory, was fond of claiming that they had "Christified their memories."

While only a portion of the choir exists today, we see there the hard choir stalls and plain walls. We come to appreciate the difficulty of the road chosen by these servants of God.

On the altar side of the choir is the church. We expect that Clare and the sisters knelt there in prayer before the crucified Christ for hours each day, year after year. There Clare prayed and taught her sisters to "gaze upon Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, as you desire to imitate Him" (2LAg 20). This was her life-plan, which she laid out before the community. In her own Testament, she reminds the sisters that it was Francis who focused her attention on the Lord.

Today San Damiano is a thriving place. Besides a resident community of friars, there are always novices from various Italian provinces. San Damiano serves as an oasis of prayer and formation.

Remarkably, any time you visit San Damiano you can find groups praying silently or celebrating Mass. Youth groups walk in pilgrimage, often from great distances, with their friar or sister leaders. They invariably find their way to the church which Francis repaired and in which Clare resided for over four decades. It is a place of welcome.

Oratory

Accessible only by a staircase directly above the choir is an oratory. This area is a tiny place for personal prayer. In a private visit there in October 1992, Salvator Butler, OFM, indicated a niche in which he claimed the Blessed Sacrament had been reserved. We know that Clare spent the night hours here in vigil. Here she wrestled with the Evil One[12] and overcame. There is in the floor a rectangular hole which overlooks the altar. On those days when she was unable to go down to Mass or to pray with the community, Clare would attend listening from above.

Dormitory

On cold nights the infirm lady Clare would pass through the dormitory and cover the nuns against the cold. When it was time to awaken for the first hour of prayer, Clare often went among them to call them gently. She spent days propped up on her bed making altar cloths and altar linens for those churches which Francis had repaired or otherwise cleaned. It was in this dormitory where the pope visited Clare and where she finally received his approval of her Rule. It was here that the nuns heard her speaking to her soul shortly before her death: "Go without anxiety for you have a good escort for your journey."[13]

When we gather for prayer in the dormitory we do so in the context of a healing ritual. Using readings from Clare's writings and a song, the leader gifts us with a few words of reflection and then invites all to come to be anointed with blessed oil. Slowly the pilgrims come, some eager, others hesitant, some with tears. The dormitory at San Damiano is a place of passage from illness to health, from death to life. It is a portal to eternity.

San Giorgio—Basilica of St. Clare

After Clare's death her remains were taken to Assisi for protection. She was buried in the Church of San Giorgio, where Francis, too, had originally been buried. In time her basilica was built there and San Giorgio was incorporated into the new structure. The Poor Ladies eventually moved to this place, where they remain to this day. They continue to live the enclosed life, devoted to contemplation and liturgical prayer, gazing upon Christ.

The San Damiano crucifix has only recently been revealed to the world. Having been taken from San Damiano, it remained in the enclosure at the Basilica of St. Clare until Pope Pius XII himself requested, in 1957, that it be made available for public veneration.

Today the chapel of the cross is visited by thousands of people. Pilgrims pray, tourists take pictures. At the altar rail Francis's prayer for enlightenment is available in several languages.

Assisi Streets

A ritual is celebrated by the pilgrims in the streets of Assisi, commemorating Clare's departure from her home on Palm Sunday night. Following a large Christ candle, the pilgrims listen to the questions which Clare might

have been thinking as she left her parental home and fled to the Portiuncola. A few Assisians stop, stare, and walk on. One young woman, somewhat fluent in English, seems startled at what she is hearing. She hovers at the back of the group and eventually engages a friar in conversation. He happily explains in Italian what we are doing. Her eyes fill with tears and she expresses happy gratitude. She has come that very day to Assisi to reflect upon her desire to enter religious life. After the prayer ends she cries "grazie, grazie, grazie!" So it seems the streets of Assisi are once again an instrument of God's grace, as they have been for centuries from the time of Francis and Clare.

Endnotes

[1] Joseph Doino, OFM, class notes taken during his course "Franciscan Spirituality," St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, Spring, 1989.

[2] Ramona Miller, OSF, at a planning meeting for the staff of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program, Chicago, January, 1995.

[3] *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993) 109.

[4] *Early Documents*, 135.

[5] *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, ed. and trans. Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap. and Ignatius C. Brady, OFM (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) 61.

[6] This quotation is attributed to St. Jerome. It is taken from *The Pilgrim's Companion to Franciscan Places*, the section devoted to Santa Maria Maggiore, Assisi, published by The Assisi Experience, The Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

[7] See Luigi Padovese, OFM Cap., "Clare' s Tonsure: Act of Consecration or Sign of Penance," in *Greyfriars Review*, 6/1 (1992): 67.

[8] Ramona Miller, OSF, *In the Footsteps of Saint Clare* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1993) 38.

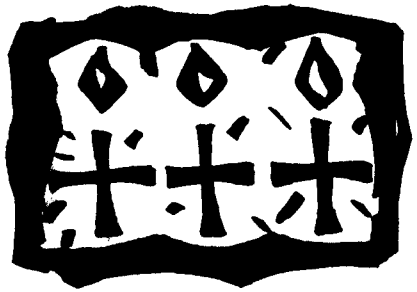
[9] *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, 103.

[10] See Marino Bigaroni, OFM, "San Damiano—Assisi: The First Church of St. Francis," *Franciscan Studies*, 25 (1987): 45.

[11] *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, 296.

[12] *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, 207.

[13] *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, 296.



Francis X. Miles, OFM

The Cord, 47.1 (1997)

Book Reviews

At Last a Third Order Women's History, and not One, but Two!!

Pazzelli, Raphaele, TOR. *Franciscan Sisters: Outlines of History and Spirituality.* Trans., Aidan Mullaney, TOR. Steubenville: Franciscan University Press, 1993. 229pp. ISBN 0- 940535-52-1. $15.00.

Péano, Pierre, OFM. *Bearing Christ to the People: Franciscan Sisters, their Origins, History and Persisting Characteristics.* Trans., Aidan Mullaney, TOR. Steubenville: Franciscan University Press, 1996. 92 pp. ISBN 0-9490535-89-0. $6.95.

Every Third Order congregation deserves to have access to the most recent scholarship tracing its development and place in the Franciscan movement. The first attempt to describe the history and spirituality of the Third Order by Raffaele Pazzelli, TOR, was translated and published as *Saint Francis and the Third Order* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982), elucidating the Biblical and historical meaning of Third Order members as brothers and sisters of penance. In doing this, Pazzelli helped Third Order members to identify their unique role in the Franciscan tradition.

When the Italian version of Pazzelli's book was completed, he began writing *Le Suore Franciscane* (Padovi: Edizione Messaggero, 1989), which accounted for the development of Third Order women's congregations. This work, translated by Aidan Mullaney, TOR, was published in English as *Franciscan Sisters: Outlines of History and Spirituality.* Pazzelli defines the subject of his book, "Franciscan sisters," as the followers of the Rule of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis, a Rule which has its own history and development. He reserves the term "Franciscan nuns" to describe those religious who follow the Rule of the Third Order Regular and are contemplative with a strict cloister and those Second Order women who follow the rule for the Order of Poor Sisters of St. Clare and who are contemplative with a strict cloister.

Pazzelli traces his history of the Third Order from the *Memoriale Propositi*, the Tertiary Rule in the time of Saint Francis. One branch of these

tertiaries, known as the "Order of Penitents," followed the gospel direction of Francis while pursuing their occupations and living in the world in family households. Another branch of early tertiaries began to live together in communities. In 1289, both branches, called the Third Order Secular and the Third Order Regular, promised to follow the Rule of Pope Nicholas IV, which reformulated the *Memoriale*. In 1521, Pope Leo X promulgated a new Rule specifically for those living in community and under religious vows. Following the 1917 revised Code of Canon Law, Pope Pius XI in 1927 published yet another new Rule for all active Franciscan congregations of women and men. After years of effort by Third Order Regular women and men, a new Rule was written more accurately reflecting the Franciscan charism; it was approved by Pope Paul John II in 1982. The new Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) was approved by Paul VI in 1980.

Franciscan Sisters reviews events and attitudes in the church and civil society throughout the centuries that either helped or hindered the development of congregations of active Franciscan sisters. It also traces Church legislation on the cloister which has affected sisters in the active life, such as the dramatic ecclesial policy in 1563 when the Council of Trent decreed that the monastic cloister be imposed on all contemplative and active religious women. Because there are four hundred congregations of Franciscan sisters today, Pazzelli notes the impossibility of providing a particular history for them all. Nonetheless, he identifies common elements in the history and spirituality of Third Order congregations of women.

This book is impossible to read hurriedly because of the complexity of historical events affecting the growth of active religious congregations in the last eight hundred years. It is peppered with names and stories that are becoming increasingly familiar as Third Order members discover their role in Franciscan history: Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231), Clare of Montefalco (1268-1308), and Angelina of Montegiove (1357-1435). Pazzelli's original work concluded with a survey of typical nineteenth-century Italian congregations. Chapter XI of Mullaney's translation substitutes the stories of influential congregations that were founded in the United States. Mullaney also adds footnotes from English language publications.

One of the difficulties facing the working group who drafted the 1982 Rule was the absence of any historical overview to help identify core values of the Third Order Regular. Pierre Péano's 1983 address, "Sisters of the Franciscan Order: Origins, History, and Persisting Values," was an early attempt to supply a brief history of the development of Third Order women. An elaboration of Péano's seminal work, newly translated by Aidan Mullaney, is a companion piece to Pazzelli's book on Third Order women.

Péano's work does not attempt to be as detailed and, for that reason,

may make the story of Third Order women more accessible to some readers. Péano grounds his history in the experience of Francis and the penitential movements and then traces the roots of the female Third Order Regular. He clusters the history of the Third Order around key events—*Supra Montem*, the Tertiary Rule of 1521, the impact of the imposition of cloister by the Council of Trent, the effect of the Protestant Reformation, and the Rule of 1927. Péano illustrates the corresponding growth of male Third Order congregations while showing the influence of the Friars Minor of the Observance. He brings their history to the time of his writing in 1983 and includes the effect of the Second Vatican Council, the development of the Rule, and the establishment of the international office for Franciscan Congregations.

Pazzelli draws from Péano's work, expanding and updating it. Consequently, Pazzelli's work is more extensive than Péano's initial attempt to present a concise history of Third Order women. Pazzelli has compiled another manuscript on the *Third Order Regular of Saint Francis through the Centuries*, which details the history and development of Third Order men's congregations. However, that Italian work is currently under revision and has not yet been published.

Although the Third Order was founded for lay persons, a common life and the profession of religious vows was added, and a communal Third Order life quickly evolved. Despite enormous diffusion, opposition, and conflict, Third Order congregations persisted, scattered, and burst forth in the nineteenth century. Contemporary United States congregations of Franciscan sisters and brothers are rooted in this history. Becoming knowledgeable about the recent ground-breaking work of Péano and Pazzelli is an important step for Third Order women who seek to know their identity and roots. The translation work of Aidan Mullaney and the commitment of Franciscan University Press to the Third Order bring these recent histories to the English-speaking world.

These two books mark a historic moment for Third Order women, whose ministerial contributions have been enormous, but who have not been commensurately represented in Franciscan publications. Each house should have these two books in its library. Third Order members and associates will profit from taking chapters of these books as topics for group discussion or individual study in order to claim ownership of their contribution to Franciscan history.

Ingrid Peterson, OSF

In Anticipation of Clare's 900th Birthday

Fonck, Benet, OFM. *To Cling with All Her Heart to Him: the Spirituality of St. Clare of Assisi.* Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996. 78pp. ISBN 081990-0971-8. $10.95

Frances Teresa, OSC. *Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi.* Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996. 136pp. ISBN 081990-0934-4. $12.95

Just when it seemed as if the eighth centenary of Clare of Assisi exhausted the contemporary imagination, Franciscan Press has added two valuable books to its publications on Clare: *Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi* by Sister Frances Teresa, OSC, and *To Cling with All Her Heart to Him; the Spirituality of St. Clare of Assisi* by Benet Fonck, OFM.

Living the Incarnation, originally published by Darton, Longman and Todd in London, is now co-published by Franciscan Press. Since Sister Frances Teresa translated Bartoli's *Clare of Assisi* into English (1993) and wrote this reflective book on how Francis and Clare lived the gospel call, she has also completed *The Living Mirror* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), which was reviewed as a "refreshing book" by Elise Saggau, OSF, in *The Cord* 45.4 (1995). Both books explore themes of contrition, conversion, and communion, for Sister Frances Teresa views these as the three modes of prayer of Francis and Clare. She writes *Living the Incarnation* for contemporary persons who search for spirituality in times of stress and who believe in a world equally accessible for all. She describes these three themes as ways in which, again and again, we attempt to look upon Christ who is the way.

Clare's Letters to Agnes of Prague are often interpreted as letters of spiritual direction to Agnes. The conversational quality of Sister Frances Teresa's writing also merits description as spiritual direction, in which she turns to the Franciscan tradition for spiritual models of encouragement. In the midst of conflict, Francis and Clare provide outlines of goodness into which we can step with our lives and feel at home. This book is not as much about the events chronicled in the lives of Francis and Clare as it is about the universal experience represented through those human events. Sister Frances Teresa writes: "In general, the spirituality of Francis and Clare was so loving and encouraging and full of light because it was rooted in the great deeds of God" (36). Such passages make this is a generous, hope-filled book.

Yet Sister Frances Teresa does not ignore the difficulties faced by Francis and Clare as they maneuvered their way through pain they did not seek. She contends that, for both Francis and Clare, the path to supernatural life

was through death. Francis, the extrovert, had to face his inner demons, and Clare, the introvert, was confronted with the external conflicts of leaving her home and establishing herself at San Damiano. Such examples illustrate how conversion engages the parts of ourselves that we would rather not face. This book is all the subtitle claims in portraying Francis and Clare as companions for prayer. What is remarkable is the gentle way that this becomes a book about ourselves and the way that we, too, are incarnations of God. If Francis and Clare are not readily accessible guides for us in prayer, then Sister Frances Teresa can easily take their places. It is her spiritual authority that makes this book triumph.

While Sister Frances Teresa's book is dense and thought-provoking, Benet Fonck's *To Cling with All Her Heart to Him* is simple, but equally reflective. Fonck chooses six phrases from Clare's Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague as launching points for his practical meditations on the six topics of discernment—conversion, contemplation, evangelical poverty, union with others, remembrance, and evangelization.

Fonck's meditations slip easily from the events and words of Clare into our own lives. For example, in discussing contemplation, Fonck explains: "Contemplation has three goals: to make evident and to make happen a) the knowing of God intimately, b) self-knowledge in God's presence, and c) life with God before the world" (30). Each of these points is examined as it applies to the reader's life in God. The entire book is filled with succinct, memorable points from which to explore the meaning of Clare's words and her union with God.

This book is self-contained in that it demands little knowledge of the Franciscan story or medieval life. It is complete with text, context, and practical guidelines to take personal assessment of the way each of us tries to cling to God. Added charm comes from the line drawings of Sister Kay Frances Berger, OSF, which illustrate Fonck's text about Clare. Her drawings are both delicate and elegant, a perfect match to Fonck's inviting tone. The illustrations provide a supporting visual text for response and reflection. In *To Cling with All her Heart to Him,* Clare is portrayed through word and image as a faithful representative of the graciousness of God. The question asked is: are we? The response can profitably be explored by individuals or faith-sharing communites.

Ingrid Peterson, OSF

About our Contributors

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André Cirino, OFM, a contemporary Franciscan itinerant, is a member of the Immaculate Conception province, New York. André lectures on a variety of Franciscan topics and is actively involved in developing Franciscan retreats. He annually collaborates with the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs in conducting The Assisi Experience in Italy. He has recently co-authored with Josef Raischl *Franciscan Solitude*, St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1995.

Roch Niemier, OFM, is a member of the Assumption province, Pulaski, Wisconsin. He was, for a number of years a formation director for his province and a retreat director in the United States and in various other parts of the world. Roch made The Assisi Experience in 1974 and has been connected with the Pilgrimage Programs ever since. He took over as director of the programs in 1981, a position he still holds today.

Ingrid Peterson, OSF, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Rochester, Minnesota, is on the staff of the Franciscan Sabbaticals Program at Tau Center in Winona. She is author of *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study*, Quincy, IL: The Franciscan Press, 1993, and editor of *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman: Clarefest Selected Papers*, Clare Centenary Series, VIII, St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1996.

Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi of Penance and Charity, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She holds a nursing degree from Marquette University and a Master's in Franciscan Studies from The Franciscan Institute. She presently serves in congregational administration and is a staff member of The Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs. She wrote "Illness and Fasting in the Life of Clare of Assisi," in *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman: Clarefest Selected Papers*, Clare Centenary Series, VIII, St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1996, and co-authored with Daniel P. Sulmasy, OFM, MD, "The Diagnosis of St. Francis: Evidence for Leprosy."

A Biographical Profile of

Patricia Hutchison, OSF Sisters of St. Francis Philadelphia, Aston, PA

Patricia Hutchison, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, PA. She did her undergraduate study at Neumann College in Aston and earned a Master of Education in Administration and Supervision from Loyola College in Baltimore. From 1970-1987 she worked in elementary education in schools in Delaware, Maryland, and South Carolina. She then served a term on the general council of her congregation, assisting in developing plans for strengthening the ongoing life and mission of the community. From 1993-1995, Pat served as Administrative Assistant for the Franciscan Federation in Washington, DC, performing the innumberable tasks that are demanded in a national office.

Today, Pat serves as Director of Sponsorship for the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston. In this role she oversees the sponsorship ministry of the congregation.

Over the years, Pat has contributed significantly to the Franciscan direction of her congregation and of United States Franciscans. She co-authored congregational material on the evangelical life, specifically reflection/discussion guides on *Our Relationship as Sisters and Brothers* and *Our Manner of Working and Preaching*. In addition she participated in the North American *Build with Living Stones* program in Aston in 1987 and as follow-up did a piece on *Inculturation* for the congregation. She helped develop a guide for Franciscan Values in Education for use in the schools in which her sisters minister.

Pat holds an intense belief that the Franciscan world view and the theology and spirituality on which it is based have the power to transform the twenty-first century into a more just, peaceful, and loving society.

She very generously brings her many talents and fine insights to the advisory board of *The Cord*.

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ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT
COMING EVENTS 1997

Sunday, February 2-Friday, February 7

Franciscan Gathering XVII. "To Desire One Thing Alone." Edward Coughlin, OFM, and Margaret Guider, OSF. Franciscan Center, Tampa. Contact: Jo Marie Streva, OSF, Franciscan Center, 3010 Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603, ph. 813-229-2695, FAX 813-228-0748.

Thursday, February 20-Sunday, February 23

The Enkindling of Love. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. Contact: Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987, ph. 507-454-2993, FAX 507-453-0910.

Friday, February 21-Wednesday, February 26

Crucifix of San Damiano. André Cirino, OFM. Contact: Sr. Barbara Zilch, OSF, Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340, ph. 412-881-9207, FAX 412-885-7210.

Friday, March 14-Sunday, March 16

"Facing the Christ Incarnate." Franciscan Federation at St. Joseph Renewal Center, Tiffin, OH. Contact: Franciscan Federation, PO Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, FAX 202-529-7016.

Friday, March 21-Saturday, March 22

Meeting Myself in Christ. William Short, OFM. The Franciscan Center, 2500 Grant Blvd., Syracuse, Ny 13208, ph. 315-425-0103. Contact: Franciscan Experience, Franciscan Center, 2500 Grant Blvd., Syracuse, NY 13208-1713, ph. 315-425-0103.

Saturday, March 22-Sunday, March 30

Holy Week Retreat. Tau sabbatical staff. Contact: Tau Center (see above).

Monday, March 31-Saturday, April 7

Retreat on the Cross of San Damiano. André Cirino, OFM. $175. New Beginnings Retreat Center, near Amarillo, TX. Contact: Celine Thames, OSF, 4305 54th St., Lubbock, TX 79413-4617, ph. 806-793-9859.

Thursday, April 4-Saturday, April 6

"Facing the Christ Incarnate." Franciscan Federation at Avila Retreat Center, Durham, NC. Contact: Franciscan Federation, Washington, DC (see above).

Thursday, April 17-Monday, April 21

The Franciscan Challenge. Contemporary Franciscan spirituality, art, music, and dance. Contact: Tau Center (see above).

Friday, May 2 - Saturday, May 10

A Franciscan Retreat. André Cirino, OFM and Josef Raischl. Franciscan Center, Andover, MA (see ad p. 46).

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy
EpCust	Letter to the Custodians
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin	Letter to a Minister
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies
ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
LaudDei	Praises of God
LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours.
OffPass	Office of the Passion
OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
RegB	Later Rule
RegNB	Earlier Rule
RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
Test	Testament
TestS	Testament written in Siena
UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

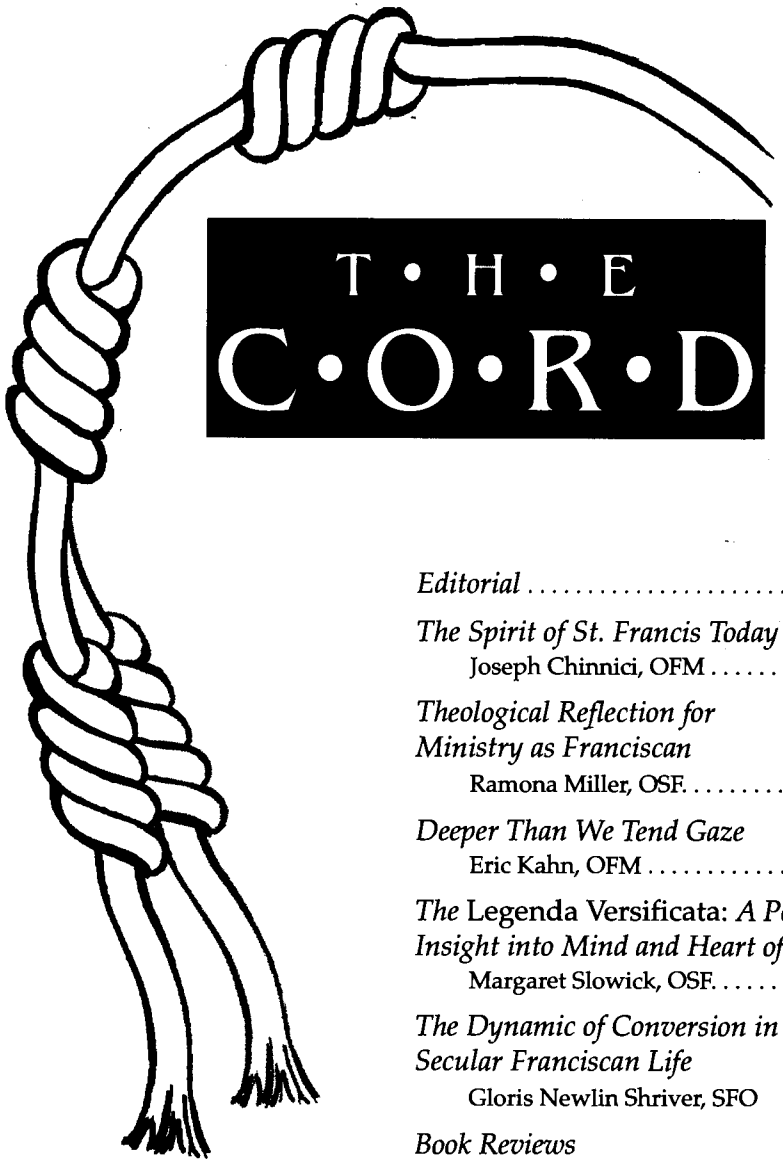
Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCl	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCl	Blessing of Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2Cel	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
AP	Anonymous of Perugia
CL	Legend of Clare
CSD	Consideration of the Stigmata
Fior	Fioretti
JdV	Witness of Jacque de Vitry
LM	Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LMin	Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LP	Legend of Perugia
L3S	Legend of the Three Companions
Proc	Acts of the Process of Canonization of St. Clare
SC	Sacrum Commercium
SP	Mirror of Perfection

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



THE CORD

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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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To save unnecessary delay and expense, contributors are asked to observe the following directives:

1. MSS should be submitted on disk or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced.
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
   Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
   (1Cor. 13:6).
   (RegNB 23:2).
   (2Cel 5:8).
   (4LAg 2:13).

A list of standard abbreviations used in *The Cord* can be found inside the back cover. The edition of the Franciscan sources used should be noted in the first reference in a mss.

Cover design: Basil Valente, OFM and David Haack, OFM.

Editorial

Spirituality, in Christian terms, is not about some other *kind* of life but about the *whole of human life at depth.*[1]

Perhaps one of the most persistent temptations in the human situation is the belief that we must "escape" our present reality in order to arrive at a more fulfilled or integral way of being. The longing to be truly different from the way we are constitutes a core restlessness in our experience. This phenomenon may simply reflect our recognition that we need to be saved.

In our Franciscan tradition we speak much about conversion—the radical turn-about that sets us "on our ear," so to speak, and truly changes us. We look to Francis's experience with the lepers as a paradigm for this radical turning. After Francis had lived among the lepers and expressed compassion for them, he was able to say: "That which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body"(Test 3). There is no intimation that Francis had been elevated to some other *kind* of life, but that his way of looking at *this* life had changed. Carlo Martini, in describing the conversion of St. Paul, says: "Paul was led to a completely new outlook on everything. . . . Now he judges his life so very differently that the exclamation which best sums up his inner response to Jesus' words on the Damascus road is this: I have got everything wrong! What I thought was of value was *not*. . . ."[2]

Conversion then cannot be construed as salvation from one kind of being and insertion into another kind of being. The reality of the Incarnation proclaims quite the contrary. Conversion is rather a fundamental shift in attitude. While remaining firmly rooted in our human being, we look at the world and our situation with new eyes, hear with new ears, discover and humbly accept that we have been wrong, and allow the Spirit to set us right.

It is precisely in our human condition that the Spirit of God is at work and at play (cf. RegB 10:8). We are called to a deeper reflection on the giftedness of our life seen as the playing field of this marvelous Spirit.

In his article, "The Spirit of St. Francis Today," Joseph Chinnici, OFM, points out to us some of the mystical possibilities in our very ordinary daily existence and demythologizes our idealization of Francis. Ramona

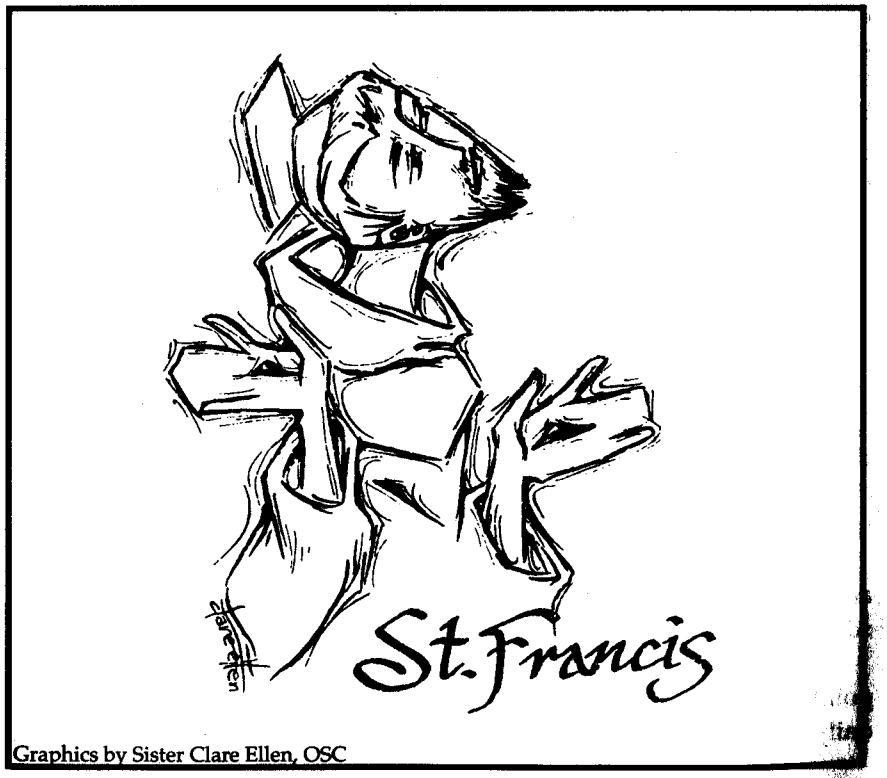
Miller, OSF, helps us understand the value of theological reflection as a tool in discovering the revelatory nature of our own experiences. Eric Kahn, OFM, challenges us to go "Deeper Than We Tend to Gaze" in probing our own blessed reality. Gloria Newlin Shriver, SFO, reflects with joy and amazement on how the Spirit has been at work and at play in her life for over seventy years. And Margaret Slowick, OSF, offers us another look at our brother, St. Francis, through the eyes of a poet who wrote a little-known early biography only now becoming available in English.

Each of these articles reminds us of how God has entered into our human situation in a definitive, irrevocable, and amazing way and insists on being one of us.

Endnotes

[1] Philip Sheldrake, SJ, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (London: SPCK, 1995) 60.

[2] Cardinal Carlo M. Martini, *The Testimony of St. Paul*, as quoted in *Living Faith* (St. Louis, MO: Creative Communications for the Parish, Jan., 1997) 25.



Graphics by Sister Clare Ellen, OSC

The Cord, 47.2 (1997)

The Spirit of St. Francis Today

Joseph Chinnici, OFM

The Death of a Saint

On December 31, 1926, Teilhard de Chardin wrote to his good friend Auguste Valensin:

> Oh, how much I would have liked to have met the St. Ignatius or St. Francis of Assisi that our age so sadly needs. What a wonderful dream, to follow a man of God along a free, fresh road, impelled by the full force of the religious life-sap *of his own time.* Very often I pray to God that I may be the ashes from which will arise, for other generations, the great blaze that our own looks for in vain.[1]

I hope we might see, in our own times, Teilhard's dream begin to be fulfilled: not only may we be the ashes but also the glowing embers which will enflame the world. There is, however, a passage we must first undergo.

Today, in many of our circles, people speak of the rebirth of myth: feminists often turn to the wellsprings of myth to rekindle a sense of dignity; we find men, following the lead of John Bradshaw and Robert Bly, beating drums, howling around campfires; others in our world are profoundly influenced by the vision of Joseph Campbell to seek the "hero with a thousand faces" within themselves. The popular psychologist and humanist prophet, Rollo May, who first pointed to the underlying anxiety of our times, has most recently analyzed the Western literary tradition—Odysseus, Hector, Dante and Beatrice, Faust, and the liberated women of the playwright Ibsen—to challenge us to internalize a pattern, a myth, which can give meaning to our often scattered lives. The myth we live by, May says,

gives a sense of personal identity; makes people into community; supports moral action; imbibes, as a constant force, the mystery of creation.[2] In many secular circles, the myth of the family—united, faithful, freed—springs from the deep soil within our hearts. For much of the world, as a single Chinese man stands before a long line of tanks in Tienamen square, the myth of freedom materializes before our very eyes. Lastly, for us as religious, the axe has been laid to the roots of the liberal tree: reweave religious life, we are told; rediscover your myth.

There can be little doubt but that the myth of Francis of Assisi has been one of the most constant and liberating forces of the religious and secular world for over six hundred years: birdbaths and forests, rivers and mountains, wolves and rabbits, brothers and sisters, the earth and the heavens—how can we not turn to this creative explosion of God's own spirit to nourish and guide our own journeys? Which one of us does not have his or her own story: How I met Francis and how my life changed.

Yet, there is also a great shadow which lies over our Franciscan family; it is, as the Scriptures would have it, "a shadow of death," and we have not liberated ourselves through the life of the resurrected Christ. That shadow hiding our own risen life belongs to Francis of Assisi.

We think of him as joyful, spontaneous, ever youthful. Who of us can be that way, at least as he was? We forget his long bouts with melancholy, despair, the anger that boils over in his writings with the frequent use of images evoking an internal cauldron of conflicting emotions. (Cf. the Admonitions.)

We think of him as poor, the Poverello, and his poverty is suffocating, embedding us who must touch money in a web of guilt. We forget that his most faithful companion, Clare, saw no difficulty in using money; or that the Poverello, for all practical purposes, owned a mountain, frequented the most beautiful places in all of Italy, set up regular rounds of begging tours, possessed the riches of a culture which gave his own poverty symbolic meaning, and gave eternal life to those who supported him. He prayed in forgotten places, which, incidentally, were probably owned by his own father. We picture him as young and try to imitate his youthfulness. Yet, it is when he is mature, racked by divorces from his own brothers and aging body and spirit that the greatest images of life come forth from his soul. We think of him as powerless. How is this possible for one who had access to local bishop, was well known in Rome, and consorted with influential friends?

In all these ways, and in so many others, the shadow cast by the myth of Francis of Assisi is long and deep, even entering into the very marrow of our own souls. I believe it is for us a "shadow of death," one probably of our own creation. We have, in short, denied Francis his humanity; we have not allowed him to die; we have not given ourselves the freedom to dismiss him, in order that we ourselves might be alive, enflamed not with imitation but with Spirit. We must allow to happen to Francis what in fact happened to the Son of God himself: he died and was buried. And only after the disciples had allowed Jesus to disappoint them, shatter their dreams, become a full human being with them, only then did they become fully aware, fully liberated; only then was the ember of the Spirit enkindled.[3]

We find the key to the acceptance of Francis's death, the granting to him of his own humanity, imperfections, limitations, vices, voiced right after his *transitus*. The following story occurs in the life of Giles of Assisi. Giles is grieving over Francis's death, and the text narrates:

> It was hard for him to resign himself to the certainty that the Poverello would never again come to visit his sons in their hermitages. Then suddenly one night in his sleep, Giles saw the saint himself. Immediately he exclaimed: "Oh, Father, I wish I could have a talk with you." Looking down at him with the kindly severity of saints, Francis replied: "If you want to talk with me, watch yourself."

The message is clear: do not grieve, nor wish for bygone times, nor seek counsel from a dead man. Instead, "stude tibi," "watch yourself." The truth is the same as that expressed in Celano's life. When he was dying, St. Francis made clear to his brothers and sisters the uniqueness of each person's response to Christ.

> He covered the wound in his right side with his left hand, lest it be seen [as if to preserve the seal of his own unique response]. And he said to his brothers: "I have done what was mine to do; may Christ teach you what you are to do" (2Cel 214).

The words of Teilhard de Chardin come back:

> Oh, how much I would have liked to have met the St. Ignatius or St. Francis of Assisi that our age so sadly needs. What a wonderful dream—to follow a man of God along a free, fresh road, impelled by the full force or the religious life-sap *of his own time.*

That person, my dear friends, for whom Teilhard longed, is each one of us, unique and together. But to allow that one to live, we must allow Francis of Assisi to die. What then will we discover?

We know that Francis was totally captured by the love of God, that is, the "all powerful, all good Lord's" first love for us. The mere thought of this One "who is without beginning and without end, unchangeable, invisible, indescribable, ineffable" taking flesh in the form of a little human being, drew Francis out of himself in praise, thanksgiving, honor, glory, and blessing. The experience took specific shape when he pondered the Eucharist:

> O sublime humility. O humble sublimity. That the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles himself that for our salvation He hides himself under the little form of bread (Ep Ord 27; cf. RegNB 23).

We stand in wonder at God's love—and we see how graced Francis must have been to be so taken up by love. Yet, have we ever stopped to ponder the fact that Francis lived in a Ptolemaic universe, one in which the earth was the center of the heavens? For him, the sun revolved around the earth, and the stars existed to give light to Assisi's evening. He lived long before the moons of Saturn or Jupiter startled Galileo's telescope; long before Uranus appeared on a photographic plate. Francis travelled in and around Assisi long before the Arctic or Antarctica were known or Western people set foot on the dusty roads of China or India; long before the new world extended the horizon of the setting sun. For Francis, Jerusalem, the Lord's own city, the city of the apocalypse, stood at the center of the world. It was here that God chose to take flesh: "O humble sublimity."

But, do we not see that in a strange sort of way, it all made some sense? For Francis, when the sun revolved around the earth and Jerusalem stood at the center and men and women were magnificent actors on the stage of the noble's court, the Incarnation sanctified the obvious. God's flesh-taking made at least some human sense in a world full of meaning. Why not become a human being when a human being is the apex of creation?

We, however, are given the great privilege of having our God take flesh not in the center of the world, nor on an earth around which the heavens revolve, but on the periphery of the entire universe, in a discarded corner which itself revolves around a larger light. If Francis was overwhelmed by God's humility, we can be absolutely stunned. Only love would do this. It makes no sense at all, but it is so beautiful.

The mystic is one who is overcome by this love in a direct experience of God, drawn out of himself or herself in praise, gratitude, adoration, wonder, joy. How good God is! I believe that our times are seeing a rebirth

of this Franciscan mystic; we live in a privileged moment; we are in fact the flames of fire. In conclusion, I would like to give two examples which correspond to some characteristics of this ever so slightly visible "fire on the earth" kindled by the Franciscan mystic.

Recently I was speaking to a young Franciscan who had been a missionary in Japan. He told me the following story:

> My conversion happened this way. Once, when I was wandering the streets of Tokyo, I came across a small chapel; curious, I entered and discovered a small group of people sitting in a circle on the ground around an altar, at which a priest was celebrating Eucharist. Everything seemed normal; nothing unusual at all. Yet, when the priest came to the communion rite, he held up the host, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." As I looked the host came alive; it turned into the globe, flowers and trees, fruits and berries, rivers and mountains, people here and there; all came to life in the bread of the world. Behind it, I saw an image of the Savior, hands stretched out, offering to me: "Take and eat." The people passed the plate around, and I ate.

Such an experience is perhaps startling. It is also true. And a person like you and me saw it. From God's perspective, the food we have to eat is the bread of this world, the lives of our brothers and sisters, united on one globe. The Franciscan mystic is one who can see this vision and, even not seeing it, act from its perspective.

Francis had this insight only at the end of his life; his testament is the Canticle of the Creatures. We, my sisters and brothers, know this God of our world at the very foundation of our lives. We know more than Francis dreamed; our God is larger than even Francis imagined, our world smaller and more one, and the Incarnation that much more beautiful. Our relationship to Francis is similar to that of the disciples to Jesus: "I solemnly assure you, the one who has faith in me will do the works I do, and greater far than these. Why? Because I go to the Father, and whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so as to glorify the Father in the Son" (Jn. 14:12-13).

And the consequences of being this Franciscan mystic of the globe are vast—we will spend our lives giving witness to its universal birth.

Last year I was privileged to speak with a group of secular Franciscans. A woman came to the meeting, one whom very few knew. She only came to see. She walked with a cane, and fastened on the cane was a flower bud just beginning to blossom. It was an unusual sight, and my eye and heart were captured immediately. An old woman, a cane, a blossoming flower. I asked, and she told me the story of her insight.

As I began to get older, very arthritic and sore, I had to use a cane. Always extremely active, I refused. It was impossible to walk; yet I struggled proudly on. The doctor just laughed at my refusal to bend to the obvious, but I hated the cane. Finally, I had to capitulate. The cane became a daily companion. I still hated it; it made me mad. The struggle continued for months. Once, late at night, I got on my knees and prayed to the Blessed Virgin and Our Lord: I cannot stand this; you must help me, or the bitterness of my sufferings will eat me up. I went to sleep, and when I woke up, I turned over in the bed and looked up to the the statue of the Virgin Mary which had always been on my mantle. She held a flower. And it came to me: "Put a flower on the cane, and the wood of the cross will blossom into life."

I do not think this woman's experience is unusual. She has come to understand that love alone can bear the freight of our daily, often dreary plod. This is a truth which Francis realized to its depths only later in his life. Yet for us, who live in a world of violence, chaos, and a questioning anxiety about the fruit of our own small efforts—for us, the flower on the wood of the cross is the daily gift from our risen Lord; the cane, a share in his human life. Our Franciscan mystic is the one who makes this experience alive. Love is the beginning and the end. Once again, history challenges us to begin where Francis only left off.

In conclusion, we might ask, what will happen when we begin to live this mystic life, when Christ comes to rebirth in our world?

In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is,
since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd,
patch, matchwood, immortal diamond
Is immortal diamond.[4]

Endnotes

[1] As cited in Henri de Lubac, SJ, *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, trans. Rene Hague (New York: Desclee Company, 1967) 20.

[2] Cf. Rollo May, *The Cry for Myth* (London: W. W. Norton, 1991) especially pp. 30-31.

[3] Cf. Sebastian Moore, *Jesus, Liberator of Desire* (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

[4] Raphael Brown, *Franciscan Mystic: The Life of Blessed Brother Giles of Assisi, Companion of St. Francis* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1962) 121.

[5] G. M. Hopkins, "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection," *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W. H. Gardner and N. H. Mackenzie (London: Oxford University Press, 1967) 106.

Theological Reflection for Ministry as Franciscan

Ramona Miller, OSF

[This is a revised form of a paper presented at the Franciscan Networking Seminar in Colorado Springs, CO, February, 1995.]

A model for theological reflection on our ministry as Franciscan is timely for local community usage as Franciscans wonder about their mission identity. Jesus' disciples returned to Jesus after being separated from him for ministry. Upon their return they related to Jesus all that they had accomplished (Lk. 9:10). In the same way we come into our local community gatherings to tell our stories. The disciples were bewildered that they could not cure a boy who was possessed by a demon. After Jesus had cured the boy, the disciples questioned why their ministry was ineffective. He replied: "Because you have so little trust" (Mt. 17:14-21). The end of that pericope in Matthew's Gospel states: "This kind does not leave but by prayer and fasting." So too, in our own process, we may come to a moment of awareness that our ministry requires more prayer and fasting. More often, however, the process enlightens us as to how God has been present in our experiences, even when we did not recognize God in the events.

What is theological reflection? According to Rosemary O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, it is

> the artful practice of bringing our lives into conversation with our Christian heritage in a way that nurtures insights for us and for the tradition. We are called to engage our lives and our Christian heritage from a standpoint of exploration, willing to trust that God is present in our experience and that our religious tradition has something to give us. Theological reflection offers challenge and

support, frustration and delight, growth and celebration to Christian individuals and communities who persevere in the practice.[1]

We prepare for the theological reflection process by recalling our experiences of ministry in order to share them with one another. Much like an artist who studies the specific parts of a beautiful flower in order to appreciate it, we reflect upon the stories of our lives to gain a better understanding of what it is that we are about. The process may enlighten us to recognize the revelation of God that we missed in the initial encounter. We might also become aware that there are certain aspects of our ministry which invite us to further compassion and contemplation. The outcome of regular theological reflection in our local groups has many blessings for our lives together:

1. We see each other's ordinariness with the eyes of faith.
2. We hear how the Spirit of God is alive and ever new in the contexts in which we share our talents, our values, our compassion.
3. We come to understand that our lives are intertwined with God, and this makes us become conscious and faithfully deliberate in our living.[2]

The potential outcome for Franciscans who regularly do theological reflection is a revitalization of their ministry. We are less likely to become apathetic or stressed out when we regularly process in our local communities the ways in which we perceive God's presence in our lives and the lives of those around us. This theological reflection also leads to more conscious and dedicated planning for improved ministry.

Theological reflection designed to be used by local gatherings of Franciscans has four components:

1. Personal Anecdote
2. Franciscan Tradition
3. Contrasts/Comparisons
4. Conclusion

Participants come with an openness and readiness to share a personal anecdote from their ministry. The group leader prepares a prayer that includes a reading from the Franciscan tradition. Following the sharing of personal anecdotes and a reading from traditional sources, participants name contrasts and comparisons between the Franciscan tradition and their personal anecdotes. A brief conclusion gathers the exchange into a consciousness that nurtures persons as they return to their ministries.

Personal Anecdote

Good theological reflection depends on our clarity in telling the stories of our own experiences. This is really quite easy if we compare it to the type of storytelling we do when we get back a new set of photos that has just been developed. Imagine that you have just received such a set. The delight in remembering incidents that these snapshots bring to mind is such that we find someone in our local group and say, "Look at this!" We comment on whether it is a good picture or not and why we have the facial expressions that the photographer captured. The experience of looking at recent photographs offers an analogy for selecting the personal anecdote for theological reflection. We come to our small group session prepared to share a story of a specific moment from our recent ministerial experience. We prepare ourselves by recalling our ministries over the past few days—like looking at film that has just been developed.

In reviewing the events we might bring to the theological reflection process, three criteria are helpful. First, we select a concrete human experience from our ministry that has affective energy connected with the experience—an energy that engages us at a feeling level when we relate the ministerial encounter. Second, we choose an anecdote that can be told in concrete terms without any religious interpretation or evaluative judgment in relating the incident. It is best not to spiritualize the story at this point. Third, we choose to share some specific moment which we desire to understand better. Perhaps we feel a sense of veiled mystery regarding a ministerial encounter and would like the group to assist us in understanding it better in the context of Franciscan ministry. It is helpful for the reflection process to focus on a specific moment so the concrete details can be visualized by the listeners in the group.

The first part of the communal theological reflection process is to listen to each other's stories without discussion. The very articulation of each one's experience gives the meaning of ministry a new dimension. Listening attentively to our brothers and sisters in this process is an ascetic exercise. We are not to jump in and solve whatever problems we have heard; we are to listen with our hearts and pay attention to how the Spirit of God has been at work. In this we are motivated by the counsel of Francis who directs us to "pursue what [we] desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (RegB 10:8). Listening, we become aware of the movement of the Spirit both within ourselves and within others. This awareness leads us to appreciate that God is in the very midst of the apostolic activity that absorbs our full attention and energy during so many of our waking hours. When we tell our own story we often gain

new insights. The new insights about the Spirit of God at work are the expected outcomes of our personal involvement in theological reflection.

Keep in mind that the goal of theological reflection is not discussion for its own sake, nor arrival at a resolution for action. Rather, the first goal is the process itself—to recognize the Divine Presence in a particular situation and to respond to it. The first faith response is walking confidently with the knowledge of the Divine Presence in us and with us in our ministry. We are led to contemplation. Like Mary, the first disciple, the prototype of all Christians, we ponder everything in our hearts as a contemplative act in the midst of our activity. We might even say that a fringe benefit of this process is to become more contemplative, because hearing the stories of the ministerial encounters of others deepens our appreciation that Franciscan ministry is incarnating the actions of Jesus in a new context, moving toward humanity in humility.[3]

The group leader has a significant role in the process. The leader's first task is to be the timekeeper, guaranteeing that all have an opportunity to share their stories. The leader then helps the group choose an anecdote which will be the focus for the contrast/comparison part of the process. The leader guides the group in discovering insights through comparing the ministry discussed and the Franciscan tradition.

Franciscan Tradition

The story of Francis's encounter with the wolf offers rich symbolic meaning for theological reflection and is a good choice for a beginning experience.[4] The story has borne the test of time as a significant aspect of Franciscan lore because it captures the heart of the matter of Franciscan ministry:

Francis went to those on the margins to bring help—a word of comfort, material sustenance when it was available, and in the most extreme cases, simply a sharing in their suffering and unhappiness. This was, according to Manselli, what made Francis's so different from other religious movements, both heterodox and orthodox, contemporary to him.[5] In other words, Francis did not wait for people to come to him for help. [6]

The two theme words for Franciscan ministry, compassion and contemplation, are displayed in Francis's approach to the wolf at Gubbio. Before the Gubbio incident, contemplation had been transforming Francis for some time. A favorite story of the change in Francis, a change from insecurity to confidence, from depression to joy, from guilt to freedom of heart, can be found in Celano's first life of Francis (1Cel 26). There Celano describes a troubled Francis going into a cave of solitude and later coming

forth a completely changed person. It is the continuous faithfulness to contemplation that transforms a person into a peacemaker who lives by the principles of nonviolence. Nonviolence is never passivity, but an assertive, loving activity fueled with courage. Francis exercised the principles of nonviolence in his decision to bring about reconciliation, a peace pact, between the wolf and the people. The love shown toward the wolf required that the wolf's reputation be spared, and the people of Gubbio were brought to a new level of consciousness of compassion for a hungry animal.

Contrasts/Comparisons

Our task in the dialogue session in our local community is to contrast the chosen aspect of the Franciscan tradition with our own lived experience. We are making meaning out of our lives. We are journeying toward insight. Insights lead to significant understandings that strengthen and/or shift our sense of who we are in relation to God, self, other, and the world.[7]

The importance of paying attention to our feelings has already been noted. We want to listen to our feelings during our own self-disclosure, but also listen during the dialog to the voices of the people absent, the people with whom we are engaged in ministry. Leonardo Boff, among other great voices in liberation theology, directs us to listen to the cry of the poor.[8] The embodiment of our ministry experience is named by our emotional responses that lead us to insights compelling us to praxis. If we read such voices only objectively and give only intellectual assent, we are not moved to praxis. It was Francis's affective experience of overcoming his disgust with the lepers and finding sweetness in the ministry that directed him to continuous ministry with the lepers.

During the time of theological reflection, compare the inner strength of Francis with the witness of your Franciscan brother or sister. Affirm the display of inner truth that reveals the Spirit of God at work. A word of caution—don't hurry past the naming of feelings that are being experienced in the telling of the ministry event. In focusing on an incident, each participant will come to images of the Divine Presence through awareness of feelings. Both the person who introduced the anecdote and the participants engaged in the process of contrast/comparison will benefit more fully from being mindful of the feelings. Are we feeling compassion? anger? fear? joy? These arouse images within us that provide a connection with our experience and direct our reflective attention to it in new ways.[9]

Pondering the image can surprise us and lead us to insights. Images and metaphors convey the energy of common but very profound human experiences. For example, if recounting a ministry experience that has con-

flict in it leads us to naming the wolf image, we can get great insights about how to approach the ministry with the wisdom that Francis exercised at Gubbio. The image itself gives strength and direction. Insights lead to actions. Listening to one another helps us to see what the ministry has been and leads to insights that enlighten us about new actions to be taken toward the outcomes we hope for in the ministry.

One might wonder what obstacles there are to theological reflection. According to Robert Kinast, there are three: reliance on external authority, a lack of imagination, and self-protection.[10]

Reliance on external authority: we must learn to trust our own inner voice and our experience and not dismiss it because it is different from the external authority. Jesus' own example of responding to the Jews that his doctrine was not his own, but from the Father, empowers us to pay attention to the inner authority that comes from contemplation.

Lack of imagination: this is overcome by Franciscans steeped in Franciscan lore. Studying the primary sources of the Franciscan tradition funds the imagination with stories of the experiences of Francis and Clare. The more study we do the more able we are to make the connections between the Franciscan charism in the Church and our own lived experience.

Self-protection: we are humans who are not yet fully redeemed, and so the obstacle of protecting ourselves from exposure of our own weaknesses in ministry can hinder the outcome of a group theological reflection. Prayer for humility is appropriate before attending our local community gathering.

Conclusion

The result of this local community process will be less than a detailed plan for a corporate response to a societal evil. The first outcome of the process is a recognition of God's presence in our human experiences, experiences that deepen in us compassion and contemplation. The entire reflection process trusts the human experience. If the personal anecdote which is chosen for the group process has disturbing elements about it, the participants might ask themselves what they can learn about God through reflecting on this story. For example, if the process leads to a decision to terminate a ministry, it is helpful to recall Jesus' words found in all the Synoptic Gospels: shake the town's dust from your feet and go on (Mk. 6:11; Mt. 10:14; Lk. 9:5).

In our local communities, we would ordinarily allow a maximum of ninety minutes for the entire theological reflection process. The leader begins to draw the sharing to a conclusion about five to ten minutes before the end. The conclusion can take a variety of forms: shared prayer and/or a resolution for action and/or a question for further reflection to be continued at the next gathering and/or blessings of all persons that they may go forth with great affirmation. Of course, in true Franciscan fashion, a celebration follows, with music and food.

Endnotes

[1] Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1994) 143.

[2] Anthony F. Krisak, "Theological Reflection: Unfolding the Mystery," *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers*, ed. Robert J. Wicks (New York: Paulist, 1995) 309.

[3] Michael Blastic, "Contemplation and Compassion: A Franciscan Ministerial Spirituality," unpublished paper delivered at the Franciscan Networking Seminar in Colorado Springs, Feb. 13, 1995.

[4] For sources from which to paraphrase this story, see "Little Flowers of St. Francis," *Omnibus* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983) 1348-9; Julien Greene, *God's Fool* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985) 218-20.

[5] Raoul Manselli, *St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Paul Duggan (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 19988) 96.

[6] Blastic 4.

[7] Killen 21.

[8] Leonardo Boff, *Faith on the Edge* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989).

[9] Killen 28.

[10] Robert L. Kinast, *If Only You Recognized God's Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993) 27-62.

The Incarnation jolts the whole system.
And Francis was deeply aware of one moment in history—the moment that God entered creation and the Word was made flesh. For Francis this event sent shock waves through the whole network of dust and flesh. Not only was human nature made holy by the Incarnation; the whole fabric of creation was also charged with the divine presence.

(Jack Wintz, Lights: Revelations of God's Goodness [Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1995] 62.)

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Deeper Than We Tend To Gaze

Eric Kahn, OFM

"My brothers/sisters, think what sort of people you are—whom God has called" (1Cor. 1:26). The words are Paul's. The call he speaks of is God's. The response is ours to make—or not. I offer reflections about God's call, particularly as it affects our prayer experience.

Paul's words convey a reality that lies deep in the love relationship between God and us. What reality? That God loves us. That God makes a dwelling place in our heart. That God pours the Spirit of Jesus into our heart and in that Spirit draws us deeper into God's self, deeper into the relationship that exists between God and Jesus. The Spirit, in fact, is that relationship; we are invited to share it. Francis's words have a persuasion of their own: "Let us make a home and dwelling place for Him who is the Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (RegNB 22:27).

Another part of the reality is that, at some point in our existence, God invited our response in a way that matched well the gifts and inclinations God had from birth planted within us. Each of us has, basically, responded with a YES. The continuing fidelity of the YES depends primarily not on anything we do or think or say. It depends primarily on God's fidelity to us; on God's constant, ever-faithful, never-failing love.

Still another element of the reality is that God invites us to enter ever more deeply into a love relationship with God's self. Within that relationship God reveals us more and more to ourselves. Working lovingly within our being and our experience, God transforms us. That is, God draws us away from ego-centered selfishness, ego-centered decisions, ego-centered plans and projects, even thwarts our best intentions in soliciting a trust that empties us. God moves us, instead, toward a more ego-less centering in God and in the things that God is concerned about. Such things may not correspond with our concerns. To the degree that our ego is wrapped up in our own concerns, we are probably not going to like being moved away from them. The usual response is resistance, struggle. And we may not

recognize the full import of God's action within us until long after.

The Assisi General Chapter of 1985 approved the following as part of its final document: "Like Francis, we want to be more and more transformed by our encounter with God in His Word and in Christ, poor and crucified."[1] Unless this assertion is to languish as gratuitous, for use merely as ornamentation assuaging our need to say the right things, we face a personal and collective challenge. Nothing of this transformation can happen without our being receptive. Receptivity to God's transforming action ordinarily occurs best as we spend time regularly, daily, with God in solitary prayer. One way to refer to such time is to call it meditation. However accurate this term might be, it is helpful to understand it as contemplation, as this has long been understood in the centuries-old tradition of Christian experience.

There are precedents. A notable one is Francis, as the above quotation from the 1985 general chapter more than hints. The men who first joined him also epitomize this response. Furthermore, the flavor of the charism that Francis passes on to us in the Franciscan family is such that we will assimilate it all the more surely and reflect it all the more faithfully through being people of prayer—regular, daily, solitary prayer.

The biographical sources report that when Francis was in his early twenties, having survived a debilitating prison experience in Perugia, his life began to change. He became more reflective, more quiet. He purposely took time to reflect, to process what was happening to him. He spent much time, in fact, praying for guidance in the caves scattered on Mount Subasio near Assisi.

Silence, solitude, and prayer—these are three essential elements that accompanied the gradual development of Francis's call. These elements remained strong throughout the rest of his life. They were so important that, at one point, Francis struggled to know more clearly whether the silent, contemplative dimension ought to predominate over the more active. His resolution in the end reflects his option for life as he believed Jesus had lived it: a combination of both the contemplative and the ministerial. Francis combines them in such a way that both are essential, the one flowing from and feeding into the other. Ever since, both these elements have belonged to our Franciscan heritage. Our usual temptation is to emphasize one at the expense of the other.

Granting that life was much simpler in 1215, the picture that emerges from the sources is noteworthy. Once Francis and the brothers had returned from Rome, they lived for a while at Rivo Torto, then at the Portiuncula. It seems they dwelt in small, private huts around the chapel of St. Mary of the Angels. Some manual work close by, or a bit of unpretentious preaching occupied their day. When they gathered at the Portiuncula, especially

upon returning from proclaiming peace and repentance for the forgiveness of sins, they would share a simple meal. Then they would share their experiences and confess their faults to one another. Francis would speak words of encouragement, of affirmation, of support—words based on gospel values, words processed through his own prayer, his own experience (cf.1Cel 29-30). Some of these words have come to us in what we call his Admonitions. And the brothers would pray together—possibly some common vocal prayer. Most likely, they also gave themselves over to a silent, contemplative, listening, receptive sort of prayer, during which time they just let themselves be loved by God and tried to love God in return. Given the strong affective proclivity in Francis, the prayer of the brothers possibly found expression in utterances of love and adoration and so on, but if they spent any of this time in common, they probably were not too vocal about it.

Nothing is reported in the sources concerning the length of time the brothers spent in quiet prayer. There was no such thing as a schedule. That was a later development. Possibly it reflects a move toward a more monastic way of living as well as an ongoing struggle to remain faithful to common prayer in the face of various ministerial demands.

Nowhere in his writings, including the Rule, does Francis legislate for contemplative praying. He does a bit of legislating for common vocal prayer. In this regard, he seems to value highly the experience of the community that prays together vocally. But for solitary, silent, contemplative prayer, Francis makes no rules.

However, note the tenor of his approach. He says the friars should "not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotedness to which all other things of our earthly existence must contribute" (RegB 5:2); and: "let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and his holy manner of working" (RegB 10:8). These directives, together with his own practice, suggest that Francis takes it for granted that his brothers will be serious about and faithful to their own contemplative praying.

The Christian call is a call to belong to God. It invites full surrender of everything into God's hands, in complete trust. The Christian call, furthermore, is a call to deep prayer. We would risk self-delusion were we to treat this call in a superficial, cavalier manner or to keep running interference by introducing a constant barrage of images into our hearts and minds. Excessive television watching, over-loading the calendar with ministerial commitments, no leisure time for healthy relaxation—these threaten fidelity and commitment to deep prayer. To neglect God's call in this regard could well be to hoodwink not only ourselves but any others who come asking for guidance on their own spiritual pathway.

In short, our call is to transforming union with God. We need to allow ourselves to be changed by God—to be so loved by God that we patiently undergo the purifying alterations God finds necessary. This is challenging, to say the least. It is often difficult and painful. Why? Because it means we have to let go of our ego and its selfish intents. In gospel terms, this is to lose life in order truly to find it.[2]

We Franciscans have been attracted by the life and the ways and the spirit of Francis and Clare of Assisi. God planted in our hearts seeds that gradually flowered with blossoms carrying something of Francis's or Clare's own original charism. It is not ours to imitate by mimicking either of them. We do not reproduce historically the setting or the furniture of their era. Our responsibility is to be fully open to the workings and the inspirations of the Spirit of Jesus in our hearts and lives for these our times just as Francis and Clare were open for theirs. As a result, we will more truly carry among people of today the spirit and flavor and joy and peace that so characterized Francis and Clare. Such openness to Jesus' Spirit includes receptivity in solitary prayer.

Whatever happens around us exerts an influence on our lives as Franciscans. There are consequences for the way we address our call and our prayer. I will indicate something of what I see having occurred and what is still going on. You may be aware of other influences as well.

1) Honest attempts at renewal over the years have led us to explore our roots in Francis and in Clare. We have become reacquainted with these two, who are practically-speaking co-founders. The values that inspirited them shine more clearly in our hearts and on the path we would walk. Recent chapter-meetings and planning processes have engaged our energies to implement what we have learned.

2) We have a genuine concern among us for the healthy experience of fraternity and, correspondingly, for the leisure that makes the exercise of this concern possible.

3) We have agreed upon priorities that manifest our approach to a world yearning for good news: a) the contemplative dimension of our vocation; b) an option for the poor, to which we join a desire to help the poor achieve justice and peace; c) formation in the missionary spirit, knowing that if we are to evangelize, we must first be evangelized.[3]

4) The very real demands of ministry seem to increase in inverse proportion to our decreasing numbers. The risk of turning ourselves into social activists is real enough. It can make of us ministerial do-gooders who work energetically, but sometimes without the empowering that

flows only from a deep love-relationship with Jesus. There is risk, also, of simply becoming too tired, burnt out, because there's always too much to do. Needs of ministry sometimes drive ministers to the point of exhaustion, where they need healing themselves.

5) There is an attitude in our culture which promotes the image of "the giver." To do and to be for others is seen as fulfillment. When this attitude is strong, it creates within us an ego that cannot receive, an ego that finds difficulty in genuine recreative leisure, to say nothing of the contemplative leisure which allows us to be simply before God in a listening, receptive stance.[4]

6) The influence of television during these last fifty years or so has gradually created a society of couch potatoes. That is receptivity of a far different sort. It is a kind of "marinating" in values other than those of the gospel. What consequences this has had for Franciscan ministry and community life and prayer I leave to the assessment of the astute observer. It is possible to wonder what would be the effect were fidelity to personal prayer equal to the faithfulness of watching weekend sporting events and to the enduring of countless, mindless commercials.

7) There is a spirit of appropriation that creeps subversively into our hearts. Things become "mine" almost without advertence. On the face of it we have vowed not to acquire, but the blatant consumerism of our culture is difficult to resist. We are constantly badgered to get what we honestly do not need. Commercial-makers and advertisers play to our wants, and the attraction is quite powerful. Things that enter the house as community acquisitions, available for the use of all in some common location, seductively multiply, becoming treasures for individual use in the sanctuary of one's own room. Years ago, it was books. The list now bristles with items both unique and somewhat pricey. To suggest contents for the list is perhaps moot. It's no dark secret that individuals possess television sets, VCRs, phones, stereos, CD players, and so on. Legitimate needs do exist; it is a mark of wisdom not to cast stones. In any case, self-assessment is a healthy practice. Still, it is possible to hazard a few questions. What is the impact on fraternity of personal acquisitiveness? How does it affect attempts to build faith-community? How does catering to wants—or even to needs—influence the deep wells of the inner spirit? attentiveness to God? purity of heart, that single-pointedness which is so beneficial—even essential—for a genuine spirit of prayer? "To which," claims Francis, "all other things of our earthly existence must contribute" (RegB 5.2).[5]

8) Finally there are numerous workshops, pilgrimages, retreat experiences, lectures at Franciscan schools, the publication of works by Franciscan mystics—all based solidly on an expertise that itself is rooted in the spirit of Francis and of Clare. These experiences can only promote our familiarity with what drew us to Franciscan life in the first place. A great gift to our times.

I offer now a listing of a different sort: faith convictions. That is, convictions of a reality ordinarily not subject to sense-perception but real nonetheless. These convictions are often the result of personal experience of the Holy and/or communicated by others who themselves have experienced the Holy. The reality in question is rooted in Jesus and in the gospel—a reality, therefore, that once introduced into our hearts, binds us to God.

1) There is power in the Word of God—power to enliven, to energize. Francis's acquaintance with the Word is rightly recognized as legendary. What do we do with it, how do we listen as we hear it read or read it ourselves, how do we treat it once it's planted within us?—all questions that stimulate reflection.[6]

2) God dwells in us. This is simply true. In our center, in our deepest being, God makes a home. In our center, God utters a Word: Jesus. As John of the Cross puts it: "The Father spoke one Word, which was His Son, and this Word He always speaks in eternal silence, and in silence must It be heard by the soul."[7]

3) Renewal, to be effective, must occur at the interior level of personal relationship with God. Such renewal grows best out of contemplative receptivity to God's transforming love. Without that all our meetings, all our continuing education and ongoing formation, all our revamping of liturgical expressions, all our conferences and workshops will mostly fill our heads with wonderful ideas, stimulate our intellects, and probably leave us wondering why we yet remain restless, not truly satisfied deep within. The mind has been tickled, some inspiration perhaps afforded; the deep inner spirit, however, has been left untouched.

4) Paul is right: "The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. We do not even know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings" (Rom. 8:26). The upshot is that there is no need to fuss over techniques for getting into prayer. It is not even *our* prayer. Truth to tell, there's only *one* prayer, the prayer that Jesus makes. This prayer is not necessarily words that Jesus addresses to the

Father. Rather, it is prayer that rises out of the living relationship of love that exists between Jesus and the Father. This is the same mutual bond of love which dwells within us--the Spirit. We're invited into the prayer Jesus makes. He is making it within our heart. It is a prayer of adoration, rising up from Jesus within, who is ever receptive, alert, listening, and attuned to God within our heart. "And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:27). It seems to me that we will be an effective witness of the Holy the more we allow ourselves to manifest, as unselfconsciously as possible, this relationship of love between God and us.

John Main, OSB, says:

> It has always been the Church's teaching that the spiritual life of the members of a religious community should be their first responsibility. More often the reality has been that the good works in which religious have engaged become supreme. Because the work is given priority, one of the "sacrifices" the religious makes is of his or her personal life of prayer. The crisis facing the Church's religious life has its origin in this radical distortion of the religious vocation.[8]

I am uncertain whether there is much difference now, in our day, regarding the crisis John Main specifies. I am certain of the importance of deep, interior prayer for vital Franciscan living.

Endnotes

[1] *Our Call to Evangelization: Proposals for Action*, n. 22.

[2] "As Francis, we also experience God's presence through contemplation. By a contemplative stance we free ourselves from our own distortions and from destructive relationships. Thus we are able to know God's presence even in dehumanized situations" (*Our Call to Evangelization*,n.11).

[3] Cf. *Our Call to Evangelization* and *A Message from Bangalore* (1988).

[4] Cf. RegNB 22:25-26 for some cautionary words from Francis that have a bearing on a receptive stance before the Lord.

[5] Clare uses the same words when she writes of preserving the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion (RCl 7:2). There are still other dimensions to this formidable challenge. For example: "Each fraternity and each individual friar, in the use of material things, should choose poorer things and refuse to have or to buy superfluous things, in order to provide a prophetic witness contrary to increasing consumerism" (*Our Call to Evangelization* n. 23:3).

[6] For further encouragement from Francis, cf. RegNB 22:41.

[7] *Maxims and Counsels* 21, in *The Collected Works*, trans. Kavanaugh and Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1979) 675.

[8] John Main, *Letters from the Heart* (New York, Crossroad, 1982) 35.

The Cord, 47.2 (1997)

The *Legenda Versificata* by Henry of Avranches: A Poet's Insight into the Mind and Heart of Francis

Margaret Slowick, OSF

The first volume of the new *Omnibus*, presently in preparation, will include the first English publication of the *Legenda S. Francisci Versificata*, the versified legend of the life of Francis by Henry of Avranches. This text is significant for a number of reasons. Dating back to 1231, it is the first life of Francis we have following the *Vita Prima* of Thomas of Celano, appearing just two years after Thomas's text.

It is evident that Henry draws heavily from Thomas's work. The content and the order in which his work appears follow Celano almost exactly. From this we can conclude that Thomas's life of Francis was quickly disseminated and widely read. Henry's reliance on the text also gives us evidence to indicate that the *Vita Prima* was generally accepted as an accurate portrayal of Francis. But the value of the *Legenda Versificata* lies in much more than being an indicator of the rapid and widespread acceptance of Celano's work. Henry interprets and develops the events of the *Vita Prima* with a poet's eye, giving us unique insights into the mind and heart of Francis. In this article I will demonstrate in particular how Henry portrays Francis's inner life during his early years and the time of his conversion.

Commissioned by Pope Gregory IX to write the official *legenda* of Francis's life, Thomas of Celano completed the *Vita Prima* around the year 1229. In the tradition of official hagiographical texts, Thomas presented a portrait of Francis which would cultivate his memory and inspire others to share in his life of holiness. Throughout the text he shows evidence of Francis's sainthood and points to the Spirit of God at work in Francis. Although it is very much in the hagiographical tradition of his day, Thomas's work is not merely the standard saint's hagiography with the names and details tailored to fit Francis. Thomas goes further into the unique aspects

of Francis's life—he uses both Francis's own writings and the facts and witnesses available to him to see to it that this legenda accurately reflects the spirit, the tenor, and the actual experiences of Francis's own life. Thomas also includes his own editorial comments and interpretations regarding the events of Francis's life and arranges the work into a masterful theological framework. Throughout all three books of the *Vita Prima*, Thomas emphasizes the fact that Francis was a model of holiness for all his readers. The invitation to participation in holiness, in the communion of saints, is there for each person that reads and is inspired by this text, and it is truly a universal invitation. As God was made manifest in the lives of the saints, so too can God be made manifest in our own lives.

The *Legenda S. Francisci Versificata* by Henry of Avranches offers us additional insights into the life of Francis as we put on the mind of a poet. Very little is known about the life of Henry of Avranches. He was born between 1190 and 1200 and died in 1254. The most recent scholarship seems to indicate that he was a Franciscan friar and a deacon in a southern Netherlands church. As recently as 1935, however, he was believed not to have been a Franciscan.[1] There is no disagreement that he was a poet, however, and in some sources he is referred to as Master Henry the Versifier.[2] He is especially known for his liturgical texts. Early references to Henry note that he was the author of the *Life of St. Birin*, from which four lines on beer were apparently often quoted.[3]

With its date of 1231, the *Legenda Versificata* is the earliest text we have on the life of Francis other than Thomas of Celano's *Vita Prima.* Henry's poem falls into the category of versified hagiography, a medieval literary genre. It would have been written to be recited and to be an inspiration to those who heard it. Although it is an invaluable development to have the text available in English, it is of course true that any translation out of the original Latin loses some of the beauty of the original poetry, with its rhythmic meter and plays on words.[4] One of the most beautiful examples is found in Book IV, lines 139-143 (144-150 in the Latin text), in which Francis is described as being all things to all people, in language which makes him appear to be an image of Jesus himself:

Nam ieiunorum sicut dapifer, sitientum
Sicut pincerna, nudorum sicut amictus,
Desolatorum sicut solamen, egentum
Sicut divitiae, profugorum sicut asylum,
Et pupillorum sicut pater, et viduarum
Sicut sponsus erat generaliter, et fluitantum
Sicut prosperitas. . . .

[He was like a waiter to the hungry,
Like a wine-steward to the thirsty,
like a garment to the naked,
like solace to the lonely,
like riches to the needy,
like asylum to the exile,
like a father to the orphan,
like a spouse to the widow,
and like good fortune to the drifter.][5]

In passages such as these, it is clear that Henry's genius as a poet enables him to touch the imagination and heart of the reader or listener in a way that prose cannot. The beauty of Henry's poetic images throughout this work helps the reader feel a connection with Francis and the events of his life, a connection which could well inspire one to the hope of imitation. And this was certainly Henry's intent, for he writes at the conclusion of his work, "May we to his [Francis's] company be led by Christ."

In spite of the fact that Celano's and Henry's works are of two different genres, the similarity between the two is obvious. As mentioned earlier, the content and chronology of Henry's text follows Celano's almost exactly. This is evident from the following brief outline:

Content	*Vita Prima*	*Legenda Versificata*
Prologue/Purpose	Prologue 1-2	I 1-31
Licentious youth	1-2	I 32-69
Conversion: General; illness	3	I 70-182
Apulia	4-6	I 183-233
Cave experiences	6-7	I 234-II 2
Before his father	10-16	II 205-III 189
Leaving Assisi; lepers	17	IV 1-161
San Damiano: Repairing the church	18-20	IV 162-182
Poor ladies	18-20	IV 183-207
Hearing the Gospel	22	V 1-36
Preaching	23, 36-37	V 37-102
Early brothers	24-54	V 103ff, VI, VII
Fiery chariot	47	II 46-60
Trip to Holy Land	55-57	VII 133-VIII 225

Animals and nature	58-61	IX 1-70
Miracles	62-70	IX 71-198
Virtues	71-83	X-XI 95
Greccio	84-87	XI 96
Stigmata	88-96	XII
Death and burial	105-118	XIII, XIV 1-32
Canonization	119-126	XIV 41-82
Posthumous miracles	127-150	XIV 33-40
Conclusion	151	XIV 83-92

It is likely that Henry worked directly from Celano's text, which was the official document commemorating Francis's life as a saint. When one looks at interpretations and emphases however, it becomes apparent that there are differences throughout the two texts. As a poet, Henry was able to present Francis's inner life, his thoughts and feelings, in a way that Celano could not. Reading the text of Henry the Versifier gives one a feeling of connection with Francis that Celano's text, masterful as it is, does not accomplish.

This is especially evident in passages dealing with Francis's early life. In chapter 2 for instance, Celano refers to Francis as a vain person, "evilly advancing beyond all of his peers in vanities," but nevertheless "a rather kindly person." And in chapter 3, he writes that Francis was "seething with sins out of youthful passion." But Henry uses his poet's imagination to take us further into the inner workings of Francis's mind and heart:

> The boy's mother was upright, unpretentious and kind;
> His merchant father violent and sly.
> . . .
> The boy sees his parents' contrasting characters;
> From the two ways he decides to follow the wrong one;
> . . .
> With no thought for his soul and indulging his flesh,
> Judging naught with his head, but all with emotion.[6]

And rather than simply stating that Francis was, in spite of his sinfulness, still "rather kindly," Henry gives us greater insight into his character:

> Yet his character, naturally good,
> Was by evil unalloyed. . . .
> Despite these failings so knavish he maintains
> Certain traces of virtue that fail to see practice.[7]

We see the same pattern in the two authors' descriptions of Francis during the illness that precipitated his conversion. Celano simply states that Francis "began to contemplate within himself" (1Cel 3) during his illness, whereas Henry goes into full detail of the mental process Francis was suffering:

> . . . Francis, sore pressed
> By such troubles, is losing all hope in this life, and all but all
> Hope in the next. When in his struggle, the fear of both hits
> him,
> He knows not what to do. He repents of an ugly past life
> And his tears are mixed with sighs.[8]

In fact, Henry goes so far as to reveal to us Francis's very thoughts during this struggle:

> He has a kind of debate within himself: Do more things exist in the
> mind
> Than what he perceives with his sense? There's an unequal strife
> In his soul, as sense-perception from beneath assaults the peak of
> His reasoning. . . .[9]

Henry gives us further insight into Francis's inner life when he writes of the dream Francis had of a house filled with weapons. He shows Francis reflecting on this dream, and writes:

> . . . But the more keenly run
> His inner reflections, the more he comes to consider
> These gifts to belong, not to laurels mundane,
> But rather to triumphs that are true to their name.[10]

Thomas, on the other hand, simply writes that Francis wondered what the dream meant and subsequently lost his desire to go to Apulia (1Cel 5). It is not Celano's style, nor his task, to speculate on the thought process Francis went through in regard to his dream.

Both authors relate that Francis spent time in caves for prayer and solitude. Thomas writes that, while inside the caves, Francis received inspiration from the Spirit (1Cel 6), as well as joy (1Cel 7) and strength (1Cel 8). Henry, as we would expect, goes further and describes what was happening inside Francis—for instance, "He makes his prayer that the Lord convert him and not let/ His mind, clinging now to things above, fall back to things of earth."[11] He thus gives insight into what Francis may have been struggling with at the time. Henry subsequently launches into a four-page

description of the "monsters" that Francis may well have been facing at this point in his life. This section of the *Legenda* forms more than half of Book II. In it, Henry's description of Francis's struggle with pride, envy, anger, and various other vices is reminiscent of a similar passage in the *Versified Legend* of Clare, in which she struggles to mortify her flesh,[12] which makes one wonder if it were a standard part of versified hagiography at that time.

In their accounts of Francis's break with his father and the subsequent events, Celano and Henry continue in the same pattern, with Celano simply stating Francis's state of mind and Henry delving into the thought process behind it. Celano describes a joyful and purposeful Francis eager to appear before the bishop and return what belonged to his father (1Cel 14). Henry gives us words of eloquence that his poet's mind imagines Francis speaking to his father:

> He, devoid of fear, speaks up: "Father, or rather, stepfather,
> Why fix me in chains, and why do you threaten me with torture?
> Your shackles or your torture instruments I shall not smash;
> They are hammers that strike in vain upon ice-cold iron!
> O what foolishness in a savage father! Are you trying to fool me,
> Hoping to seduce me with dire threats? I cannot be fooled,
> Or lured, or yield to your threats. Christ the way, truth, and life
> Stands on my right, so that I shall not be moved."[13]

What Celano left to the imagination, Henry spells out for us in Francis's long discourses against his father.

There are many other examples of Henry the Versifier elaborating on what Celano reported. Celano relates Francis's struggle to overcome his repulsion for lepers: "He met a leper one day, and mastering himself, he approached and kissed him" (1Cel 17). It is typical of Celano just to report the incident, letting the facts speak for themselves (except, of course, for the places in the text where he goes on to editorialize and interpret). Henry is more prone to give us insight into the inner Francis. In the incident with the leper, for instance, Henry writes of "the fire of blessed love that flared in him / When by chance he meets a leper on the road."[14] We get a glimpse of the divine love within Francis that motivated him to kiss the leper.

Even in Henry's descriptions of Francis's outward deeds, we often sense that we are receiving a glimpse of the inner Francis. His description of Francis settling in at the Portiuncula, for instance, contains no explicit mention of Francis's state of mind, yet we get the impression that here was a man very much at peace at this time of his life:

> Of all places this was his favorite; nor are they frequent
> His departures from it. He lingers on, settling there quietly,
> Repairing the building, planting the gardens, sustaining life
> On meager fare, not clothed in his usual garb,
> But in such as hermits wear.[15]

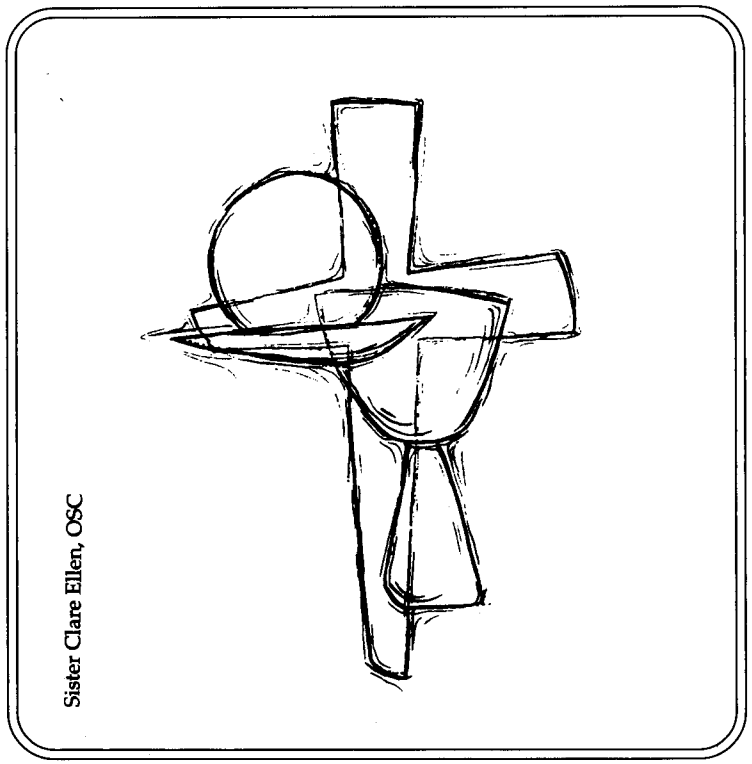
Finally, in what marked the beginning of Francis's mission to preach, we come to Celano's and Henry's treatment of Francis hearing the Gospel at the Portiuncula. In this passage Celano does communicate Francis's state of mind, as he "immediately exulted in the Spirit of God" and was "overflowing with joy" (1Cel 22). Again, however, Henry emphasizes even more what Francis must have been thinking and experiencing within himself at that time:

> . . . the Spirit
> Of the Lord comes down on him and fills his breast full with the gift
> Of grace, and shows him the secret pathway to heaven. . . .
> Nor will he gloss over anything, but follow the text and faithfully cling
> To every word. Allegory may in much prevail; but the literal sense
> Surpasses it, when no metaphor cloaks the author's mind
> And his words mean what they say.[16]

The first two lives we have of Francis, then, are both very similar and very different. While undoubtedly working from Thomas of Celano's text, Henry has a contribution of his own to make to our understanding of the life of Francis. Henry's poetic imagination gives us insight after insight into the inner workings of the mind and heart of Francis in a way that Celano's style does not. The *Vita Prima* is a masterpiece of hagiographical literature, with elements of theological reflection, interpretation, and eyewitness remembrances of Francis skillfully woven together into a whole. The value of the *Legenda Versificata*, however, lies in its ability to take us farther into an understanding of Francis the person. Henry the Versifier's poetic imagination is able to stimulate in turn the imagination of the reader and create a connection between the reader and Francis. Both legends were written to inspire the faithful and give them hope that the Spirit of God, which worked so beautifully and relentlessly in Francis's life, would permeate and direct their own lives as well. Given that these texts retain their power to inspire readers centuries later, it would appear that both authors have succeeded in accomplishing their purpose. Each, in its own way, is a valuable work for deepening our understanding of the simple, poor man of Assisi.

Endnotes

[1] Josiah Russell and John Paul Heironimus, *The Shorter Latin Poems of Master Henry of Avranches Relating to England* (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1935) 16.
[2] Russell, 18.
[3] Russell, 15.
[4] See Regis Armstrong, *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993) 186-187.
[5] Henricus Abrincensis, "Legenda S. Francisci Versificata," *Analecta Franciscana* 10 (1926-1941) 431-432. This English translation by Gregory Shanahan, OFM, will appear in the new *Omnibus*.
[6] Book I, lines 32-33, 42-43, 50-51.
[7] *Legenda Versificata*, Book I, lines 64-65, 68-69.
[8] *Legenda Versificata*, Book I, lines 109-113.
[9] *Legenda Versificata*, Book I, lines 151-154.
[10] *Legenda Versificata*, Book I, lines 220-223.
[11] *Legenda Versificata*, Book I, lines 238-239.
[12] See "The Versified Legend of the Virgin Clare" in Armstrong, 186-237. This particular passage can be found in lines 561-632.
[13] *Legenda Versificata*, Book III, lines 87-94.
[14] *Legenda Versificata*, Book IV, lines 130-131.
[15] *Legenda Versificata*, Book V, lines 1-5.
[16] *Legenda Versificata*, Book V, lines 15-22.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The Dynamic of Conversion in a Secular Franciscan Life

Gloria Newlin Shriver, SFO

Conversion in My Life

While viewing the film, *Schindler's List*, it occurred to me that the author of the novel, Thomas Keneally, was describing a classic instance of personal conversion. This motivated me to reflect on the dynamic of conversion as it has been operating in my own life for the past seventy-four years. This has not been a straightforward process, an upward dynamic, but has often involved muddled periods of regression, doubts, and confusion. Sadly I must confess my life has never been one of heroic struggle to save the world or even the suffering masses in it; but I still have hopes that God, through the death of Jesus, will save me. However, so far it has been mostly two steps forward and one step back—sometimes, even one step forward and two steps back.

To me conversion is change, and God knows, my life has been one of constant change. The story of my conversion is the story of my life, a life that has been a never-ending conversion process that eventually let me stumble across the path of St. Francis of Assisi.

Over the years I learned that conversion, for most of us, is not an easy process and that following Francis can lead us over some bumpy roads indeed. However, for me, walking in the footsteps of Francis assured me that I was following the right path and kept me from losing the way. God took me on a very crooked path and a long way before allowing me even a glimpse of the great saint.

Early Consciousness

My earliest recollection of a consciousness of God is saying my evening prayers at about age two and a half, believing firmly that God was listening to my prayer so it didn't really matter "... if I should die before I wake ..." because God was there to take care of me. Even then I realized that one doesn't have to sit for hours waiting for God to come because God is always there. Long, drawn-out prayers are for our benefit, not God's. God is always there waiting for our response.

I can remember being baptised at age three in a Presbyterian church in Monticello, Florida. I was standing beside my step-mother who was holding my new baby sister, Dolores, in her right arm and holding my right hand in her left hand. I did not understand what was going on, but I knew that the whole churchful of people was watching us. The minister stood facing us with his back to the congregation. He must have sprinkled us, but I don't remember any water being involved at all. I guess you could say that God opened this gateway to life in the Spirit without my having the slightest idea of what it was all about. I don't know whether or not anyone had tried to explain it to me beforehand. If so, I did not understand. I just kept wondering why all those people were looking at us. My father was not present. I don't know if he had been baptised before or if he ever was baptised. I never remember seeing him in a church at all—except in his coffin many years later.

Even though I felt nothing at my baptism, I still believe something did happen to me. God does not always explain; but ever since I can remember it seemed to me there was a holy place within me. Maybe it was the place where the soul lives within each of us. Maybe it's what some call the light within, or maybe it's the seed of Christ just waiting to be awakened. To me it has always been God.

Models of Holiness

Shortly after my baptism, I went to live with my paternal grandmother in Savannah, Georgia. Neither she nor my step-grandfather went to church, although they were a praying couple. I could hear them praying together every night before they retired. Who knows what effect that had on me? Maybe that's how it became even clearer to me that God is always there for us. Their never-forgotten evening prayers impressed me. However, I was much more impressed by the woman who lived next door, whom I will call Mrs. Anderson. She was a Pentecostal who always wore white—even

a white coat in winter! Children couldn't pass her on the street without raising their arms to heaven and repeating after her, "Praise the Lord!" My grandparents thought she was nuts, but I liked her.

It was depression time, and I liked to watch the beggars get off the streetcar on Waters Avenue and walk the block and a half to Mrs. Anderson's house to ask for help. A few stopped at every house on the way, but most of them went directly to her home. They never left without help. One Thanksgiving she even had her cook bring out the turkey she was preparing for the family's dinner and give it to a family that had no turkey. I never saw Mr. Anderson more irate than that day, except the time she put a strange, dirty man who had just had a seizure on her front porch into her own (and Mr. Anderson's) bed. It turned out that the poor man had pneumonia, and since this was before the day of miracle drugs, he had to stay for six weeks before he was strong enough to go out and face the cruel, winter world of the depression-struck city.

The neighbors all thought she was crazy, but I thought she was wonderful. She made a lasting impression, but I never gave poor Mr. Anderson any thought at all. He was just a man who gave the neighbors something to laugh about. In hindsight, maybe he was a saint, too. He lived with Mrs. Anderson for over fifty years. It might also be a sort of martyrdom to live with a saint, night and day, for fifty years.

Church Experiences

Although my grandmother never went to church, she allowed me, when I was about eight, to walk the four blocks to the Baptist Church alone so that I could go to Sunday School. It was there that I learned such basics as the names of the books of the Bible, the usual children's Bible stories, little lessons on the acts of mercy, and the Ten Commandments. I went alone many Sundays to attend the Sunday School, but I never thought of it as a religious experience. I liked the people and enjoyed the lessons. To me, it was just going to another school. It was there I learned about Jesus, so I guess it was an unconscious step toward my conversion. (All conversions are not like St. Paul's!) However, I never considered joining that church.

When I was eleven, I went to live with my Aunt Josie in Ridgeland, South Carolina. She was an ardent Methodist who read her *Upper Room* (the Methodist magazine containing a Bible quote and short message for the day) every morning before she got out of bed. I went to Sunday School and church with her every Sunday and, at age twelve, joined the Methodist Church, then called the Methodist Episcopal Church South.

This was a real conversion. It was as if I had been emptied and completely filled with the love of God and because of that love was filled with

the desire to love others. For a short time, I persuaded a little friend to save up our allowances and buy groceries for some of the poor Afro-Americans who lived in the shanties on the outskirts of town. We felt so grown-up and so good when we walked the mile out of town to deliver them. God was good enough not to let us see how proud we were of our good deeds. No one else seemed to notice either.

Aunt Josie was quite upset because I had joined the church without discussing my desire with her first, but when the pastor opened the doors of the church, I just walked up. She was afraid that I didn't realize what I was doing, but I really did and have never been sorry for the years I spent in the Methodist-Episcopal tradition. Since I've always liked to read, I read many of Wesley's writings when I was only about twelve. Much of what he wrote was very Catholic. If I remember correctly, he frequently quoted some of the early Church fathers, or at least reiterated their ideas. Some in the church thought I would make a good missionary and tried to talk me into that career, but somehow I knew that wasn't for me.

At thirteen, I went back to live with my father and step-mother out in the country, and so my church-going days were over for awhile. Occasionally we went to funerals, weddings, or big church picnics with friends, but going to church was something that other people did, not us.

In college, I went to the Methodist Church fairly regularly, but I sometimes went to the Episcopal Church with my roommate. I was a class officer and vice president of the University Christian Service Club, which was involved with such things as visiting the Civil-War Veteran's Home. Of course, by that time—the early 1940s—there was only one veteran left in that home in Columbia, but there were quite a few of their wives still there who welcomed our visits. We also visited high schools and helped to encourage the seniors to come to the university. We tried to reassure their parents that the university was not a den of Satan.

My closest friend in high school had been Catholic. Her father was a doctor, so I was allowed to associate with her although usually my family thought Catholics were the very bottom of the social barrel. I never really understood Betty's religion, and in hindsight, I doubt if she did either; but it fascinated me. I was particularly drawn to the nuns who were so mysterious with their starched headdresses and hidden hair. And there was something compelling about a religion that could put a teenager into a true panic for taking a bite of hot dog on Friday!

Somehow, I ran across St. Teresa of Avila in the college library. She and St. John of the Cross let me know that someday I would join the Catholic Church, but I had no idea of how to go about it. I guess that's why God let me marry a Catholic. However, although he was a good Catholic and a good man, he didn't know anything about Christianity except what the

Baltimore Catechism told him. He never suggested that I either go to church with him or join his church, so I joined it without even telling him I was taking instructions. I don't think he cared much one way or the other.

The Catholic Church

My instructor was a young curate who was wonderful and wise far beyond his years, but he had the craziest ideas about what the Protestants believed. I still think I taught him more than he taught me.

During my conditional baptism, I went into a sort of hysterical laughing fit that I was completely unable to control even through I considered it a very serious and holy moment. Afterward, I apologized to the priest and tried to tell him how sincere I was about joining the Church. His only comment was: "The Holy Spirit works in curious ways. It is much better to laugh than to cry. I'm sure he understands that." He refused the donation I tried to give him by saying: "I can't take it. I promised God that if he would let me convert you, I wouldn't take anything." Evidently to him, as it did to most Catholics in those days, conversion meant joining the Catholic Church. To me, even then, it was only a step in the right direction.

One would think that once I had found the Church, that would satisfy my life-long search for my religious home. It could have been the end of my search for the God that had been beckoning to me since I was two years old, but there was one happening that had enticed me to find something more. Like most things in my life, it seemed like a chance encounter.

A Franciscan Invitation

During my stay in Huntington, Indiana, I had joined The Daughters of Isabella, now called The Catholic Daughters. One evening after our meeting, I heard one of the members laughing about her grandmother being such a "holy" person, about how much she prayed and the way she was always talking to God. When I questioned her more about it, my friend said: "O, Gramma belongs to the Third Order of St. Francis. They're all a bunch of religious nuts. They say loads of prayers every day and try to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis on his way to heaven."

Because of my Bible-Belt upbringing, I knew that saints were the people in heaven, but I had never heard of any officially recognized saints who were still here on earth. I was immediately filled with the desire to be a follower of this saint. I had never even heard of St. Francis, but I was drawn to the prospect of following a real, live saint here on earth like a starving person is drawn to a loaf of bread. I don't think it mattered to me at that

time what kind of saint he was. My friend wouldn't believe that I could be interested in such a group. "They're all old folks, at least forty," she assured me. I wouldn't fit in at all; I was only twenty-three. But this idea of following St. Francis held a great fascination for me. I decided immediately that someday, even if it meant waiting until I was forty, I would become a member of this Third Order and follow St. Francis all the way up to the pearly gates.

I didn't quite make that goal of finding him by the time I was forty, but once during my fortieth year, as I was walking along the sidewalk in downtown Cincinnati in a pouring rain, the wind blew a small leaflet into my path. In spite of the wind and rain, I stooped and picked it up. It was a leaflet about the Third Order of St. Francis, but it had neither an address nor telephone number on it, and I could find no one who could help me find the fraternity. However, the leaflet did explain a little about the life of a Third Order Franciscan, and it also contained a few paragraphs about the life of St. Francis. What I read excited me no end and made me feel as if I were just a few steps away from my goal. My desire and enthusiasm soared.

Everywhere we lived: South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Kansas, Ohio, and Santiago, Chile, I tried to find a Third Order of St. Francis Fraternity. I found people who had heard of the Order, but no one who knew where I could find a fraternity except for a friar in Santiago whom I stopped on the street to ask for directions to a fraternity. He decided that my Spanish was not good enough to "grasp all the theological explanations" that I would need in the Spanish-speaking group that he was familiar with. So I joined the Maryknoll Guild, most of whose members spoke English, and served as its treasurer while I continued my unsuccessful search for St. Francis.

We guild members raised money for the Maryknoll sisters and priests, helped the poor in the unbelievably poor section of the city, and accompanied the religious sisters on their rounds since, in those days, a sister could not go out on the streets unaccompanied.

All of this was probably good training and a conversion of sorts, but I never once stopped trying to find someone who could lead me to St. Francis. By this time I knew I was not searching for a real, live man, but an ideal, a way of life. I was more determined than ever to find it. I knew that St. Francis was the missing thing in my life. Interestingly enough, I later discovered that one of Maryknoll's two founders was a Secular Franciscan.

Franciscan Incorporation

In my forty-seventh year, after we had returned to the States and were living in New Jersey, I got a small Franciscan calendar in the mail from the

Franciscan Associates in New York State. I can't remember if I sent them the offering they asked for or not, but I wrote and asked them where I could find a Third Order of St. Francis Fraternity. It was at least six, long months before I got a reply from someone in Chicago, who wrote that the fraternity nearest me was in Red Bank, New Jersey. The note even told me which Sunday of the month they met and at what time in the afternoon. I was ecstatic. I could hardly wait for the slow-moving minutes to drag by so I could hasten to meet some real, live Franciscans.

When the day finally came, I drove the fifteen miles to Red Bank and probably shocked them all by walking in and announcing that I was ready to join. I had no idea that after all these years of searching, I would have to convince them that God had really called me to share their beautiful way of life. I, like everyone else, had to study for about a year and a half before they allowed me to make my profession.

At the time, I thought all that waiting and searching was wasted effort. However, it actually served a good purpose. A few years later, I was on the National Secular Franciscan Committee organized to locate the various Franciscan provinces in the United States, to compile a list of their secular fraternities, and to make a map of them. Until that time, the provinces of Franciscan priests and brothers had been keeping good records of the fraternities they had established, but there had been little or no sharing of information among the provinces. Because of the work of that small committee, there is no problem today with finding a fraternity. Our National Fraternity can be called at any time at 1-800-Francis; and it is on the internet.

However, on that Sunday afternoon when I walked into St. Anthony's Fraternity in Red Bank, I was convinced that God had called me to join the brothers and sisters gathered there, even though I had no idea exactly what it was all about or what would be expected of me. I soon learned that this was a group of Catholic men and women who lived in the world and fulfilled all the obligations that entails. At the same time they aspired to Christian perfection under the direction of the brothers and sisters who not only "talked the talk" but "walked the walk" on the way to perfection. In that fraternity, I saw a close-knit group of St. Francis's lovers from many backgrounds and occupations who were following that saint to a personal union with Jesus.

During the early months of my training, I realized that for the postulants and novices (which we now call inquirers and candidates), the most impressive thing was the development of a strong, personal love of Christ and the ensuing practice of the presence of God. During all the years I had been searching for God and Francis, I think God had been taking me on a solo journey. I had found out long ago that God in Jesus was a very dear,

personal friend—as real to me as any of my other friends.

It was only later that I realized that these people in my fraternity, like all Franciscans all over the world, were united in the practice of penance. In Franciscan terms, practicing penance means living a life of on-going conversion. We Franciscans are constantly aware of sin and are also constantly seeking God's grace and forgiveness; but in the beginning, the promises I would be asked to make if I wished to continue life as a Franciscan concerned me more.

The thought of promising chastity didn't bother me, for our promise of chastity is based on one's state in life. Since I was married, my promise was only concerned with adultery or fornication. However, the promise of poverty gave me a lot more trouble. I found it hard to believe that possessions can eventually possess you. I am, by nature, a collector—what some call a pack-rat—and it tears me apart to throw anything out, even if it's an old piece of string or excess coat hangers. I don't mind giving things away, but I hate to pitch out an old and faded dress that I could someday use for some useful purpose known only to God. After all these years I'm still having to remind myself of that promise every day of my life. Those who can be completely detached from the attraction of the goods of the world are truly blessed.

Our promise of obedience to lawful authority can sometimes be hard, but I have always been fortunate enough to be in fraternities with kind and understanding brothers and sisters. My promise of obedience, then, was hardest only as it referred to obedience to God. That is extremely hard for most of us. It is so easy to convince ourselves that God doesn't really mean exactly what God says, or at least that God would understand any of our particular circumstances and agree with our own interpretations or misinterpretations of God's rules. Slowly, with the help of my brothers and sisters, I realized that God means what God says, not just what we would like for God to have said.

Besides these promises, we form the habit of saying the Office of the Church every day and attending daily Mass when possible. We use one of several shorter offices if we cannot say the Prayer of the Church, but whichever one we choose, it is a great way to increase the habit of prayer and grow closer to God. I'll be forever grateful for that wonderful stipulation of the Order.

Life as a Franciscan

In our fraternities we study the life of Francis and try to follow Christ as he did. Francis had been changed from a fun-loving teen-ager, who aspired to the nobility by going so far as to try to win his knighthood in battle, into the leader of a group of poverty-stricken *Lesser Brothers.*

One of the most wonderful things I learned about Francis's way of life is that it is a community effort. We travel the way together, help each other, and hopefully reach our goal together. Clearly, it is a community effort to follow the Gospel. As anyone who has ever tried to do that knows, it isn't an easy way of life; but it brings peace and joy that surpass all understanding, an experience that is hard to put into words. For this reason, it is difficult to explain it to someone else; but it is important for us to try to articulate it, not only for others, but for ourselves.

St. Francis always had great love and respect for the Church and its authority and wanted his followers to share that love. It is very painful for me that my own children, who lead good lives, who are kind and considerate, and who are rearing lovely little ones of their own, don't seem to feel the need for the Church (or any church) in their lives. My greatest comfort is to remind myself that if God could lead me by so many devious paths that have so many detours on the way, God can take care of my four children, too. That realization, and my acceptance of it, is probably my last conversion and my greatest test of faith: to realize, at last, that God's will is truly my own.

Maybe God has finally answered the prayer that I was told to memorize in the early days of my walk with Francis. It is the prayer that he wrote and prayed before the great crucifix in the San Damiano Chapel in Assisi:

Most high and glorious God,
Bring light to the darkness of my heart.
Give me right faith, certain hope, and perfect charity.
Lord give me insight and wisdom
So that I might always discern your holy and true will

To that I can only say: "Amen," and continue to pray it every day.

> Therefore let us desire nothing else, let us wish for nothing else, let nothing else please us and cause us delight except our Creator and Redeemer and Savior, the one true God.
>
> (Reg NB 23:9)

Book Reviews

Patti Normile. *Following Francis Of Assisi: A Spirituality For Daily Living*. St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1996. 123 pp. $7.95 paper.

Saint Francis, one of the most loved saints of the Church calendar, lived the Gospel in such a heroic manner that ordinary Christians may find him a hero to be admired rather than a model for their own lives. Patti Normile, in her book, *Following Francis of Assisi*, clearly shows that the Franciscan Gospel way of life is indeed a feasible way of finding happiness in the midst of a complex, technical culture. She is herself a follower of Francis in the Secular Order of St. Francis.

Reviewing some of the significant events in Francis's life, the author presents him as a man freed by his austere simplicity rather than restricted by it. He does not impose a life of squalor upon us, but invites us to detachment from the gifts which created things truly are. Words like surrender, sacrifice, or conversion were no more appealing to Francis Bernadone than they are in our ordinary vocabulary, but are a challenge. The author states well:

> Had Francis refused to make God his all, the world would have had for a few decades a successful business man in a small town in Umbria. But it would not have had a St. Francis of Assisi. If you refuse to make God your all, the world will have an individual who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to explore the possibility of making God her or his all. But if you refuse, the world will not have a new saint (even with a small s) from your home town.

Ms. Normile's message has an authentic ring as she explains and gives examples from real life experiences. With Francis she has discovered that the cultural cravings for wealth, control, and immediate pleasure cannot promise lasting joy in life. She has discovered the freedom attained by decluttering life from non-essentials.

Anyone interested in St. Francis or Franciscan spirituality will find this little book a joy to read. I would highly recommend it to Secular Franciscans and FranciscanAssociates.

Sara Lee Jobe. *Footsteps in Assisi*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996. 86 pp. $6.95 paper.

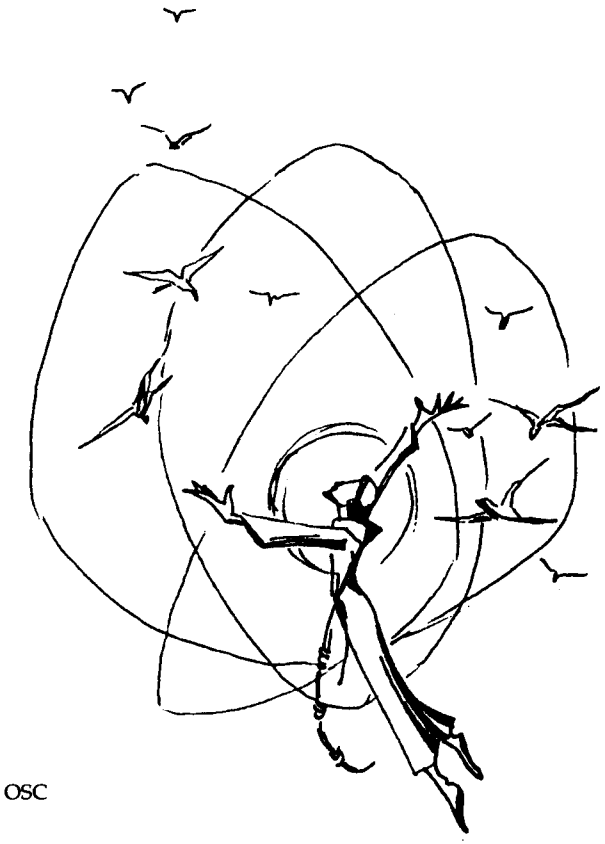
In her little book *Footsteps in Assisi*, Sara Lee Jobe skillfully brings to life two beloved saints of the thirteenth century. With the imagery of a poet she shares her reflections as she moves about the city made famous by St. Francis and St. Clare and recalls the significant events in their lives.

Woven into her reflections are the Saints' own words expressing their responses to God's call and their counsel to neighbors.

Ms. Jobe's pen and ink drawings decorating the pages add to the light and joyful atmosphere of the reflections.

The contents of the book cover the homes and haunts of St. Francis and St. Clare, an insight into the spirituality of the Middle Ages, and a description of the town of Assisi as recorded by a devout pilgrim.

Venard Niehaus, OSF



Sister Clare Ellen, OSC

Contributors

Joseph Chinnici, OFM, has just completed several years of service as Provincial Minister for the Province of St. Barbara, Oakland, California. He is a professor of history at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley and author of *Living Stones: the History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States* (Macmillan, 1988).

Eric Kahn, OFM, is a friar of the Sacred Heart Province. A former seminary teacher, he has been in retreat ministry for more than twenty-five years. Presently he is at Cordis House, a house of prayer in Republic, Missouri.

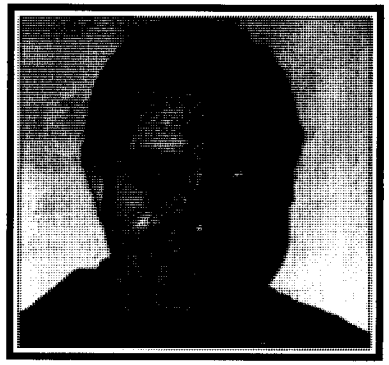
Ramona Miller, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester, Minnesota, and is Program Director at the Tau Center in Winona, Minnesota. A graduate of The Franciscan Institute, she also serves as a staff person for the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs. She is the author of *In the Footsteps of Saint Clare: A Pilgrim's Guide Book* (Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993).

Venard Niehaus, OSF, is a Franciscan Sister of Little Falls, Minnesota. A former history teacher and librarian, she presently resides at her Motherhouse in Little Falls.

Gloria Newlin Shriver, SFO, is a Secular Franciscan, currently living in Ahoskie, North Carolina. She has served the Secular Franciscans in many leadership positions, both locally and nationally, and is now formation director for the Brothers and Sisters of the St. Francis Region, which includes five southern states.

Margaret Slowick, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin, Ohio. She serves as a campus minister at Heidelberg College and Tiffin University. As a Master's candidate at The Franciscan Institute, she is researching the origins of Franciscan Third Order Regular congregations in the United States.

A Biographical Profile of Dominic Scotto, TOR Brooklyn New York



Father Dominic Scotto, a native of Brooklyn, New York, is a longtime board member and contributor to *The Cord*. He entered the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis of Penance in September, 1958, after four years of military service with the United States Air Force, during which time he served a tour of duty in Korea. He made his solemn profession on July 1, 1964, and was ordained on May 20, 1967.

He holds S.T.B. and S.T.L. degrees in Theology from the Catholic University of America, a Master of Arts degree in Liturgical Research from the University of Notre Dame, and S.T.L. and S.T.D. degrees in Liturgical Theology from the Pontifical University of Sant'Anselmo, Rome.

From 1969 to 1979, Father Dominic taught theology at Saint Francis Seminary and at Saint Francis College, Loretto, Pennsylvania. He was involved in the religious formation program of his province for seven years, six of which he served as Master of Professed. From 1980 to 1988 he served as Provincial Definitor for his Province.

In the area of liturgical theology he has authored two books: *The Liturgy of the Hours* and *The Table of the Lord* (St. Bede's Press), as well as numerous articles on religious life.

Father Dominic continues to be excited by the challenges presented to Franciscans by a world which is making such gigantic strides in so many different aspects of human development. He believes that we have a unique opportunity to live and exemplify Gospel values in a pure and simple manner and that the Franciscan message is as meaningful today as it was when Francis conceived it and lived it.

Currently he is stationed at St. Anthony Friary, Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania, while primarily attending to the care of his aged mother.

The Franciscan Insitute
Summer Session, 1997

Course Offerings

Aesthetics and Asceticism: The Franciscan Search for God
Xavier Seubert, OFM (June 23-July 24)

To Live the Gospel: Franciscan Interpretations
Robert Karris, OFM (June 23-July 24)

Franciscan Leadership
Anthony Carrozzo, OFM, and Jack Zibert, OFM (June 23-July 11)

Development of the Franciscan Person
F. Edward Coughlin, OFM (July 14-25)

Foundations of Franciscan Thought
David Flood, OFM (June 23-July 11)

Clare and Franciscan Women
Margaret Carney, OSF (July 14-25)

Introduction to Franciscan Studies
Anthony LoGalbo, OFM (June 23-July 4)

Franciscan Theology of the World
Michael Blastic, OFM, Conv. (July 7-25)

Francis: His Life and Times
Mary Meany (June 23-July 4)

The Franciscan Movement
Dominic Monti, OFM (July 7-25)

Special Program:
Refounding in the Franciscan Tradition
A Workshop presented by:
Linda English, Flavian Walsh, OFM, and Anthony Carrozzo, OFM
July 20-25

for more information:

School of Franciscan Studies
*The Franciscan Institute
St. Bonaventure University
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778
(716) 375-2105 • (716) 375-2156

NATIONAL FRANCISCAN FORUM

Sponsored by The Franciscan Institute

June 10-15, 1997

Franciscans Doing Theology

•Our Assumptions
•Our Questions
•Our Challenges

What: A unique opportunity for Franciscans to gather and explore the implications of our theological tradition as a resource for contemporary Franciscan life and ministry. This program will attempt to dialogue with some of the key figures from the tradition such as **Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and Scotus.** We look to them in search of insight which might guide us in our life and ministry today. An introduction to the thought of these individuals can be found in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, edited by Kenan Osborne, OFM, 1994, a primary resource for this conference. (Order from The Franciscan Institute.*) This will be the first of five such gatherings.

Where: Franciscan Center, 7665 Assisi Heights
Colorado Springs, CO 80919 (719)598-5486

Cost: $425.00 (including $25.00 non-refundable deposit)

Program presentors and readers include:

Michael Blastic, OFM, Conv.
Anthony Carrozzo, OFM
Margaret Guider, OSF
Kenan Osborne, OFM
Margaret Carney, OSF
Edward Coughlin, OFM
Zachary Hayes, OFM
William Short, OFM

Program Coordinator: Kathleen Moffatt, OSF
Program Facilitator: Mary Arghittu, OSF

For more information please contact:

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to nurture and strengthen their charism.

Retreats:

June 15-22, 1997

THE GOSPELS AS FOUNDATION OF FRANCISCAN LIFE

Jude Winkler, OFM Conv., will offer a look at the four Gospels from the point of view of what the sacred authors wanted to say to their communities and what they have to say to us today. *Cost: $350.00.*

August 1-9, 1997

THE SOUL'S JOURNEY INTO GOD

Conferences led by André Cirino, OFM, and Josef Raischl, SFO, explain St. Bonaventure's classic, *The Soul's Journey Into God.* Rituals, common prayer, music, and Eucharistic celebrations lead the retreatants toward a profound experience of God. *Cost: $425.00.*

November 16-22, 1997

PRAYING WITH FRANCISCAN MYSTICS

Ramona Miller, OSF, and Ingrid Peterson, OSF, present the lives and writings of some of the active and contemplative Franciscan women and men who followed Clare and Francis. A daily conference, liturgical prayer, and optional afternoon activities will provide a rhythm for this unique opportunity to pray with Franciscan mystics. *Cost: $325.00.*

SABBATICAL PROGRAM:

January 20-April 13, 1998

SABBATICAL FOR CONTEMPORARY FRANCISCANS

A twelve week time of study and personal renewal in a community setting with lectures on the Franciscan sources, dialogue exploring the Franciscan charism in the world today, and an emphasis on living a wholistic lifestyle. The sabbatical culminates with a Holy Week Retreat and the celebration of the Easter Triduum. *Cost: $4,200.00.*

For further information contact:

TAU CENTER
511 Hilbert Street
Winona, MN 55987
PH. (507) 454-2993 FAX: (507) 453-0910

Summer Retreats
1997

Franciscan Spiritual Center

609 S. Convent Road
Aston, Pennsylvania 19014

May 12-18 ***Contemplative Retreat*** *Cost:* $240
Retreat Team: Helen Budzik, osf, Celeste Crine, osf, Ellen Duffy, osf, Andrea Likovich, osf, and Cyprian Rosen, ofm cap.

Directed Retreats

June 16-23 *Cost:* $315 July 11-17 *Cost:* $240
Retreat Directors:
Celeste Crine, osf
Ellen Duffy, osf
Virginia Spiegel, osf
Rev. Paul Mast
Thomas Hartle, ofm

June 25-July 1 ***Guided Retreat*** *Cost:* $240
Retreat Guide: Peter Chapaitis, ofm

July 21-27 Private/Liturgical Retreat *Cost:* $200
Liturgists: Nicholas Terico, o. praem. and Andrea Likovich, osf

Arrival: 6:30-7:00 PM on the opening day.
Departure: after Liturgy of the Eucharist and breakfast on the closing day.
Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated daily.

The Franciscan Spiritual Center is situated in the newly renovated southeast wing of Our Lady of Angels Convent, the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Located about 20 miles south of Philadelphia and just north of the Delaware state line, the Center consists of 21 rooms with private bath, two lounge areas, spiritual direction rooms, reading area, kitchenette, and elevator. The Center is fully air-conditioned and is handicapped accessible. Quiet, shaded grounds provide ample space for walking and solitude. Reservations are requested and there is a $45 non-refundable deposit for each retreat.

For more information and/or to register,
write to the address above
or call (610) 459-4077.

THE FRANCISCAN & MONASTIC HERITAGE FOR DAILY LIVING

A RETREAT WITH JOHN MICHAEL TALBOT

JULY 10-13, 1997
7:30 Thursday Evening through 12:30 P.M. Sunday

The early monastic movements were the "renewal" movements of yesterday and, as such, they are vitally important to our understanding of renewal, both communal and personal, in a world increasingly hostile and indifferent to Christian standards.

In this three-night event, John Michael Talbot will, in particular, draw from his book, :Hermitage". the monastic developments from the Desert Fathers, Celtic monasticism, and Benedictine and Franciscan traditions as they apply to our daily lives.

DIRECTOR: ***John Michael Talbot, BSC,*** *is an internationally known musician, composer and performing artist as well as an an author of several books. He has presented numerous workshops and retreats. He is founder and General Minister of the Brothers & Sisters of Charity, a Catholic-based community and integrated Moastic expression of celibate brothers, celibate sisters, families and singles, and a domestic expression of those who outside their homes.*

SUGGESTED DONATION: $165
A deposit of $50/person, $75.couple is requested for registration. Deposits are normally NON-REFUNDABLE and are placed in our scholarship fund.

REGISTRATION FORM

Name_____

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Program_____Dates_____

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NEW

FRANCISCAN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

1998

in

Spiritual Direction

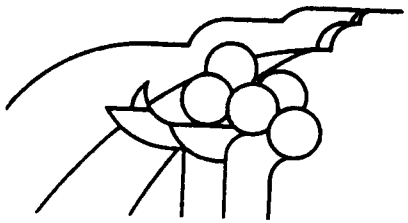
and

Directed Retreats

March 29-June 20, 1998
(Deadline: December 15, 1997)
29th Session

A three-month ministerial and experiential program born out of the conviction that our Franciscan charism enables us to bring a distinctive Franciscan approach to our ministries.

Helpful to religious and lay formators, retreat directors, parish and hospital ministers, contemplatives, missionaries, community leadership, personal renewal.



For more information contact:

Marilyn Joyce, osf; Tom Speier, ofm
St. Francis Center
10290 Mill Road
Cincinnati, OH 45231
Phone (513) 825-9300 • FAX (513) 825-1083

Franciscan Spirit and Life Center

The Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, a ministry outreach of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, is located on 33 acres of rolling hillside in the South Hills of Pittsburgh. The Center, with 23 private bedrooms, has meeting space available for groups of various sizes. Three hermitages in the secluded wooded area on the grounds are available for day, overnight, or extended stays.

The Franciscan Spirit and Life Center offers programs, workshops, and retreats on Franciscan spirituality, holistic development, evangelization, reconciliation and peace, the Enneagram and dreams.

The following Franciscan programs will be offered at the Center:

North American Franciscans and a New Century
April 4, 1997 (7:00 PM) - April 6, 1997 (Noon)
—Margaret Carney, OSF

Flesh to Spirit — (Jung and Francis)
Transformation in the Life of St. Francis of Assisi
April 18, 1997 (7:00 PM) - April 20, 1997 (Noon)
—David Cordisco, PhD

Admonitions and Scripture
June 1-7, 1997 — *Fr. Giles Schinelli, TOR*

Directed Retreat
June 8-14, 1997 — *Sr. J. Lora Dambroski, OSF*
Bro. Malachy Broderick, FSC
Fr. Timothy Fitzgerald, CP

For futher information on these and other programs, please contact:

Sr. Barbara Zilch, OSF, Director
Sr. Karen Schnoes, OSF, Office Manager
Franciscan Spirit and Life Center
3605 McRoberts Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340
Phone (412) 881-9207 • FAX (412) 885-7210

Mission Statement

The Franciscan Spirit and Life Center exists to promote the Gospel life rooted in Franciscan spirit and values. The Center reflects a commitment to evangelization, reconciliation, and healing, providing programs and services for the Christian community.

ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT
COMING EVENTS 1997

Friday, March 21-Saturday, March 22

"Meeting Myself in Christ." William Short, OFM. The Franciscan Center, Syracuse, NY. Contact: Franciscan Experience, Franciscan Center, 2500 Grant Blvd., Syracuse, NY 13208-1713, ph. 315-425-0103.

Saturday, March 22-Sunday, March 30

Holy Week Retreat. Tau sabbatical staff. Contact: Tau Center 511 Hilbert. St., Winona, MN 55987, ph. 507-454-2993; fax 507-453-0910.

Monday, March 31-Saturday, April 7

Retreat on the Cross of San Damiano. André Cirino, OFM. $175. New Beginnings Retreat Center near Amarillo, TX. Contact: Celine Thames, OSF, 4305 54th St., Lubbock, TX 79413-4617, ph. 806-793-9859.

Thursday, April 4-Saturday, April 6

"Facing the Christ Incarnate." Franciscan Federation at Avila Retreat Center, Durham, NC. Contact: Franciscan Federation, PO Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, fax 202-529-7016.

Thursday, April 4-Saturday, April 6

"North American Franciscans and a New Century." Margaret Carney, OSF. Spirit and Life Center, Pittsburgh (see ad p. 99).

Thursday, April 17-Monday, April 21

The Franciscan Challenge. Contemporary Franciscan spirituality, art, music, and dance. Contact: Tau Center (see above).

Friday, April 18-Sunday April 20

"Flesh to Spirit (Jung and Francis)." David Cordisco, PhD. Spirit and Life Center, Pittsburgh (see ad p. 99).

Monday, May 12-Sunday, May 18

Contemplative Retreat. Helen Budzik, osf, Celeste Crine, osf, Ellen Duffy, osf, Andrea Likovich, osf, Cyprian Rosen, ofm cap. Franciscan Spiritual Center, Philadelphia, (see ad, p. 96).

Sunday, June 1-Saturday, June 7

"Admonitions and Scripture." Giles Schinelli, TOR. Spirit and Life Center, Pittsburgh (see ad p. 99).

Saturday, April 26-Sunday, April 27

"Facing the Christ Incarnate." Franciscan Federation at Our Lady of Angels Convent, Aston, PA. Contact: Franciscan Federation, Washington, DC (see above).

Friday, May 2-Saturday, May 10

"The Soul's Journey Into God." A Franciscan Retreat. André Cirino, OFM and Josef Raischl. Franciscan Center, 459 River Road, Andover, MA 01810, ph. 508-851-3391.

Tuesday, June 10-Sunday, June 15

"Franciscans Doing Theology," sponsored by The Franciscan Institute at The Franciscan Center, Colorado Springs (see ad p. 93).

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy
EpCust	Letter to the Custodians
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin	Letter to a Minister
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies
ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
LaudDei	Praises of God
LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours.
OffPass	Office of the Passion
OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
RegB	Later Rule
RegNB	Earlier Rule
RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
Test	Testament
TestS	Testament written in Siena
UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LErm	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCl	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCl	Blessing of Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
...tise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano

...ymous of Perugia
...d of Clare
...eration of the Stigmata

... of Jacque de Vitry
...e of St. Francis by Bonaventure
... of St. Francis by Bonaventure
... Perugia
...he Three Companions
... Process of Canonization of St. Clare
...mmercium
... Perfection

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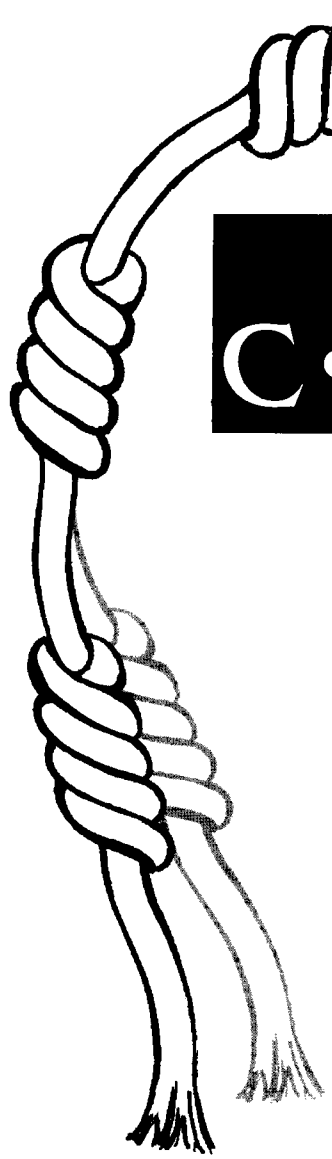
A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

THE CORD



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1. MSS should be submitted on disk or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced.
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
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4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
   (1Cor. 13:6).
   (RegNB 23:2).
   (2Cel 5:8).
   (4LAg 2:13).

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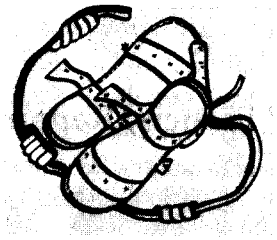

Editorial

In a talk given some years ago, Eric Doyle described Francis as a medieval man who "saw the need to go back to the only conformity that the Church . . . must comply with—the teaching of the Holy Gospel." Francis "brought the Gospel into the heart of the medieval world." For Francis, conversion was a "total shift of meaning—everything took on a fresh meaning through a relationship . . . with the unseen one, Christ the Lord," given to us as a brother. (Eric Doyle, OFM, "A Church in Ruins," unpublished talk, tape at St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, n.d.)

Conversion, change of heart, is at the very center of the Franciscan experience, as it is at the very center of the Gospel. "Repent and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15) is not just a call to some kind of individual moral process; it is a call to personal and societal transformation, an invitation to let the Spirit of God enter our lives in ways that really change us, that turn us around. For some, this change can be sudden and dramatic; for others gradual and seemingly imperceptible, like petals unfolding. But unless it is happening, the Gospel is not alive in our lives or in our societies.

In this issue of *The Cord*, Michael Crosby challenges us as Church to the radical change of disposition that is necessary for ecclesial integrity. He reminds us that Francis and Clare's love for the Church compelled them to seek its Gospel renewal in their very lives and in the lives of their followers. Kathleen Uhler witnesses the power of the Franciscan ministries of contemplation and compassion in an international forum. Sharon Liscio reflects on the power of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* to stir us to personal transformation. Gerard Thomas Straub describes how sharing the lives of our poor brothers and sisters can be for us an avenue of profound change of disposition.

Each of these writings, in its own way, helps us to understand better the incredible work that God wants to do in us and in our world today. In each we find a genuine account of how the good news is announced to us and through us when we allow ourselves to be servants of the Gospel.

The Cord, 47.3 (1997)

"Francis, Repair My House"

Michael H. Crosby, OFM Cap.

"Francis, go, repair my house, which, as you see,
is falling completely to ruin" (2Cel 10).[1]

In this article I would like to probe what happened to Francis and his partner Clare as a consequence of their embrace of this challenge from the Crucified One. I have discovered that this consideration turns out to be a rationale for my own effort to build up the Church. It provides me the opportunity to verbalize how I, as a Franciscan loyal to the Church, can still dissent and resist.[2]

Today there is an urgent need for us to examine the approach of Francis and Clare in light of signs all around us that our Church too is falling into ruin. The group calling for "Common Ground" has termed the situation as being "in peril."[3] No matter what words we use, we know there are problems. In this article I'll offer a "Franciscan" way to address them.

I want to begin my comments by describing the conditions in society and the institutional Church in the late 1100s and early 1200s. Then I want to show how Francis's response to "repair my house" never led him to imagine leaving the institution, despite the power of a Pope like Innocent III. Serene in the wisdom of knowing he couldn't change its bureaucracy, he would repair the house by courageously creating an alternative household of brothers. He'd also support Clare in her new household at San Damiano.

I will argue that, while Francis's approach may not have reformed the institutional Church per se, it did breathe into the body of Christ a new expression of the Spirit that represented a life-giving alternative. Then, because her way of dealing with Rome in conflictual situations expressed

itself differently from Francis's, I want to show how Clare of Assisi serves as a model of resistance for us when we find ourselves at odds with the ways of Rome. To conclude my remarks, I will suggest some principles of dissent and resistance flowing from the examples of Francis and Clare that might guide us in our own effort to build up our Church, which we can see is falling into ruin. I share my remarks in thanks for the life of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, whose effort to find "Common Ground" for a "Church in time of peril" reflects for me the powerful witness of just one more among us who has tried to repair the house.

Conditions in Society and Church at the Time of Francis's Call

At the time Francis was born in 1182, popes and emperors were battling for hegemony. Their contests included efforts to win over allegiance from Italy's rising communes, like Assisi. Their internal battles were compounded on October 2, 1187. On that date, after eighty-four years of Christian rule, Jerusalem fell to the Moslems.

Before Francis was a teenager, Conrad Moscaincervelo took over control of Assisi. He ruled it and its environs from the Rocca Maggiore, the fortress overlooking the city and the Umbrian countryside. He governed with the support of the emperor in dependence on the help of the traditional feudal lords. In the emperor's name he acted as their patron, protecting them against the ever-increasing uprisings of Assisi's citizens. However, all these warring social relations changed when Francis was in his sixteenth year.

On January 8, 1198, Pope Celestine III died after a seven-year reign. He was succeeded by Cardinal Lotario di Segni, who took the name Innocent III. One of his first actions was to seek the restoration of papal rule in Italy's central area, including Assisi. The Pope persuaded Duke Conrad to change allegiance from the emperor to himself. However, as soon as Conrad left Assisi to swear his new fealty to Innocent, the people of Assisi's commune laid siege to the Rocca and destroyed it.

The next year (1199), civil war erupted. Assisi's rising merchant class challenged the last vestiges of the feudal families and their interests. The family of Favarone di Offreduccio, was one of them. In 1194 his wife, the Lady Ortolana, had given birth to their first child, a daughter named Clare. Realizing they'd likely lose their lives along with their property if they stayed in Assisi, they fled to Perugia, which had aligned itself with the pope.

In the next years hostilities between Assisi and Perugia increased. After isolated raids and ambushes, destruction of crops and border skirmishes, a great battle occurred in November, 1202. Francis fought for Assisi and

was taken prisoner. He remained imprisoned in Perugia for a year, until his father ransomed him.

Assisi and Perugia signed a peace agreement in 1203, but their conflicts continued until 1209. Although he had returned home, Francis found another battle being waged inside his soul.[4] The outward manifestation of this conflict got expressed in a kind of lethargy which he could not shake. When he was about twenty-two, however, he was energized by talk of the prowess of Walter of Brienne. Francis decided to join this knight, become knighted himself, and thus give his life some meaning. So in 1204 he rode off to Apulia to join de Brienne.

On the first night, while at Spoleto, another fever struck. He went to bed and had an unexpected dream. As he stood in a room filled with arms and the trappings of war, a voice asked him "who could do better for him, the servant or the Lord." When he answered, "The Lord," the voice responded: "Why then are you seeking the servant in place of the Lord? (2Cel 6).

Francis returned home, but by now he had little interest in Peter's business and in Assisi's military expeditions. Sensing that his future had something to do with a power greater than economics and violence, he began wandering. In the process, (if Celano's Second Life of St. Francis is right),[5] three things occured that set him on a path which would guide him the rest of his life. First he went to Rome. There he changed clothes with a poor man and began to eat with poor people. Upon his return, he had an encounter with a leper. Finally, he experienced the voice from the Cross at San Damiano. Linking the Apulia experience with the call from the cross, Jan van de Pavert notes a deeper call to an ecclesial repair in Francis's mandate. In a Church sustained by a worldly culture:

> It was Francis' intention to join the battle in Apulia, to become a knight, a man of war, of armor, of power, of violence. But God summoned him to return and asked him: "Can't you see that my house is being destroyed?" The house of God exists wherever the living God is revealed in the suffering servant on the cross, wherever God's glory is recognized in the broken body of the crucified. A Church preoccupied with war, force and power in order to push through her own "rights" is in self-destruction; the self-understanding of the Church as God's house becomes a delusion. From the Crucified One came the mandate: "Francis, restore my house." He would fulfill this mandate in the way he followed [Christ].[6]

Francis's Call to Repair the House; Innocent's Dream

At first Francis interpreted his call quite literally. "Though the divine command concerned itself with the Church that Christ had purchased with

his own blood" (2Cel 11), Francis began his rebuilding effort by giving money to a priest for a lamp and oil so the image of Christ Crucified could always be seen. Then he set out repairing the building itself. To aid the work he began soliciting others' help. Hearing about his son's begging, Peter Bernadone flew into a rage. But Francis continued.

After his San Damiano experience other men began to join Francis. He had compiled some gospel passages and linked them together with reflections of his own as a kind of "rule of life." With this in hand, in the summer of 1210, he and his troop journeyed to Rome to seek permission for their way of life. Bishop Guido of Assisi happened to be in Rome when they arrived. According to Arnaldo Fortini:

> Innocent III (who intended to restore the complete temporal rule of the Church) could not have had a more faithful executor than the bishop of Assisi. In Guido, strong and energetic, episcopal power was once again linked with old unlimited aspiration for material riches.[7]

Upon learning of the group's plans, Guido feared they might leave Assisi, and so he presented Francis and his followers to the powerful Cardinal Giovanni Colona.

Like Guido, Cardinal John thought their Gospel project to be impossible to implement. While he offered them accommodations, he advised them to join another group of religious. However, after a few days, during which he was able to observe their commitment, he changed his mind. He promised to support their cause before the pope and the Curia, which now was at the "high point in the centralization of ecclesiastical power."[8] Addressing the Curia, Cardinal John's words echoed Francis's earlier San Damiano mandate:

> I have found a most excellent man who desires to live according to the form of the Gospel and in everything to observe evangelic perfection. I am convinced that through this man our Lord wills to renew the faith of Holy Church in the whole world (L3S 48).

Impressed with the Cardinal's insight, Innocent asked that the fledgling group appear before him.

Opinions differ as to what happened the next day at the papal audience. While some insist Innocent violently resisted the Franciscan project, a majority of writers say he offered reasonable cautions and considered objections. Whatever the concerns being raised, Francis had a response based on his conviction of the Spirit's calling: the "Most High" revealed he should live this way and God gave him these brothers. The papal audience

closed with Innocent's suggestion that they all pray to know God's will in the matter.

That night the Pope had a dream. Fully vested, he walked into the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the Mother Church of Catholicism. As he strolled, the colonnades seemed to extend on and on forever. All of a sudden a great rumble thundered through the edifice. Everything began collapsing. The whole building seemed headed for ruin. As it started falling apart in front of him he closed his eyes. When he reopened them, the Basilica had returned to its previous state. It was being singularly supported by a little man. The Pope recognized him as the beggar from Assisi who had just visited him. "Surely," he said, "this is that man who, by his works and by the teaching of Christ, will give support to the Church" (2Cel 17).

At this point, it is important to find links among Francis's San Damiano experience, the wording of Cardinal Giovanni Colona's recommendation favoring the fledgling movement, and the dream of Pope Innocent III. All three accounts depict images of the Church related to ruin and repair. In many ways they reflect notions contained in the messianic promise of the one[s] anointed to be Servant[s] of God in the Prophet Isaiah: "They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations" (Is. 61:4).

Francis's Call in Innocent's Church

In order to recognize how Francis's call might have an echo in our present and future Church, we need to examine more deeply the entrenched and institutionalized power system within the "house" which Francis felt mandated to repair. Innocent III firmly believed the papacy's role was to rule theocratically. He was to be the supreme power at the head of a hierarchy of vassal states. In fulfilling this goal he proved to be very successful. Fortini, writes:

> His success had exceeded his every aspiration, since kings and emperors were now coming to prostrate themselves humbly at his feet, receive their crowns from him, renounce their secular prerogatives, and obey him without argument. In truth, he was by now able to consider himself the lord of all, who at will controlled the world [the world, of course, being the world known to Europeans at that time].[9]

He demonstrated this power by humbling Otto IV on October 4, 1209. He forbade the Emperor to go any further into Rome than the Tiber. The Emperor obeyed the Pope.

With such all-embracing control defining papal power, it is not surprising that a sense of worldliness characterized Innocent and his court. Politics, economics, and military concerns dominated. Anything considered "spiritual" would serve a religion whose god seemed far from the gospel's terrain. A historian of the era, Jacques de Vitry, described the scene:

> While spending a short time at the [Roman] Curia, I encountered several things which I did not like. There is so much occupation with temporal and worldly things, with kings and kingdoms, processes and recourses, that it was almost impossible to speak, even briefly, of things spiritual.[10]

Obsessed with controlling the world outside through domination and the Church within through orthodoxy, Innocent was suspicious of any new movement claiming to be under a higher power, even if that other power might be the Holy Spirit. It wasn't that Innocent had no grounding in the Spirit or opposed the establishment of new groups. He just wanted to be sure they would operate under his control. With this agenda he approved the Humiliati in 1201 and the Poor Catholics of Durandus of Huesca. In the same year that he confirmed Francis's way, he also confirmed that of the Poor Lombards of Bernard Prim. Two years later he sanctioned another group connected to the Poor Lombards.

However, alongside these groups many other reform movements had arisen. They too appealed to gospel values, especially poverty. Yet they had become heretical and anti-clerical. Chief among these groups were the Waldensians and the Cathari, or Albigensians. These two popular heretical movements both responded to the growing sense of independence characterizing Italy's communes, as well as the peoples' frustration with a greedy, grasping, and controlling clergy. They also rejected any notion of salvation in which the Church, especially, its clergy, mediated between God and human beings.

Given this background, Francis's movement seemed different from these others as he stood before Innocent. The Pope was intrigued with the beggar. He detected no rebellion in him. On the contrary, Francis appeared desirous of operating within the institutional structures. How could this be? As Mico notes:

> While Francis's attitude to poverty was similar to that of the other radical movements, his view of obedience could not have been more different. In the eyes of the hierarchy, the other groups were simply rebels because they gave all their allegiance to the word of God and did not acknowledge that the Church had any authority over them, a view to which Francis was totally opposed.[11]

The Church controlled by Innocent III had reached what was quite possibly the highest level of secular power in its history and, as a consequence, what might have been her lowest degree of fidelity to the Gospel. The institutional Church organized itself on the model of the empire, after the pattern of feudalism. Despite the Gregorian reforms, more than half the land in Europe belonged to clerical benefices. One of the priests just outside Francis's district, who held the investiture all during Francis' lifetime, was continually before the consuls, quarreling with neighbors and seeking to insure his control over the households in his jurisdiction.[12]

Once known as havens from avarice, most monasteries seemed little different. They too had joined the race for wealth and control. Corruption ruled. Indeed, as Celano wrote: "Showing forth in themselves nothing of the Christian religion either in their lives or in their conduct" people took "refuge under the mere name of Christianity" (1Cel 1). Religion had succumbed to the "deadly disease," which had come to infect everyone.

Since this institutionalized decadence was so pervasive, it was probably beyond Francis's imagination even to consider operating outside its dynamics and structures. Francis's whole life revolved around the Catholic faith. It had been reinforced by his bishop, who had been wise enough or political enough to remain on the side of the people as they liberated themselves from the feudal lords and grew together as a commune. Mico notes:

> This historical background gave Francis a vision of the Church such that, no matter how problematic and painful the institutional element in it might turn out to be at times, he was not deterred from putting into practice his decision to follow Christ in poverty and humility. From this we can deduce that, for Francis, the Church, even as a structured institution, was something which formed part of his origins and which he could not regard as a purely external society that had nothing to do with him. Instead, he saw the Church as a loving family into which he had been born and which had cared for and sustained him and in which he hoped to realize his Gospel plans.[13]

If the institutional element of the Church was sick, was it possible for Francis to nurse it to health? In this sense, we face today the same dilemma which Francis faced. Could Francis be faithful to his San Damiano mandate within an institution fallen into decay?

Francis Offers a Life-giving Alternative

Some scholars insist Francis never set out to reform the Church. According to Giovanni Miccoli:

> However paradoxical it may seem, there is no more subtle distortion of Francis's religious experience than to interpret it as a plan for the reform of the Church and thus the renewal of pastoral activity and Christian life and society.[14]

Engelbert Grau extends this thought to Clare as well when he writes:

> Francis and Clare [did not] have a program to counter the contradiction between the teaching of Christ and the practice of Christians; they have no program to reform the Church seeking power and earthly possessions.[15]

Others feel Francis did dream of reforming the institutional Church but was co-opted by this same Church. Scholars like Paul Sabatier, who wrote a controversial life of Francis in 1894, explain that Francis originally rebelled against the institutional Church but gradually got tamed by the Roman Curia in a way that forced him to live within its self-defined boundaries. Those of the Sabatier school say that the dream got domesticated in a way that made the revolutionary a conformist.

A third interpretation comes from "the German School." This is represented by such scholars as the Franciscans Englebert Grau and Kajetan Esser. In their view Francis was totally obedient and never had any conflicts with the Curia. Furthermore, they argue, even if Francis had experienced conflicts, he would have gone immediately to the Curia to have them resolved.

In a way all three positions hold some truth, but none hold enough of it. As to the first opinion about Francis never envisioning reforming the Church, it may be true that he never explicitly used the word. But it is also true that he spent his whole life trying to fulfill what he considered a divine mandate to "repair my house" and to live with his followers in such a way that the repair of the Church might occur.

As for Sabatier's argument about Francis's being co-opted by the Curia, it seems too simplistic. Rather than repeating Francis's oft-repeated words on the need to be obedient and submissive to Rome and its representatives (down to the most despised cleric), we need to ascertain the subtle ways he continually and non-violently resisted being co-opted by offering an alternative way of life to that of the institutional Church in that particular milieu.

Within the institution's world of power where people were divided between the haves and the have-nots, the *maiores* and the *minores*, even higher and lower clergy, Francis adopted the name "minor" for himself and all his followers. In the world of wealth, which required armies to

preserve Church property and privileges, Francis explained to a bishop who tried to persuade him to mitigate his approach toward poverty:

> My Lord, if we had any possessions we should also be forced to have arms to protect them, since possessions are a cause of disputes and strife, and in many ways we should be hindered from loving God and our neighbor. Therefore in this life we wish to have no temporal possessions (L3S 33; cf. AP 16d).

In the world of the institutional Church's *modus operandi*, where form followed function, part of its ruin could be traced to the way so many men coveted and clung to prelacies. Francis resisted these for his brothers. Responding to a bishop who suggested his followers would make good members of the hierarchy, Francis reportedly declared:

> Lord, my brothers are called minors so that they will not presume to become greater. Their vocation teaches them to remain in a lowly station and to follow the footsteps of the humble Christ, so that in the end they may be exalted above the rest in the sight of the saints. If . . . you want them to bear fruit for the Church of God, hold them and preserve them in the station to which they have been called, and bring them back to a lowly station, even if they are unwilling. I pray you, therefore, Father, that you by no means permit them to rise to any prelacy, lest they become prouder rather than poorer and grow arrogant toward the rest (2Cel 148).

Most of the examples I've used describing Francis's alternative way of living within the institutional Church were addressed vis-à-vis members of the hieararchy who had different assumptions about the Christian life. These examples do little to support Sabatier's contention about Francis's Curial cooptation. If any seduction did take place, we need to ask ourselves how the Curia could have gotten the upper hand without the support of some members of Francis's own community. Clearly there were those who were so monasticized and clericalized that they couldn't grasp the uniqueness of Francis's return to evangelical itinerancy and fraternity. When some of his followers grew tired of his austerity and tried to change his direction, they sought help from the hierarchy, especially Cardinal Hugolino, the future Pope Gregory IX. Together they tried to persuade Francis to join one of the traditional religious orders. Francis resisted. Holding his ground before the Cardinal and his brothers, he declared:

> "My brothers, my brothers, God called me to walk in the way of humility and showed me the way of simplicity. I do not want to hear any mention of the rule of St. Augustine, of St. Bernard, or of St. Benedict. The Lord has told me that he wanted to make a new fool of me in the world and God does not want to lead us by any other knowledge than that. God will use your personal knowledge and your wisdom to confound you; he has policemen to punish you, and I put my trust in him. Then to your shame you will return to your first state, whether you like it or not!" The cardinal, dumfounded, kept silence, and all the brothers were gripped by fear (LP 114).[16]

As to the third point raised by the German Franciscans, it does seem that Francis never showed evidence of any serious problem with the institutional Church in fulfilling his dream. But such a possibility cannot lead us to conclude that Francis was clerically co-dependent or did not resist when church leaders insisted on something against his or his followers' consciences. In fact such a conclusion is contradicted in his own Rule. There he establishes line-authority in the Order squarely within the Roman system:

> The rule and life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of their own, and in chastity. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Honorius and his canonically elected successors and to the Roman Church. And let the other brothers be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors (RegB 1:1-3).

This passage makes it clear that Francis's First Order followers must obey the head of the Order, who, in turn, must obey the Pope. With this hierarchical form of obedience, any obediential response we make to the Pope as Franciscans comes through our obedience to our superiors. However, Francis writes in the same Rule (approved by Rome): "I strictly command them to obey their ministers in all those things which they have promised the Lord to observe and which are not against [their] consciences and our Rule" (RegB 10:3).

The above prescription for our life shows how Francis institutionalized a way of resistance to "all those things" that might undermine the Franciscan way of "repairing the house." However, as we've already seen, Francis's way to repair the house cannot be characterized as one of direct resistance but as one which offers a way of life within the excesses of power, property, and prestige. Above all, he offers an alternative "house," modeled on that family we know as the Holy Trinity.

Within the house, falling into ruin because of its seduction by the world, Francis envisioned a new household seduced by the Spirit. So defined was he by this Spirit and so desirous of having this Spirit be the core of his

community of equals, he viewed this most basic element of his life encapsulated as the soul for his entire Order.

> "With God," he said, "there is no respect of persons, and the minister general of the order, the Holy Spirit, rests equally upon the poor and the simple." He wanted this thought inserted into his rule, but since it was already approved by papal bull, this could not be done (2Cel 193).

In the context of a Church and society defined by *maiores* and *minores*, Francis immersed himself in the Holy Spirit as the great equalizer. He also found in the relationships within the Triune God the model of equality that he envisioned for his new household within the old "house" that was falling into ruin. In one of his most-used references to John's Gospel, he showed eloquently and clearly how his followers—indeed all the faithful—must be grounded in the Triune God. For instance, in his Letter to All the Faithful, he wrote:

> Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and perservere in doing them, since the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and He will make His home and dwelling among them. They are children of the heavenly Father whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.
> We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to our Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father Who is in heaven. [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 which should shine before others as an example (1EpFid 5-10).

Probably the most radical way the future Church will be built up from its ruins will be when its structures and dynamics reflect the trinitarian community of God. Therein all persons are equal; all relationships among those persons are defined by the passion each member has that the other have full access to all the resources held by one's self. In such a "household" all relationships are defined by meeting each other's needs. A most beautiful exemplification of this community of equals sharing all things in common is found in the words Francis used to exhort his brothers to be continually available to each other:

> And wherever the brothers may be together or meet [other] brothers, let them give witness that they are members of one family. And let each one confidently make known his need to the other, for, if a mother has such care and love for her son born according to the flesh, should not someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit even more diligently? (RegB 6:7-8).

In her writings Clare also sought to establish her Order in trinitarian groundings. She linked her sisters' very identity with their participation in the household of God. Invariably she refers to her followers as "sisters," "spouses," and even "mothers." Such images are also found in her Rule. In one place therein she quotes from the "Form of Life" Francis gave her and her sisters:

> Since by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the most high King, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel, I resolve and promise for myself and for my brothers always to have that same loving care and special solicitude for you as [I have] for them (RCl 6:2).

Resistance—Clare's Way of Repairing the House

Like Francis, Clare always insisted on being submissive to Roman authorities and being loyal to the Pope and his representatives. Yet we know from her history that her way of being submissive and loyal expressed itself in non-traditional ways, especially when the hierarchy tried to persuade or pressure her to shift from what she believed to be her divine calling.

Clare would not likely have resisted the hierarchy without Francis's support. Although she didn't need it, it seems he lent her his full support when she discerned the need to dissent. Also, possibly expecting she'd have trouble from the hierarchy after he died, Francis seems to have anticipated this in the "Last Will" he wrote for Clare toward the end of his life: "Keep most careful watch that you never depart from this by reason of the teaching or advice of anyone." (UltVol 3).

While Francis may never have given evidence of any significant differences with Rome, the words in his "Last Will" to Clare and Clare's own life make it clear that room exists for a "Franciscan" model of dissent and method of resistance. This could serve us well in the present and future Church as long as we define ourselves as Roman Catholics.

In this regard we might examine in greater detail the actions of Clare of Assisi. One cannot consider Francis isolated from Clare. The two mirrored each other. They were co-dreamers and collaborators. They both aspired to concretize in their worlds the gospel, especially its way of poverty, in order to fulfill the mandate of the Crucified One at San Damiano. In-

deed, Clare's first foundation and perpetual residence took place within the confines of this very church.

Two years after Francis received, with the patronage of Bishop Guido, formal approval from Innocent III for his way of life, Clare, again with Guido's support, went to Francis and began to translate his vision into a feminine form. Before her family could discover what she had done and insist on her return, Francis escorted her to the sanctuary of a nearby Benedictine convent. She soon moved to San Angelo di Panzo near the Carceri, a favored place of Francis. There, just sixteen days after Clare had stolen away from her family, her sister Agnes joined her. Shortly after that they moved to San Damiano, where Clare remained for the rest of her life.

Three years after the foundation of Clare's community, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) decreed that any new religious communities not yet approved must adopt the rule of an established Order. Because the "form of life" written for her by Francis lacked official approval, the "Ladies of San Damiano," as they were called, were given the Benedictine Rule.

Thus began a series of conflicts between Clare and Rome. The Benedictine Rule allowed monasteries to own property.[17] Clare wanted the "privilege of poverty" which the brothers enjoyed. This meant her sisters could neither individually nor collectively claim ownership of property. Clare appealed to Innocent III to grant her this privilege, which he did, issuing a decree declaring: "by the authority of this letter . . . no one can compel you to receive possessions."[18]

Innocent died in 1216. At this time the Cardinal Protector of the Order was Cardinal Hugolino. In 1218, following the Lateran Council's decree, he once more confirmed for the Poor Ladies the Benedictine Rule; to it he added a "form of life." But since this did not include the privilege of poverty, Clare sought it again. Hugolino did not want to reinstate it, but Clare remained steadfast. The "Most High," God's Spirit, had revealed to her that she should live evangelically in poverty. Her arguments prevailed; Hugolino acceded to her request.

Upon becoming Pope (Gregory IX), Hugolino again tried to pressure Clare to change her course. He believed that corporate poverty might prove too difficult for the community. Again he urged her to accept possessions. Again Clare resisted his proposal. Once more he relented. In 1228 he reconfirmed the privilege of poverty.

At the surface things seemed to go well. However, Clare still chafed under the Benedictine Rule. Having prevailed when Cardinal Hugolino tried to impose on her a way of life foreign to her vision (1218-1219), Clare faced another hurdle in 1245 when a new Pope, Innocent IV, unilaterally repealed the privilege of poverty and imposed another Rule on the San

Damiano group. Clare found this Rule unacceptable. In conscience she could not obey a papal rule that undermined what she considered a mandate from "the Most High." Even as she lay on her deathbed, Clare persisted in this conviction of conscience. In the face of her persistence, Innocent blinked. He journeyed to San Damiano and gave verbal acceptance to the Rule she herself had written. The Bull making legal his order was issued on August 9, 1253. It was hand-delivered by a friar on August 10. Clare died the next day.

What happened that Innocent converted rather than Clare? From the start, it seems that Clare wanted her Rule to reflect the Later Rule of the friars. Innocent's Rule having been rejected, the Cardinal Protector, Rinaldo Segni, offered her another. Again she resisted. Finally, in September 1252, a year before she died, the Cardinal gave approval to Clare's own Rule with its privilege of poverty. Still Clare lacked papal approval. This finally came when the Pope discerned not only Clare's adamant position, but the Spirit's power behind it.

In her Rule Clare promised "obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent and to his canonically elected successors, and to the Roman Church" (RCl 1:3). One might ask how she could have been so adamant in resisting the earlier rules the popes and their representative tried to force on her. The answer seems simple if you read what she wrote just one sentence above. This sentence opens her Rule: "The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters which the Blessed Francis established, is this: to observe the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity" (RCl 1:1-2). The Gospel's mandate came before the fiat of the Pope. In her mind, the way she and her sisters would "repair the house" could only be by radical observance of the evangelical poverty of Jesus.[19]

While Clare's dissent over the rule defined much of her life, especially its latter years, she resisted Rome's encroachments at other times as well. In 1230, her friend Gregory IX issued a decree making it practically impossible for the friars to preach God's word to the sisters. Upon receiving the decree, Clare became so angry that she "fired" the friars. Defiantly, she decided to do the only thing women of her era could do in the face of brute male power: she began to pray and fast. Clare's mode of fasting was not just a pious activity; it was an act of resistance, a "holy anorexia."[20] Her form of resistance demonstrates that hunger strikes did not begin with Ghandi. As he had done earlier in response to Clare's resisting the undermining of her privilege of poverty, Gregory changed his mind.

At that time in the institutional Church, the forms of debate and dissent and the kind of "disobedience" evidenced by Clare were not seen as

signs of "disloyalty." Instead, they were considered concrete manifestations of fidelity to the Spirit working in one's life despite institutional differences. Indeed, the resistance Clare showed to popes and protectors on the matter of the privilege of poverty, as well as to Gregory's decree about the friars' preaching, was considered in her beatification process as concrete evidence of her spirit-based grounding and holiness.[21]

Principles for Repairing the House Falling into Ruin

Having offered all these reflections, and aware of how our contemporary Church is "in peril," we might now ask: "What can we learn from the response of Francis and Clare to the "deadly disease" that afflicted the whole Church?" (1Cel 8). First, we must realize that a Franciscan style places much greater stress on modeling alternatives of what it means to be "house" than on ways of direct dissent and resistance. But what happens when it comes to the point when dissent and resistance seem to be the only recourse people of integrity can take? First of all, it is very important to be sure this point has been reached. Could *we* be wrong? When we are not open to consider the possibility that we may be wrong, an equal possibility exists that ideology may have taken over our search for truth. However, given this caution and, having worked on contemporary alternative forms of community based on the trinitarian model, if events find us at a point where we discern no alternative but resistance, Francis and Clare offer us some guidelines.

There are eight principles for dissent and resistance which will keep us faithful to the non-violent, ecclesial way of Francis and Clare. Four of these flow from their common charism, two arise from what Francis himself can teach us, while the final two can be learned from Clare.

The four which come from Francis and Clare's common charism are as follows:

1. In what refers to the very nature and identity of our life, no human authority on earth can undermine what must reflect our trinitarian grounding in the Holy Spirit. Where human authority is to be part of decision-making in the essentials, it must also be willing to be grounded in what this Spirit authenticates. Thus Francis wrote in his Testament: "And after the Lord gave me brothers, 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. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me." (Test 14). For her part Clare wrote to Agnes of Prague, at the very time Agnes was resisting the Pope's efforts to mitigate her understanding of poverty: "If anyone would tell you something else or suggest something which would hinder your perfection or seem contrary to your divine vocation, even though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel" (2LAg 15).

2. We must be convinced that whatever we do is grounded in the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's operation, not our own. Our goal should be to strive always to be under the same "Spirit of the Lord" which guided Francis and Clare and the Spirit's "holy manner of working." (RegB 10:8; cf. 1EpFid 21).

3. Where these two principles converge, another flows as a consequence: an ecclesially-informed personal conscience must be the ultimate norm which characterizes our obedience to all legitimate authority. As Francis wrote in his Rule, the individual member of the Order is under the jurisdiction of the Minister General, who, in turn, is under obedience to the Pope. "Therefore I strictly command them to obey their ministers in all those things which they have promised the Lord to observe and which are not against [their] conscience and our Rule" (RegB 10:3).

4. The fourth principle results from all the above: where differences exist between leaders of the institutional Church and the members, any dissent must be grounded in authentic discernment. It is up to all involved to make sure their process of discernment serves as a real check against ideology, delusion, deception, distortion, and self-righteousness.

Building on these principles which Francis and Clare shared, we can find in Francis's own way two more principles that may guide us as we try to repair the house, especially when some of our leaders do not see it falling into ruin:

5. When dissent is deemed necessary, our approach should be respectful and courteous as we never stop asking for dialog about our differences. Persons whose positions we feel are doing harm to the Church, especially if these are members of the clergy, are deserving of our courtesy. Aware that the clergy might be sinning, Francis pointed to what they represented rather than to their failures. He wrote in his Testament that his faith in priests was such that, even if they persecuted him, he would keep coming back. He did not want to consider the sin that might be in them because he saw himself subservient to them. He did this because of their role in making present the eucharistic presence "of the Most High Son of God in this world" through "His Most holy Body and Blood which they receive and which they alone administer to others" (Test 6:10).

6. With respect and courtesy, we should never hesitate to speak our understanding of truth clearly and charitably to our authorities. This should be done in the power of the Holy Spirit under whom both of us should be subservient.

Finally we consider Clare's unique approach to building up the Church in its institutional expression when we see it falling into ruin:

7. In the event that decrees and decisions critically undermine our life and the life of the body, and we discern the need for resistance, this resistance should be grounded in the Spirit and nourished by prayer and fasting. In the face of overwhelming power, prayer and fasting may be the only resort left. These manifestations of our resistance may also represent a clear and concrete sign of the conviction of our conscience.

8. Finally, we should be willing to bear joyfully any costs that might be incurred by our act(s) of resistance which result in other's counter-resistance. In this we have no greater example than Clare of Assisi herself. She was willing to go to her death convinced of the Spirit's support for her decision.

In conclusion I can only say with Francis, as he wrote to us in the final words in his Testament:

> And whoever shall have observed these [things], may he be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father and on earth with the blessing of His beloved Son with the most Holy Spirit the Paraclete and with all the powers of heaven and all the saints. And I, little brother Francis, your servant, inasmuch as I can, confirm for you this most holy blessing both within and without (Test 40-1).

Endnotes

[1]All biographical references are from Marion A. Habig, *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972).

[2] I do so aware that I have changed from previous thoughts on this subject (and may change again). In my first book, based on what "modern" popes have said of the Franciscan life and mission in the church (which I wrote while still a student in theology), I said: "In certain places it may seem the popes emphasize points not usually stressed. It may also seem they overstress particular points or stress things which may even appear alien to our spirit. If this seems to be the case, let us not jump to the conclusion they have been wrong. As Francis did regarding studies, let us rather look to our genuine spirit. If we do, we can only deduce that our life is to be lived at the feet of these popes, not only listening to their words of counsel for us; but eager to put them into practice." Jeremiah Crosby, OFMCap, *Bearing Witness: The Place of the Franciscan Family in the Church* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1965) 12.

[3]The Common Ground Project, convened by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, issued a paper August 12, 1996, "Called to Be Catholic: Church in a Time of Peril," noting the differences that are dividing the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. It was reproduced in *Origins* 26 (1996): 165ff.

[4]Cf. Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi,* trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 166.

[5]There has been much speculation as to why the event before the Crucifix at San Damiano was not recorded in Celano's First Life of St. Francis of Assisi. Some of the points offered can be found in Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., "Clare of Assisi, the Poor Ladies, and their Ecclesial Mission in the First Life of Thomas of Celano," *Greyfriars Review* 5 (1991): esp. 389-94.

[6]Jan van de Pavert OFM, "Stell mein Haus wider her," *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 54 (1991): 116.

[7]Fortini, 253.

[8]Julio Mico, OFM Cap., "The Spirituality of St. Francis: Holy Mother Church," trans. Paul Barrett, OFM Cap., *Greyfriars Review* 8 (1994): 28. Mico continues; "The Church's policy of organization required an active bureaucracy as well as a general tightening up on morality, and that entailed a proliferation of rules of every kind to facilitate government with authority. The Church's desire to make herself the arbiter of social and political, as well as of religious conduct, presupposed that she had some means of enforcing her laws. And she had: she linked her laws with the truths of faith and eternal salvation; the threat of an interdict or excommunication by the Pope was enough to make the other part surrender or at least revise its proposals."

[9]Fortini, 295.

[10]Jacques de Vitry, quoted in Engelbert Grau, OFM, "Saint Clare's *Privilegium Paupertatis*: Its History and Significance," trans. M. Jane Frances, PCC, *Greyfriars Review* 6 (1992): 332.

[11]Mico, "Obedience," *Greyfriars Review* 9 (1995): 230.

[12]Fortini, 146.

[13]Mico, "The Spirituality of St. Francis," 4. Later in his life Francis would depend on ecclesiastical endorsement of his way of life when the friars would go to new areas with new bishops (as in *Cum dilecti filii,* June 11, 1219, and *Pro dilectis filiis,* May 29, 1220). Francis also declared in his approved Rule that no friar should preach in any place without permission of the local authority, nor should friars seek to overturn such when local authorities would not give permission.

[14]Giovanni Miccoli, "Francis of Assisi's Christian Proposal," trans. Edward Hagman, OFMCap., *Greyfriars Review* 3 (1989): 158.

[15]Engelbert Grau, OFM, "Saint Clare's *Privilegium Paupertatis:* Its History and Significance," *Greyfriars Review* 6 (1992): 333.

[16]For an elaboration on this event in a context that reinforces some of the overall points raised in this paper see Miccoli, especially 153ff.

[17]Some say the "privilege of poverty" was not the only conflict experienced by Clare with the Benedictine Rule. Others say she had difficulties with a form of authority that stressed the superior to the detriment of the Spirit working among the members and from an overly-restrictive approach to the enclosure. See Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF, "Clare and Conflict," *The Cord* 33 (1993): 51-5.

[18]Innocent III, quoted in Grau, 329.

[19]I find it interesting that these same sentiments seemed to undergird the famous intervention of Cardinal Lecaro during the Second Vatican Council. In his mind, only when the Church would become poor and in solidarity with the poor would it be transformed. His words, we know, fell on deaf ears.

[20]For more background on this notion, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1987).

[21]For a good elaboration on the dynamics of Clare's resistance, see Gigismund Verhij, "Personal Awareness of Vocation and Ecclesiastical Authority as Exemplified in St. Clare of Assisi," trans. Ignatius McCormick, OFMCap., *Greyfriars Review* 3 (1989): 35-42.

The Cord, 47.3 (1997)

Franciscan Ministry with a Global Perspective

Kathleen L. Uhler, OSF

This paper was presented as a reflection on the keynote presentation, "Contemplation and Compassion: A Franciscan Ministerial Spirituality" by Michael Blastic, OFM Conv., given at a Networking Seminar on Franciscan Ministry, Feb. 11-14, 1995, Colorado Springs, CO.

Sometimes it takes a lot of humility to allow one's resume to be read. It provides me with a mirror for regarding my own human condition: my resume tells the tale of an incarnational, messy, and, if the truth be told, checkered career. I find Michael Blastic's paper to be instructive for my own self-understanding as a Franciscan woman, whose enclosure is the world and, Clarelike, whose ministry lies within that enclosure.

Blastic's thesis is about the proper Franciscan use of power. The dyad—compassion-contemplation—reminds me of Plato's use of the word *dynamis* or power: the ability to act and to be acted upon. But it also tells us that, in a very un-Platonic move, Francis found God in sensible things, directly. Creation is not a ladder from least to most perfect. It is not even Teilhardian, from Alpha to Omega. Franciscan reality is rather the transference of energy and power in active and passive moments found in both contemplation and compassion: in relationship, through personhood, in communion. Considering this, I feel as though I see with new, unclouded eyes, through the lenses of contemplation and compassion, the Franciscan view of the world.

I am involved in a ministry with global parameters—the world is our field of action. Franciscans International, a non-governmental organization (NGO) at the United Nations, is about systemic change in the broadest possible sense of the term. Governmental organizations and NGOs are in a vital tension. And, within the 185 member states of the UN, there is a tension between countries aligned with the five nuclear powers of the Security Council and the non-aligned majority of nations, mostly of the Southern hemisphere, the developing countries. The tension exists among all these entities to create a new world order, to repair Christ's house, Christ's earth.

Through reflection, I have come to know Francis as one who understood how to change the system by going through the system. ("the system" being people or " focal points," in the jargon of the day, whether pope or bishop or sultan). Francis was a natural-born diplomat; he knew how to make deep changes while remaining in the system or, as the case may be, in the Church.

Francis understood that it takes relationship-building, coalition-building, eyeball-to-eyeball contact, conversion of hearts, and localized efforts to make a people-centered change in the structure, to allow space, for example, for an experiment in Christian living, as Francis anticipated from Pope Innocent III.

Francis would be at home at the United Nations. Franciscans *are* at home at the UN, and we are universally accepted. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, of South Africa, an Anglican Third Order Regular Franciscan, says that Franciscans have a vital contribution to make at the UN in the ongoing debate on issues of peacemaking, the environment, and the poor.

I would like to touch on three topics treated in depth in Blastic's paper: contemplation, humility, and compassion, and a topic of my own, hope. How have I experienced each of these within my own ministerial spirituality as a Franciscan? When have these things happened to me?

Contemplation

In January 1995, I and other members of Franciscans International attended a two-week meeting at the UN in preparation for the World Summit for Social Development to be held in Copenhagen in March of that year. At a values panel held during this meeting, we were privileged to hear the spiritual guru of the UN, Robert Muller, speak. Robert Muller served as Under-Secretary-General to three UN Secretaries-General: U Thant, Dag Hammarskjold, and Kurt Waldheim. He related that the three secretaries-general came into the position as economists or political scientists and left the position as mystics. The overwhelming problems, the lack of solutions and answers, eventually wear one down to where one drops to one's knees.

When has this happened to me? A recurring meditation for me has been the Temptation in the Desert. The highs of being part of an NGO can lead me to pride, to saying: " Yes, I can change stones to bread for you."

The prestige of an NGO can induce me to expect the angels to hold up traffic so that I can get to a meeting on time. The global scope and world-wide contacts can produce a mirage of false power over people in many lands.

Being part of an NGO is not like commanding an army, but it is true that with a little effort, the earth may be moved if, like Archimedes, one stands in the right place.

The contemplative moment for me comes when, in humility, I request of God access to her or his place in the deepest part of my being so that I may balance there and steady the images of all that is swirling uncontrollably by in my ministry world.

Humility

In an NGO, I can't help but take somewhat personally the humiliation of the failure of UN peacekeeping initiatives in Bosnia, Angola, Somalia, and all the rest. On top of that, along comes Jimmy Carter, a journeyman diplomat, pre-empting the vast web of relationships carefully built and maintained which *is* the UN, first and foremost. He assumes the peace negotiations which are the highest mission of the United Nations.

It is humbling to know that the major moves in UN negotiations on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and steps taken that would de-nuclearize the world were made possible by Bill Clinton's willingness in 1993 to talk about them on the world stage at the UN. In both of these instances, the idealistic NGO runs smack into *Realpolitik*. Yes, in Franciscans International I have experienced humiliation with the UN and the apparent failure of a more interdependent, Franciscan way.

Compassion

How have I practiced compassion in my ministry? In experiences of humiliation, if I am not to succumb to bitterness, then I must be like a poor person who is grateful to anyone from whom real help comes. Our NGO must relate to the broadest meaning of the suffering of humanity, of the condition of " man in the Seraph" at La Verna, of the global beggar looking for solutions, of lepers despised and displaced from their rightful roles in brokering peace.

Experiencing the sufferings of others, I can be moved to compassion and to contemplation by walking with them in the footprints of Christ, by bearing in myself the image of the poor Christ. Like Francis, hopefully, I am coming to understand the vision as I become what I see.

Hope

With Francis and Clare, I appreciate the opportunity to create a pattern of seeing the sinful world in solidarity with my sinful self. I look with Clare into her mirror and see the poverty of the Incarnation in the messiness, and I discover the truly human without disguise. When have I done this in my ministry?

The UN, in its Charter and in its basic structures, is egalitarian. There are, however, many more brothers there than sisters! I can relate readily as a Franciscan to the required non-judgmental behavior: fingers are never pointed nor is name-calling ever heard in the General Assembly. Rather, one hears these formulations: "I disagree with my distinguished colleague from North Korea." Or, "I am wondering if the distinguished representative from the Holy See would consider the suggested word change of the distinguished representative from the United States?" The ambassadors, too, are icons of Christ.

Ambassador Juan Somavia of Chile, the Secretary-General of the World Summit for Social Development, at the same values panel which I mentioned earlier, pleaded with us who represent NGOs to encourage leaders like himself in their tasks by greeting them in the halls, by offering words of affirmation for statements or positions taken. These are some of the uses of power—to act and to be acted upon; they are basic, ordinary human behaviors within everyone's grasp to bring about more good in the world.

I have often heard it said at the UN that, since the Cold War ended, the realization struck hard that the old solutions had failed and that the ambassadors are searching for a solution which will transcend the old totalitarian structures. They are humbled, open, and ready for a spiritual solution. We Franciscans were present a year ago at a preparatory meeting for the Social Summit when Slovenia called for a global ethics. As a result of that, there is now a values caucus, to which Franciscans International belongs. This values panel is just one of the events sponsored by the caucus. The new UN emphasis on values and spirituality is surely a sign of hope.

In conclusion, it is a great happiness to make connections between Franciscanism and UN deliberations. Contemplation and compassion can be exercised at the United Nations through the use of NGO status and power.

By Your grace alone, may we make our way to You, Most High. (EpOrd 52)

Reflections on "The Soul's Journey into God"

Sharon Liscio, SFO

One of the discoveries I have made since joining the Catholic Church is an ancient tradition known as the Stations of the Cross. As we travel along on this prayerful journey with Christ, we have the opportunity to pause and reflect on Christ's supreme sacrifice for us, opening up ourselves to God through the special insights of each station.

St. Bonaventure invites us to journey "to the groans of prayer, through Christ crucified"(Itin. Prol.: 4), ascending on a path into God which can only be through the "burning love of the Crucified." It is a love which so transformed Paul when he was carried up to the third heaven (2Cor. 12:2) that he could say: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross. I live now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20) (Itin. Prol.: 3). Paul leads us along a Way of the Cross that comes from within the heart rather than from an orderly outward procession. I would like to share six such "inner stations" that I am led to within the *Itinerarium*.[1] I call them Awakening, Enlightenment, Speculation, Affirmation, Submission, and Ecstasy.

Awakening

> Since happiness is nothing other than the enjoyment of the highest good and since the highest good is above, no one can be made happy unless he rise above himself not by an ascent of the body, but of the heart. But we cannot rise above ourselves unless a higher power lift us up. No matter how much our interior progress is ordered, nothing will come of it unless accompanied by divine aid. Divine aid is available to those who seek it from their hearts, humbly and devoutly; and this means to sigh for it in the valley of tears, through fervent prayer. Prayer, then, is the mother and source of the ascent (Itin. 1:1).

My academic background is steeped in mathematics and the physical sciences. Moreover, I was raised within a tradition that holds fast to "sola scriptura," with its tenacity for precise definitions and a literal interpretation of biblical text. On entering the Catholic Church and discovering the wealth of the Church Fathers and the depth and richness of its tradition, a part of the scientist in me was once more awakened. Scientists enjoy an enlarged vision of the world. They become aware of a wider range of unusual animals, crystals, flowers, sounds, and all kinds of natural wonders. They approach the world with a sense of wonder and awe, seeing the beauty in creation and in the objects all around us. To see a drop of pond water or a crystal through a microscope is a unique chance to praise God. When I think of all the intricate reactions that must occur, all in harmony with each other, just to maintain life, I am struck with amazement.

Scientists are trained to tune their antennae to be sensitive to a wide range of images and signals. We are constantly in a sea of signals. We know they are there, because if we turn on the TV or radio, suddenly they become visible in sight or sound. It's a lot like prayer. Constantly we are bathed in and blanketed by the overwhelming immensity of God. Our normal "antennae" are generally quite weak and not too adept at picking up God. We go through our day for the most part unaware of God's presence, sometimes catching only a glimpse as the wind of the Spirit blows through our senses. Thus, we are faced with choices: one is to reject the data and close our hearts to a large part of what is real; the other is to accept the data and, as St. Bonaventure tells us, "rise above ourselves, not by an ascent of the body, but of the heart" (Itin 1:1).

Prayer is the base of our ascent because only by praying are we able to "receive light to discern the steps of the ascent into God" (Itin 1:2). For me prayer is much like a flow of energy, not so much from me to God, but rather from God into my soul. As I quiet myself, I experience a deep sense of peace and comfort and a conviction that I am exactly where I am supposed to be. And I know that this is a sign of God's grace, flowing into my heart and energizing me. But in responding to God's voice and love, the energy which is imparted to us by God cannot remain locked up inside. Energy is not static but must be released, transforming us into channels of God's grace into our surroundings.

St. Bonaventure opens our eyes, and in awakening, we become energized for life, nudged into action by the power of the Spirit. We find a way to see life through the Cross of Christ within the love of the Trinity.

> Whoever, therefore, is not enlightened by such splendor of created things is blind; whoever is not awakened by such outcries is deaf; whoever does not praise God because of all these effects is dumb; whoever does not discover the First Principle from such clear signs is a fool. Therefore, open your eyes, alert the ears of your spirit, open your lips and apply your heart so that in all creatures you may see, hear, praise, love and worship, glorify and honor your God lest the whole world rise against you (Itin 1:15).

Bonaventure reveals what is known in science as "Complementarity." Complementarity came about when early scientists were trying to explain the nature of light. Some held to a particle theory, some held to a "wave" theory. It wasn't until 1927 that a physicist named Louis de Broglie proposed that it could be either, depending on the type of experiment. His hypothesis that two mutually exclusive situations could both be correct was confirmed within a year by two Americans. Soon it became clear that the reality of the situation far exceeded our capacity to describe it. It is important for us to realize that our descriptions of reality can only be approximations. In reality, things are rarely what they seem to be on their surface. They are almost always either more complex or more simple than we at first think. We must stand in wonder and awe before the Creator, not simply Creation or the theory.

Bonaventure reminds us that prayer is a quest to see the face of God. Just as it is true in science, our limitations get in the way of the awesome immensity of God, who is far more than we could ever begin to describe. So often we are led to grapple with questions like how can God, who is always with us, sometimes seem so absent from our life? How can God be both all-merciful and all-just? Like the early scientists, we are often too bent on insisting that the truth be on one or the other of the sides of these seemingly exclusive pairs. But in so doing, we begin to shift away from communion with God, and into the construction of a picture of God. I think it's even more important in prayer than in science not to confuse a theory of reality with the truth and to be humble in the face of both the immensity of God and the vastness of creation.

To see the invisible things of God and to see the shape of reality in the form of the Cross is for me to see a dynamic world. God is always moving about, among and within us, to contradict the darkness and despair of the world, no matter how strong the opposition might be. There seems to be much indifference and hate in the world around us, but each time we experience God's love, we can live in the power of that moment and make it multiply.

> Wonder that in Christ personal union exists with a trinity of substances and a duality of natures; that complete agreement exists with a plurality of wills; that mutual predication of God and man exists with a plurality of properties; that coadoration exists with a plurality of excellence, that coexaltation above all things exists with a plurality of dignity; that codomination exists with a plurality of powers (Itin 6:6).

Prayer opens our eyes, and we begin to see the invisible attributes of God in all things. We are soon forced to recognize that contradictions seem to be apparent everywhere, reflected through "the burning love of the Crucified." The mirror we are looking into reflects the way that the world contradicts God. Gazing into the Cross, with its arms reaching to left and to right, to the sky and the earth, we are pulled between the human and the divine, between the conflicting claims of one people against another. Our eyes come to rest where the arms all converge at the center, and it becomes obvious that God can unify the opposition, overcome the conflicts and the contradictions, and someday bring peace to earth and good will to all. We find that no matter how hard we seem to reject God's touch, no matter how often we say "no" to the offers of love and peace, God is always there to bring hope out of despair, life out of death, light out of darkness. Today it sometimes seems foolish to stand committed to peace against the apparently incessant evolution of war. Yet, as we stand in what appears a futile place, are we not contradicting the course of this evolution? And by living this contradiction, are we not participating in the power and hope of the Cross of Christ?

Through the plurality of persons in God within the unity of the Trinity we find our salvation. When I look around, I see much in our society centered on a "me first" kind of philosophy, insulating people from each other. It generates relationships that are "safe," "comfortable," and "complacent." The way of the world tends to pull communities apart. I believe it is only in community that we can experience the joy that comes from embracing God as our "all in all." People who seem to have the deepest sense of community are those who have been able to share their "crosses" with one another. In presenting ourselves to others as someone totally in control, with no problems or faults of our own, we close the door allowing no one to enter. It is only when we are willing to share our brokenness with others, and in turn allow them to share theirs with us, that we present an opening within ourselves where community can occur.

As we allow Christ to move in and through our lives, sharing His cross

with each other, we become free to give ourselves to others and to God. United in Christ, we embrace each others' crosses with confidence and joy. It is only in community where our paths come together in the center of the cross. Here we are able to go beyond the world's contradictions and enter into the wholeness of life that is found in the Spirit. It is here that we are finally able to acknowledge the cross as our way of life. Life on the cross becomes one of freedom in the Spirit where we are free to serve God. We are able to live the contradictions of the cross, knowing we are all held together by the bond of community. We are able to walk together with freedom and in love all over the face of the earth, knowing that God is with us no matter where we go. It is in finally realizing that just as the plurality of God is something beyond our understanding, the contradictions of the cross are conquered through the mystery of God's power and love. Coming together in the center of the cross we find God, our all in all, the One who created us, to make us whole again.

Affirmation

> The intellect can be said truly to comprehend the meaning of propositions when it knows with certitude that they are true. . . . Here it is that, now . . . we enter into our very selves; and, as it were, leaving the outer court, we should strive to see God through a mirror in the sanctuary, that is, in the forward area of the tabernacle. Here the light of truth, as from a candelabrum, glows upon the face of our mind, in which the image of the most blessed Trinity shines in splendor. . . . When the soul considers its Triune Principle through the trinity of its powers, by which it is an image of God, it is aided by the lights of the sciences which perfect and inform it and represent the most blessed Trinity in a threefold way. . . . All . . . sciences have certain and infallible rules, like rays of light shining down on our mind from the eternal law. And thus our mind, illumined and flooded by such brilliance, unless it is blind, can be led through itself to contemplate that Eternal light (Itin 3:3).

It is when we are able to see God in all things, when we know deeply within our souls that God is "all in all" and that the visible things of the world are nothing, that we are able to move forward.

St. Bonaventure tells us that "the function of the power of choice is found in deliberation, judgment, and desire" (Itin 3:4). For several years prior to my conversion, I had been attending Mass occasionally at St. Francis on the way to work. Even though I found the beauty and reverence for the Mass very appealing and constantly drawing me back, I would always sneak out the door before the Eucharist. Resistance is strongest when we feel "comfortable" where we are. I think my Protestant training still had

me convinced that the Catholic Church was really not much more than a "cult" of sorts, and to be truly Christian, one could not be Catholic. When a couple of my friends converted to Catholicism, I was determined to save them. I soon learned that God certainly does work in mysterious ways! One day in the church lobby I saw a flier for a class during Lent on "What it Means to be Catholic." At the time I hadn't even considered the question of the validity of Catholicism.

I was driven by a need to "prove" the puzzle, much like one of my mathematical proofs. This involved solving the unanswered questions with as much logic and objectivity as I could muster with God's grace. So, I laid out my premises. First I asserted that, given my prior education, any Catholic doctrine would appear false so I would have to make a conscious effort to remain as objective as possible. Next, I asserted that a rational choice can be made only between known alternatives. Thus, I would need to learn as much as I could about this "cult" that was claiming the lives of some of my friends. "In judging, our deliberative power touches the divine laws if it reaches a solution by full analysis" (Itin 3:4).

And so I began the classes. I had strenuous objections to almost everything I was being taught. But one by one my objections were answered by a gentle friar who kept saying, "No, not for you necessarily, but for me. I'm Roman Catholic and for me. . . ." On and on I was led, unable to uncover any flaw in the doctrine I was learning. The Church he was revealing to me wasn't the dry, lifeless entity I had been taught that it was, but a rich, deep, living Church—full and exquisitely beautiful. I even had to admit that perhaps the Catholic Church was the church Christ told Peter to found and build. And if I accepted the "sola scriptura" argument, then I would have to accept the canon of the New Testament. And if I accepted that, it seemed obvious that I had to admit that at one time in history the Holy Spirit had been guiding the Catholic Church. Could I now accept that the Holy Spirit had a change of heart? Even more critical to me—how could I now avoid, as long as I was still accepting "sola scriptura," the Bread of Life discourse in John 6?

The experiences of that first class reminded me of some of the stories in the Old Testament where we constantly see people trying to outmaneuver, outwit, and trick God—resisting all the way! I see God as someone who will argue with me occasionally, like Jacob wrestling with the angel. I see a God who is willing to be brought down into our human struggles to grapple with us. Often I find myself trying to bargain with God. I struggle, arguing about other demands that I feel on my time and energy. I become hesitant, fearing the possible consequences of the total surrender to God's will. This resistance slowly forces us to look at ways our witness can give a

"yes" to life. It forces us to examine carefully all that God has opened up to us and to discover exactly how we can use our gifts in bringing Christ's love to others.

Submission

> After our mind has beheld God outside itself . . . within itself . . . above itself . . . insofar as this is possible . . . our mind reaches that point where it contemplates, in the First and Supreme Principle and in . . . Jesus Christ, those things whose likenesses can in no way be found in creatures and which surpass all penetration by the human intellect, it remains to pass over not only this sense world but even itself. . . . In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities must be left behind and the height of our affection must be totally transferred and transformed into God (Itin 7:1,4).

We seem to resist the new and hold tightly to the familiar and the comfortable. We spend our lives carefully constructing a "world" in which we can live. The prospect of change challenges us, insisting that some of our life's work may need to be undone. There is so much over which we feel helpless, over which we have no control. We didn't choose the family into which we were born and had no control over our inherited characteristics. We can't control changes in the lives of those closest to us. Individually, we have little control over things that threaten our environment, our cities, or even our neighbors. We can't stop the creeping advance of age and death. Sometimes the promise we hear in Corinthians—"We shall all be changed"—sounds rather like a threat. Will the gain from any change exceed the loss? I feel the desire to respond as St. Augustine did to God's persistence as he cried: "Let me wait a little longer."[2]

Bonaventure makes it clear that we need not face the challenge of transformation unaided. The Spirit is always with us, nudging us along the path to greater freedom. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2Cor. 3:17,18). Stripped of the illusions of our own accomplishments and self-worth, we can begin to perceive the true glory of the crucified Lord. As our eyes are slowly opened to His glory, we begin to receive its impression upon our lives as we are conformed to the image of Christ. We begin to see God's invitation to change and promise of transformation as the ecstatic invitation of lover to beloved: "Come unto me. . . ." The process of drawing into God becomes an ecstatic, and sometimes painful, unfolding from within.

Ecstasy

> God not only outside us and within us but also above us (Itin. 6:1) . . . to lift you up in wonder . . . for Being itself is first and last; . . . eternal and most present; . . . utterly simple and the greatest; . . . most actual and most unchangeable; . . . most perfect and most immense; . . . supremely one and yet all-inclusive (Itin 6:7) . . . all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good, and to see him perfectly is to be blessed. . . (Itin. 6:8).

Carl Sagan, the astronomer, once said, "We are an intelligent species and the use of our intelligence quite properly gives us pleasure. . . . Understanding is joyous." Yet, St. Bonaventure brings us further. With Dionysius he reminds us that we need to "leave behind our senses and intellectual activities, . . . and in this state of unknowing be restored, insofar as possible, to unity with him who is above all essence and knowledge" (Itin 7:5). We pause at each station to pray and to meditate on the wonders of God, and as we come into the center of the Cross we stop in awe.

St. Bonaventure gives us the example of St. Francis, who ". . . passed over into God in ecstatic contemplation and became an example of perfect contemplation as he had previously been of action . . . so that through him . . . God might invite all truly spiritual men to this kind of passing over and spiritual ecstasy" (Itin 7:3). Following then in the footsteps of St. Francis, we come full circle and find ourselves back at the beginning of the journey in prayer. St. Bonaventure tells us:

> If we wish to know how these things come about, ask grace not instruction, desire not understanding, the groaning of prayer not diligent reading, the Spouse not the teacher, God not man, darkness not clarity, not light but the fire that totally inflames and carries us into God by ecstatic unctions and burning affections. This fire is God. . . . Let us, then, die and enter into the darkness; let us impose silence upon our cares, our desires and our imaginings. With Christ crucified let us pass out of this world to the Father (Itin 7:6).

It is in the unity found within God that we become one with our brothers and sisters, dying to ourselves and entering joyfully into the cross. Gently nudged open by the power of the Spirit, the community we have found here on earth bursts apart and blossoms. The beauty we are able to see becomes one with the fragrance that we cannot see, lifting us up in harmony with each other and in awe before the incredible reality that is God.

Endnotes:

[1]All quotations from the *Itinerarium,* or *The Soul's Journey Into God,* are taken from *Bonaventure—The Soul's Journey Into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis,* trans. Ewart Cousins, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

[2]St. Augustine, *Confessions* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1961) 165.

Francis,

repair my house!

(2Cel 10)

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Lady Poverty

Gerard Thomas Straub

The cornerstone of Franciscan spirituality is poverty. Francis took Lady Poverty for his bride. Of course, for us moderns, poverty is a strange choice for a mate. The goal of our lives is to escape or avoid poverty. We chase after Sister Porsche or Brother BMW. When we look at the millions of indescribably poor people around the world, people living in unthinkable squalor in far off places such as India or in the shadows of our own cities (such as in the Kensington section of Philadelphia), we can not even remotely begin to picture poverty as an ideal.

The Meaning of Poverty

For Francis, a life of poverty didn't just mean living a simple, uncluttered life. Francis knew that, at its core, poverty was a condition of being perpetually deprived, of being in a state of constant need. The virtue of poverty is that it leads one to recognize that God alone can provide us with what we truly need. Francis believed that to travel down the road to God required him to rid himself of all possessions. Buddha understood the same thing. He was born a prince—Prince Gautama—and was raised in a luxurious palace. When he was around age thirty, he left his father, his wife, his son, the palace, and his fortune and set out to solve the problem of human suffering. He knew that the road to enlightenment was paved with detachment and that he had to break free from all desire and karma. Down through the ages, mystics of all faiths have claimed that God speaks in the quiet of our hearts and we can hear the voice only when we silence the noise of our selfish desires. Francis turned his back on all the things of the world which might turn his heart away from God. With the help of Lady Poverty, Francis

gladly gave up all his desires except one—to do the will of God. Joy, he discovered, was in giving, not in having.

I understand the spiritual concept of poverty, too. Or do I? Heck, even though I'm drawn to Francis's ideal of poverty and have no consuming desire for riches, nonetheless, the last thing I want to be is poor. I don't want to have to beg for food or not be able to buy a book I want to read. Yesterday, I had no trouble spending $15 for the latest recording of Gregorian Chant by the Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos. I can't help but think perhaps Francis took the idea too far, and his impetuous literalness which demanded he own nothing but one ragged, old, brown robe was a mistake. Mahatma Gandhi didn't think it was a mistake. Gandhi said that Francis's renunciation of every conceivable human consolation was so complete and profound that he "made himself zero."

In effect, Francis created a void in his life, a void which could only be filled by God. Francis's understanding of poverty didn't even leave room for him or his followers to live in the security of a sturdy building or to have the assurance of daily food. Francis wanted his friars to live from moment to moment, trusting completely in God, and giving "no thought for the morrow"—just as the Gospel said. He called money dung, and became angry when a friar even touched a coin. This is hard to understand or appreciate.

Poverty in Action

Recently, I had the opportunity to see Francis's concept of poverty in action. In the fall of 1996, my friend, Fr. Reginald Redlon, OFM, asked me to do him a favor: to talk with a friar from Florida who wanted to start a TV ministry. This, to me, sounded like an impossible dream because the friar had no experience in the field of television. Because I'm a former television producer, Fr. Redlon thought I might be able to offer the friar some advice on how to get started. I was happy to help, although I only anticipated answering a few questions without ever leaving my home in Los Angeles.

In a typically Franciscan fashion, where logic and order play second-fiddle to inspiration and spontaneity, the few questions quickly evolved into my agreeing to write and direct a documentary on the work being done by a team of Franciscan friars, nuns, and lay volunteers who minister to the poor and homeless in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. The area, known as "The Badlands," is one of the worst slums in America; the soup kitchen the Franciscans operate is called "St. Francis Inn." Besides the soup kitchen, which feeds three to five hundred people a day, they also run a men's shelter that accommodates ten men a night, a women's center

that offers counseling during the day to prostitutes and drug addicts, and a thrift shop that provides clothing for the poor. In order to write the script, I made two trips to Philadelphia and lived at St. Francis Inn for a total of nine days. What I saw shocked me, saddened me, and, eventually, inspired me as I slowly gained insight into the spiritual wisdom of poverty.

I went to Kensington expecting to find a soup kitchen. What I found was a community of remarkable yet very human people offering not just a hot meal to the poor and homeless but also love to all those who were hungry and hurting. The staff gave their all to those who had nothing. As I observed them, I saw people who saw Jesus in people most of us do not even see. They looked at the broken, dirty, and disheveled people who live on the margins of society and saw a spark of divine beauty and goodness. The drug addicts, the prostitutes, the mentally ill, as well as the poverty-plagued elderly and families who live each day without hope or enough to eat, come to St. Francis Inn and are treated with dignity and respect.

One young Franciscan Volunteer Minister told me that when she goes home and hears people talking in a condescending manner about drug addicts and prostitutes, she gets angry because they are talking about "my friends." That was the amazing and unexpected part—the staff doesn't just feed the guests, they enter into a relationship with them. They listen to them. They laugh with them. They cry with them. They hug them. They encourage them. They pray for them. In short, they give themselves—completely and without reservation—to the guests. And what is even more unexpected, the staff claims it is the guests who give to them, enriching their lives in innumerable little ways each day.

New Insights in Tent City

Before spending time in Kensington, the plight of the homeless had always troubled me. The problem, however, was beyond not only my comprehension but also my ability to do anything about it. It's hard to care about the homeless when you don't know anyone who is homeless. My time in Kensington helped me put a face on the homeless—the face of Sheila from Tent City, whom I came to care about very much. Tent City is not a campground. Located on an empty, corner lot, it consists of collection of small, ramshackle dwellings made of cardboard, scraps of discarded wood, and large pieces of plastic. A dirty mattress, standing on its side, forms a wall of one of the dwellings. Perhaps a dozen people live in the four or five huts. I tagged alone with one of the friars who was delivering some left-over food that had to be eaten before it spoiled.

It was a damp, cold night. As we loaded the van, the light drizzle in-

tensified. I began to shiver as we drove, which made me wonder how the homeless endure the winter nights. I don't think I could. As we pulled up to the lot, we could see a group of people gathered around a fire. Some were standing, warming their hands over the bright flames; others, bundled under blankets wrapped around their heavy coats, were seated on the old junk furniture which encircled the large barrel in which scraps of wood were being burned. The friar introduced me to his friends, who were thrilled by the surprise, late-night food delivery. "Hey, we got some good stuff here. It came from a gourmet Japanese restaurant. It was left over from their Sunday brunch. It won't last long. Gotta eat it quickly."

No need to worry—starving people do not need to be told to eat quickly. Sheila asked me to sit on the tattered couch with her. I did, though it felt awkward sitting on a couch which sat in the middle of a vacant lot. The friar sat down on a wooden crate. As they ate, we talked about all kinds of things. Perfectly normal conversation. I couldn't help but feel as if we were in their living room, except it was raining in this living room, and the occasional loud truck that passed made it difficult to hear each other. The main topic of discussion was the coming winter. The temperature at night will regularly get well below freezing. Some of the people were going to try to find an abandoned building in which to squat. They needed to get their hands on a kerosene heater, which would be instrumental to their hopes of surviving the winter.

I don't know why, but I was attracted to Sheila. Perhaps it was her broad, infectious smile and hearty laugh. If that littered lot were my living room, could I manage to smile or laugh? But beyond her smile, Sheila's eyes told a different story. In them, I could see deep sadness. The sadness of someone who couldn't break the addiction to drugs. The sadness of a mother who had her daughter taken away by the state because she was not able to care for the child. The sadness of a woman who confronts relentless suffering and violence on a daily basis. The sadness of a woman whose home was a cardboard hut in a lot off a busy street. In the distance, through the drizzle and over the roofs of the boarded-up buildings, I could see the skyline of Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. Sheila and her friends experience very little brotherly love. Rejection is their lot; hopelessness, their brother.

During my two visits to Kensington, I ran into Sheila a number of times. She often came to the Inn to eat. Whenever I drove past Tent City with one of the staff, I asked to stop for a few minutes to visit Sheila. I asked if I could photograph her. She let me. She was a large woman. Her face was round, and her smile made her cheeks look puffy. Her skin was weathered by constant exposure to the harsh winter. Her teeth were crooked. Her thrift shop clothes fit her poorly. Yet, she was beautiful in her openness.

Personal Tragedy

One morning, during my second visit, I saw her waiting by the side door of the Inn. The poor are always waiting; they are powerless to do anything else but wait. When I approached, I could see she had been crying. There were no smiles that morning. She was clearly troubled by something, so I asked her what the problem was. I wasn't ready for what I heard. Sheila and a couple of other people from Tent City had moved into an empty building to escape the bitter cold nights. It was a "crack house." One of the women living there had a young baby, whom Sheila had grown very fond of. She missed her own daughter very much, and so Sheila showered her motherly affection on the infant. The baby's mother was a "crack" addict. Sheila made it her business to look after the child when the mother was stoned. Sheila heard the baby crying in the middle of the night, but she didn't get up to see what the problem was. She said, "I was cold and tired. I thought about getting up, but I couldn't. I fell asleep."

When Sheila came downstairs that morning, she made a horrific discovery. The mother and child had been sleeping on the couch. During the night, the mother had rolled over on top of the child. The child must have cried. But to no avail. Under the weight of her drugged mother, the child suffocated. Sheila and the mother screamed as they shook the baby. Someone ran to a pay phone a few block away and called for an ambulance. The paramedics said the infant had lapsed into a coma. They rushed the child to the hospital, where she was reported to be in critical condition.

Sheila blamed herself for not responding to the cries in the dead of the night. I tried to comfort her, but there was little I could do. I expressed the hope that the hospital could help the baby and everything would end up OK. Sheila needed some change to take a train to a clinic where she had an appointment. She had been troubled by pains in her stomach for over a month. I gave her the money. As she walked towards the train station, I thought about just how tough her life was. If living in a "crack house" in order to escape some of winter's bite wasn't tough enough, now she had the added burden of guilt over a child's tragic accident, not to mention the chronic stomach pains.

Later that night, Sheila was in the courtyard of the Inn, waiting her turn to come in and get a hot meal. They were serving turkey soup that night. I noticed a woman come up to Sheila and say something to her. Sheila began crying. A couple of homeless women surrounded her and tried to comfort her. I went over to see what the problem was. One of the women whispered in my ear, "The little baby from the crack house died."

I backed off in order to give Sheila and her friends space. Besides, what could I say? After a few minutes, Sheila left the courtyard and began to walk alone under the Kensington Avenue elevated train. I ran after her. As I approached her, a train roared by overhead. I just looked at her. Her eyes were filled with tears. She said, "The baby died." I could hardly hear her. I said, "I know. I'm sorry." The train passed. Stillness suddenly filled the dark night, as we stood alone looking at each other. I gave her a hug. And as I did, I said something that was so unplanned it caught me by surprise as the words punctuated the cold stillness of the night: "I love you." She hugged me even tighter and said, "I know. Thank you." There was a brief pause as we both looked at each other. "I'll be OK," she said. We parted. I stood watching her as she walked alone under the elevated tracks as another train loudly rumbled passed. It was a moment I shall never forget. I felt a real, vital connection to a homeless, black woman who was a drug addict. Before spending time with the friars in Kensington, I would have considered such a person to have been repulsive.

Miracles of Discovery

By embracing the lepers whom he found repulsive, St. Francis of Assisi was able to discover their beauty. That same miracle of discovery happens every day in Kensington.

The staff at St. Francis Inn thought I was doing them a favor, offering my time and expertise to produce a TV documentary about their ministry. No way. It was the community of St. Francis Inn who did me a favor, showing me the true meaning and beauty of Lady Poverty. By becoming poor themselves, the staff depends completely on God for everything. They are fed each day at the altar, where they receive the strength in turn to feed the poor. The spiritual poverty Francis espoused for himself and his followers recognized that there was nothing wrong with material things, but he did not want the friars to appropriate anything for themselves. Not owning anything meant they had nothing to defend. Francis did not want to cling even to his own ego—that was Adam and Eve's mistake. During a homily, Fr. Charles Finnegan, OFM, a former Provincial of the Holy Name Province, quoted the martyred bishop of El Salvador, Oscar Romero: "Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God."

During my stay at St. Francis Inn, I learned that I needed to empty myself in order to be filled by God. Creating that void isn't going to be easy. I'm still clinging to my own understanding, my own ideas; I want to be in control of my life, which, I now see, means God can't be. The friars, nuns, and lay members that form the community at St. Francis Inn showed

me a better way, a much richer way, the way of Lady Poverty. While they were feeding the poor, they also were spiritually feeding me—and for that I'm very grateful.

No Potatoes

St. Francis of Assisi would feel very much at home at this island of hope in the midst of a sea of despair. He would be glad to see his followers depending on God for everything and living simply so others might simply live. St. Francis would have smiled had he been in the kitchen the day a volunteer asked Br. Xavier de la Huerta, OFM, "What are you making, Brother?"

"Potato soup," Brother Xavier answered without hesitation.

The volunteer looked around the kitchen for a few seconds and then asked, "Where are the potatoes?"

"We don't have any potatoes," responded Brother Xavier.

A perplexed look crossed the volunteer's face. He asked another question: "How can you make potato soup then?"

Brother Xavier's answer reflected his faith: "The Lord knows what we need, and He will provide."

Within twenty minutes, there was a knock on the side door. The volunteer opened the door, and standing before him was a man who said he had been to a farmer's market, adding, "When I saw the potatoes I had this sudden thought that I should pick up a couple of fifty-pound bags for the Inn. I hope you can use them."

Embracing Lady Poverty means learning to admit—we don't have any potatoes. It also means letting go of self and entrusting ourselves to God. The essence of Lady Poverty is fulfillment and inner freedom. Lady Poverty is rich not because she has given up much but because she has found

I consider you a co-worker of
God Himself
and a support of the weak members
of His ineffable Body

(3LAg8)

A Biographical Profile of Frances Ann Thom, OSF Syracuse, New York

Frances Ann Thom is a Sister of the Third Order of St. Francis of Syracuse, New York, and is on the General Council for her religious congregation. She visits sisters in New York, Pennsylvania, South Jersey, and Texas.

Sister Frances Ann has an M.A. in English from Catholic University of America and an M.A. in Franciscan Studies from The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University. She has been active in literary organizations and has also served as Vice-Chairperson for Region I of the Franciscan Federation

In the 1970s, Sister Frances Ann was a steady contributor to *The Cord* and collaborated with a Dominican sister on a book of poetry honoring St. Francis, *Two Prayers for Two Stones*, (Franciscan Herald Press, 1976). She also contributed a chapter to *Medieval Religious Women: Peaceweavers*, entitled "Clare of Assisi: New Leader of Women" (Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1987). During her twenty-five years as a teacher of English, drama, speech, and journalism, she wrote and produced with her students several plays, including *A Certain Trumpet*, on the life of Mother Marianne of Molokai. *The Cord* ran a series of her articles on Mother Marianne.

She also founded a House of Prayer for her community, introducing Francis's Rule for Hermitages. For five years she was the resident hermit, spending much time in prayer and offering hermitage experiences to others.

She has published many poems, articles, and reviews over the years and continues to write, lecture, and give retreats on Francis and Clare. She speaks enthusiastically about our Franciscan way of life:

> Today I am extremely energized by the Franciscan spark which has so visibly burst beyond all boundaries as is evidenced in the thrust for refounding in religious communities. We . . . are continuing to move into ministries of greatest need while renewing and repledging ourselves to the needs of the times and of the Church. I am further energized by the Franciscan Federation of which I was a member of the Research Committee in the '70s. The development of regions has greatly increased the possibility of touching each Franciscan individually. In our own area we are beginning to work on sub-regions. Imagine how many fires can be lighted in this way! Soon the whole world will know the meaning of what it is to be a Franciscan.

We are grateful to Sister Frances Ann for her generous support of *The Cord* for so many years.

Contributors

Michael H. Crosby, OFM Cap, is a member of the Midwest Province of the Capuchin Franciscans. He has written a number of books, including *The Spirituality of the Beatitudes, House of Disciples* (both published by Orbis Books), and *The Dysfunctional Church* (AveMaria Press.)

Sharon Liscio, SFO, was formerly an Elder/Minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. Some years ago, she was received into the Catholic Church at St. Francis of Assisi Church in New York City and became a Secular Franciscan. She holds terminal degrees in math and science from Stanford University and is presently a controller for a law firm in New York City.

Gerard Thomas Straub, a former network television producer, taught special courses in television writing and directing at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy. He wrote and directed a feature length documentary, *We Have a Table for Four Ready*, which tells the story of a soup kitchen run by Franciscan friars in Philadelphia. He is the author of two books, *Dear Kate*, a novel (1992), and *Salvation for Sale*, a nonfiction look at the world of televangelism (1986), both published by Prometheus Books.

Kathleen Uhler, OSF, a Franciscan Sister of Allegany, New York, has a doctorate in philosophy and has taught medical ethics and political philosophy. While on the faculty of St. Bonaventure University, Sr. Kathleen developed the Peace Studies program. At present, she is Associate Director of Franciscans International.

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Summer Session, 1997

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David Flood, OFM (June 23-July 11)

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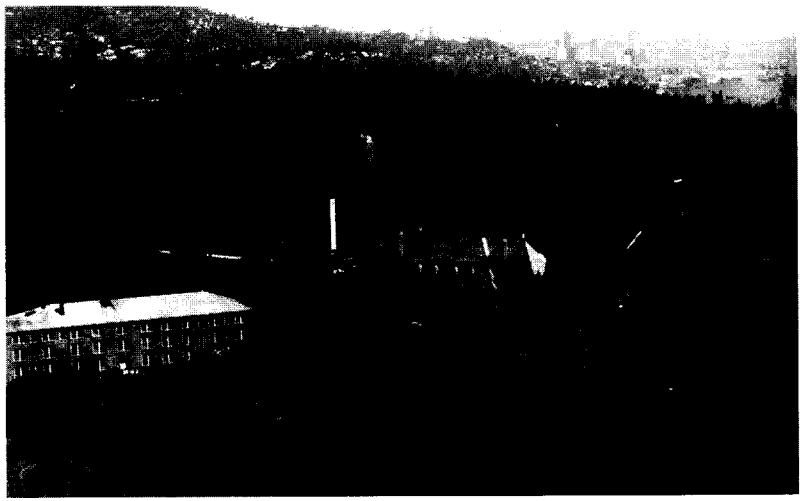

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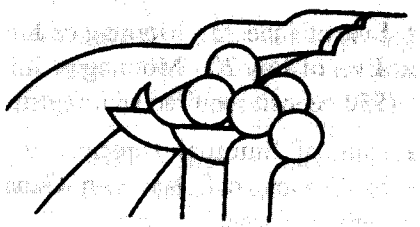

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ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT
COMING EVENTS 1997

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The Beatitudes and Discipleship. Michael Crosby, OFM Cap. At Living Waters Catholic Reflection Center. Contact: Jane Schmenk, OSF, 1420 Soco Road, Maggie Valley, NC 28751, ph. 704-926-3833.

Sunday, June 1-Saturday, June 7

Admonitions and Scripture. Giles Schinelli, TOR. Spirit and Life Center. Contact: Barbara Zilch, OSF, Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340, ph. 456-881-9207.

Tuesday, June 10-Sunday, June 15

Franciscans Doing Theology. Sponsored by The Franciscan Institute at The Franciscan Center, Colorado Springs (see ad p. 143).

Sunday, June 15-Sunday, June 22

The Gospels as Foundation of Franciscan Life. Jude Winkler, OFM Conv. Cost: $350. Contact: Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987, ph. 507-454-2993, fax 507-453-0910.

Sunday, July 6-Saturday, July 12

Right Relationships as a Franciscan. Madonna Hoying, SSF. At Mount St. Francis. Contact: Marilyn Uhing, OSF, 7665 Assisi Heights, Colorado Srpings, CO 80919, ph. 719-598-5486.

Sunday, July 13-Sunday, July 20

The Form of Life: The Gospel Call to Ongoing Conversion. Clare A. D'Auria, OSF. Cost: $230. Shalom Retreat Center. Contact: Marie Therese Kalb, OSF, Shalom Retreat Center, 1001 Davis St., Dubuque, IA 52001.

Thursday, July 17-Sunday, July 20 (or Tuesday, July 22)

Franciscan Contemporary Living. Ramona Miller, OSF. At Pilgrim House. Contact: Pat Meyer, OSF, Pilgrim House, 321 Clay St., Carey, OH 43316, ph. 419-396-7970.

Friday, August 1-Saturday, August 9

"The Soul's Journey Into God." André Cirino, OFM, and Josef Raischl, SFO. Cost: $425. Contact: Tau Center, Winona (see above).

Friday, August 29-Friday, September 5

A Family and a Rule. Margaret Carney, OSF. Cost: $240. Contact: Shalom Retreat Center, Dubuque (see above).

Friday, September 26-Sunday, September 28

Facing the Christ Incarnate. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation at Madonna Retreat Center, Albuquerque, NM. Contact: Franciscan Federation, PO Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, fax 202-529-7016.

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy
EpCust	Letter to the Custodians
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin	Letter to a Minister
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies
ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
LaudDei	Praises of God
LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours.
OffPass	Office of the Passion
OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
RegB	Later Rule
RegNB	Earlier Rule
RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
Test	Testament
TestS	Testament written in Siena
UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCl	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCl	Blessing of Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2Cel	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
AP	Anonymous of Perugia
CL	Legend of Clare
CSD	Consideration of the Stigmata
Fior	Fioretti
JdV	Witness of Jacque de Vitry
LM	Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LMin	Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LP	Legend of Perugia
L3S	Legend of the Three Companions
Proc	Acts of the Process of Canonization of St. Clare
SC	Sacrum Commercium
SP	Mirror of Perfection

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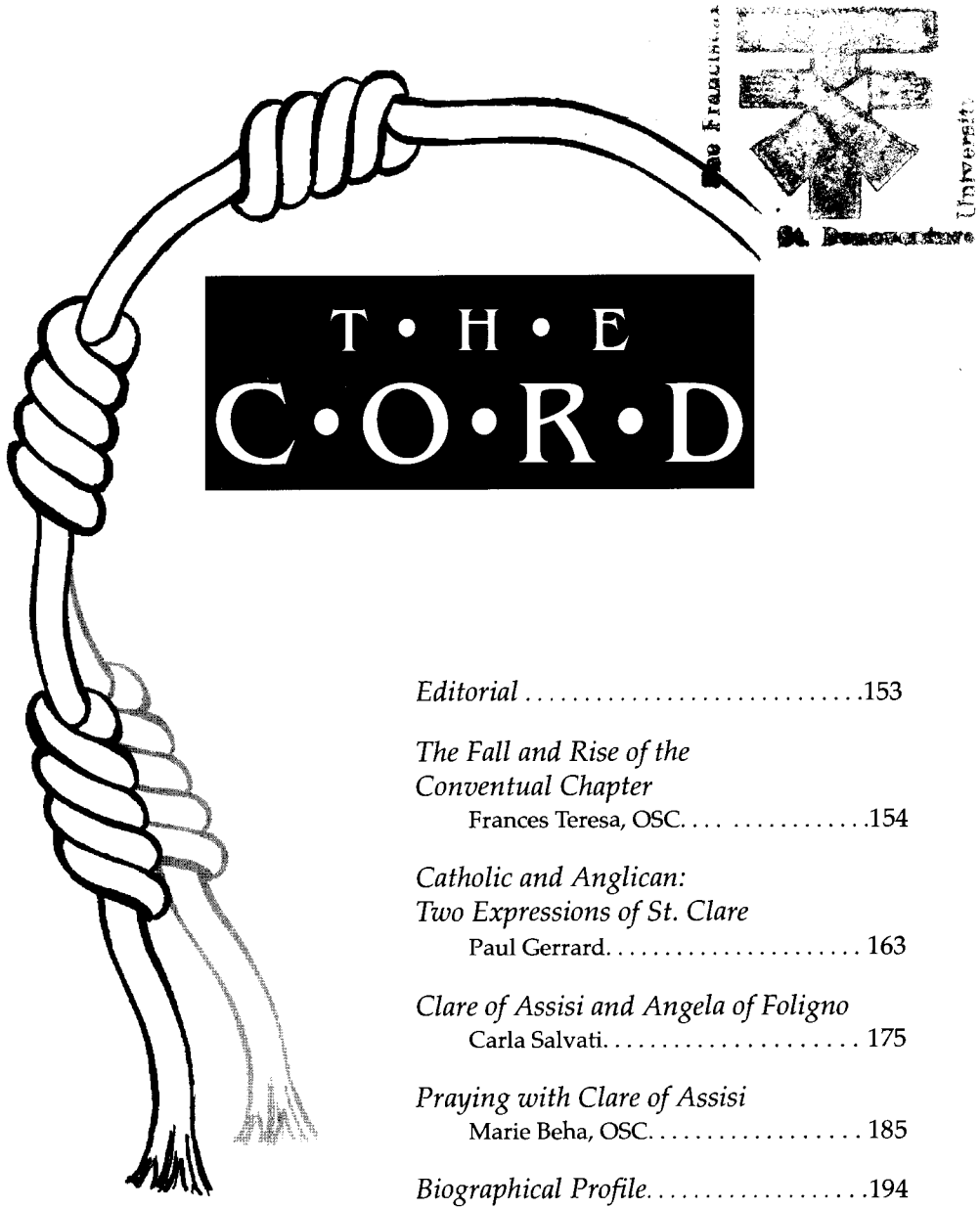

T • H • E C • O • R • D

Volume 47, No. 4 *July-August 1997*

THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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Editor: Elise Saggau, OSF
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To save unnecessary delay and expense, contributors are asked to observe the following directives:

1. MSS should be submitted on disk or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced.
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
   Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
   (1Cor. 13:6).
   (RegNB 23:2).
   (2Cel 5:8).
   (4LAg 2:13).

A list of standard abbreviations used in *The Cord* can be found inside the back cover. The edition of the Franciscan sources used should be noted in the first reference in a mss.

Cover design: Basil Valente, OFM and David Haack, OFM.

Editorial

Perhaps one of the challenges of our time is to discover once again the value of being "useless." We live on an "edge of terror" that threatens us with our own lack of necessity. When we allow ourselves to meditate on the vast scheme of things, we are occasionally confronted with our own infinitesimal smallness and the fact that everything in the universe got on perfectly well without us for millions of years—and will do equally well when our brief sojourn here is over. It is a sobering and, yes, humbling thought.

Lest it be perceived as a depressing thought, there is the other side of the coin. In spite of our smallness and clear limitation, we, for some mysterious reason, *are*. It is the very wonder of this that so grasps the saints and the truly contemplative among us. Of all people they understand their own insignificance and nothingness. Thus, of all people, they stand most amazed at their own being—gratuitous, unmerited gift. This gift derives its value from the heart of the creative God, who at some specific, historical moment, like a delighted child playing a game, suddenly announces: "I choose you!"

Clare and Francis of Assisi certainly grasped this marvelous truth. They lived lives of radiant gratitude and praise, understanding that the gift of their own being and that of their sisters and brothers was the truest sign of God's love in action. The "usefulness" of creatures was a secondary consideration. Thus infants, the old, the sick, the handicapped, the poor and deprived—all ranked equally with the brilliant, the healthy, with vibrant youth and wise maturity. This is our heritage in the Franciscan Family—to know this and to live in the world believing it.

In this issue of *The Cord*, we once more focus on our Sister Clare, to admire her and to learn from her.

We offer our apologies for an unfortunate error in the last issue of *The Cord*. On page 139 the last line of Gerard Straub's article on "Lady Poverty" was omitted. It should have read: "Lady Poverty is rich not because she has given up much but because she has found much. God's love and grace are all the riches she needs."

"Lady Poverty is rich not because she has given up much but because she has found much. God's love and grace are all the riches she needs."
(Straub, "Lady Poverty," The Cord [May/June, 1997] 139.)

The Cord, 47.4 (1997)

The Fall and Rise of the Conventual Chapter
From Chapter 4 of the Rule to the General Constitutions

Frances Teresa, OSC

Anyone who has been a Poor Clare for more than twenty-five years would probably agree that some of the most far-reaching and influential changes have been in the role and status of the Conventual Chapter. The Poor Clare life, unlike that of some orders, has always had a place for consultation not only in practice but also in legislation, so that there is no sense in which the Chapter, as we see it today, can be called a new thing. What is new, however, is the expansion of its role, the spread of its concerns and the possibilities for the future which these make possible.

Thirty years ago, Chapter was, to all intents and purposes, a forum for correction and admonition, a well-tried and structured means for maintaining fervor and correcting faults. Today it takes its place among the actual instruments of government in a monastery. The matters entrusted to it are important and significant enough that the Sisters have a real role in shaping their own lives. It is one of our main channels through which the community can express its appropriate responsibility and provide the complementary balance to the way in which the Abbess exercises her appropriate responsibility.

These two modes of government are now seen as parts of the same whole in a way which represents a marked development from the relatively minimal place of consultation granted to the Chapter in, for example, St. Colette's Constitutions of 1434. The General Constitutions of 1989 say:

> The Abbess is to summon the Chapter as often as there are questions to be discussed which are pertinent to it and at least four times a year. (Art. 249.3)
>
> . . .
>
> In matters where the decision is reserved to the Council but which seem to be of greater moment, the Abbess should be ready to consult all the Sisters. (Art. 246.2)

St. Colette says:

> When all this [admonition of faults, etc.] has been concluded, then the Sisters discuss and decide any points which are to be discussed as the Form of Life says (103-111).

Urban IV, in his rule, makes no mention of the Abbess's acknowledging her faults—a point which Clare puts first. He ordains correction, reformation, and punishment, none of which are mentioned by Clare in this context.

What is new in the General Constitution is that the Chapter now has a long list of specific matters assigned to it as well as the power to decide which are the important matters on which the views of the whole community are to be sought (Art. 250 b12). In other words, the Chapter itself can draw upon its own agenda in a way which is apparently open-ended.

However, a glance at the original legislation of the Poor Sisters of St. Clare reveals that, although the present role of the Chapter is considerably expanded, it can be argued that we have not yet attained the full expression of Clare's vision of community. Clare stipulates that, at least once a week, the Abbess must call the Sisters together in Chapter (4.11). She is obliged to call them—*teneantur ad convocare Capitulum.* The same phrase is used in verse 1: the Sisters are bound to observe the canonical form—*teneantur formam canonicam observare* (4.1). This is stronger than a recommendation. It suggests that this weekly meeting is as obligatory as the observance of Canon Law about elections. That is a strong statement. Clare then goes on to define three quite clear areas which are to be the basis for an agenda for these Chapters—confession of public offenses and negligences, the well-being of the monastery, the contracting of debts.

Confession of Public Faults

Clare says that both she [the abbess] and her Sisters must confess their common and public offenses and negligences humbly (4.12)—*tam ipsa quam Sorores*—she, every bit as much as the Sisters. Clare is making a definite reminder of the absolute equality of the Sisters and the Abbess. She is also defining the area which should fall into these confessions: common and public offenses and negligences, which the Abbess commits as well as the Sisters. Nothing is said about correction, no mention is made of penances, in marked contrast to the Rule of Urban IV, written only eleven years after her death which says:

> The Abbess shall call the Sisters together in Chapter . . . to correct, order and reform them. She shall mercifully impose punishment according to the public admission for both common negligences and faults.

Urban makes no mention of the Abbess acknowledging her faults, which Clare puts first, ordaining correction, reformation, and punishment. It is clear from the Canonization Process that Clare was well able to correct when necessary, and in her Rule she gives this matter a whole section, a section which is composed almost entirely of quotations from Francis's Rule of 1223 (Ch. 10) with one or two additions—apparently by Clare herself. For example, Francis speaks of "our Rule" and Clare of "our Form of profession"; Francis says: "I strictly command them," and Clare: "they are firmly bound" because "they have renounced their own wills for God's sake." To Francis's list of faults particularly to be avoided, Clare adds: "dissension and discussion, and let them be ever zealous to preserve among themselves the unity of mutual love which is the bond of perfection." Finally when Francis encourages them to patience, Clare adds "in difficulty." These are clearly the fruits of her years lived in community and are quite other than the imposition of punishment, however "mercifully."

Clare then directs that, mutual apology and forgiveness having been made and granted, the Abbess shall confer with all her Sisters about the good of the monastery (4.13), about matters practical and non-material, *utilitate et honestate.* She then adds, as if by way of explanation to an inquiry not asked but guessed: for the Lord often reveals what is best to the lesser *(minori)* among us.

As Regis Armstrong points out, Clare's remarks about Chapter gain in force when we recall the complete absence of any mention of Chapter in the two previous Rules of Ugolino and Innocent IV.[1] When Clare speaks about Chapter, she is often looking more to Benedict than to her long experience of Ugolino. She makes one important and interesting change, however. Benedict says:

> As often as any important business has to be done in the monastery, let the Abbott call together the whole Community and himself set forth the matter (Rule of St. Benedict 3, hereafter RSB).

So far Clare follows Benedict. The sources of the many quotations in her Rule are a study in themselves, and there is much to be learned from any changes which Clare makes as she quotes. The fact that the changes are often very slight only adds to their significance and their subtlety. Throughout her Rule we have a clear and developed enunciation of the basic principles by which she and Francis lived, those of *minoritas*, "lesserness," and *fraternitas*, community. It is no exaggeration to say that these verses (11 and 12) spell out the heart of Francis and Clare's vision in which all are sinful, all are redeemed, all are loved, and all are poor. She challenges us here to transcend that deeply-rooted dynamic by which every group of human beings tends to seek a leader to carry both the responsibility and the blame. Instead, she summons us to live

as co-heirs of the Kingdom where God shall be all in all. With this almost certainly in mind, she urges us to hear the "minori" among us. Benedict actually says: *quia saepe iuniori Dominus revelat quod melius est*—for it is often to the youngest that the Lord reveals what is best (RSB 3). Clare, however, says "minori," not "iuniori"—"to the least" not "to the youngest."

Unfortunately *minori*, like *minoritas*, has no real equivalent in English unless it be "leastness"; but we can well understand her meaning, especially as we know how dear this concept was to Francis and Clare and how central to their thinking. We may be sure that if Clare made this change from youngest to least, then she did so of set purpose. Even if ill and dying and perhaps quoting from memory, yet how significant that this change of word had taken place in her memory. She is making a clear statement to us that the "true Friar minor" and the true Poor Clare is often someone hidden in our midst, not notable in any way, and therefore one who receives the Lord's revelation.

In this case, we ask ourselves what it signifies that Urban IV in his Rule changes the word back to "iuniori"? He retains the quotation as Clare gives it, speaking first of the Lord and his revealing and secondly of the one to whom he reveals, but Urban replaces Benedict's word, the "youngest." This change is one of those very small things which conceal great things and has meant that those communities who observed Urban's Rule for so many years were, in fact, deprived of a clear expression of a fundamental insight. We all know who the youngest among us are. We do not always know who are the lesser. It could be any of us and will be each of us at some time. This can free us from human respect and enable us to listen to each other freely, open to hear the Word of God spoken by each other.

Colette in her Constitutions says that when the confession and admonition of faults have been concluded, then if there are any points to be discussed, as the Form of Life says, let the Sisters discuss and decide them, as it may seem expedient (111). One of the characteristics of Clare is the simplicity and limpidity of her thoughts and words when compared with those of others. In the whole of Chapter 4, her sparse Latin has barely a dozen adjectives. Colette, on the other hand, daughter of a more complex period, feels the need to give correspondingly complex instructions—the Sisters discuss and decide them as it may seem to be expedient, with due gravity and decorum, being most careful to avoid all superfluous, injurious, or ill-considered words of any kind (111).

What are these matters to be discussed? According to Clare they are

- the well-being of the monastery (4.13) (surely a very wide brief),
- that no heavy debt is to be contracted without the common consent of the Sisters,
- obvious necessity (4.14).

Does the "common consent of the Sisters" mean their unanimous consent? It seems that Clare hoped so. One's first rather flippant thought in response is that therefore it will be highly unlikely that many communities will be contracting heavy debts. Communities are notoriously cautious—and rightly so. This may have been exactly the wisdom Clare wanted to summon. We know she tried to attain unanimity on important matters, for when it was a question of the reception of a candidate, she says that the Abbess is required to seek the consent of all the Sisters—*Sororum omnium consensum requirere teneatur* (2.1), again using the verb *tenere* which was used in reference to obeying Canon Law and the successors of Francis. So here, before contracting a debt the Abbess must consult with all; but Clare does not stipulate unanimity, perhaps because the readiness to contract debts is partly a matter of understanding the issues involved. However, the general message is that Clare would not have been happy with a canonical vote of "one more than half."

With regard to the actual debt she gives no description beyond the words: no heavy debt—*nullum debitum grave*. Urban, on the other hand, has an eye on paying it off and so adds: burdensome—*onerosum*. He also has much more than Clare to say about the procurator. We know from what was happening in other monasteries of the period and especially from the records of some early Cistercian monasteries of nuns (which were usually better documented, and the records better preserved than those of early Poor Clares) that it was the custom for nuns to give their financial affairs into the care of a lay person or else a local abbot or monk. At this time, around 1250, there was considerable official concern about the poverty of some monasteries of nuns, for they did not always have enough food, had no financial security, and often needed help from the bishops or papacy to pay their debts—never a route to popularity! In the light of the connections between the Cistercians and the early Poor Clares, one wonders if the latter were allowed to share in the Cistercians' exemption from certain Papal tithes and levies?

Clare nowhere spells out the details of the procurator's work or accountability, but Urban, that man of affairs, does. He says:

> Each of your monasteries shall have a procurator, someone prudent and trustworthy who must be appointed and removed from office by the Abbess and Chapter as seems most expedient. All the receipts and expenses are committed to the procurator who shall be accountable to the Abbess and the three Sisters specially assigned to the task by the Chapter (21).

Without this team of Abbess and three Sisters, the procurator may not sell or alienate anything of value and must also render an account of his stewardship to the Visitor. This would all be in line with the practice of the day and, though its details are more developed in Urban's Rule (as is the case in almost

every area), we do find it adumbrated in Clare's for she says: this should be done through a procurator (4.14)—apparently taking the reality for granted. The end effect is that the nuts and bolts of daily administration are left to be worked out in the best way by the individual Abbess and community. These matters do not engage Clare's attention as much as do the unity of the house, mutual love and peace, or the form of our poverty.

The Well-Being of the Monastery

In Clare's vision of community, all who hold office are elected by the common consent of the Sisters. This applies particularly to the Abbess. When Clare uses—as she does throughout—the Latin word consensus, she is again touching a deep Franciscan conviction that God speaks to the community as a whole. If anyone disagrees, she especially is to be listened to; she is, for the moment, the "minor," the minority voice, and may well be the one through whom God is, at that moment, speaking. Whenever possible, a unanimous solution is the goal. Thus, with regard to those who wish to enter, Clare says: The Abbess is required to seek the consent of all the Sisters (2.1), but because she has lived for forty years in a community, she goes on to say: and if the majority shall have agreed . . . (2.1). Yet in spite of (or because of) those long years of experience, she can still put before us this great ideal and vision of unanimity—the consent of all the Sisters.

Urban simply says: The free election of the Abbess belongs to the Chapter (22) and seems to require no more than the canon law of the day to make the election valid. The present requirement of a two-thirds majority for a third and fourth term of office, although possibly based on reasons other than Franciscan idealism, is very much in line with Franciscan thinking. Francis and Clare always wished to move with the whole community, not simply by majority vote. It is far too easy for any vote to fall victim to power politics, but these would have had no commerce with *minoritas* as understood by Francis and Clare.

Urban then touches another basic issue when he says: the election is to be confirmed by the Cardinal Protector to whom this Order is committed (22)—something of which Clare makes no mention at all. Time and again we find that Clare was easily able to put the full weight of her trust in her Sisters, so we find her with no hesitation about leaving the responsibility for their lives in their own hands. It is good, too, to recall that she did not write the Rule in the first flush of her idealism and conversion but only after many years of faithful religious life.

Reading Clare's Rule in the light of what she moved from as well as the ideal

towards which she moved, it is helpful to note that in the Rule of Innocent IV, the election of the Abbess has to be confirmed by the Minister General or the Provincial if the General be absent (4.11). Clare asks them only to come and through the Word of God "dispose [the Sisters] to perfect harmony and to the common good in the choice they are to make" (4.2).

Saint Colette, too, requires that the election be confirmed by the Minister General or, in his absence, the Provincial of the Province where the monastery is, or his Commissary—in other words, the one who holds the authority. Colette, however, is also very aware of the positive requirement which Clare is making and asks that instead of the Minister General or Minister Provincial (as in the Rule), the Visitor or Confessor give the encouragement and advice which Clare asks for (8.1). All of Colette's complex arguments for vocal voting (presumably the origin of the term vocals) were changed, of course, by the Council of Trent, and it was the Tridentine model which was embodied in Chapter 7 of the Constitutions of 1932.

In all these examples, we see an ideal being built up, Clare articulating her convictions about how the house should be organized and where real responsibility lies. She is not only convinced that serious decision-making can be placed on the shoulders of the Sisters themselves, but also that it is good for it to be so placed, that the Sisters are well able for such responsibilities and decisions.

Nearly all these points are tempered in Urban's Rule although they are present in essence. It is as if he recognized the essential elements of Clare's charism, but found the sheer simplicity and trust of it too much for his prudent and cautious mind. It has been a loss to the Order that within eleven years of Clare's death we were pointed back towards the more traditional monastic authority structures, towards patterns of life which placed greater reliance on hierarchy, division of responsibility, and confirmation from above. In the process, we lost some of the full force of Clare's total confidence in her community, her complete love and respect for the gifts and ability of each Sister. So we find, for instance, that Urban is not happy with a situation in which the Sisters simply choose their Abbess. He requires the Cardinal Protector of the Order (or his delegate) to confirm the Abbess in office, as indeed does Colette. Today, too, it is true that the Bishop or religious Superior will often say something like: I confirm you in office; but it is clear from Article 235 that the General Constitutions follow Clare, saying unambiguously that that Sister is Abbess who has received the votes and is to be proclaimed as such by the President. In this situation he is to proclaim—*proclametur*—whereas Urban speaks of confirmation—*confirmatio*. Clare is really asking simply for encouragement in unanimity.

Confession of Faults

The area in which Clare's gentle but resilient spirit seems most to have been overlaid is in that of the admission of faults at Chapter. Urban says that the Sisters are gathered together in order to be admonished, that the Abbess is to correct, order, and reform them. He provides no forum for the Abbess to acknowledge her own offenses and negligences. The actual wording of Colette's Constitutions is a little ambiguous here, but the inference seems to be that the Abbess (or her Vicaress) impose penances on them, . . . admonish and reprehend them (107). The Sisters receive these admonitions with humility and perform them devoutly.

Clare sees the confession of faults as almost a preliminary rite to restore harmony, analogous to the confession and absolution at the beginning of Mass. By acknowledging failure and asking forgiveness, we clear away anything which might hinder us from listening together to the Spirit speaking to the Community. Time and again, what comes through to us is the high spirituality both of Clare's ideals and her daily practice—for no one doubts that what she has given us in the Rule is a description of the way she and her Sisters at San Damiano tried to live. For us today there is a double task. We need to steep our spirits in the wine of San Damiano. We need to learn how to drink that wine today and share it with the coming century.

The research being done into the social situation of medieval Italy, into the Beguines, into the movements of poverty and the new forms of women's religious life at the time of Francis and Clare, coupled with the insights of Vatican II, the clear enunciation of the great principles of subsidiarity (that nothing pass to a higher level of authority which can be done at a lower level), and *epikeia* (that the law be interpreted according to the mind of the legislator)—all these things are of inestimable value to us. They offer us a unique opportunity to respond to the vision of Clare in a way which is wholly true to her and wholly appropriate for our time.

One of the instruments for this task must be the general Constitutions. These blend the guidelines of Clare with the historical developments of the last 750 years. Like any synthesis, the Constitutions are threadbare in places, but because of their fidelity to Francis and Clare's most cherished principle of consultation, they offer an instrument of resolution for most (not all) dilemmas. This enables the community to do what Clare would have wanted us to do—to listen, talk, and work together as we seek to resolve and to synthesize. Synthesis is essential with regard to the Constitutions because there is little doubt that there are two strands within them, almost two schools of thought. Clare's guidelines are honored but we must decide for ourselves how we shall

implement the directives and resolve the contradictions, real or apparent. Hence we are told:

> All points of the Rule are to be understood and applied according to the mind of St. Francis and St. Clare, in the light of the understanding and interpretation given by the Church and in the way in which they are set out and clarified in these Constitutions (Art: 15.3).

This is a key article, offering the only acceptable basis upon which we can put together pairs of articles which could seem contradictory or even mutually exclusive. True fidelity, we are told, is brought about by

> our sharing together as Sisters, by meetings of the conventual Chapter, by meetings of the whole family (i.e. the Order) or by meetings specifically for the renewal of life (Art: 21.3).

This is a strong hint that renewal and vitality must spring from the roots of community. The Chapter is an instrument of life for a Community, the prime means to articulate and implement our Gospel calling and the ideals of Francis and Clare. "Chapters are of particular importance for the organization, renewal, and development of our life (Art: 221), which covers just about everything. It also frees the Abbess from the impossible responsibility of being the sole source of renewal and inspiration, the only organizer. In this way the Abbess will not carry the whole responsibility on her own (Art: 221), and the Abbess and the Sisters should try to forestall any harm to the Community (Art: 105.3) because we have a debt to all humanity (Art: 89.3) and that debt is that we show

> a diversity of members who are continually growing into that unity of spirit which is brought about in them by love (Art: 88).

Endnote

[1]Cf. *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. Regis J. Armstrong, OFMCap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993), n. a, p. 70.

The true Friar Minor and the true Poor Clare is often someone hidden in our midst, not notable in any way, and therefore one who receives the Lord's revelations
(Frances Teresa, OSC, p. 157).

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Catholic and Anglican: Two Expressions of St. Clare[1]

Paul Gerrard

Introduction

In October 1994 I was lucky enough to attend the Mass in Westminster Cathedral, London, which marked the end of the Year of St. Clare. As a Franciscan historian it was wonderful to see all members of the family of St. Francis—friars, Poor Clares, and tertiaries—together to celebrate St. Clare. Indeed, for someone with a special interest in the Poor Clares, it was a once-in-a-lifetime day when sisters from several communities left their enclosure to gather around their foundress.

Among the sisters was a group from Freeland, Oxfordshire, who were indistinguishable from the others. However, this group was different in one way—they were from the Anglican Community of St. Clare which was founded in 1950. They form the contemplative branch of the Anglican Society of St. Francis. The Freeland sisters are different by their very institutional foundation.

The aim of this article is to look at the way in which Freeland differs from, and is similar to, one particular Roman Catholic Poor Clare house, Arundel in Sussex[2]. In many ways the two houses exemplify the gains and problems that have been experienced in the Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical dialogue[3]. The roots of both houses pre-date the sixteenth century, and their lives are still influenced by the events of that period. However, this article will be looking at the institutional structures of the communities and will not seek to discuss or examine the theological issues that surround the ecumenical debate.

Arundel

The Poor Clare Convent at Arundel was founded in September 1886 from the house in Notting Hill, London, which itself had been founded from Bruges in 1855. The Notting Hill Poor Clares had been invited by Flora, duchess of

Norfolk, to found a new community in Arundel. The young duchess had sold some of her jewels to finance the construction of the new convent on land given by her husband, Henry, fifteenth Duke of Norfolk. Indeed, it was the duchess who handed over the keys of the enclosure to the new abbess, Mother Agnes Gasquet, after the enclosure ceremony on September 7, 1886[4].

Beginnings were difficult. The local society had to get used to the needs of a mendicant community, and two sisters died in 1900 from consumption. Nevertheless, the Arundel community flourished, celebrating its centenary in 1986 with a community numbering forty-two sisters. There are fewer now, partly due to the foundation of a community in Myanga, Kenya, in the summer of 1992. Arundel itself has a tradition of becoming a second home for many Poor Clares who have come from other houses such as Leyland, Liberton, Sclerder, and Ellesmere. However, by far the biggest addition to Arundel's numbers came in March 1972 when the enclosed, third order regular community of Goodings amalgamated. This house had recently celebrated the 350th anniversary of its foundation in penal times in the Low Countries in 1621. Arundel is a community with a long history and also a great many different experiences of Poor Clare life. Furthermore, the foundation made by the community in Kenya has brought a great many new experiences and insights.

Freeland

In contrast to Arundel's relatively long history, the Anglican community of Freeland was founded only in 1950, although its roots lie in the revival of Franciscanism at the end of the nineteenth century. Barrie Williams gives an excellent account of the many different Franciscan orders that sprang up in the Church of England in the late 1800s and early 1900s[5]. The Freeland community is the contemplative branch of the Society of St. Francis (S.S.F.), founded in 1936 when the Brotherhood of St. Francis and the Brotherhood of the Love of God joined under the inspiration of Father Algy Robertson. The union of these two societies was announced in the Quarterly of the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross when the new society indicated their "hope that a new second order, for women, will come into being."

In fact the second order of the S.S.F. did not come into being until 1950, although preparations for it had been in progress for several years. Once again the inspiration was Father Algy, who encouraged five ladies to test their religious vocations. They became, on March 15, 1943, the Oblates of St. Clare. This group, with some additions and losses, found its way via Wantage and Cassington to the Cistercian-influenced community of Ty Mawr in Monmouth in January 1947. Of this group only three became religious novices in September 1947, but they were joined by two more novices in April 1948. These five sisters moved from Ty Mawr to St. Mary's Convent, Freeland, in January 1950. The two senior novices took their first vows on February 6 in the presence of

the abbess from Ty Mawr and Father Algy. The community of Ty Mawr, which had so helped the nascent community of St. Clare, continued to give assistance until the autumn of 1952 when the sisters elected their first abbess, Sister Elizabeth, who had been one of the earliest Oblates. With Father Algy once again present, she was installed as abbess on October 2, 1952. The Community of St. Clare was thus established as the second, contemplative order of the S.S.F.

Comparisons Between Arundel and Freeland

These two communities are very similar in many respects. This is perhaps not surprising or unpredictable as the key figure for both communities is the same—Clare of Assisi—who remains the point of reference for both sets of sisters. Since the call of Vatican II to return to the sources, it is more true now of Roman Catholic Clares than it may have been in the past[6]. However, there are one or two points to observe in the relationship between each house and the figure of St. Clare.

The Anglican sisters of Freeland, having been founded in 1950 with no precedents, look directly back to St. Clare without any obstacles or accretions. Therefore, their relationship with Clare and the manner in which they are allowed to interpret her are uncluttered by any historical precedents. In contrast, the sisters at Arundel, when they look back to St. Clare, do so through the preconceptions, practices, and ideals of the centuries that make up their history—the Victorian era, the experiences of penal times, St. Colette's reforms, and the diversity of legislation of the late thirteenth century. So, in that sense, the view the Roman Catholic sisters have of St. Clare is more opaque than that of the Anglican sisters. Reflecting their longer history, the sisters of Arundel come to St. Clare with more historical and psychological baggage than their Anglican counterparts.

However, some of this historical baggage also gives the Arundel sisters a greater link to St. Clare through the presence of a continuous tradition going back to San Damiano. This became a clear reality to two Arundel sisters who attended a conference of French abbesses. Among the houses represented there were several who were able to trace their history back to Clare's time, including Marseille, which is reputed to have been founded by Clare's own natural sister, Beatrice. These communities have an almost unbroken history going back to their foundation in Clare's time; and, although some were split up during the French revolution, they came back together when allowed to and resumed their community life as before. The Roman Catholic sisters can, therefore, not only tap into this history and tradition, but are indeed a part of it in a way that the Anglican sisters, in their newness, cannot be.

While there are many similarities in the two communities, there are also some differences in the specifics of each one's life. These do not necessarily

reflect, however, the Roman Catholic and Anglican nature of the houses. Indeed, of the eleven Roman Catholic Poor Clare communities with which I am familiar, each is different in its interpretation. This is due to the fact that each house is autonomous. Although federations exist, the Poor Clares have no central organization which could enforce uniform observance (even if that were wanted!). Indeed the British Association of St. Clare has few, if any, executive powers and is there to foster closer links between the Poor Clares in the organization. Therefore, differences between Freeland and Arundel are by no means necessarily because of the communities' different denominational backgrounds.

Poverty

For any Franciscans the practice of religious poverty is the key element in their life, as indeed it was for St. Francis and St. Clare. Both Arundel and Freeland have a keen sense of the spirituality that lies behind the realities of Clare's poverty in the following and imitation of Christ. One sister at Arundel noted that their life of poverty has its direction "from the Gospels; likewise Christ became as nothing, gave up everything, he was totally dependent on the Father." This is mirrored at Freeland: "It is inspired by the vision of Christ." It is not surprising then that, with such a similar conception of Clare's poverty and its aims, their practice of poverty is also very similar.

Article 117.1 of the Constitutions[7] which govern Arundel notes that in the habit and all clothes "simplicity and poverty should shine forth." The simple, poor nature of Poor Clare clothing also extends to the other material realities of their surroundings, as article 153.2 of the constitutions relates: "Churches, monasteries and their furnishings should always be in accordance with holy poverty, all lavishness and extravagance should be avoided." This theory is confirmed in the description of Arundel's chapter room as "a collection of all different types of upright chairs. We don't have a carpet on the floor and [there are] odd curtains all around the room." Simple, poor furnishings are also seen at Freeland, where a visiting African Poor Clare commented that their house was poor and simple because of its lack of adornments. Similarly the community receives many things as gifts which others would not consider. For example, one friend sends her old brown cardigans to the Freeland sisters.

This poor lifestyle has many connected reasons lying behind it. There is the financial position of the house which does not allow the sisters to be either extravagant or careless with the things they have or are given. One sister at Arundel summed up her experience when she said that it had to be seen to be believed. She said: "We don't earn enough money to pay the bills. The pensions some of us get don't fit the bill either, but we manage. . . . God provides for us." Freeland has a similar experience where they also have no set income and therefore, to most eyes, they are financially insecure. Clearly this represents a twentieth-century attempt to recreate Clare's own refusal to accept

regular income. The two lifestyles both have their roots in Clare and as such are very similar.

However, another motivating force behind this life is also revealed in the constitutions of the Catholic houses, which says that the sisters should be happy with "clothing as befits other poor people" (article 117.2). This represents a desire to ground their poverty in a greater appreciation of what poverty means on the other side of the enclosure. It is an idea that has been embraced wholeheartedly by the Arundel sisters, one of whom said that the poverty of society has "to have reality in our lives." This may not necessarily mean being more or less poor than others, but rather expressing realistically the poverty of whatever society they are living in. Therefore, one sister at Arundel describes how she now has a small transistor radio, which is something she would not have had even ten years ago; but it is in keeping with the standards of her society in England. The experience is the same for the Anglican sisters. One said that the emphasis in their poverty was now on "realism," which "is all related to a different standard of living outside."

Although both communities appreciate the need to have authentic standards of poverty that are understandable to society, both also see the need for their lives to be counter-cultural in some way. They want to be, in Thomas Merton's phrase, "marginal." Although neither community would say they set out deliberately to be witnesses, they are aware of the fact that it does happen. At times they can see themselves, inadvertently and imperfectly in their view, standing out against the consumerist society of England. One experience of the Anglican sisters is equally applicable to both communities. The guest house they have near the convent had to be inspected by the fire safety officer, but he found it impossible to categorize them as they do not charge the guests. Similarly, both houses sell craftwork; yet no one is there to check that "customers" pay the right money, if at all.

This brief survey of some of the aspects of the poverty of the two communities has been selective, but it demonstrates the way in which both communities have similar ideas and practices because they have St. Clare as their starting point.

Authority

St. Clare's Rule constructed mechanisms of authority which were unique in the legislative history of religious orders, especially in regard to the responsibility held by the body of sisters and the role of the abbess. It is quite clear in the Rule[8] that the sisters were to hold responsibility and power within the community through the chapter, which was to "meet at least once a week" to discuss all matters regarding the "welfare and good of the monastery." Similarly, Clare states that for the most important decisions, the "common consent

of the sisters is required," such as reception of novices and the election of officers. Clare sees the body of sisters as being responsible for their own life, both in terms of the internal mechanisms and the relationships with outside superiors.

Moreover, the role of the abbess in this system is one of a sister among sisters. Clare stresses that the abbess and the vicaress are "to preserve common life in everything," a theme often repeated throughout the Rule. The fact that Clare expects the abbess to confess her faults along with her sisters at the Chapter of Faults illustrates this in a very graphic way.

It is quite clear that for Clare the executive power within the community should be held by the sisters, with the abbess being the specific sister who has been given special responsibility. The Anglican community have taken this very seriously. First, the superior is not called "abbess" but rather "mother," and she takes action only when "she is aware of the mind of the community." Furthermore, all major decisions need to be made by the chapter. When, because of expediency, decisions are made without consent of the chapter, retrospective debate must take place. One sister from Freeland summed up the sisters' role in their own destiny when she said that they have "always had a tradition of the community being responsible for its own life." Although the Mother may become, by virtue of her added responsibility, the focus of the community, the Anglican sisters try hard not to develop any "personality cult." It is clear that the Mother is working with the other members of the house, on the same level, to ensure growth. The rule of life at Freeland says that "the Mother stands in the midst of the community, not above it."

The experience of authority is the same for the sisters at Arundel, although it is possible to argue that they use even more explicit language to position the abbess as a "sister-servant." As at Freeland, the constitutions make it clear that all major issues and decisions should be dealt with in the conventual chapter, or at least the chapter must give consent to the policy adopted by the abbess. The model of government at Arundel is the abbess and the conventual chapter.

Therefore, many of the structures and mechanisms of authority in the two houses are the same or very similar because they have their mutual roots in chapter four of St. Clare's Rule. However, other factors also play their part, most crucially the influence of contemporary British society. Both houses recognize that candidates have been shaped by contemporary culture, and this in turn affects their ideas and expectations. One Freeland sister acknowledged this interplay with contemporary culture and its roots when she said: "If we are concerned with the incarnation, then we should be finding expressions that are interrelated in some way with society." However, it is the figure of St. Clare which both houses retain as their touchstone, thus giving so many similar experiences and practices. Perhaps the clearest expression of the way in

which Clare is used as a yardstick for both communities is the practice of enclosure.

Enclosure

St. Clare's own thoughts on enclosure, as expressed in chapters two and five of her Rule, represent a more humane and sensible approach to providing a suitable method of protecting a life of prayer than previous and subsequent legislation. St. Clare clearly moved the emphasis from the perpetual enclosure envisaged by the papacy[9] and expressed in Hugolino's Constitutions of 1218-9[10] to a more "sensible" form of enclosure. Whereas Hugolino had written that the sisters could leave the enclosure only to found another community (that is, leave to be enclosed somewhere else), Clare wrote that the sisters could leave for a "useful, evident and approved purpose." This was not meant to be a carte blanche but was intended to enable the sisters to be responsible for their own lives and decisions. In her forty years in San Damiano, Clare had learned many lessons which were laid down in her Rule. She knew the value of enclosure as a way to live out her union with Christ. It was not an end in itself.

Over the centuries, Clare's idea of enclosure was gradually blurred. Reformers seeking to bring the order back to a perceived purity and a papacy intent on controlling religious women saw enclosure as a panacea for all abuses and evils. This resulted in strict papal enclosure being enforced for all contemplative women. This not only affected the Roman Catholic sisters, but also the Anglican community. In the early 1950s, Father Algy imposed upon the community at Freeland a strict enclosure because of certain Anglican Church expectations of contemplative women. However, Vatican II questioned and legitimized debate about these assumptions and models. This allowed both Catholic and Anglican sisters to find their own expression of enclosure without the pressure of historical models and expectations. Here again, it is Clare's spirit that is the ideal.

At Arundel the old style grilles and bars were removed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Now the limits of the enclosure are noted by discreet signs, ordinary doors, and modest barriers. The most obvious, visible sign to the casual observer is in the chapel, where the sisters occupy the front two-thirds, while the laity are behind them, separated only by a small barrier. The sisters are now with the people. Enclosure is still seen as very important, however. It provides the peace and quiet necessary for prayer and, for some sisters, represents their total gift of self to God.

The current enclosure at Freeland is, like that of Arundel, marked not by grilles but by normal doors. Although the Anglican sisters have never had grilles and bars, they were originally separated from the laity, who sat in a side chapel, unable to see the sisters. The Freeland community values enclosure as "the greatest privilege" granted to the community according to the Rule, that is to

have the peace and solitude it allows.

St. Clare, in her Rule, keeps the canonical norms of grilles, bars, and locks. Therefore, in not having them, the sisters are not just looking back to St. Clare alone, but are considering a social milieu different from that of the thirteenth-century. For the point of this paper, this matters little, as the culture of British society is a norm for both houses (although it is worth noting that some British Catholics feel enclosure means grilles and locks). Nevertheless, for most British people, the sight of grilles and bars does not represent a life of free dedication to and in God, but rather imprisonment and punishment.

Therefore, the material, overt expressions of enclosure have not been affected by St. Clare's ideals so much as by contemporary society. However, it is the spirit of St. Clare's humane intentions for enclosure that are encapsulated in the words "useful, evident, reasonable and approved." Moreover, in Clare's own life, there are times when she felt she could leave the enclosure,[11] implying that it was not an end in itself. It would seem that the driving forces in their expression of enclosure have been the same for both houses, that is the "tenor of the times" and the ideals and spirit of St. Clare.

Relationship with the Church

An examination of poverty, authority, and enclosure illustrates that, since the driving impulses and original models for the sisters have been the same, the resulting expressions have been very much alike. The person of St. Clare is a real figure for both communities. Access to her has been made more possible by the new scholarship which has erupted in the last fifteen years. Furthermore, the need to make St. Clare relevant to British society has also produced similar models. After all, the Anglican sisters do not deal exclusively with Anglicans, and they number among their "Associates," Jews, Catholics, and Evangelicals, just as Catholic Arundel has persons of many faiths visiting them.

It should come as no surprise that many of the internal features of the lives of Freeland and Arundel have a great similarity to one another. However, it is in the external relationships of the two houses that we can see differences both in the way the communities see themselves and in how others see them. A sense of their mission in the Church and the external mechanisms of authority illustrate the differing natures of each house.

It is quite clear that the Roman Catholic sisters at Arundel have a distinct perception both of their own mission and of their position within the structures of the Church. One sister said that they are "acknowledged as having a structural part of the Church and are a visible part of the whole shop." Article 160.2 of the new constitutions states that the contemplative life of the sisters is at the very heart of the Church and of the mystical body of Christ. The Church understands, as do the sisters, their role and mission in the Church's life. According to *Perfectae Caritatis*, contemplatives "offer God an exceptional sacrifice of praise, lend luster to God's people with abundant fruits of holiness, sway them by example, and enlarge the Church by their hidden apostolic fruitfulness."[12] This four-fold mission of glorification, adornment, witness, and prayer is understood by the sisters and has been given a definite position within the Church by *Mutuae Relationes*, the papal decree on relations between religious and diocesan authorities.[13] The bishops are to make contemplative communities centers of spirituality for the diocese in which they are located.

Arundel has followed this program by involving the laity more in the liturgy of the community and by being a base for meetings and a center for several prayer groups. Indeed, this is a role the community is happy to have. One sister says that now there is a "lot more personal contact, interaction with people, and sharing our life." Arundel is trying to find new ways to become more of a "center of spirituality" and is able to define its place with some clarity. One sister defined the place of the Clares within the Church as "in the middle, somewhere to do with the heart of it and the prayer of it and the general spirituality." While some members of the hierarchy do not understand or appreciate the life of the sisters, the majority appreciate it as a good in itself. One sister felt that the hierarchy "tend to have this idea that the contemplative life is a great thing and it is a wonderful thing to have in your diocese, although they don't often know what to do with us when they have got us." This seems to be changing, however. One bishop said that he is beginning to learn about the religious life in a way which would enable him to use contemplatives more actively. It would seem that the Poor Clares, the hierarchy, and the laity are gaining an understanding of the value of the contemplative life to differing degrees and that the contemplative life has a definite place in the Church.

In contrast, the Anglican sisters at Freeland, although acutely aware of their Franciscan mission, seem not to be as certain of their place in the Church. The sisters are keenly aware of the Franciscan value of a literal and visible living out of the Gospel life. One sister said that their mission "was living out the Gospel in daily life." Although the legislation speaks of all the elements of the four-fold mission clearly enunciated in the Roman Catholic constitutions, there seems not to be the same clarity of vision or firmness of conviction. That is not to say that the Anglican sisters lack any of the dedication of their Catholic counterparts, but rather that the Church's theology does not seem to give them the same level of support. For example, the Freeland Rule says that "our aim is that God be glorified," mirroring the Catholic words of *Perfectae Caritatis*, "exceptional sacrifice of praise." However, although this is repeated in the Freeland Rule, particularly when talking about the Eucharist, it is not as explicit as other Catholic legislation. The difference would appear to be a lack of explicitness in the definition of the Anglican sisters' role. Furthermore, the first reaction of many Anglicans is: "Oh! I didn't know we had contemplative nuns!"

Clearly many members of the Anglican laity and hierarchy do appreciate the sisters' lives and have been in contact for many years—the sisters' mailing list runs to over one thousand people. However, the Freeland community does not seem to have as clear a role as that given in *Mutuae Relationes* to Roman Catholic communities like Arundel. One Anglican sister feels that they "provide a place a lot of people can look to, an oasis." This role has neither a definite nor a recognized character in the Church.

The problem for the Freeland sisters is that contemplative religious life is a relatively new idea in the Church of England. Their position and role is still being worked out. In some ways it lends a very Franciscan experience of insecurity to their life, but at the same time, it is in sharp contrast to the Arundel sisters.

This difference is also reflected in the lines of authority that are present for both houses above the person of the religious superior—the Abbess at Arundel and the Mother at Freeland. For the Anglican sisters, the only authority above the superior is the bishop-protector, who has the final executive voice for any major decisions. In his role as protector, the bishop can make a canonical visitation of the house to check discipline and other matters. In addition, Freeland, like other Anglican religious communities, has access to the Advisory Council for Religious Communities, although, as its name implies, it only has an advisory capacity. Therefore, above the superior there is only the bishop-protector. Above this figure there is no one; indeed there is no canon law in the church of England that refers to religious communities.

In contrast, above the religious superior at Arundel, there is a dual line of authority. First, there is the diocesan authority which goes through the vicar for religious to the bishop himself. In addition to this line, and independent of it, is the quasi-authority of the Franciscan friars who deal with matters pertaining to the sisters' lives through the "Pro Monialibus" office.[14] Both lines of authority ultimately end with the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes in Rome (SCRIS).

What is the result of these two, contrasting lines of authority for each community? We have seen that the Anglican sisters experience a less definite role, whereas the Catholic sisters are more restricted and less autonomous. Certainly, Arundel is governed in many ways by the decisions of SCRIS and, therefore, by people who may not appreciate the realities of living out Clare's own ideals in twentieth-century England. For example, the norms governing enclosure laid down in the decree *Venite Seorsum* have little relation to the needs of the sisters themselves.[15] Some of the Arundel sisters appear to be getting more and more exasperated. One sister summed this up neatly when she said: "For heaven's sake, we are a serious group of committed women doing this because we are called to it not because we have to, so why can't we make our own decisions?" Another said: "We are all tied up in canon law and

haven't got the freedom for initiatives and experiments and we haven't got the freedom to make mistakes and learn from them."

In contrast, the Anglican sisters, in accordance with Clare's own recognition that the sisters themselves are capable of making decisions concerning their own life, are free to express their following of St. Clare in a way which is wholly appropriate to their community and to their experience. Therefore, when the Freeland sisters want to change one element of their life, they discuss the issue, make a decision, and apply for approval from the bishop-protector. They are clearly more free to run their own lives than their Catholic sisters, who can do so only up to a point.

Therefore, issues of mission, position, and authority are all intertwined for the houses of Freeland and Arundel, and there are gains and losses for both. On the one hand, the Roman Catholic sisters have a defined, recognized position within the Church, but at the expense of a certain amount of freedom to exercise their own mature judgments about their life. On the other hand, the Anglican sisters have the freedom to live out St. Clare's ideals and inspiration as responsible, mature women in ways that they see appropriate. However, they have this freedom because the Church of England is still developing its ideas on the religious life. The sisters have a less structured place within the Church.

Conclusion

What can we say in conclusion about these two examples? First, it is quite clear that internally there is little difference. Behind the similarities lies the figure of St. Clare. Second, the differences between the two houses are in the structures that surround them in the respective Churches.

What in turn does this tell us about the ecumenical process and, in particular, the Anglican-Roman Catholic debate? There is clear evidence that in figures that pre-date the Reformation (in this case Clare and in a wider context Christ), there is real hope for close cooperation and union among the Christian Churches. As to structures and positions in the Church, we can see, perhaps, some solutions and ways forward. Arundel would like some of Freeland's legislative freedom but not at the expense of its defined role and position. Conversely, Freeland wants to keep its freedom, but at the same time could benefit from a more explicit affirmation of its place and role. Therefore, if both move towards one another, not compromising, but using the other's experience to benefit themselves, they could create a life which would be better suited to their needs and at the same time closer to one another.

Finally, and more personally, in the lives lived at Arundel and Freeland, there are real and genuine presentations of the ideals of St. Clare in the twentieth century. These lives are influenced not by any denominational origin, but by truly Franciscan values.

Endnotes

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[2]The author is indebted to the kindness and generosity of the communities of Arundel and Freeland without whose help this article could not have been written. Special thanks go to Sister Gillian Clare, C.S.Cl., at Freeland, and Sister Frances Teresa, O.S.C., at Arundel. The conclusions and observations of this article are those of the author having spoken to Poor Clares at the Arundel and Freeland communities, but do not represent the views of those houses.

[3]The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Final Report: Windsor, September 1981* (London, 1982).

[4]*The Arundel Poor Clares: Notes on the First Hundred Years* (Crossbush, 1986).

[5]Barrie Williams, *The Franciscan Revival in the Anglican Communion* (London, 1982).

[6]See Paul Gerrard, "Clare of Assisi and the Poor Clares: A New Spring," in *The Church Retrospective, Studies in Church History*, 33, ed. R. N. Swanson (forthcoming).

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[9]See Brenda M. Bolton, "Daughters of Rome: All one in Christ Jesus!" in *Women in the Church, Studies in Church History*, 27, ed. W. J. Sheils (Oxford, 1990), 101-15, and Brenda M. Bolton and Paul Gerrard, "Clare in Her Own Time," in *Contemporary Reflections on the Spirituality of St Clare (The Way Supplement*, 80) (London, 1994), 42-50.

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[13]"Mutuae Relationes" (23/4/1978), in *Vatican Council II: More Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Dublin, 1992), 209-43.

[14]The fact that the friars deal with those matters concerning the Poor Clares gives them some authority; if not *de iure* then *de facto*.

[15]"Venite Seorsum" (15/8/1969), VII:1-17, in *Vatican Council II: Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Dublin, 1992), 671-5.

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(TestCl 6).

Sister Clare Ellen, OSC

The Cord, 47.4 (1997)

Clare of Assisi and Angela of Foligno

Carla Salvati

Introduction

Clare of Assisi left 'the world' for what would become a cloistered life. But 'the world's' most intimate relationships followed her into the cloister when her sisters and mother joined her. Angela of Foligno never left 'the world'—but she 'prayed away' its most powerful bonds, she prayed for the death of her mother, husband, and children—and her prayers were answered. Both women dedicated themselves to Christ in a full and impassioned way. These biographical details are telling of the conditions in which they created interior space for a fuller relationship with Christ. Relationship, human and divine, was central for both Clare and Angela. I would like, in the following brief paper, to explore aspects of the spiritual journeys of these two extraordinary women, medieval mystics and exemplars, seen from the perspective of their relationships, both human and divine.

Clare of Assisi

Clare of Assisi was holy from her childhood, predestined for sainthood—this according to her hagiographer. A *topos* undoubtedly, but there is reason to believe that Clare was just the devout young woman Celano described. Ioanni de Ventura, a house watchman in Clare's household and witness at her process of canonization, declared that even as a child Clare saved food to give to the poor. She wore a "rough garment" under her clothes and "fasted, prayed, and did other pious deeds, as he had seen; and that it was believed she had been inspired by the Holy Spirit from the beginning" (Proc 20:5).[1] This portrait of Clare is reinforced by glimpses of the character of her mother, Ortulana. Ortulana was a very devout woman, as Ingrid Peterson points out, "Ortulana's religious journeys to Rome, Jerusalem, and Saint Michael's in Monte Gargano

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indicate that she was not an ordinary woman of her culture."[2] Ortulana's strength of character and the inspirational example of her devotional life undoubtedly nurtured and guided her daughter's spiritual development.

Clare's encounter with Francis, was not a conversion so much as a decisive event in a spiritual journey that was well underway before meeting him. As Clare's sister Beatrice bears witness: "Francis heard of the fame of her holiness" before going to preach to her (Proc 12:2). Evelyn Underhill says that the saints ". . . possess the power of stinging to activity the dormant spark in the souls of those whom they meet."[3] In the case of Clare and Francis, the concrete *example* of his life sparked in Clare the vision of how to move forward in her own journey. Francis's preaching was the impetus for her to seek out a new form of service to God with Francis as her guide. Celano says: "She committed herself thoroughly to the counsel of Francis, placing him, after God, as the guide of her journey" (CL 6). Clare's spiritual development was a steady growth, built on a firm foundation. The drama and romance of her stealing out into the night to receive the tonsure from Francis belies the idea that this was an impetuous act of an impressionable young woman. It was a firm decision that followed as a natural progression of someone who already had 'inner formation' and trusted the leanings of her heart and soul.

Angela of Foligno

Angela's conversion, on the other hand, was a *break* with her past. While still living with her husband, she felt an inner transformation that led her to "put aside [her] best garments, fine food, and fancy headdress."[4] Angela was not supported through her conversion; she speaks of "slanders and injustices" leveled against her, of the death of her mother, who had been "a great obstacle" to her. Angela says: "In like manner my husband died, as did all my sons in a short space of time. Because I had already entered the aforesaid way and had prayed to God for their death, I felt a great consolation when it happened."[5]

Is Angela's coldness in relating the death of her family a *topos*? Is her scribe creating the impression of monastic detachment to the links with the world to justify the exemplarity of a lay widow? As Lilia Sebastiani points out, Angela's lack of sentiment with regard to these untimely deaths seems shocking given her extremely passionate nature.[6] Her startling statements are followed by the following: "I thought that since God had conceded to me this aforesaid favor, my heart would always be within God's heart and God's heart always within mine."[7] For Angela, a *break* with intimate human relationships was necessary to create the inner space for union with God.

At a later point in the *Memorial* Angela does lament the death of her loved ones, speaking of " the pain and sorrow I had felt over the death of my mother and my sons. . . ."[8] She does not mention her husband. While it is risky to construct psychological portraits based on very scant *hagiographic* evidence, there are indications that Angela felt let down by some of her deepest human relationships. Unlike Clare, her decision to transform her life was not a natural development from her past, but a rupture—a venturing into the unknown—that began with the void left by the death of everyone she was most deeply attached to. Like Clare, her love for Christ was total; but Angela's need to *feel* Christ's love for her seemed more pronounced.

Relationship with Francis

Angela too was drawn by the example of Francis. The definitive moment of her conversion took place in Assisi ". . .when [she] saw a stained-glass window depicting St. Francis being closely held by Christ. . . ."[9] Angela joined the Third Order at a time when the cult of Francis dominated the spirituality of the day, a time when iconography depicted Francis as an *alter Christus*. Clare was in relationship with Francis the man, a person she advised and assisted as much as she was guided by him. Angela experienced an ecstatic moment before an icon of Christ embracing Francis—archetype of a divided Franciscan Order. It is telling that, gazing at the stained glass window, she heard Christ's voice telling her: "Thus I will hold you closely to me and much more closely than can be observed with the eyes of the body."[10] Angela imaginatively *substituted* herself for Francis in Christ's arms—a bold transposition for a lay woman, considering the image reflected Francis as an *alter Christus*. Angela's impulse was clear from the outset—unmediated union with the divine. Even her saintly human exemplar was superseded. She is content only when she can say that nothing is between her and God—*nihil erat medium inter me et ipsum (Deum)*.[11]

Mystics

Both Clare and Angela were mystics—their lives guided and shaped by a deep connection with divine presence. Evelyn Underhill says that with Francis "mysticism comes into the open air, seeks to *transform the stuff of daily life*, speaks the vernacular, turns the songs of the troubadours to the purposes of Divine Love. . . ."[12] This description also captures the mysticism of Clare and Angela, who were not mystical philosophers, but indeed used the material of their daily lives and emotions to express their union with Christ.

With Clare this was reflected in the quality of her daily relationships. In a chapter entitled "Her Great Charity Toward Her Sisters" Celano tells us:

> Frequently, in the cold of night, she covered them with her own hands while they were sleeping. She wished that those whom she perceived unable to observe the common rigor be content to govern themselves with gentleness. If a temptation disturbed someone, as is natural, she called her in secret and consoled her with tears. Sometimes she would place herself at the feet of the depressed [sister] so that she might relieve the force of [her] sadness with her motherly caresses (CL 38).

This portrait (corroborated by witnesses at the process of canonization) of Clare's care for her sisters—of tender, gentle, discreet, compassionate, consoling love—is that much more significant given that she was fully aware of the *exemplary* power of her actions. The actions speak not only of Clare's personal capacity for love, they express her vision of what human relationships, rooted in Christ, look like. Clare says in her *Testament*: "Loving one another with the charity of Christ, let the love you have in your hearts be shown outwardly in your deeds so that, compelled by such an example, the sisters may always grow in love of God and in charity for one another" (TestCl 18). Love of God and of one another are inextricably linked. Love itself, *the loving deed*, is exemplary for Clare. Confidence, trust, attentiveness to one another, these are the qualities that Clare encouraged in her sisters. Her vision of cloistered community had none of the emotional austerity associated with such a disciplined life in later centuries. Temptations were not shameful in Clare's community, they were "natural"; the action taken by a superior—compassionate tears.

Angela's mystical relationship with Christ was also marked by very human expressions of love, a tenderness which is striking in its *reciprocity*. Christ says to Angela: "You are very much loved by me; much more than you could love me."[13] "I love you so much more than any other woman in the valley of Spoleto."[14] "I will hold you more closely to me than can be observed with the eyes of the body."[15] "Your whole life is pleasing to me."[16] When Angela asks Christ why he so loves a sinner, he answers: "Such is the love that I have deposited in you that I am totally unable to remember your faults; my eyes do not see them. In you I have deposited a great treasure."[17] And, in Angela's experience, Christ desired to *be* loved by her—"I want you to hunger for me, desire me and languish for me."[18] Angela's *Memorial* is astounding in its testimony of God's preferential love for a *lay* woman—and His desire to *be* loved by her.

Angela loved Christ with all the passion of human love. Meditating on the fact that Christ had died for our sins set her so afire that she says: "Standing near the cross I stripped myself of all my clothing and offered my whole self to him. Although very fearful, I promised him then to maintain perpetual chastity and not to offend him again with any of my bodily members, accusing

each one of these one by one."[19] Angela's gesture reveals her passionate daring. Caroline Bynum believes that the incident reflects shame over sex in marriage.[20] But Angela's nudity was not only occasion for self-accusation but also for *intimacy* with Christ. The scene has an erotically ambiguous quality not reducible to shame. Angela *offers* her nude body, her whole self, to Christ, and the singling out of each part of her naked body reflects not only the shame but the boldness of a sexually experienced woman.

Visionary Experiences

What do we make of the visionary experiences of mystics, the images they see, voices they hear? Evelyn Underhill suggests that we approach mystical phenomena as "forms of symbolic expression, ways in which the subconscious activity of the spiritual self reaches the surface-mind."[21] Whether or not Angela actually heard Christ's words of love, there is no doubt that she *felt* deeply loved by him, that her relationship with the divine was neither remote nor forbidding, but affirming in ways human love can only aspire to be.

The sources give us fewer glimpses of Clare's visionary experiences. But the few that we do have reveal that Clare too felt an intimate, human love for Christ. "Very frequently while she was prostrate on her face in prayer, she flooded the ground with tears and caressed it with kisses, so that she might always seem to have her Jesus in her hands, on whose feet her tears flowed and her kisses were impressed" (CL 19). However the sources don't dwell on this aspect of Clare's spirituality. Celano even omits from his biography an unusual vision Clare had of Francis, which the Process of Canonization recounts:

> Lady Clare also related how once, in a vision, it seemed to her she brought a bowl of hot water to Saint Francis along with a towel for drying his hands. She was climbing a very high stairway, but was going very quickly, almost as though she were going on level ground. When she reached Saint Francis, the saint bared his breast and said to the Lady Clare: "Come, take and drink." After she had sucked from it, the saint admonished her to imbibe once again. After she did so what she had tasted was so sweet and delightful she in no way could describe it.
>
> After she had imbibed, that nipple or opening of the breast from which the milk came remained between the lips of blessed Clare. After she took what remained in her mouth in her hands, it seemed to her it was gold so clear and bright that everything was seen in it as in a mirror (Proc 3:29).

In "Una Visione di S. Chiara,"[22] Marco Bartoli's gives an extensive analysis of Clare's vision and comments that Clare's love for Francis, "L'amore tutto

umano di Chiara per Francesco . . . ,"[23] helped her to escape the excesses of ecstatic exaltation characteristic of other women mystics, referring specifically to Angela. Clare's vision of Francis does indeed reveal the depth of her bond with him—the extent to which a human relationship was the source of much spiritual nourishment. As to Angela's ecstasies being excessive, I suspect that Clare was capable of equal excess. She was capable of being absorbed in contemplation for days when she would remain "out of her senses" (CL 31). When awakened from her trance by one of the sisters, she exclaimed: "May that vision be blessed, most dear daughter! Because after having desired it so long, it has been given to me. But, be careful *not to tell anyone* about that vision while I am still in the flesh" (CL 31).

Celano tells us Clare *secretly received divine whispers*(CL 31). The interior life and visionary experiences so central in Angela's testimony do not receive the same attention in Clare. This is partly explained by hagiographic focus, which in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries gradually shifted away from a saint's exterior behavior to her subjective, interior experience.[24] But in the case of Clare and Angela, I believe the sources reflect actual differences between them. Mystical experience became Angela's *raison d'être*; for Clare it was the *secret* that fueled her vision of community.

Experiences of Desolation

We have noted that Angela's *Memorial* describes a relationship with the divine that is almost unimaginably direct and deeply affirming to the point of Christ telling Angela: "My daughter, you are sweeter to me than I am to you."[25] But why did Angela so often feel such desolation? With her graphically visual imagination, Angela compares her afflictions to "a man hanged by the neck who, with his hands tied behind him and his eyes blindfolded, remains dangling on the gallows and yet lives, with no help, no support, no remedy, swinging in the empty air."[26] She says elsewhere: "I entertain the conviction that there never was any virtue in me. . . . [I am] full of anger, sadness, bitterness, conceit, and affliction."[27] Angela felt such desolation that ". . . even if God were to speak to me . . . I would draw no consolation or healing from it."[28] In sharp contrast to this, Clare's sisters tell us that "she was always rejoicing in the Lord, was never seen disturbed." She ". . . showed spiritual joy with her sisters. She was never upset" (Proc 3:6).

Clare responded to the affliction of her sisters in this way: "If Lady Clare ever saw any of the sisters suffering some temptation or trial, she called her secretly and consoled her with tears, and sometimes threw herself at her feet" (Proc 10:5). Would Angela have felt the desolation of God's (apparent) absence if she had experienced the human consolation present in the cloister at

San Damiano, if she had had Clare to console her with her tears? Angela ventured fearlessly into intimacy with the divine. Is it perilous to leave human consolation behind? Was it Clare's vision of divine and human love as grounded and mirrored in each other that kept her so constant and peaceful on her path?

Attitude Towards Suffering

But then desolation and suffering had acquired a new significance by the time Angela wrote her *Memorial.* Much attention has been paid to medieval women's fierce ascetic practices often repulsive to modern sensibilities. Here too we can note a difference between Clare and Angela. Celano tells us that Clare performed even the humblest duties for her sisters: "She herself washed the mattresses of the sick; she herself, with that noble spirit of hers, cleansed them, not running away from their filth nor shrinking from their stench" (CL 12). Clare embraced tasks that were disgusting—but absolutely necessary. Angela also performed difficult acts of charity in her care of lepers but the following passage from the *Memorial* speaks of a different relationship to suffering:

> And after we had distributed all that we had, we washed the feet of the women and the hands of the men, and especially those of one of the lepers which were festering and in an advanced stage of decomposition. Then we drank the very water with which we had washed him. and the drink was so sweet that, all the way home, we tasted its sweetness and it was as if we had received Holy Communion. As a small scale of the leper's sores was stuck in my throat, I tried to swallow it. My conscience would not let me spit it out, just as if I had received Holy Communion. I really did not want to spit it out but simply to detach it from my throat.[29]

Angela goes beyond the necessary and the charitable; suffering is ingested—literally internalized—as the leper's scale becomes a *Eucharistic symbol* of Christ's broken body on the Cross.

Personal Asceticism

Clare was fiercely ascetic, extreme in her fasting, while preaching moderation to her sisters. Evelyn Underhill, speaking of the mystic's self-purification says: "Man has built up for himself a false universe: as a mollusk, by the deliberate and persistent absorption of lime . . . can build up for itself a hard shell."[30] Self-purification is the breaking open of these shells to contact "the tides of the Eternal Sea."[31] Clare's thirteenth-century hagiographer echoes Underhill closely when he says that Clare "broke open the alabaster jar of her

body by the scourgings of her discipline so that the house of the Church would be filled with the fragrance of her ointments" (CL 10). While it is wise to doubt male clerics' views of female asceticism, I suspect in this case Celano was closer to expressing Clare's own intent than any suggestion that her severe fasting was internalized misogyny. There is no reason to doubt that Clare was in complete control of her fasting; she *chose* to fast as she did, to embrace the Cross and its salvific power to the very limits of her being.

Angela's asceticism was as harsh as Clare's, but she attributed a different meaning to it. The *Memorial* expresses a shift in perspective with regards to the role of suffering in relationship with God. For Clare, as for Francis, one suffered with Christ—it was an offering from humanity to God, the gift that was "perfect joy." For Angela suffering was a gift *from* God. God says to her: "And to those who are, strictly speaking, his sons, God permits great tribulations which *he grants to them as a special grace* so that they might eat with him from the same plate."[32] "I deposit in you a love of me so great that your soul will be continually burning for me. So ardent will be this love that if anyone should speak to you offensively, *you will take it as a grace* and cry out that you are unworthy of such a grace."[33] "This bed [the cross] is my bed to rest on because on it Christ was born, lived and died. Even before man sinned *God the Father loved this bed and its company (poverty, suffering, and contempt)* so much so that he granted it to his son"[34]

Influence of the Stigmata

Is it possible that the perception of suffering as gift from God developed in part from meditation on the Stigmata of Francis? Bonaventure described the Stigmata as Christ piercing Francis's flesh with the wounds of the Passion because of Francis's compassionate love for the Crucified. Mystical union, sealed by the physical sign of Stigmata—the gift of pain—became, through Bonaventure, *the* Franciscan *exemplum* made even more explicit and central in the *exemplum* of Angela.

Conclusion

Clare of Assisi and Angela of Foligno were extraordinary women, mystics and Christian exemplars. They "followed" Francis only to the extent of creating *their own* footprints behind him. Both women had extraordinary confidence in their experience of the divine and from this confidence created powerful models of holiness that came to be accepted, despite their originality, by ecclesial authority. In Angela's case, confidence in her *experience* of God went so far as saying: "I understood that all those things which have been said in the Scriptures . . . do not seem to express anything of its innermost meaning, not even to the extent of a grain of sand compared to the whole world."[35] And Clare stood firm, even against the power of several popes, remaining faithful to her vision of poverty. Juxtaposed, their stories reveal an interesting paradox—it was the woman in the cloister who expressed her love for Christ through human relationships and the woman in the world who desired freedom from human intimacy for exclusivity with God.

Endnotes

[1]References to Clare sources are from *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. Regis J. Armstrong, OFMCap. (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

[2]Ingrid J. Peterson, *Clare of Assisi a Biographical Study* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 49.

[3]Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystic Way: A Psychological Study in Christian Origins* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1913), 111.

[4]*Angela of Foligno Complete Works*, trans. Paul Lachance (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 126.

[5]Ibid.

[6]See Lilia Sebastiani,"La Beata Angela da Foligno," *Santita e Agiografia* (Genova, 1991), 203.

[7]*Angela of Foligno Complete Works*, 126.

[8]Ibid., 143.

[9]Ibid., 141.

[10]Ibid.

[11] *Il Libro della Beata Angela da Foligno*, Thier Calufetti, critical edition (1985).

[12]Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (London: Methuen, 1949), 460-461.

[13]*Angela of Foligno Complete Works*, 140.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., 141.

[16]Ibid., 142.

[17]Ibid., 152.

[18]Ibid., 153.

[19]Ibid., 126.

[20]Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 206.

[21]Underhill, *Mysticism*, 271.

[22]See Marco Bartoli, "Analisi Storica e interpretazione psicanalitica di una visione di S. Chiara d'Assisi," *Archivium Franciscanum Historicum*, (Rome, 1980), for an extensive analysis of this vision from both the psychoanalytic and historical-symbolic perspectives.

[23]Ibid., 472.

[24]See Peter Dinzelbacher, "Movimento religioso femminile e santita mistica nello specchio della *Legenda sanctae clarae*," *Chiara di Assisi, Atti del XX Convegno Internazionale*, Spoleto, 1992.

[25]*Angela of Foligno, Complete Works*, 143.

[26]Ibid., 197.

[27]Ibid., 201.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., 163.

[30]Underhill, *Mysticism*, 198-199.

[31]Ibid.

[32]*Angela of Foligno, Complete Works*, 161.

[33]Ibid., 150

[34]Ibid., 206

[35]*Angela of Foligno, Complete Works*, 192.

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Praying with Clare of Assisi

Marie Beha, OSC

How did the saints pray? Not as I pray, of that I am sure. I let my imagination run with the question. Undoubtedly they went to prayer eager to be there; once there, they must have spent long hours gazing at the face of God wrapped in contemplative union. It all sounds wonderful, but unrelated to my everyday experience. And that is the trouble. It doesn't even sound human.

But only humans can, and sometimes do, pray. It is what I want to do and so I go back and ask the saints: "How *did* you pray? What was your prayer like? As a follower of Clare of Assisi, I address my query to her. Though I cannot do a personal interview, I can look for hints in her writings and in the descriptions of those who knew her personally.

I suspect that Clare's answer will, in its basics, be very comparable to that of other holy men and women whom you might choose to question. Let us go ahead and ask, sure that the Communion of Saints promises an answer in life's gifting.

By Way of Introduction.

I think it is interesting to realize that the saints tended to say very little, almost nothing in fact, about their own prayer. You have to read between the lines of what they wrote to others, realizing that their insights could only have come from their own experience.

Why the reticence? In the case of Clare, I think part of it may have been cultural. We who live in an age of rampant individualism can hardly conceive of a period where the communal had priority. The family, the neighborhood, the city-state, the church—these were the realities that gave life its context and meaning. The individual was significant primarily in relation to them. Medievals likewise lacked the sophisticated emphasis on self-awareness that is so much part of our psychological age. To ask how an individual prays presupposes not only an interest in the self, but also the vocabulary for describing individual experience. Clare of Assisi had neither.

Beyond such historical considerations, I think the saints were reticent about their prayer because it was too sacred to be objectified in words; most of the time, it was beyond verbalization. Love has a way of stammering and eventually growing silent. I am reminded of the story of Thomas Aquinas, who at the end of his life was asked by Christ: "Thomas, you have written well of me; what would you have?" And Thomas's fabled response: "Yourself, Lord, just yourself." After which he never wrote another word, leaving his monumental *Summa* unfinished.

If we find ourselves reluctant to talk about our prayer, we are in good company. "Many words" contradicts the gospel criterion for prayer. What we need to be concerned with is a deepening relationship with God. But saying little does not mean having nothing to say. The saints did speak about prayer, advising others and, at times, seeking advice themselves. In doing so they revealed their heart.

Living Prayer

Not only did the saints care about formal prayer, even more importantly they lived prayer. Prayer was their life. Nice, but our pragmatism asks: "How"? In her Rule, written during the final years of her life, Clare warns her Sisters to work in such a way that "they do not extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion," (7:2). "Spirit of prayer": the phrase comes easily off our tongue; but what does it really mean? Obviously, Clare is not suggesting twenty-four hour prayer marathons or some kind of a split-level consciousness that would involve doing something while we try to think of God.

We get a hint of Clare's meaning in another chapter of the Rule where she speaks of "praying always with a pure heart" and adds "in humility and with patience" (10:10). If prayer is to become our life so that we do pray always, our hearts need to be "pure," totally given to God; we need to grow into a kind of single-heartedness, so that God has priority in all we do. The focus of our lives is always on the things of God. This is where we live.

The image that comes to mind is that of a compass. When someone moves from one place to another it swings, sometimes wildly, but always seeking true north, where it ultimately comes to rest. The same process repeats itself in the dynamism of true devotion. As we move from one situation to another, the needle of our heart swings, sometimes wildly, as we focus on one activity after another. Ultimately, we come to rest in the direction of our deepest desiring.

But perhaps you and I protest: I surely experience those swings back and forth from one thing to another; I am not so sure that I ever come to rest, much less that I rest in God. Clare responds to our realistic concern when she adds humility and patience in times of difficulty to the focus of a pure heart.

Humility opens us to truth, putting everything into true perspective: who God is, who we are, the preciousness of each individual, the grace that lies hidden everywhere. But this only happens if we are patient, if we accept the cross that will mark every life caught up in the paschal mystery as well the "nothing" that will be the staple of most of our prayer.

As prayer becomes the directional force in our life and as we grow in humble self-acceptance, we become better able to name the sinful tendencies that pull at us and then to turn from them more quickly. We are less upset by this experience of our own weakness and more appreciative of God's faithful love. Patient self-acceptance dredges our capacity for love's surrender. Our focus begins to shift from self at center stage to a sustained thrust toward God and the things of God. Our life bears the fruit of "praying always."

Such a focused life is the climate of prayer, the air where we breathe in God's spirit. But sustaining such a life of prayer presupposes that times of explicit prayer have a certain priority in our life. They did for Clare as for all the saints. Her days were patterned by the regular rhythm of the liturgy, both the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours. It was a strong steady diet, rich in the word of God where many hours given to prayer nourished her spirit. But the amount of time she gave to liturgical prayer, even its dailyness, are less important than her dedication. It is quite possible to make a substantial investment in times for prayer without really being there. We are only being dutiful—or compulsive. The saints were present to God in their devotion. Clare gave herself the gift of time for prayer; her heart's devotion required it.

How do we know that Clare did this? One of the most striking evidences for me is the way in which her writings are almost a tissue of Scriptural references. This was not the work of scholarship, leafing through a commentary or even looking up references in her own Bible. Given her period in history, Clare had no such resources. She must have known whole sections of Scripture by heart. That is the way we too must come to know them. Though the well-developed memory of the medieval is no longer our contemporary heritage, perhaps we can repeat favored passages over and over until they come spontaneously to mind, forming a kind of backdrop to our thinking and ultimately to our living.

Over the years Clare grew in understanding of the Scriptures. What she experienced opened up new meanings in the word of God, and these new insights into Scripture revealed still more of God's work in her everyday life. The same process enables us to come to ever new understandings of passages that are already very familiar to us. Then daily reality further illumines God's word in a constant cycle of revelation/experience leading to conversion.

Clare not only listened to Scripture, she also studied it in more formal ways. How? One of the witnesses at the process of her canonization, speaks of

her willingness to listen to learned sermons. (Proc 10:8) The *Legend Of Clare* points out that she knew how to take something good out of any sermon (CL 37). It is an art worth cultivating especially in our hypercritical age. As a result, Clare could draw on the ideas of others, quoting them in her writings even without having the possibility of recourse to books. We, on the other hand, are more likely to be overwhelmed with the richness of our resources, so surfeited with material that we lack the receptive heart to take in, understand, savor what we read or hear.

In addition to Scripture, the prayer-filled living of the saints was nourished by the sacramental Word of God. Clare received Communion as often as Church practice in that period of history permitted. Scholars debate whether she only received at the seven times per year stipulated in the Rule (3:14) or whether she may have communicated much more frequently, even daily. It is unlikely that we will ever really know. But what we do know is the importance of the Eucharist in her life. Many hours of her prayer were spent in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and she often remained in choir after all the other Sisters had left. This was the place to which she returned instinctively in times of trouble. We may be familiar with the story of how she faced a mob of Saracen soldiers who were literally climbing over the walls of the monastery. At the sight of this woman, armed only with the Sacrament of the Body of the Lord Jesus, the whole barbarian horde fled, routed by the strength of her devotion. (Proc 9:2)

Clare also encouraged the Sisters to frequent the Sacrament of Penance, confessing at least twelve times a year. (RCl 3:12) It was a generous option at a time when Lateran IV, the Vatican II of its time, was making once-a-year confession mandatory. What Clare legislated, she first of all lived. The Sisters recall that she confessed frequently and, at the end of her life, made a general confession in the presence of at least some of the Sisters; it was something they never forgot. (Proc 3:23)

The Sacraments remain a staple of any life of prayer. The ongoing conversion implied in a life of authentic devotion seems to require some form of "confession," an opportunity to acknowledge our failures before another, expressing our sorrow and desire to change. The Sacrament of Penance, in addition, allows the pray-er to receive the powerful grace of the sacrament and to do this in the context of the Church. I suspect that it is no accident that the lives of the saints abound in examples of their taking frequent advantage of this Sacrament.

What is true of Confession is even truer of the Sacrament of the Eucharist where our prayer's desire for union finds daily realization. Small wonder that Clare's Sisters remember how fervent her reception was, how prolonged her thanksgiving. They used to wait for her to emerge from choir, anxious to catch

a glimpse of the glory reflected on her face. (Proc 9:10) The same transforming of our lives awaits each of us in this Sacrament of realized union.

The Geography of Personal Prayer

Liturgical, sacramental prayer inserts the individual into the rich stream of communal prayer in the church. It is the "face" of a life of prayer, the one immediately visible to others. But such an outside, lacking an inside, would be empty indeed. Periods of personal prayer, more or less prolonged, are essential to any prayer-filled life; they are its heart.

What was the geography, the environment, of Clare's personal prayer? The question is bold and we only dare to seek hints of an answer in her writings, reading between the lines as she speaks of the God whom she had come to know in those hours of frequent and fervent communing. While she did not legislate times of individual prayer in her Rule, Clare led, as she did in many other instances, by her example rather than by exhortation. That she prayed often is amply witnessed by the Sisters in their testimony during the process of her canonization. They speak of her remaining in prayer after night prayer (Proc 10:3), as well as her rising during the night to keep vigil (Proc 14:2). While, as we have already mentioned, Clare spent a great deal of her prayer time in the choir, the Sisters also speak of her having a special place where she often prayed (Proc 7:9) None of the saints seems to have grown beyond such practical details as having times and places set aside for their personal prayer. As their relationship with God deepens the time is never enough; the places become more inclusive; the need to provide for both continues. It clearly did for Clare.

We also know that Clare felt free enough in her relationship with God to give bodily expression to her devotion. Her Sisters make repeated reference to her praying prostrate on the ground (Proc 1:9; 9:2). Clare knew herself as a poor one before God; her humility found natural expression in this kind of close union with the earth. The Sisters also speak of her tears (Proc 6:4; 10:3), whether of joy or of sorrow we will never know. But we do know that her prayer effected transformation so much that, when "she returned from prayer, her face appeared clearer and more beautiful than the sun" (Proc 4:4).

Though our own devotion may be far from any such brilliance, still we too pray in our bodies. Where else? If even our most private devotions are constrained by a stiff at-my-Sunday-best, I may need to allow myself the same kind of freedom that I would express with a good friend; for that is what prayer really is—a heart-to-heart sharing with a friend. Instinctively the saints seem to have known this. They directed their attention to God by allowing their bodies to relax enough to express what they were really feeling.

In addition to the geography of times, places, and bodily expression, Clare and other saints also cultivated the silence and solitude that provide an environment favorable to a life of prayer. We know that Clare did this and, in her Rule, urged her Sisters to a flexible kind of silence that allowed them to "communicate always and everywhere, briefly and in a low tone of voice, whatever is necessary" (RCl 5:4). In an age like ours, so geared to communication, it is a helpful caution. Does constant noise pervade our personal space, whether the background sound of endless chattering or the ever-present TV? Granted that much of this may be beyond our control, we can make decisions about some of it and so contribute to the quieting of our world as well as our hearts. Hopefully we would learn in the resulting stillness to be better listeners.

But it may also be worth noting that Clare's cautions about unnecessary talking are not absolutes. She who gloried in the title "sister" knew that speaking appropriately was another aspect of maintaining an atmosphere of quiet. What we need to say must be said lest it pursue us into prayer. Self-righteous silence, the protest of withdrawal, the laziness of shirking the responsibilities of communication are non-vocal ways of polluting the atmosphere of true charity. When our prayer seems lacking in fruitfulness, Clare seems to suggest that we may need to examine whether our over-all pattern of communication in both silence and speech expresses our desire to live in love.

Prayer in Person

Given the geography of prayer, its time and place, what did saints like Clare do once they began their periods of personal prayer? I suspect that most of the saints might find this contemporary concern with discovering a successful formula a bit strange. After all, what is really important is not performance but desire for God. Clare knew this so her prayer was essentially simple. "Love God and Jesus, his Son, who was crucified for us sinners, from the depths of your heart, and never let the thought of Him leave your mind," was her impassioned plea to Ermentrude (LEr 11). She wrote from experience.

While our heart may well say yes, this is what I want, we may also need help in translating this desire into daily practice. Clare obligingly answers in her letters to Agnes of Prague. Clare first suggests a gathering of our spirits: "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!" (3LAg 13). In other words, lay aside your preoccupations and bring your whole being, all your faculties into unity in the divine presence. Even our distracted attempts to do just this are already prayer in practice.

Clare goes on instructing Agnes, using her favorite image of the mirror. This was a common medieval symbol of the spiritual life, but Clare is unique

in using it to express spiritual growth. She suggests to Agnes (and to us!): "Gaze upon that mirror each day and continually study your face within it that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes" (4LAg 15:16). Practical as ever, Clare begins by studying her own face, seeing herself reflected against the backdrop of the holy gospels. Do we think like Jesus, speak like Jesus, act like Jesus? Though our questioning may well begin with the fresh realization of how far we are from being mirror images of Jesus, the more basic concern is not how we see ourselves but how God sees us. What particular imaging of Jesus does God ask us to incarnate? The answer must unfold in all the prayers of our daily lives.

Clare continues urging Agnes to keep looking into this mirror that is Jesus: "Look at the border of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him Who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. O marvelous humility! O astonishing poverty!" (4LAg 19-21). Contemplation of the incarnation was central to Clare's Franciscan vision. Here she learned the lessons of the poverty that was to become the titular heritage of all who would follow her inspiration. It was a poverty as real as lack of necessary accommodations and a substitute stable and manager. But it was an equally real interior poverty of holy humility. The divine coming down to dwell among us of the Incarnation gave Clare a sense of the richness of holy poverty. That, in turn, enabled her to sustain a very radical form of material poverty, combining it with an appreciation of her own worth that was neither exaggerated by false pretensions nor denied by pseudo-humility.

These same themes of poverty and humility are also discovered "at the surface of the mirror" where Clare considers "the untold labors and burdens that Jesus endured for the redemption of the whole human race" (4LAg 22). Only through a life of prayer did Clare and her Sisters grow into the kind of lovers whose lives would be motivated by a desire to share in Jesus' work of redemption. Nothing would be so small, so trivial, that it could not be transformed into the divine design of bringing everything together into Christ Jesus.

As Clare continued to gaze at Jesus, she contemplated "in the depth of this same mirror . . . the charity that led Jesus to suffer on the wood of the Cross and to die there the most shameful kind of death" (4LAg 23). Clare's contemplation, like that of so many of the saints, was marked by the sign of the cross. How often she must have knelt before the Crucifix at San Damiano, the very same one that had spoken to Francis in his vocational discernment: "Francis, go and repair my church; it is falling into ruins." We know that, at first, Francis took the directive literally, beginning to rebuild the partially ruined chapel of San Damiano (LM 2:1). Only later would he come to realize that his ministry was to repair the whole Church. That was what Clare would do too, not by becoming an itinerant preacher like Francis, but by living faith-

fully her call to a life of prayer. This is a ministry in which we each can share, one that transforms daily fidelity into love's labor.

In another letter to Agnes Clare summarizes this whole process of mirroring Jesus: "Gaze upon Him, consider him, contemplate him, as you desire to imitate him" (2LAg 19). That is as close as Clare ever came to a formula for prayer. "Gaze"—direct your attention, the whole focus of your life toward Jesus. "Consider"—reflect on the "how" and the "why" of your life in the light of the Jesus of the gospels. "Contemplate"—keep looking with the kind of love that transforms the one who sees into what is seen. Then "imitation" will be less a conscious self-improvement project and more a matter of interior conversion issuing necessarily in external reflection.

Just as a mirror can catch the light of the sun and concentrate it with such intensity that another object will catch fire, Clare continues using this same mirror image to symbolize the apostolic aspect of all contemplation. In her Testament she invites her Sisters "not only to be a form for others in being an example and mirror, but even for our sisters whom the Lord has called to our way of life as well, that they in turn might be a mirror and example to those living in the world" (19).

Because true interior prayer deepens charity, it necessarily affects others, first of all those who are most neighbor to us, that is, those with whom we live. Clare knew that the close living together of the Sisters in the small space of San Damiano provided ample opportunity for them to live their love for one another. Relating to each other as sisters, sharing each others' poverty, correcting, forgiving, accepting forgiveness, authenticated their life of prayer. Life in community helps to keep contemplation honest, just as contemplation makes close community viable. "See how they love one another," spoken of the first Christians, remains the most reliable criterion of growth in prayer, both Clare's and our own.

Prayer articulated in this language of love concentrates the power of the Spirit, igniting a fire that is not only discernible but also tends to spread rapidly. This truth is made literal in the delightful legend in which Francis invited Clare and a few of her Sisters to join him and some of the friars for a never-to-be-repeated meal. While these saints were speaking of their hearts' love of Jesus, the citizens of Assisi, looking down into the valley where poverty's banquet was being shared, saw a fire raging and ran down to extinguish the flames.

Whatever the historical accuracy of this story, its poetic truth makes it worth repeating. Love speaks; it spreads. This is what happened over and over again at San Damiano. Clare's life of poverty lived in contemplative love attracted others: her sisters, Agnes and Beatrice, her mother Ortolana, cousins, friends, the young girls of the surrounding towns. The people of Assisi heard the same good news and began to make their way down the hill in a steady

stream that threatened to become a torrent. Parents brought sick children to be healed; the poor sought the alms of a blessing; Francis sent troubled friars; the Pope came and was consoled in the burdens of his office. Clare's prayer was undisturbed. Her secret? Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

As our own life of prayer deepens, a flame is lit in our hearts. We love more, first of all, those who are closest to us, the people with whom we live, those who have special claim to our charity. We serve their needs more faithfully, bear their burdens more willingly, forgive their failings more generously. It is not an easy way to live; beyond us many times. In truth, to love with the love of Christ is always beyond us. And so we are brought back to humble prayer. We can't; God can and God will, if we ask with an openness to receive.

Though genuine prayer can always be tested within the immediate radius of daily living in community, it is never limited by it. Living in love moves out to an ever widening world of others. Clare realized that this was as true of her enclosed Sisters as of Francis's pilgrim Brothers. A gospel form of life is essentially missionary. Ours must be too. Nothing lies beyond the circle of our concern because this is the way God lives and loves. A life of prayer expands our horizons outward towards the limitlessness of God.

In summary Clare's life of prayer brought her in humility and patience to a single-hearted devotion to God and the things of God. Hers was a gospel life nourished by the word of God in Scripture and in sacrament. The focus of all her living was that Word of God become incarnate and dwelling among us. Clare kept looking at Jesus, until she became Jesus living for others—for her own Sisters at San Damiano, for the people of Assisi, for the rebuilding of the Church of God, for all the world in its loved reality. This is how she prayed; this is how the saints pray. It is how they invite us to grow in living prayer.

Gaze upon Him,
consider Him,
contemplate Him, . . .
imitate Him

(2LAg 20).

Sister Clare Ellen, OSC

A Biographical Profile of Edward and Mary Zablocki Buffalo, New York

Mary and Ed Zablocki, of Buffalo, NY, were married in 1981 and professed as Secular Franciscans in 1983. Since 1995 they have been co-chairs of the Work Commission of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States. The Commission is one of four created to foster the efforts of Secular Franciscans to evangelize the world—the others being Family, Peace and Justice, and Ecology. Ed and Mary have given presentations on the spirituality of work and publish two newsletters—*Dignitas* and *In The Trenches*—offering a Catholic and Franciscan perspective on work.

Since 1993 they have been active in the revision and promotion of the correspondence course on the Franciscan Missionary Charism, known in the U.S. as *Build With Living Stones*, participating in *Assisi '94*, which brought together Franciscans from every part of the family from around the world.

Past service to the Secular Franciscan Order includes Mary's stint as minister of their fraternity, Ed's service as councilor and vice-minister for Holy Name Province, and their mutual efforts to coordinate activities for Secular Franciscans in Western New York.

Mary has been a registered nurse since 1974 and today works in labor and delivery at Sisters' Hospital in Buffalo. She is also a writer. Her prose and poetry have been published in *New Covenant*, *The Cord*, and various Secular Franciscan publications. She is currently writing a novel about nineteenth-century Ireland, based on her own family history.

Ed, as a Tyng Fellow at William College, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduated *magna cum laude*. He holds a masters' degree in public administration from the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he has worked in research administration for the past thirteen years. He has contributed two articles to *The Cord*, "Finding Identity as a *Secular* Franciscan" (November, 1993), and "Extending Franciscan Mission: Secular Franciscans and the Renewal of the Temporal Order" (March/April, 1996). He contributed to and edited a study guide, *Secular Franciscans: Evangelizers of the Culture* (1988) and for several years published *Good News*, the newsletter for the Secular Franciscans of Holy Name Province. The Zablockis have two sons, Francis and Paul, who are sixteen and fourteen respectively.

We are very grateful for the enthusiastic support which Ed and Mary give to *The Cord*. We appreciate as well the fine contribution they make in promoting the Franciscan charism locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

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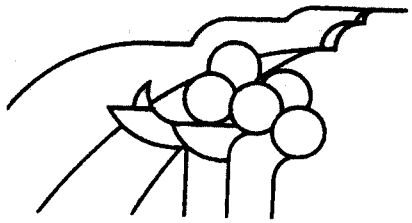

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Sunday, July 13-Sunday, July 20

The Form of Life: The Gospel Call to Ongoing Conversion. Clare A. D'Auria, OSF. Cost: $230. Shalom Retreat Center. Contact: Marie Therese Kalb, OSF, Shalom Retreat Center, 1001 Davis St., Dubuque, IA 52001.

Thursday, July 17-Sunday, July 20 (or Tuesday, July 22)

Franciscan Contemporary Living. Ramona Miller, OSF. At Pilgrim House. Contact: Pat Meyer, OSF, Pilgrim House, 321 Clay St., Carey, OH 43316, ph. 419-396-7970.

Friday, August 1-Saturday, August 9

"The Soul's Journey Into God." André Cirino, OFM, and Josef Raischl, SFO. Cost: $425. Contact: Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987, ph. 507-454-2993, fax 507-453-0910, e-mail taucentr@luminet.net.

Tuesday, August 18-Thursday, August 21

32nd Franciscan Federation Conference: Encountering the Human Face of God. Keynote: Elizabeth Dreyer. Rochester, NY. (See ad, p. 195.)

Friday, August 29-Friday, September 5

A Family and a Rule. Margaret Carney, OSF. Cost: $240. Contact: Shalom Retreat Center, Dubuque (see above).

Tuesday, September 2-Thursday, September 4

The Next Generation of Franciscan Women! Networking gathering for formation personnel. At Wilke-Barre, PA. Contact: Patty Podhaisky, OSF, 2851 W. 52nd Ave., Denver, CO 80221, ph. 303-458-8640.

Friday, September 26-Sunday, September 28

Facing the Christ Incarnate. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation at Madonna Retreat Center, Albuquerque, NM. Contact: Franciscan Federation, PO Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, fax 202-529-7016.

Saturday, September 27

Mysticism in the Marketplace: Franciscan Tradition of Prayer. Franciscan Day of Recollection in Preparation for the Feast of Francis, with Ingrid Peterson, OSF. At St. Anthony Shrine, the Worker Chapel, 100 Arch Street, Boston, MA, ph. 617-542-6440, fax 617-542-4225. Contact: Violet Grennan, OSF.

Friday, October 10-Sunday, October 12

Facing the Christ Incarnate. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation at Franciscan Sisters of OLPH, St. Louis, MO. Contact: Franciscan Federation, PO Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, fax 202-529-7016.

Thursday, October 30-Sunday, November 2

Franciscan Connection, A weekend experience for candidates in initial formation. Srs. Diane Marie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Imler. At the Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort, IL. Contact Jean Schwieters, OSF, 727 E. Margaret, St. Paul, MN 55106, Ph. 612-772-1740.

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy
EpCust	Letter to the Custodians
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin	Letter to a Minister
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies
ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
LaudDei	Praises of God
LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours
OffPass	Office of the Passion
OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
RegB	Later Rule
RegNB	Earlier Rule
RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
Test	Testament
TestS	Testament written in Siena
UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCl	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCl	Blessing of Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2Cel	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
AP	Anonymous of Perugia
CL	Legend of Clare
CSD	Consideration of the Stigmata
Fior	Fioretti
JdV	Witness of Jacque de Vitry
LM	Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LMin	Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LP	Legend of Perugia
L3S	Legend of the Three Companions
Proc	Acts of the Process of Canonization of St. Clare
SC	Sacrum Commercium
SP	Mirror of Perfection

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THE CORD

ume 47, No. 5 *September-October 1997*

THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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To save unnecessary delay and expense, contributors are asked to observe the following directives:

1. MSS should be submitted on disk or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced.
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
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4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
   (1Cor. 13:6).
   (RegNB 23:2).
   (2Cel 5:8).
   (4LAg 2:13).

A list of standard abbreviations used in *The Cord* can be found inside the back cover. The edition of the Franciscan sources used should be noted in the first reference in a mss.

Cover design: Basil Valente, OFM and David Haack, OFM.

Editorial

Matter matters! It is one of the perennial temptations of Christianity to slip into thinking that matter doesn't really matter, that only spirit matters. Our strong sacramental tradition keeps calling us back to a profound reverence for, respect for, matter—not just as that which we "see through" to some more transcendent reality, but as that which we "see into," recognizing the profoundly sacred character of all that is. It is *being* that all creation shares with God.

Francis and Clare had this awareness—they saw physical, material reality as a marvelous witness to the reality of the Creator God. They read the world as a sacred book that spoke volumes about the source of all being.

The body, then, that most intimate forum of our material and personal experience, requires respectful treatment. In this regard, Francis and Clare are not always the models whose behavior we wish to imitate. They themselves, however, in their more mature years, show evidence of more moderate and respectful attention towards their bodies. But always they were repectful of the bodies of their brothers and sisters, tending them with loving care and assisting them patiently in their illnesses. Their own illnesses they bore with good grace and made the passage through illness to death with a deep conviction that this was a meaningful and even holy journey.

In this issue of *The Cord*, Thomas Nairn reflects on a Franciscan view of illness. Mary Hroscikoski sees in Bonaventure a grounding for an attitude towards one's own illness and that of others. Claire Campbell finds connections between her illness and the wolf of Gubbio. Mary Gurley offers some thoughts on how Bonaventure might have viewed bodily knowing. David Flood affirms the value of human work. And Patricia Fritz and Kathleen Gannon affirm the place of an evangelical life in our own times.

All these know that matter matters.

> ***It is the prudent Franciscan who is able to resist sickness when that is appropriate and to accept sickness and even dying when that is appropriate.***
> ***(Thomas Nairn, OFM)***

The Cord, 47.5 (1997)

THE LAST ILLNESS OF ST. FRANCIS *

Thomas A. Nairn, OFM

Introduction

As Franciscans, we follow a person for whom example and stories were important. It is no accident that in the years after his death, stories and *legendae* flourished. Today, almost eight hundred years after his death, his followers still gather annually to re-tell the story of his death. We relate the details of his passing from this life to the next. How different from our contemporary image of sickness and dying this story seems! Yet perhaps even in this difference, the story can help form our religious imagination, exhibiting how those values we hold as Franciscans ought to affect the choices we make concerning health care.

Bonaventure described that in his final two years of illness: "Francis now hung, body and soul, upon the cross with Christ" (LM 14:1). We may tend to romanticize this period of his life. We need however to recall that St. Francis was becoming increasingly debilitated by terminal illness. By meditating on his last illness perhaps we are able to discern those values which can help us Franciscans to face sickness, decline, and even death itself.

---

*This is a reworking of material found in the reflection paper, *A Vision of Life, Health, Sickness and Death for Religious* (©1995 CMSM/LCWR), prepared by the Joint Task Force on Health Care of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious to which I was a theological consultant. Used with the permission of the copyright holder. Quotations are from *The Omnibus*.

Celano tells us that "Francis, the herald of God, walked in the footsteps of Christ through innumerable labors and severe illnesses" (2Cel 210). He relates that "frequently the brothers admonished him, suggesting to him with great urgency in their entreaties that he should seek to restore his infirm and greatly weakened body in some measure with the help of doctors." Brother Elias "compelled him not to abhor medicine but to accept it in the name of the Son of God by whom it was created, as it is written: The Most High has created medicines out of the earth and a wise man will not abhor them. The holy father then graciously acquiesced and humbly complied with the words of his advisor" (1Cel 98).

Francis needed to hear that medicine was a creature of God. It motivated him to take the steps available to him in his day to resist the onslaught of his sickness. Like Francis, some of us may need to hear our brothers or sisters tell us that we need to care for brother body and that it is proper to resist sickness. Others of us may need to hear in the words of Brother Elias that medicine is *only* a creature. There does come a time when medical technology reaches its limits, and because of this inherent limitation we cannot put all our hope in it. It is the prudent Franciscan who is able to resist sickness when that is appropriate and to accept sickness and even dying when that is appropriate.

As we continue the telling the story of Francis's last illness, we see that the medical profession fell into the same temptations in the thirteenth century as it does today. We read: "In those days a doctor from Arezzo, named Buongiovanni (Good John) a friend and favorite of blessed Francis, came to see him. The saint questioned the doctor about his sickness and said to him: 'What do you think, Brother John?' The doctor answered him: 'Brother, with the grace of God, all will be well.' He did not want to tell him that he was going to die soon. Blessed Francis replied: 'Brother, tell me the truth. What is your prognosis? Do not be afraid; for, thanks be to God, I am not a coward who fears death. The Lord, by his grace and in his goodness, has so closely united me to himself that I am as happy to live as I am to die'" (LP 65).

Today, as in the time of Francis, physicians can tend to give their patients false hope, thinking that hope can only be understood in terms of cure—even when such a cure is impossible. In the midst of this denial, we follow a person who lovingly welcomed death as his sister. Perhaps we, his followers, need to be *truthful* regarding our limits, including speaking the truth about our sickness and dying. Such truthfulness demands courage on the part of the one who speaks and also on the part of those who are willing to listen. Speaking the truth means that we do not allow a simplistic sentimentalizing of illness

and death. Neither does it demand that we simply give up.

Illness, suffering, and death are *evils*. They threaten our well-being and dignity. It is proper to resist such evils to the extent that we are able. But we need not *fear* sickness and dying. If we believe that the paschal mystery proclaims victory over death, we, like Francis, can also believe with courage that it is precisely in vulnerability that we encounter Christ. Grave illness *can* be a time of grace. We who follow the footsteps of the crucified and risen Christ have the power to name illness and death in our lives. Faith lets us glimpse meaning when it seems hidden. It tells us that God is present in the midst of illness, suffering, and even death.

Furthermore, as physicians find it increasingly difficult to say "no" to *any* artificial prolongation of life, perhaps the most important witness a Franciscan can give is that of maintaining the distinction between caring and curing. The example of St. Francis and of those members of our communities who have allowed themselves simply to let go, without clinging to life at all costs, can be a powerful witness both to the sacredness of life and to the naturalness of death. This witness is not reserved only for those who are dying. As we understand better our society's tendency to do more and have more rather than less, perhaps all of us need to evaluate all medical interventions, especially those involving high technology, in terms of the values we hold as Franciscans. Among other values, these include simplicity of life and our preferential option for the poor.

As his illness progressed, Francis continued to seek the advice of his brothers regarding the care he should take for his body. Again, Celano relates: "One day he spoke to a certain brother who he know would give him suitable counsel: 'What do you think, my dearest son, of the fact that my conscience murmurs so frequently about the care of my body? It is afraid that I will indulge it too much in its illness and be anxious to come to its aid.' . . . And the brother said, 'Where then, Father, is your generosity, where are your kindness and discretion? Is it reasonable that you abandon so faithful a friend in such great need?'" (2Cel 210-211).

Our American culture has placed great value on individual choice and autonomy. Yet the example of Francis is that of deciding *with others*, especially with his superiors (see above, 1Cel 98). As we encounter increasing physical disability and are unable to do things once easily accomplished, we need others more than at any other time in our adult lives. In our sickness we are called to recognize our dependence and to *trust*—trust in God and in others in the community. Each of our vows moves us from believing that we are self-sufficient and invites us into a life of interdependence. Our brothers and sisters

who are chronically sick or dying witness, by their very existence, to that human dignity which demands more than autonomy's non-interference. By the very fact that they cannot exercise autonomy or choose not to exercise it, they demonstrate that one's dignity may still be preserved in relinquishing autonomy to a trusted brother or sister. Such "letting go" testifies that we are all members of the same family. The use of durable power of attorney, including the naming of another brother or sister as my agent when I can no longer speak for myself, also attests to trust. With that person I discuss my values and desires regarding end-of-life decisions. All these actions express mutual expectations of reliability and trust. They are powerful witnesses to Franciscan faithfulness and responsibility.

Francis's illness became chronic. Celano explains: "These things St. Francis bore for almost two years with all patience and humility, giving thanks to God. . . . He committed his care to certain brothers who were deservedly dear to him. . . . These tried with all vigilance, with all zeal, with all their will to foster the peace of mind of their blessed father, and they cared for the infirmity of his body, shunning no distress, no labors, that they might give themselves entirely to serving the saint" (1Cel 102).

The Rule of St. Francis states: "If any of the brothers becomes sick, the other brothers should serve him as they would wish to be served themselves" (RegB 6). In order for our brothers and sisters who are facing illness or death to accept it as a time of grace, the rest of us must give witness to faithfulness and care. If we expect our sick and dying brothers and sisters to speak the truth about illness and death, then we must be honest with *them*. If they are called to witness to a spirit of dependence, then our communities must be *dependable*. If they are to give an example of letting go and not clinging to the last remnant of life, then we must not abandon them in their suffering but rather *care for them*.

We should not believe that becoming a community of faithfulness and care comes automatically. Conflicts are inevitable. We may experience tensions between the cost of caring for our sick and the financial demands arising from our mission. Furthermore, because of cultural, ethnic, and even familial differences among us, we Franciscans may not always understand the needs of a particular sick brother or sister. In addition, issues with which individuals have wrestled during their lives may become more acute as the end draws near.

Bonaventure describes the last days of Francis: "In his last serious illness, which was destined to put an end to all his suffering, he had himself laid naked on the bare earth, so that with all the fervor of his spirit he might

struggle naked with his naked enemy in that last hour which was given him. As he lay there on the ground, stripped of his poor habit, he raised his eyes to heaven, as his custom was, and was lost in the contemplation of its glory. He covered the wound in his right side with his left hand, and he said to the friars, 'I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours'" (LM 14:3). Celano adds that "a certain brother, in his anxiety for all the brothers, said: 'Kind Father, alas your sons are now without a father and are deprived of the true light of their eyes. Remember therefore your orphan sons whom you are now leaving'" (1Cel 109).

Like Francis, those in our communities who are facing serious illness and death need to know that their brothers and sisters are around them. When one is resisting the onslaughts of disease, he or she needs the encouragement of the community. As illness progresses, our communities must become places of care, giving both physical and spiritual comfort. As diseases enter into their last stages and death approaches, they need the presence of the community and the reassurance that they will not be abandoned. This may sometimes become a practical question of where one will spend one's last days. Yet it also evokes deeper questions of whether others really care about our dying or what we will leave for others after we are gone—whether our lives have had meaning. Those caring for a sick or dying brother or sister may also need to examine their own expectations of suffering and whether these expectations are realistic. There may be times when a caregiver will want to make everything right and "fix" things when the only appropriate response is merely to remain present and powerless with the brother or sister who is suffering.

Furthermore, like the followers around the death bed of Francis, those of us who remain may feel like orphans. The death of each member is a sign of the numerical diminishment of our communities themselves. Thus as our brothers and sisters face death, the rest of us are forced to confront the question of the impermanence of our communities, issues of continual renewal and possible non-renewal. The temptations of denial which an individual may face reflect similar temptations facing the community. Unless we face these issues, however, we cannot be present to our aging and terminally ill brothers and sisters.

As Franciscans, we have come to realize that the story of St. Francis is our own story. We need to see the correspondence not only in the story of his continuing conversion, but perhaps even in the story of his last illness. And as we look to imitate our father in his illness and dying, let his last words remain with us: "I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours."

APPENDIX

The following guiding principles were developed for the Joint Task Force on Health Care for the Conference of the Major Superiors of Men and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. They address in a more concise way the values encountered in the above meditation.

•*Attitudes toward life, health, and death*

Franciscans are stewards of their physical, mental, and spiritual health. This stewardship is a life-long task. We are therefore called not only to care for our sick brothers and sisters but also to encourage all members of our communities to be concerned about preserving this precious gift of health in all its dimensions.

Since life is a gift from God, we are called not only to maintain life but also to return this gift in full freedom to God at the appropriate time. As stewards of the gift of life, we should use the means at our disposal to resist illness. Yet, we also need to accept our mortality. We believe that, as we are united with Christ in his dying, so are we destined to rise with Christ to new life.

•*Care of sick or aging brothers and sisters*

Our communities should be environments where aged or chronically sick brothers and sisters feel at home and truly a part of the community. To the extent possible, communities should support the independence of their sick brothers and sisters and provide them with planned programs of care in the community setting. This includes formal pastoral care and hospice care, together with the active engagement of friends and other members of the community.

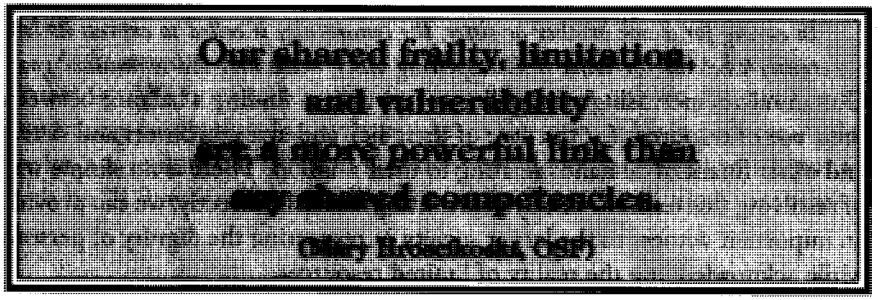
Caring for a sick brother or sister is a reciprocal ministry. Sick and dying brothers and sisters are not merely the objects of ministry. They also build up the larger community by means of their prayers and presence. Through their illness, they can help other members of the community as they confront their own limits and mortality.

In caring for a sick brother or sister, the community is called to express its love generously while at the same time respecting other needs and the communal good. Communities increasingly are called to struggle in finding a balance between their use of resources for the care of their sick and aging brothers and sisters and other financial demands relating to their mission. There is no simple way of resolving this tension. Yet, by confronting this issue directly, we can provide an important witness to the larger society in respecting the dignity of persons while acknowledging the reality of limited resources.

When a brother or sister is suffering from serious disease, decisions regarding treatment, especially end-of-life decisions, should be made jointly between the individual and the community. Imitating St. Francis, we realize that such decisions are not simply our own but may involve our local community, a trusted brother or sister who serves as our agent by means of durable power of attorney, or even a representative of the larger community. Joint decision-making is itself a witness to faithfulness and trust as well as to a mutuality of concern and care. To ensure that such decisions are respected when we can no longer speak for ourselves, we should not only complete an advance directive, especially the durable power of attorney for health care, but also discuss our values and desires with the agent we designate. We should inform our families of these decisions but also assure them that they will be included when illness and death overtake us.

Both the dignity of the individual and the nature of our Franciscan life require that communities and other caregivers be truthful to our sick and dying brothers or sisters. Members of the community who are sick should be told about the seriousness of their illness and be given reasonable expectations regarding their prognosis, including the probable progress of the disease and whether they are dying. It is unjust to maintain a sick brother's or sister's false hope. Rather, communities are called upon to accompany their brothers and sisters during this final journey, enabling them to come to the point of acceptance.

Franciscans have the right, like all people do, to refuse all forms of treatment which are burdensome and do not offer a reasonable hope for benefit. The Catholic moral tradition regarding health care is not simply to preserve life at all costs. At the late stages of a terminal disease, a shift in the burden of proof regarding treatment occurs. Aggressive treatments directed toward cure, which are appropriate in the early stages of a disease, may no longer be appropriate. Forms of treatment requiring high technology at relatively great cost ought to be weighed against the concerns for the common good of the community.



The Cord, 47.5 (1997)

A Bonaventurian Paradigm for Discovering God in Illness

Mary Hroscikoski, OSF

Illness in its myriad forms is part of the universal human experience. While the given malady may be based in one aspect of the person—body, psyche, spirit—it is expressed ultimately through the body.

I know the disordered physiology of my diabetes primarily in my body through the constant attention it demands and the fatigue and feelings of unwellness it can create. Through my bodily experience it envelops my self-understanding as one able, and often demanding, to choose to be in control of where I will place my attention. It is enveloped by my understanding of the science of insulin absence and replacement. It fills my memory with the painful consequences of past blood sugars, too high or too low, which have forced me to share my unwanted vulnerability. It teases my imagination with potential complications to come and with possibilities life might hold without the limits it creates. I managed well for two weeks in a Nicaragua barrio, but two years (or even two months?) could be life-threatening at worst and nearly impossible at best.

If, as St. Bonaventure says, God is revealed not only *through* but also *in* sensible things,[1] God is surely revealed in this experience of chronic disease. If our bodies are the vehicles for the encounter with the sacred,[2] so too is the experience of disorder in our bodies. In this bodily experience of frailty, limitation, and vulnerability, I am given the gift of knowing God who is, leaving behind the objective qualifiers which my preferred cognitive knowing wants to add. This bodily knowing draws me too into relationship with other persons. Our shared frailty, limitation, and vulnerability are a more powerful link than any shared competencies.

But working as a physician, I have a bridge to cross to another side of illness. Medicine is "a science-using, judgment-based practice committed to the knowledge and care of human illness, . . ."[3] where "disease is obviously the central theme. . . . The whole bent and purpose of the good physician is the

diagnosis and treatment of disease."[4] In the presence of a patient, then, I experience tension between two demands—should I focus my attention on the person in his or her illness or on the disease itself?

Disease focused, my attention is to the body. It is a focus built into the structure of the clinic and the schedule of the physician-patient encounter. Allot five to fifteen minutes per appointment. Take a focused but thorough history, gathering facts and perceptions. Support it with the physical exam. Develop a diagnosis and treatment plan. Write the prescriptions. Document the encounter in objective detail. Next patient, quickly please. The line is long and the time short.

But my deeper questions lie in a too-little tended fire, coals glowing, waiting to burst into full flame, wanting to illumine the human mystery within. Why are we here—patient, physician? To attend to a malady known and proclaimed in the body, yes. Per an ancient Latin proverb: to cure rarely, to relieve sometimes, to comfort always. But as a person of faith, I am necessarily called deeper into the human experience, to the One who lies hidden within.[5] This faith impels me to invite my patient to the same attention.

What does this illness, this pain mean in your life? How does it speak to who you are? To who you desire to be? How can it be an experience of coming to greater wholeness, whether cured, relieved, or comforted? Where is God hidden in this experience? Is this, can this be a meaningful experience pointing to Meaning itself? Can Beauty be discovered here?[6]

While it is rarely appropriate for me to ask these questions so directly, they frame all my sharings with my patients. Dimly, subtly with the nine-year-old boy with an acute respiratory infection, where the straightforward question is antibiotics or not. Brightly, more overtly with the forty-nine year old woman in for a general physical exam with her more complex problems, fears, and burdens. How do we talk of the worrisome-looking genital lesion that needs to be biopsied?

In medicine, we want to say we are about caring for the person with his or her illness. We do not care only for disease. But we sometimes, perhaps too often, forget how to do that as we work in a structure whose supports of space, time personnel, and money are built around identifying and solving problems. Too, as persons-living-with-illness in a culture devoted to efficiency and productivity, we take on the problem-solving perspective when we seek the quickest, most complete cures which create no interference with our real lives. Not unworthy goals for the healer or for the ill.

But from either viewpoint, as people of faith how do we attend to the Mystery hidden within such experience? St. Bonaventure and the Franciscan tradition give us some guidelines. The starting point: "The divine reality itself lies hidden within everything which is perceived or known."[7] In the experience of illness past, the footprints of which still shape our being, in the dis-

comfort of illness present, or in the anxiety of illness yet to come, God is waiting to be revealed. The finding comes in examining the experience and ourselves in it.

In my own life, I have most often perceived as barriers to God the painful limits diabetes has given me and the limits placed on reflective living in a work environment seemingly antithetical to, but calling forth, such reflection. I feel myself as bent over within these limits, less able or unable to turn to God. While not totally untrue, I suspect these perceived barriers are also an important part of my own self-deception, giving me excuse for turning less than fully to God.

In an artistic and spiritual paradigm on learning to live rightly, *Ordo Vivendi*, Bonaventure supplies a way to examine the parts of an experience in its constitutive relationship to the whole of human life. What do I believe and know in my encounter with this illness? How does my intellect name its causes and effects?—know its meaning? How does my memory call on past times of illness? How does my imagination carry me into possibilities for coping and adapting?—for living with or living against?—for survival or death? How does my body translate the illness? What symptoms does it express? Which do I ignore or deny? Which do I indulge in?

Then, what do I desire? To know myself, and hence the God who is hidden within? To know Christ resurrected, without the crucifixion? Understanding, so as to control? Isolation or relationship? Humility, apprehending my place before God, dependent on God's love?

Lastly, how will I act in the light of my belief and desire? What concrete choices will I make about how I live today in this body with these limitations and these resources? How will I keep a good measure between too little and too much— dependence/independence, self-care/other-attention, control/flexibility?

Bonaventure's exercise of examination provides us with a means for constantly re-orienting our being in re-directing our will that leads us to act. In this rectitude of will, the bent-over creature becomes able to stand upright, turned continually toward God. In entering fully and lovingly into our human condition, our relationship with God will grow. That illness which is bitter will be changed into sweetness of soul and body (Test 3).[8]

Endnotes

[1]Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God* 2:1, in *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; the Tree of Life; the Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins, The Classics of Western Spirituality Series (New York, 1978), 69.

[2]Vincent Bilotta, "The Formative Dimension of the Lived Human Body in the Spiritual Life," *The Bulletin* 29.3 (1983): 38.

[3]Kathryn Montgomery Hunter, *Doctors' Stories: The Narrative Structure of Medical Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 47.

[4]H. J. L. Marriott, *Medical Milestones* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1952), 277.

[5]Bonaventure, *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, 26, trans. Zachary Hayes, OFM (St. Bonaventure, New York: The Franciscan Institute, 1996), 61.

[6]Bonaventure, *The Life of St. Francis*, 9:1, in Cousins, 263. ("In beautiful things he saw Beauty itself.")

[7]*On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, 26.

[8]Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. and Ignatius Brady, OFM, *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, 1982), 154.

Francis X. Miles, OFM

I beg the sick brother to give thanks to the Creator for everything; and whatever the Lord wills for him, he should desire to be that, whether healthy or sick.
(RegNB 10:3)

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Bodily Knowing and the Theology of Bonaventure

Mary Catherine Gurley, OSF

Introduction

Perhaps one of the most interesting phenomena in religious literature and one that is beginning to have an impact on contemporary understandings of theology and spirituality is the concept of bodily knowing. Originating in a renewed interest in the medieval women mystics and extended in meaning by research from the fields of psychology, anthropology, literature, and the visual arts, bodily knowing has emerged as the popular term to describe a way of knowing that springs from experiences of "feminist" spirituality. It does not submit to the traditional "disembodied, 'rational' mode of learning attributed to males."[1] It draws its most vivid examples from the devotional experiences of the medieval period and the very dramatic and public evidence of a kind of knowing that is prized for its own sake, a bodily knowing, wherein the person physically experiences—not as metaphor, symbol, or expression, but as fact—Christ himself really, physically interacting with him/her.[2] Indeed, "a number of women writers argue the point that only through the body can human beings know adequately what is good and worthwhile in human life."[3]

What was experienced physically as real knowing was and continues to be generally ignored or denied by traditional theologians. The tensions inherent in the female/male modes of knowing, in the religious expression of medieval women in bodily knowing modes vis-à-vis that of the writings of medieval men in theological tomes, and in the cultural and ecclesial religious articulations of each sex in general have been expressed by Asian writer Marianne Katoppo:

All over the world and throughout history, the churches have tended to give male chauvinism not only a practical expression, but also a theological and even a quasi-divine legitimation. . . . If women are admitted at all to male-dominated institutions of higher theological education and/or patriarchal church structures, they are expected to theologize by proxy, faithfully to relay the ideas fabricated in male chauvinist (and often white supremacist) contexts. A woman's own experience—of discrimination, subordination and oppression—are denied validity. Her personal encounter with God is denounced as heretical or hysterical: if the first, she is figuratively burnt at the stake; if the second, people hasten to find her a husband.[4]

Katoppo's views are strong and expressive of a number of contemporary women writers. She does not, however, speak the whole story. Nor, in pointing a critical finger does she point a direction. However, within the Franciscan tradition, particularly as expressed in the theology of Bonaventure, women and men can find a foundation from which some of the issues raised in the bodily knowing literature might find a place of dialogue.[5]

Selected Concepts within the Theology of Bonaventure

One might legitimately raise an important question here: Would twentieth-century bodily knowing concepts be "foreign" to Bonaventure? The answer is simple: Bonaventure was a theologian of his time, well-versed in the schema; it would be inappropriate even to suggest that the question of bodily knowing would find a place in his work. Though very visible in devotional practice, bodily knowing was simply not a serious part of theological discussion in Bonaventure's century.

This concept of direct physical knowing, bodily knowing, having been reintroduced into present-day consciousness by contemporary in-depth studies of the medieval mystics, has become a twentieth-century question that is now finding its way into theological circles. The movement began, as would be expected, with women theologians but has expanded to include men theologians as well. The recent widespread interest in Eastern prayer and its attention to bodily readiness and expression has also had an impact on the understanding of bodily knowing, as has the feminist movement.

For the Franciscan, however, the study-journey to understand and respect bodily knowing begins with Bonaventure, who is described by A. Epping as "the most complete embodiment of the spirit of the Franciscan School."[6] And the question that needs to be asked in this age would be: What is there in

Bonaventure's theology that might serve as a starting point for theologians and followers of Francis in contemporary discussions of bodily knowing? For the purposes of this paper the ideas and constructs of Bonaventure that will be touched on as potential starting points for a bodily knowing dialogue include: 1) His understanding of a created universe that links creation and eschatology; 2) His belief that humanity is created body/soul. Is this a hierarchy or a complementarity? and 3) His openness to paradigms for human knowledge other than the ladder.

Creation and Eschatology in Bonaventure

Zachary Hayes writes:

> Bonaventure's understanding of the order of the created universe emphasizes the centrality of humanity. This seems almost inevitable when creation is viewed in terms of its origin in an intelligent God and in terms of its finality in the spiritual union between that intelligent God and intelligent creatures.[7]

Throughout his writings Bonaventure does indeed makes very clear connections between creation and eschatology, but none so eloquent as these lines in the *Breviloquium:*

> Therefore, the fabric of his sensitive body is like a house made for man by the supreme Architect to serve until such time as he may come to the house not made by human hands . . . in the heavens. Just as the soul, by reason of the body lives on earth, so will the body, by reason of the soul and to gain reward, some day live in heaven.[8]

With the eschatological promise embedded, as it were, in the body, Bonaventure has already proclaimed the goodness of humanity's physical condition. The inherent goodness of the body flows, he says, from God's desire that his Wisdom might be revealed in "a physical constitution that would be well balanced," that it "be endowed with a manifold organic composition, together with beauty, dexterity, and flexibility," and that it "stand erect with lifted head."[9]

This well-ordered creation of humanity has its perfected parallel in Bonaventure's description of humanity in paradise: a marvelous hymn of balance and beauty.

> Concerning the whole man placed in paradise, it must be held that he was given a twofold perception, interior and exterior: of the mind and of the flesh. He was given a twofold capacity of motion: imperative in the will, and executive in the body. He was given a

twofold good: one visible, the other invisible. He was given a twofold command: that of nature, and that of discipline; the command of nature: "Be fruitful and multiply"; the command of discipline: "From the tree of knowledge of good and evil you must not eat."[10]

A similar orderliness is reflected in humankind's corruption by original sin. In the absence of original justice, Bonaventure writes, "Our souls incur a fourfold penalty: weakness, ignorance, malice, and concupiscence." These are "matched in the body by all kinds of pain, imperfection, labor, disease, and affliction."[11]

In the end, the bodies of the just will receive their reward. "The soul cannot be fully happy unless the body is returned to it, for the two have a natural ordination to each other."[12] And finally, in what can only be termed a "hymn of satisfaction," Bonaventure recites the litany of joys that await the glorified, eschatological body.

> Tell me, my body, what do you love? My soul, what do you seek? Anything you love, anything you desire is here. Is it beauty that delights you? The just will shine forth like the sun. Is it swiftness and might, and a bodily freedom no barrier may contain? . . . Is it a long and healthy life? . . . Is it repletion? . . . Is it inebriation? . . . Is it melody? . . . Is it pleasure—pure delight? . . . Is it wisdom? . . . Is it friendship?. . . Is it peace? . . . Is it honor and riches? . . . Is it security? How wonderful and great must be the joy whose object is so great and wonderful![13]

Body/Soul in Bonaventure: A Hierarchy or Complementarity?

It seems to be a foregone conclusion for one who reads Bonaventure that all of creation, material and spiritual, is arranged in a hierarchy of order. Each element has its own place, its own level, the properties of that particular level. Within the given framework there is perfect harmony. The enemy is anything/anyone that would disturb the order:

> Sin is . . . a force which contaminates mode, species, and order in the created will;[14]
>
> By their inordinate attempt to rise above what they were, both [Adam/Eve] fell wretchedly below what they were: from the state of innocence to that of guilt and mercy;[15]
>
> The will withdraws from the first Principle in some matter in which it should have chosen to be acted upon by Him in accord with His will and for Him as an end.[16]

Bonaventure, a scholar of his times, was, as were his contemporaries, a master of the form of hierarchical order.

One can also find in Bonaventure, however, many instances of balance and of complementarity. The passage below from the *Itinerarium* serves as illustration of this:

> Look at the Mercy Seat and wonder
> that in him there is joined
> the First Principle with the last,
> God with man, who was formed on the sixth day;
> the eternal is joined with temporal man,
> born of the Virgin in the fullness of time
> the most simple with the most composite,
> the most actual with the one who suffered supremely and died,
> the most perfect and immense with the lowly,
> the supreme and all-inclusive one
> with a composite individual distinct from others,
> that is, the man Jesus Christ.[17]

Though this passage is addressed solely to the perfect complementarity of the divine nature with the human nature in Jesus, there are also passages in Bonaventure which indicate a type of complementarity between body and soul of the created person. The passage below, quoted earlier in this paper reflects this complementarity, specifically in the repetition of the word "twofold."

> Concerning the whole man placed in paradise, it must be held that he was given a twofold perception, interior and exterior: of the mind and of the flesh. He was given a twofold capacity of motion: imperative in the will, and executive in the body. He was given a twofold good: one visible, the other invisible. He was given a twofold command: that of nature, and that of discipline; the command of nature: "Be fruitful and multiply"; the command of discipline: "From the tree of knowledge of good and evil you must not eat."[18]

In making a case for an approach to theology that recognizes complementarity as well as hierarchy, Bonaventure might be a starting point. His Christocentric approach puts the Incarnation at the heart of all theology. The two-fold nature of Jesus is the perfect mirror for humanity that struggles with its own body/soul duality. Perhaps within such a context, the giftedness of creation that Bonaventure sings so well will be enhanced by a re-ordering of how we structure reality. In such a re-ordering of structures, in accepting a complementarity of body/soul, the richness of bodily knowing will receive new emphasis and practice and God will be glorified anew.

Is such a re-ordering possible? In a rather unusual source, an article about abjection and anorexia in medieval mystics, there is an extended reflection on the meaning of order. It is included here as a backdrop for some consider-

ations on hierarchy and complementarity and as a challenge to break down some mental fences.

> That there is meaning at all depends on the human capacity to create boundaries, draw lines, affirm differences and, in so doing, both create and maintain order. Aside from bricks and stones out of which actual fences and walls are constructed, the order we create elsewhere in the world we owe to the capacity of the human mind to make mental fences and walls. Testimonies to our attempts to humanize ourselves by creating boundaries lie everywhere. We order our days with clocks and calendars, our relations with each other by complicated patterns of etiquette, and our surroundings by banishing disorder, which we call dirt, from our midst.
>
> Underlying this fence-making activity, by which order is demarcated from disorder, we find ambiguity. Gray marks the border between black and white; good cannot clearly be distinguished from evil. Thus, at the boundaries separating order from disorder lie power and danger. Power lies there because those parts of existence which are set aside—the irregular, anomalous, or unnatural—are not simply dismissed. . . . Lurking always in the margins of any ordered experience are claims of disorder to pattern and meaning. . . . But in potential for order lies danger. What if, in erecting fences and fortifying borders, we err and include in our midst elements that threaten order?[19]

Paradigms for Human Knowing in the Thought of Bonaventure

In his article on bodily knowing that was referenced earlier in this paper, Milhaven concludes that an entirely new paradigm of human knowing is needed.

> The women are right. Not only by reason, but also in and through their bodies do human beings know other human beings in their humanness, their personalness. Not only by reason, but also in and through their bodies do human beings know much that is intrinsically precious in human life. The recognition of this fact does away with any epistemology, medieval or modern, that propounds a hierarchy of knowledge. It demands instead a bipolarity.[20]

His statements are a beginning. However, if one believes that a new paradigm of knowing would be useful, one should question what Milhaven lists as the ends of bodily knowing—"humanness" and "personalness" of others and "that which is intrinsically precious in human life"—ends that stop short of knowing the Divine. Is Milhaven suggesting that bodily knowing is appropriate creature to creature but stops short of creature to Divine? One should also question Milhaven's suggestion to "do away with any epistemology. . . that

propounds a hierarchy of knowledge." Perhaps the better way is to hold the various paradigms in tension. At the very least, there is need to give serious comparative study to the various paradigms.

Certainly Bonaventure knew and used various paradigms. Any reader conversant with his writings is familiar with the hierarchical paradigm of the ladder that recurs throughout his writings. Bonaventure has also used the circle as a paradigm, specifically in reference to the creation/eschatology and sin/redemption themes. The trinity paradigm, a three-fold representation and illustration of ideas, as well as the cruciform paradigm are additional favorites with Bonaventure. No doubt the careful Bonaventurian scholar could also find examples of a continuum paradigm in the *Opera omnia*.

It is with Bonaventure that one might fruitfully begin the search for a model of knowing that would include bodily knowing. In the deep reverence for knowing and for knowing the things of God, Bonaventure is a master. Whether his paradigms are hierarchical, circular, or cruciform, the focus and the extension are always God. In addition, Bonaventure was the master of inclusion; nothing that spoke of God was outside the parameters of consideration. One could easily conceive of Bonaventure reading the words of Milhaven quoted below and prayerfully researching and discerning their truth. If, indeed, bodily knowing speaks of the things of God and leads the body/soul to its final end, Bonaventure would encompass such knowing in his schema, perhaps even in the paradigm suggested.

> If human knowing be bipolar, the various forms of human knowledge of person and value do not constitute degrees of realizing one supreme kind of knowing, as the theologians thought they did. The various forms of human knowledge of person and value fan out between two polar kinds of knowing. One is bodily. The other is rational. All human knowing is constituted by its particular degree of participation in both poles. The poles are irreducible to each other. They are incomparable to each other in value. One cannot be rated superior to the other. Good human living is at any moment determined by both poles.[21]

Conclusion

Bodily knowing and the theology of Bonaventure—are the two constructs as far apart, perhaps even as mutually exclusive, as one might first suspect? Certainly there is a sufficient supply of both ambiguity and fact to entertain a lively interactive dialogue among the medievalists, the theologians, the feminists, the traditionalists, and unwary students who wander into this particular minefield. One could begin the dialogue with bodily knowing; one could begin it with theological schema. The follower of Francis might begin/end it

with Francis. That is where I would like to venture now with some closing reflections on the Stigmata of Francis and on the Canticle of Creatures.

Addressing the need of medieval women to understand and express their spirituality in a manner true to who they were, Caroline Walker Bynum writes:

> Women thus asserted and embraced their humanity. They asserted it because traditional dichotomous images of woman and man opposed humanity-physicality-woman to divinity-rationality-man. Women stressed their humanity and Jesus' because tradition had accustomed them to associate humanity with the female. But humanity is not, in the final analysis, a gender-related image. Humanity is genderless. To medieval women humanity was, most basically, not femaleness but physicality, the flesh of the "Word made flesh." It was the ultimate negative—the otherness from God that the God-man redeemed by taking it into himself. Images of male and female alike were insipid and unimportant in the blinding light of the ultimate asymmetry between God and creation.[22]

The passage has echoes of the final chapter of the *Itinerarium* with its images of the ultimate negative, the otherness, the blinding light, the God-man who redeems by taking [humanity] into himself. One might even suggest that the title of chapter seven ("In Which Rest is Given to Our Intellect when through Ecstasy Our Affection Passes Over Entirely into God") could find its parallel in the excerpt above ("In Which Rest is Given to Our Body when through Ecstasy Our Physical Being Passes Over Entirely into God").

Francis spent the whole of his life after his conversion with the injunction of Paul to put on the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). So in love was Francis with his God, so overwhelmed with the utter self- giving of the Godhead in the Incarnation of Jesus, that Francis not only put on the mind of Christ, he bore the marks of Christ in his body. He who had been crucified with Christ could truly say, "I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). He knew Christ immediately, physically, with a bodily knowing that sealed and crowned his desire. He was one with his beloved. Of LaVerna, Bonaventure tells us that Francis

> passed over into God in ecstatic contemplation
> and became an example of perfect contemplation
> as he had previously been of action.[23]
>
> ....
>
> When the true love of Christ
> had transformed his lover into his image
> and forty days were over
> . . . the angelic man Francis
> came down from the mountain
> bearing with him

> the image of the Crucified
> which was depicted not on tablets of stone
> or on panels of wood
> by the hands of a craftsman
> but engraved in the members of his body
> by the finger of the living God.[24]

In Francis, a bodily knowing of the Crucified, the Stigmata, was the outward sign of a life spent in desire for his Beloved. Francis gave *everything*, including his living, earthly body, into the contemplative embrace of God. Francis, who loved God with his whole heart, his whole soul, his whole mind, and his whole will now also loved God with his whole body as well. Truly Francis experienced a bodily knowing.

William Johnston, author of *Christian Zen*, has developed a concept of what he calls a second kind of asceticism, the asceticism of achieved spontaneity. (The first is asceticism of punitive discipline). The aim of the second is positive, including such things as the recovery of the rhythms and responses of the body, the development of feeling responses to the world, the awakening of such sensory awareness as will prevent the misuse of the body by the mind in sensuality, power-seeking, and the like.[25] About the body and prayer, Johnston writes the following:

> Christians should think more about the role of the body in prayer .... For the fact is that Western prayer is not sufficiently visceral—it is preoccupied with the brain and not with the deeper layers of the body where the power to approach the spiritual is generated. . . . There is a basic rhythm in the body, linked to a consciousness that is deeper than is ordinarily experienced. . . . Anyone who wants to meditate in depth must find this rhythm and the consciousness that accompanies it.[26]

Nearing his death, Francis, the man of prayer, having walked the road of asceticism, of discipline, had achieved the perfection of an asceticism of spontaneity—body and soul had truly become body/soul and entered into a harmony with the material world as well as the spiritual. Eloi Leclerc believes "Francis experienced the sacred in the cosmos and entered into communion with God through the medium of created things, and indeed in the very depths of created things. . . . It is this aspect of his religious experience that the Canticle of Brother Sun expresses."[27]

> At first sight, there is something rather surprising in all this. Here is a man whose diseased eyes cannot bear the light nor any longer enjoy the sight of creatures, a man who is interested only in the splendors of the kingdom. Yet, in order to express his joy, this man sings of matter: matter that burns and emits a brilliant light—the sun and the fire; matter that nourishes—the air, the water and the

earth, "our mother." And he does so in terms strangely reminiscent of ancient pagan hymns in which men gave thanks for the sun's mastery and for the earth's maternal fruitfulness. His language is the ancient language typical of the sacred, the language of the cosmic hierophanies, and he uses it with the spontaneity, directness, and warmth that mark a man's words when he speaks his mother tongue. Moreover, in the entire Canticle there is not a single reference or slightest allusion to the supernatural mystery of Christ and his kingdom. It is only material things that are used to celebrate the glory of the Most High."[28]

Bonaventure's theology was a written embodiment of the life and spirituality of Francis. In addition his approach to theology indicates he shared the same profound reverence for God's created world that Francis had for it. If today, in the twentieth century, Bonaventure were asked to write a treatise on bodily knowing, I believe two things would happen: 1) he would say yes, and 2) this is the place he would begin—the place where our Seraphic Father Francis, at the end of his life, *used only material things to celebrate the glory of the Most High God.*

Endnotes

[1]John Giles Milhaven, "A Medieval Lesson on Bodily Knowledge: Women's Experience and Men's Thought," *Journal of the Academy of Religion*, 57/2 (1989): 341.

[2]Milhaven, 351.

[3]Milhaven, 341.[4]Marianne Katoppo, *Compassionate and Free: An Asian Woman's Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1981), 7.

[5]See bibliography for works giving background on medieval mystics, women and men, and the concept of bodily knowing within the medieval milieux. See especially: Bynum, Mazzoni, Miles, Milhaven, Petroff, Reineke.

[6]As quoted by Zachary Hayes, "The Life and Christological Thought of St. Bonaventure," in *Franciscan Christology*, ed. Damian McElrath (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1980), 59.

[7]Zachary Hayes, "Bonaventure: Mystery of the Triune God," in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. Kenan B. Osborne (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1994), 67.

[8]Brev II, 4:5. All citations from *The Breviloquium* are taken from *The Works of Bonaventure*, Vol. 2, translated from the Latin by Jose de Vinck (Paterson, NJ, St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963).

[9]Brev II, 10:4.

[10]Brev II, 11:1.

[11]Brev III, 5:2.

[12]Brev VII, 7:4.

[13]Brev VII, 7:7.

[14]Brev III, 1:1.

[15]Brev III, 3:4.

[16]Brev III, 8:2.

[17]Itin 6:5. All citations for the *Itinerarium* are from *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins, The Classics of Western Spirituality Series (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). [Note: The sense lines of Cousins's translation have been used to show better the balance/complementarity.]

[18]Brev II, 11:1.

[19]Martha J. Reineke, "This is My Body": Reflections on Abjection, Anorexia, and Medieval Women Mystics," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 58/2 (1990): 246.

[20]Milhaven, 367-68.

[21]Milhaven, 368.

[22]Bynum, 280.

[23]*Itin* 7:3.

[24]Bonaventure, *The Life of St. Francis*, in Cousins.

[25]William Johnston, *Christian Zen* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 55.

[26]Johnston, 55.

[27]Eloi Leclerc, *The Canticle of Creatures: Symbols of Union*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), xi.

[28]Leclerc, x-xi.

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The Cord, 47.5 (1997)

Hard Work and Good Times

David Flood, OFM

Today's paper (*The Gazette*, Montreal, February 13, 1997) offers new data on work. The business page reports that a store chain in Quebec is closing its doors, with the loss of thousands of jobs. The paper also reports that Ottawa plans to create thousands of summer jobs for students. Work is news. People's lives depend on selling their skills in the work market. The paper also reports the astounding bonuses which a few investors are receiving, but it does not deal at all with the clear connection between the two.

It so happens that Francis and his friends set out together just as the work market in Assisi underwent a major change. We can read about it in the municipal charter of 1210 (re-edited by A. Bartoli Langeli in 1978, correcting the many mistakes of A. Fortini's edition). The charter freed Assisi's working people from feudal restraints, while it told Assisi's managers to put them to work. The first Franciscans formulated their own work policy within the reorganization of labor in central Italy. Several basic determinations sufficed. Francis and his friends did not have to describe at any length their daily routines.

Work and our notions of work belong to our daily life. We cannot do without food, shelter, and the basics of life. Consequently we develop ways to produce the means of life and to distribute them. We supply ourselves consciously; we know what is going on. The morning's paper speaks explicitly to this consciousness.

It was through work primarily that Francis and his brothers reached out to the Franciscan Penitents and proposed common cause. As an expression, "the Franciscan Penitents" covers all those serious Christians who were responding with interest to the brothers' openness to others. Let us look at the line where Francis, as spokesman for the brotherhood, tried to organize the Penitents around a new idea of work.

Morton's Essay

Before I do that, I mention why I write on this point for *The Cord*. When I was at The Franciscan Institute in early December 1996, I read the latest issue of *The Cord* and in particular Richard Morton's essay on Franciscan leadership in the workplace. I was familiar with Mr. Morton's role in Franciscan life through my association with the Secular Franciscans of Waterville and Norway in Maine. I offer this essay as historical background to the proposal Morton makes that Franciscans work with others in service to common interests. (Cf. Morton, *The Cord*, 46.6 [Nov/Dec., 1996] 274-275). He gets to that point after describing work, given our nature (269), as a duty and a right (271) and as needed for our growth as human beings (271).

Francis's message to the Franciscan Penitents (The Message of Recall and Exhortation, also called The Letter to the Faithful) connects with the work world of central Italy: "We must bring ourselves to submit our bodies to the yoke of service, as each has sworn obedience to God" (2EpFid 40). The operative word in the sentence is *servitium*, service, work as service.

A word depends on its context for its precise meaning; and here two contexts come into play. The first is Franciscan life as it had developed among the brothers. For in his message Francis shares the brotherhood's experience and aspirations with a larger audience. Work is central to the action covered by the Early Rule, a clear alternative to Assisian work. Two distinct forms of consciousness promote Franciscan work and Assisian work. Francis was harking back to the movement's initial frame of mind when, in his Testament, he said simply: I want to work and [therefore I feel free to say that] I want all the brothers to work (Test 20).

The Message

The second context which helps define *servitium*, work as service, is the whole Message. Francis approaches line 40 by proposing a theory of Christian life (as the Franciscans saw it) and then describing its daily routines. With line 37, Francis begins spelling out Franciscan interaction with other social forces. From this line on, the Franciscans contend directly with the age in which they live. Franciscans seek no social advantage; in the din of daily life, Jesus' words guide them rather than daily hearsay. First of all, however, they do the work which they have taken upon themselves as their primary social role; and in this way they obey God. In those years, and up to recent times, work demanded long physical effort as is rarely the case today. People bent their bodies to the harsh demands of medieval labor.

After stating frankly the demands of daily life, Francis speaks in the following lines (41-44) to those responsible for organizing and directing labor.

He heeds the composition of his penitential audience. In lines 45-47 Francis rounds off the instruction by summing up the Franciscan attitude of ready service to all, "for God," *propter Deum.*

Now, from line 48 on, Francis looks back on what he has proposed. He explains what happens when people engage in such action. The Spirit visits them so that their labor helps transform the lives of others (53). Both here in retrospect and then in his harsh words for those who do not do these things, Francis has in mind work as the origin of a just and blessed society. The impenitent simply do not do justice with their time and means, and they pay the price for their failure (68).

If we look at the whole Message and try to pinpoint the words which connect with daily life and challenge Assisian order, we are led to "service" (*servitium*) in line 40 and "these things" (*talia*) in line 48. "These things" culminate in the service of work. Francis then passes through "these things" to the new life born of the Spirit. He bears witness to the joy and vision which suffused the movement. People together, working for a just world, not only take care of their own needs (material and spiritual), they brighten up others' lives—hard work and good times. In lines 48 to 62, Francis celebrates the return of all good things to God. Here and in the Early Rule, that is the purpose of work as service.

Well . . . at this point in my account, I have to step back and acknowledge little learned support for such a thesis. I can only point to the evidence and invite others to study it. Look at work from the Early Rule 7 through the Message to Francis's recommitment to work in the Testament. Certainly, the argument needs a longer, more careful demonstration. It also needs a little theoretical agreement—the goods of life come from work; and work then (1209) and work now was and is underplayed and exploited. As a result, it is not easy to speak clearly about work.

Yet work gives us the world in which we live. Such is the central role of work in our lives that it inevitably mixes into the dilemmas and problems we confront in our efforts to reach a just order at home and in the world. And special interests try to preempt the discussion with false problems. Not enough work? Nonsense! Such an idea stems from an arbitrarily truncated notion of work. A Franciscan group which does not take work today seriously has lost the connection with common people which was so strong in the early Franciscan years.

Churchy Sermons or Political Clout?

In the late 1260s, a Franciscan, speaking for the Order, drew up and circulated a pamphlet of questions and answers on those Franciscan practices

which were bothering people. The pamphlet has come down to us under the title: "Answers to Questions about the Rule of the Friars Minor." We do not know who the author was. Although the text emanated from Franciscan officialdom (and was published in the *Opera omnia* of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio), Bonaventure himself did not write it.

One chapter has to do with the relations between religious Franciscans and Franciscan Penitents. The question raised was: "Why don't you promote the Penitents, an order which Francis began?" The answer runs through a list of troubles, of social entanglements, which would result from close contact, from communal enterprise, with the Penitents. The Order's apologist wanted the Penitents and others to come hear the brothers preach; but he wanted nothing which would tie the brothers to the Penitents' daily struggles.

At the end of the chapter, the apologist tried to set aside an historical argument, for the Penitents were challenging the Order's policy by referring to early Franciscan history. Lamely, the apologist wrote:

> It was different with Saint Francis, for the order and people related to one another differently and variously in that country and at that time. And the holy reputation of Saint Francis and the first brothers led to action which, though considered right then, would not have the same success now and in other countries (*Bonaventurae Opera Omnia* VIII, 369).

From that refutation, I derive the Penitents' argument, and they were right—Francis and his brothers stood with the Penitents in the trenches. With their wit and by their spirit they strengthened the Penitents' efforts to make God's good things circulate justly. And that is what the Penitents expected from true brothers in the 1260s.

Richard Morton's essay on work is a worthy descendant of that penitential call for a common policy on work. His proposals deserve attention and discussion.

Francis and his brothers
stood with the Penitents
in the trenches.
With their wit and by their spirit
they strengthened the Penitents' efforts
to make God's good things circulate justly.
(David Flood, OFM)

The Cord, 47.5 (1997)

Exploring the Foundational Aspects of Religious Life

Patricia Fritz, OSF and Kathleen Gannon, OSF

Introduction

Within the past decade, a number of religious communities have gone through a process of refounding[1] with the hope of revitalizing their congregations. Set before each group was the choice of life, survival, or death. Although most congregations opted for life, the lived experience continues to be survival or a slow dying. This is expressed in decreased numbers of members and candidates, economic struggles, but more significantly a grasping for a common commitment and focus as members seem to drift into their "own way" of ministry and mission. Undoubtedly, refounding gave us hope, helped each congregation revisit the rooted charism of its particular foundress or founder, and stimulated energy around realistic choices for the future. The lens of charism provided an important context for study and reflection for each congregation.

As beneficial as all of this was, and we are indebted to Gerald Arbuckle for his charismatic energy around this, one cannot help but ask the question: "Is it/was it enough?" In this paper we invite you to view religious life from a different vantage point. We will try to position ourselves at the beginnings of religious life in early Christianity. Whether identified as apostolic or evangelical, many United States congregations have their roots in monasticism. All subsequent directions, expressions, and charisms of religious life have been impacted directly or indirectly by the first religious communities. For our purposes, we will present some of the foundations of the evangelical life, namely, desire, gift and exchange, poverty and *exemplum*, birthing, and integration. We will approach each chosen dimension of evangelical life from theological, historical, and personal perspectives. We will include reflections on our lived reality, as well as some of the challenges that confront vowed religious in light of the evangelical option. All that is said will readily apply to apostolic communities as well.

Desire

At the root of the pilgrim's spiritual journey is desire for God. This desire is not motivated by something outside a person, but rather it is a quality with which each of us is born. It is part of our very being. Since we are made to the image and likeness of God, we have a compatibility with and a capacity for God. Michael Casey presents a key aspect of this desire in his book, *Athirst for God*, when he states that human desire for union with God is but a mirroring of the divine desire which created the human race with no other purpose in view than that such a union should exist. "He [the bridegroom] himself desires to come, for it is his desire which creates yours."[2]

Endlessly, desire and possession cause each other to increase because God's love is inexhaustible. Desire grows even in eternity. Jean Leclercq, quoting St. Peter Damien, aptly describes the dynamic quality of desire: "Always eager and always satisfied, the elect have what they desire: satiety never becomes wearisome, and hunger kept alive by desire never becomes painful. Desiring, they eat constantly, and eating they never cease to desire."[3] Gregory the Great repeatedly states that desire presents its own paradoxical experiences of presence/absence, possession/non-possession, certainty/uncertainty, light/darkness. The reality of the experience of God lies in the midst of the paradox, holding both sides.

The spiritual masters tell us that it is the love of God to which we should cling, not **our** love for God but rather **God's** love for us. Truly, desire is the "treasure hidden in the field" (Mt. 13:44), and it is for us to "sell" our sense of having to **do** and be open to receive the gift. We will no longer have the need to cling to our works, our successes, our opinions; we will rather cling to the love of God and perhaps with Mary, our beings will "proclaim the goodness of God" (Lk. 1: 46). Since God initiates, our desire for God begins with our focus on God, which, in turn, leads to self-knowledge.

During our formative years in religious life the word "desire" was not often used. It seemed to be associated with satisfying carnal or fleshly appetites. There was almost a suppression of passion and desire for fear that we would lose control of ourselves. The examination of conscience was considered an important practice in deepening self-knowledge. Often the focus was on our weaknesses, limitations, and sins. Rarely was it presented that another integral part of self-knowledge was realizing our privilege of being an *imago Dei*.

At times, when the love of the world lures one, then the attention of the soul is drawn to God. Leclercq defines compunction as an "act of God in us, an act which awakens us, a shock, a blow, a sting, a sort of burn."[4] Hence, even the awareness of our sinfulness is a gift. God works in this mysterious purification. Our part is to be sensitive to and consent to this invisible action of God,

which comes, as Leclercq says, as an "inner song, a slight murmur, a silent word."[5] Our receptivity to this gentle urging sparks desire anew.

Religious life, and society as well, is filled with expressions of the longing to be satisfied and to feel whole. The manifestations of the compulsive activity to satiate this craving are multiple, ranging from drugs and addictions of all kinds to consumerism in its innumerable forms. None of these satisfy the heart in this obscure and unrelenting quest: the exclusive pursuit of God. St. Clare in her Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague expresses this when she writes:

> Happy, indeed is she
> to whom it is given to share in this sacred banquet
> so that she might cling with all her heart
> to Him
> Whose beauty all the blessed hosts of heaven
> unceasingly admire
> Whose affection excites,
> Whose contemplation refreshes,
> Whose kindness fulfills,
> Whose delight replenishes,
> Whose remembrance delightfully shines (4LAg 9-12).[6]

To follow this desire to cling to God seems to make no sense. There does not seem to be any obvious outcome nor necessary active response. There is no apparent social end for peace and justice nor does it appear practical. However, in the eyes of love it is the only thing that is worth pursuing. The clarity of vision expressed in this letter highlights the importance of a focused attention and intention (*intuitio)* for all who are called to the evangelical way of life.

Intuitio is not merely one's purpose in doing a particular act. It fixes one's intention on God rather than worldly affairs. The opposite of this intention is aimlessness, a lack of direction, a carelessness and insensitivity to spiritual realities. Often we are caught up in frenetic activity which we impose upon ourselves through unreflective choices. An excessive concentration on immediate issues and dispersal of energy with the intention of "making it all better" diverts us from our exclusive pursuit of God.

Desire is the center of our quest for God and lies at the heart of our way of life. Elizabeth Johnson places desire in a contemporary context: "The fascination with the mystery of God is endemic to religious life everywhere and at all times."[7] She describes the "fascination" which unites persons in communities as a "search for relationship with the sacred leading to a certain kind of absorption with the religious dimension of life."[8] We are coming to understand more clearly this foundational aspect of our lives. Indeed, we may be arriving where we started but with a fuller understanding of where and who we are.

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.[9]

Desire for God opens one to the ultimate gift—God! One cannot get a gift on one's own nor by one's own efforts or acts of will. Gift is that which is gratuitously given. The call to and mystery of religious life is one of the many gifts given to us. It is given for the Church and the world. For our purposes, we will focus on the religious vocation of Franciscan, in which we have been called to live out the evangelical charism given to us through Francis and Clare.

The Mystery of Gift and Exchange

The root of the English word "mystery" comes from the Greek verb *muein*, which means "close to the mouth." Lewis Hyde develops this meaning: "Mystery cannot be talked about; . . . it can be shown, witnessed or revealed, not explained."[10] Gift extends into one's outer life, "moving the heart, reviving the soul, delighting the senses, giving courage for living."[11] Does our desire for God open up the reality of the gift dimension (mystery and expression) of religious life? We live in a world of consumerism, dominated by market value rather than gift exchange. Daily we run the risk of destroying gift by converting it into a commodity to be sold or purchased. In other words, our gift can easily be and sometimes is equated to a marketable item. Our society, even in ecclesial and religious life circles, equates one's worth with acquisition of degrees, status, money, power, goods, property, and success. Getting, rather than giving, is the norm. Undeniably, we have a responsibility to work for a living, as Clare and Francis exhort us to a "holy manner of working"; however, do we honestly work for daily sustenance or do we work for tomorrow? We religious comfortably talk about Divine Providence; yet in the reality of our lives we seem to be storing up and getting enough for tomorrow.

Marcel Mauss cites three related obligations of gift economies: 1) obligation to give, 2) obligation to receive, 3) obligation to reciprocate.[12] One cannot help but wonder if we, even in religious life, are so caught up in market economy that the world of exchange is almost irrelevant or foreign to us. Obviously, the gift can only be given within our own milieu. If, for the most part, our society values profit and gain, then to desire to give a gift gratuitously seems like foolishness. Hyde maintains that "where gifts have no public currency, where gift is neither valued, recognized, nor honored, then our inner gifts will find themselves excluded from the very commerce which is their nourishment."[13] Is it possible to live a life of exchange, or have we allowed (consciously or unconsciously) outside influences to deny us and others this possibility? Are we and

are those with whom we interact excluded from the very exchange which is our and their nourishment?

Many factors account for the lethargy, burn-out, and near demise of religious life. Our world in many ways functions from the stance of avarice and greed. This environment has undoubtedly had an impact on religious life. The evangelical response for today is a decision to name and internalize the desire for God and the gift of exchange as essential to a passionate, enthusiastic living out of religious life.

In times of scarcity, diminishment, loss, fears about the future, concerns about limited resources, such as, money, energy, personnel, health, etc., we easily grasp, cling to, or hoard what we have rather than give it away. However, the gift that is not given, used up, consumed ends up being lost. When Jesus was sending his disciples on mission he exhorted them: "The gift you have received, give as gift" (Mt. 10:8). At times, this giving feels like a place of emptiness, a lack of control. It is important to note that "the gift finds the one attractive who stands with an empty bowl s/he does not own."[14] The mendicant is the one who stands in an empty place and who has a duty beyond begging. When empty, the wealth of others touches his/her bowl at all sides, and the mendicant gives it away again when she/he meets someone who is empty. However, this is the very place of exchange where involvement and engagement with others builds bonds of attachment and unity—a large corporate heart.

Celebrating, sharing the gift that is ours, we are united. The fruits of the exchange truly satisfy our deepest needs and longings and those of our hungry world. Francis and Clare lived such lives of exchange. It was not a horizontal, but a circular exchange. They were aware of their gift and desire to share it with others. So too they were aware and open to receive the gift of the other, whether beggar or bishop. We all know from experience that in giving or receiving a gift a relationship is established or strengthened among those involved. Clare and Francis witness to the truth that, as a gift is passed along, it may not earn a profit, but it definitely gives increase. In other words, when we have nurtured our gift through fidelity to our call and generosity, the gift grows and feeds us in return. In the world of exchange, our gift is never used up; it remains abundant. For Francis and Clare, the world of exchange allowed the Word to become reality. "Who are my mother and brother? . . . These are my mother and my brothers . . . Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to me (Mk. 3:34-35).

Poverty and *Exemplum*

Considering that we are immersed in this market economy, we must ask the question about witness *(exemplum)*. In the world of bartering, the focus is

on objects and often necessitates extensive talking and activity. In the world of gift-giving, the focus is on relationship, and more often than not allows for a reverent silence. Each of us is invited to reflect on our own world view which dominates our choices.

The world being the cloister of Franciscans, we must be open to answer the question of insertion, immersion, and witness. Charles Williams reminds us that religious life is the establishment of a state of *caritas*. It mirrors the humanity and deity of the Redeemer. "We shall be graced by one and by all, only never by ourselves."[15] It is only in community that the individual gains her/his individuality, that is, being made to the image and likeness of God in a unique way. As this awareness grows, so too does our reverence for the other increase.

Francis and Clare were known for their ministry to lepers. In their society, lepers were considered the lowliest, the filthiest. Yet, in giving the gift of self to such as these, that which was bitter became sweet (Test 3). In their poverty, Francis and Clare realized their need for others, their need to be in relationship.

Embracing the leper, Francis became aware of God's love for all. One way in which Francis learned of God's preferential love was through Clare, who had a preferential love for Francis. A noble, beautiful, intelligent, and holy woman loved Francis, who considered himself in many ways to be like a leper. Francis began to redefine himself through her eyes. In turn, Clare redefined herself through his eyes as she experienced this holy man's attraction to her. Hence, in the midst of their own poverty, the world of exchange blossomed as Francis showed mercy to the leper, as Clare showed mercy to Francis and he to her. To be brother and sister were not idle words but rather "word and example." Francis and Clare recognized and acknowledged their poverty, their need for one another; hence they were open to receive, as well as to give.

In the midst of a society which was becoming increasingly depersonalized because of urbanization and the rise of a money economy and the exploitation of people for one's own profit, Clare and Francis emphasized the dignity of the individual, made to the image and likeness of God.

With new scholarship, we have, within the past two decades, seen a renewed interest in Franciscan incarnational spirituality. In recovering an awareness that we are made to the image and likeness of God, there has been more of a focus on Jesus *(contemplatio)* and the necessity to follow in his footsteps *(exemplum)*. A strong adherence to poverty, though expressed differently by Clare and Francis, was the result of perceiving how people were abused, disregarded, and treated unjustly for the sake of material gain, whether it came in the form of money or property. Time and again, Francis and Clare encourage us to focus on and follow the poor, crucified Christ.

Clare and Francis were people of their time and responded appropriately. Are our words and actions the result of seeing *(contemplatio)* the truth of our society and responding *(exemplum)* accordingly? As we discern the way we are called to live the evangelical life, from whom do we receive the call? As Jesus responded to his brothers and sisters, we too are challenged to nurture relationships where the primacy of the individual is violated. The incarnational spirituality which we embrace as Franciscans situates us in the heart of our world. This is the locus of the action of God for us. It is here that our emptiness (poverty) gifts us with the space to respond lovingly to the Word of God made manifest in the moment. "We are mothers, when we carry Him in our hearts and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and when we give birth to him through his holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example" (1EpFid 1:10).[16]

Birthing

Images of motherhood permeate the writings of Clare and Francis. Recent scholarship has devoted attention to Francis and Clare's *animus* and *anima.* One cannot help but marvel at the integrated personalities of Francis and Clare. Their society was less dualistic than ours. We tend to compartmentalize and to think conceptually. The people of the Middle Ages lived in a milieu of relationship and metaphor. Clare and Francis often used dual images of Jesus with Mary, speaking of them in relationship, not as separate entities.

Clare and Francis's prophetic stance comes from their unwillingness to polarize and attribute qualities to only one gender or the other. Their emphasis was on human beings made to the image and likeness of God and thus endowed with the vocation to give birth to the Word in the world. Francis, in his Letter to All the Faithful, invited every man and woman into the process of "birthing Christ," not only making but being Christ incarnate in the historical and sacramental moment. This birthing is the ultimate meaning in the Christian life. It is the spiritual motherhood of which the mystics speak—a process of union with the divine, a transformative means to union, a becoming the mother of God.[17] The womb of the soul is the sacred and hallowed space which receives, nurtures, and brings forth the Word.

When Clare and Francis spoke about the womb, they moved with ease in and out of metaphors of the heart or the cave, thus creating a network of metaphors and meanings. When they talk about giving birth to the Word, they address nurturing, caring, dependence, suffering, and make references not only to Mary but also to Jesus as mother.

One of our greatest contemporary challenges is to witness and give birth to a renewed vision of the kingdom. Two important tasks in this revisioning are: 1) the integration of the masculine and feminine and 2) the further integration of body/soul. The fruit of these two tasks is the whole person—the *imago Dei.*

The Tasks of Integration

The basis of the spirituality of Clare and Francis was the desire for God and an awareness of the kingdom. Consequently, they did not categorize people but emphasized what Paul preached: "There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). The spirituality of Gregory the Great embraces a "return to the body as integral to the expression of the spiritual."[18] God does not remove human reality but fills it with divine presence. "Through life in the body, man comes to know himself and his Creator, to understand what it means to be human and, by contrast, to glimpse something more of divine perfection."[19]

As we contemplate Jesus' life, we are confronted with paradox— he is God and he is bread; he is human and he is divine; he is servant and he is Lord. Our lives, also, are filled with paradox. We seek solitude and at the same time the shared life of community. We are attracted to a contemplative way of life while attempting to respond to **all** the demands of ministry. We long for a simplicity of lifestyle as we are wooed by the world's consumerism. We want to give generously of our resources while financial necessity is insurmountable. Ours is to live in the midst of the paradox of our time as did Jesus, Clare, and Francis. Unless we are willing to accept and respond lovingly to this tension, we will find ourselves walking outside our vocation to evangelical life.

The Challenge Which is Ours Today

Living the evangelical life, then, is the activity of the whole person in a concrete historical moment, an activity that moves beyond mere words and deeds and becomes a way of life. Herein lies the challenge! It is impossible for us to replicate the experience and response of Francis and Clare in our time. However, all of us together have the necessary elements, namely, the inspiration of the Gospel, gifted, creative women and men in our congregations, and the concrete historical moment. As Eric Doyle said: Franciscan "theology and spirituality lead one to a material spiritualism or spiritual materialism, to a holy worldliness or worldly holiness."[20] Since "the world is our cloister," the heart of the world holds both the gift and the challenge of our contemporary response.

Clare and Francis had the ability to capture the seeds of spirituality in the midst of their world in such a way that it connected with the lives of others, engendering a passionate response to God and all peoples. Within our Church and our society there are signs that the time is ripe for the charism of the

evangelical way of life to flourish anew.

Our time needs the *exemplum* of a way of life which understands, respects, and appreciates the fullness of the human person; holds as sacred all of creation; rejects primacy of power, competition, money, and consumerism; shares life with the poorest among us; embraces and builds the human community; and, most especially, integrates all of this within the desire for and intimacy with the Incarnate God.

Endnotes

[1]Gerald Arbuckle, SM, in *Out of Chaos: Refounding Religious Congregations* (1988), presented a theory of the importance of "refounding," or prophetic persons in the history of religious congregations and the need for such persons today.

[2]Michael Casey, *Athirst for God* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1988), 73-74.

[3]Jean Leclercq, OSB, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), 74.

[4]Leclercq, 39.

[5]Leclercq, 39.

[6]Quotations from Clare's writings are from Regis Armstrong, OFM, *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

[7]Elizabeth Johnson, "Between the Times: Religious Life and the Postmodern Experience of God," *Review for Religious* 53/1 (Jan./Feb., 1994): 16. (This article by Johnson is part of a research project under the sponsorship of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Conference of Major Superiors, and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.)

[8]Johnson, 16.

[9]T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Publishers, 1971), 59.

[10]Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 280.

[11]Hyde, xii.

[12]As cited in Hyde, xv.

[13]Hyde, xiv.

[14]Hyde, 23.

[15]Charles Hefling, ed., *Charles Williams: Essential Writings in Spirituality and Theology* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1993), 230.

[16]Quotations from Francis's writings are taken from Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap, *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

[17]Wendy M. Wright, "Birthing Jesus: A Salesian Understanding of the Christian Life," *Studia Mystica*, 13 (Spring, 1990): 23.

[18]Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 127, 193.

[19]Straw, 127.

[20]Eric Doyle, OFM, "Seven Hundred and Fifty Years Later: Reflections on the Franciscan Charism," *Review for Religious*, 36 (Jan., 1977): 35.

The Cord, 47.5 (1997)

BROTHER WOLF

Claire Campbell, SFO

Last year I began to experience severe pain in many muscles. Blood tests revealed extensive inflammation. I was given a tentative diagnosis of "Systemic Lupus Erythematosus." This is a serious immune disorder of unknown origin and there is no cure, only some palliative relief of symptoms with steroids or chemotherapy. Both medicines can cause dangerous side effects.

I prayed about my situation and felt a need to find out all I could about my mysterious illness. Surprisingly, my research led me into an unusual Franciscan meditation. I discovered that *lupus* is the Latin word for wolf. The disease got its name because some lupus patients, (not all) develop an area of inflammation on their face that resembles the markings on the face of a wolf. Like the wolf, lupus is also unpredictable.

I just had to smile! I've always been fascinated by wolves. I associate these elusive and beautiful creatures with St. Francis. The legend about him and the wolf of Gubbio is one of my favorite Franciscan stories.

The more I visualized Francis with *his* wolf, the more at ease I became with *my* wolf. It occured to me that all Franciscans share things with wolves. For example:

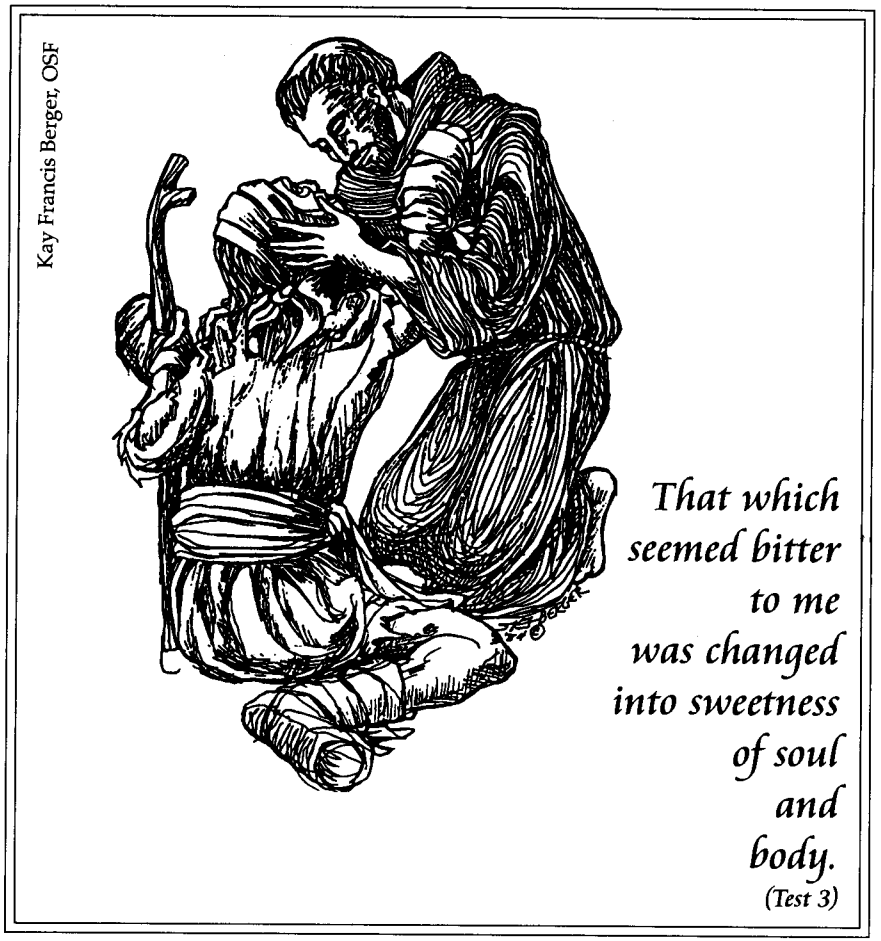
- Wolves live in communities in simple surroundings just the way Franciscans do. They share everything the way St. Francis did.
- Wolves are protective of one another, yet can show extraordinary patience and gentleness toward the very young. As a child were you ever taught by Franciscans?
- At times wolves can become quite playful. Have you ever witnessedFranciscan joy?
- Wolves even "sing" together when Sister Moon lights their night.
- Franciscans fill the midnight air with the song of Matins.

- The ears of wolves are, oh so sensitive. They *really* listen! Try tellng your troubles to a Franciscan sometime.
- Both wolves and Franciscans are always aware of every part of Creation and search through it daily for perseverance.

For me, wolves have become symbols of survival, because they have endured for centuries. Franciscans have also survived for over eight hundred years and continue to show me daily where to find spiritual nourishment.

Yes, my wolf is unexpectedly teaching me about Franciscanism, especially when I realize deep in my heart how very, very lovingly Francis cared for his hungry friend, Brother Wolf.

I'm hungry, too, Francis.



Contributors

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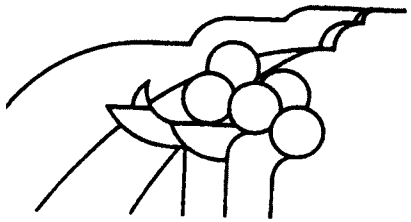

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Saturday, September 27

Mysticism in the Marketplace: Franciscan Tradition of Prayer. Franciscan Day of Recollection in Preparation for the Feast of Francis, with Ingrid Peterson, OSF. At St. Anthony Shrine, the Worker Chapel, 100 Arch Street, Boston, MA, ph. 617-542-6440, fax 617-542-4225. Contact: Violet Grennan, OSF.

Friday, October 3-Sunday, October 5

Francis: the Memory and the Meaning—A Festival in the Spirit of Clare. Margaret Carney, OSF. Contact: San Damiano Retreat, PO Box 767, Danville, CA 94526; ph. 510-837-9141.

Friday, October 10-Sunday, October 12

An Inquiry into Contemporary Spirituality with an Eye toward the Millennium. Richard Rohr, OFM. Contact: San Damiano Retreat, Danville, CA (see above).

Friday, October 10-Sunday, October 12

Facing the Christ Incarnate. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation at Franciscan Sisters of OLPH, St. Louis, MO. Contact: Franciscan Federation, PO Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, fax 202-529-7016, e-mail franfed@aol.com

Friday, October 17- Sunday, October 19

Women and Scripture: Stories of Hope. Megan McKenna. Contact: San Damiano Retreat, Danville, CA (see above).

Thursday, October 30-Sunday, November 2

Franciscan Connection, A weekend experience for candidates in initial formation. Srs. Diane Marie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Imler. At the Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort, IL. Contact Jean Schwieters, OSF, 727 E. Margaret, St. Paul, MN 55106, ph. 612-772-1740.

Saturday, November 8-Sunday, November 9

Facing the Christ Incarnate. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation at Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, Pittsburgh, PA. Contact: Franciscan Federation, PO Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, fax 202-529-7016.

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Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy
EpCust	Letter to the Custodians
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin	Letter to a Minister
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies
ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
LaudDei	Praises of God
LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours.
OffPass	Office of the Passion
OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
RegB	Later Rule
RegNB	Earlier Rule
RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
Test	Testament
TestS	Testament written in Siena
UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCl	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCl	Blessing of Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2Cel	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
AP	Anonymous of Perugia
CL	Legend of Clare
CSD	Consideration of the Stigmata
Fior	Fioretti
JdV	Witness of Jacque de Vitry
LM	Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LMin	Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LP	Legend of Perugia
L3S	Legend of the Three Companions
Proc	Acts of the Process of Canonization of St. Clare
SC	Sacrum Commercium
SP	Mirror of Perfection

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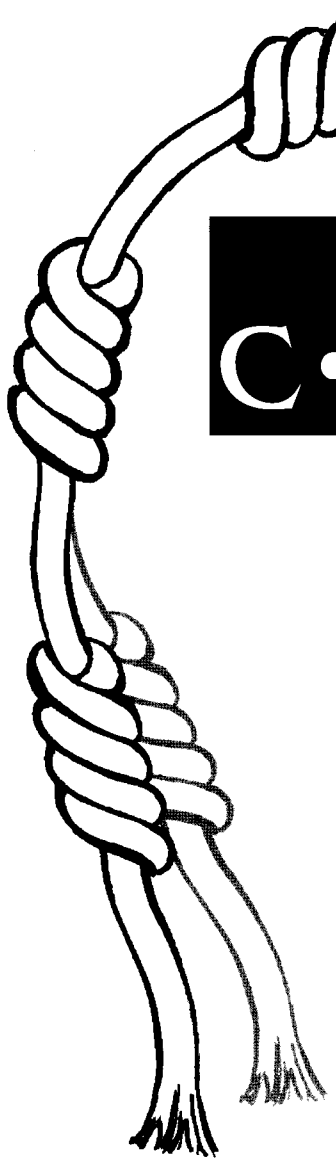
A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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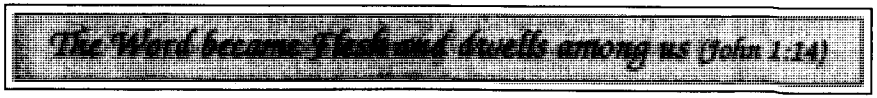
Editorial

The Franciscan Family faces the celebration of Christmas and a new year with the kind of heart-ache that accompanies sudden and totally un-anticipated loss. Grief over the destruction wrought by earthquake in central Italy gives us all pause. We weep for lives and homes and businesses lost, for priceless artwork crumbled into dust, for glorious architecture irreparably damaged. And as Franciscans we experience the disorientation that families feel when the "home place" is exposed as vulnerable and transitory.

One is reminded of Jesus' words to the woman at the well: "Believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. . . . God is spirit, and those who worship God must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21, 24). The vulnerability of our material "treasures" casts us back on those spiritual treasures which form our true heritage. The Spirit moves and works in all things, but especially in the word and example of those who worship God in spirit and in truth.

The Cord, in its continued effort to "effect among us a deeper knowledge and more ardent love of the Franciscan way of life" (mission statement), is pleased to offer in this issue a significant reflection by Elizabeth Dreyer on Bonaventure's "Images of the Cross." Philippe Yates shares with us a sermon on the Trinity based on Bonaventure. Leonie Kindiki and Damien Isabell help us see some challenges for the Franciscan way of life in Africa. Clare D'Auria reviews Thaddée Matura's book on the writings of Francis. Jack Wintz offers a timely reflection on Word-Becoming-Flesh.

The end of our subscription year is an appropriate time to thank all our subscribers for their support of *The Cord*. It is our privilege to bring to the Franciscan family throughout the English-speaking world articles that help us on our way. This is also a good time to suggest again that those who are producing written work that is solidly grounded in the tradition and of practical value to the life of the brothers and the sisters offer it for sharing with the larger family. Send all contributions to The Editor, *The Cord*, Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778.



Christ's Final Bow on History's Stage

Some years ago I attended a stage play. During the final curtain call an intuition flashed into my mind. It struck me that what was happening on that stage was a shadowy image of what will happen at the end of the larger drama of history itself.

We know well the ritual at the end of a stage play. When the curtain reopens, we once again see the familiar set and furnishings, the "world" of the drama just presented. Then all the characters, from the lesser to the greater, begin coming on to the stage. All have been a part of this one dramatic story, this "one word" or "conception" expressing the mind and heart of the author. The performers continue to fill up the stage until at the very end, as the lights grow brighter and the applause grows louder, the star of the show—glowing in the light—comes forward to take the final bow.

We can look at the drama of history and salvation in the same way. All of us humans, with our fellow creatures of all the centuries, have been offered a role to play in the drama, ***Word Becoming Flesh.*** *When the drama ends, we will all have a chance to take our little bows and then turn to await the reentrance of the lead player, Jesus Christ, the head of creation, the final judge and measure of what it means to be truly human. As he comes back on stage to take his final bow, the lights grow brighter, and the praise from the whole audience of creation is deafening.*

Prayer to the Divine Word

O Divine Word,
we listen to your voice
embedded deep within us,
within nature and, of course,
revealed in Scripture
and, most eminently,
in the Word made flesh.

May you lead us
to the full measure of creaturehood
we are meant to become,
and the very stature of Christ.

Guide us forward to this,
our glorious destiny. Amen.

From Jack Wintz, OFM, *Lights: Revelations of God's Goodness* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press,1995), 72-74. Reprinted with permission.

The Cord, 47.6 (1997)

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio: Images of the Cross

Elizabeth A. Dreyer

[This presentation was the keynote address to the Annual Conference of the TOR Franciscan Federation, Rochester, NY, August, 1997]

Introduction

Scholars today explore the risks, benefits, and methods in examining and retrieving medieval texts. Russian literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, warns against isolating the text from its broader socio-cultural matrix and from the long trajectory of history in which any given text must be situated. Language must be understood in a dialogic fashion, that is, the complex elements that impinge on both the reception and the creation of language must be seen in relationship to each other. The basic image through which he understands all language is two people talking with each other—each in the fullness of her or his specific time and place. He writes, "There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even past meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all)—they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent development of the dialogue."[1] Such an understanding of the never-ending flow of language gives us courage to try to understand and relate to our own time Bonaventure's language of the cross. Elements of this retrieval include the understandings of the cross that were passed down to the Middle Ages; how the medieval community saw the cross; and how the symbol of the cross functions for us now, which meaning will lead into future understandings.

In particular, I focus on the imagistic language Bonaventure uses relative to the cross. In the volumes celebrating the seventh centenary of Bonaventure's death in 1974, Marigwen Schumacher has an article entitled "Mysticism in Metaphor."[2] She reflects on Bonaventure's word-choice and images in several of his sermons as reflective of his being in touch with his own religious experience. She posits that there is "an intrinsic, inescapable relationship between

the 'what' of Bonaventure's thought and the 'how' of his expression—mysticism tangible through metaphor."[3] Bonaventure's vividness of expression, sensitivity to nuance and cadence pulls the reader into the beauty and thence into the spiritual depth of what he is saying. Bonaventure lived in a world that included "the Gothic smile, the delicate tracery, intricate enamels and woodcarving, amazingly graceful flora and fauna, perfection of craftsmanship even to the tiniest detail, accompanied by soaring and grand cathedrals of exquisite, fragile strength and powerful beauty—all these bespeak a lyric freshness of awareness of God's world. Mosaics and stained glass windows radiated a kind of "mural poetry" that could not have but influenced those who saw them.[4]

Schumacher goes on to link Bonaventure's poetic and harmonious expression to the joy of Francis, the wandering troubadour of mystic rapture. Francis was clearly endowed with what some have called "enthusiasm"—Bonaventure often used the term "fervor"—a gift Bonaventure admired and in his own literary-mystical way, possessed. Schumacher describes it as the gift of being god-inspired, touched, attuned, gifted with that rare ability to "see" the direct equation between the divine and the human and express it in words both powerfully taut and simply clear.[5] In his book, *The Distancing of God*, Bernard Cooke writes of Bonaventure: "From his 'father in God,' Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure had inherited a contemplative awareness of the pervading divine presence. This mystical consciousness caused every detail of experience to be Word of God, to speak of God's loving blessing of human life. . . . The symbol world of Franciscan spirituality has a freshness that springs from its discovery of the mystery dimension of the ordinary."[6]

Schumacher investigates the poet-preacher-mystic's own personal intuitive, inspired, non-rational contact with Deity. She cites the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*:

> Throughout the periods of religious history, there has perhaps never been found a saint who has made the world hear an invitation to mystical union as broad and as urgent as the Seraphic Doctor. For these reasons, among many others, the spiritual doctrine of St. Bonaventure, totally infused as it is with unction and poetry, constitutes a unique monument in mystical literature.[7]

Bonaventure was a brilliant rhetorician and a learned theologian, but "there is something more that throbs and pulses through his works."[8] The reader might well follow Roland Barthes's invitation to take pleasure (*jouissance*) in the unresolved text, the ending that opens up rather than closes down.

In an article on the cross in Bonaventure's mystical works and sermons, Maurycy Suley notes a distinction between spiritual growth that comes as a result of grace and the sacraments and that which comes via personal assimilation of the works of salvation by listening and meditating on the word of God

through prayer and contemplation. In the latter, one is transformed through the practice of the contemplative gaze on the images and symbols of redemption. Bonaventure begins the Prologue in the *Tree of Life* with this idea.

> No one will have the intimate and lively experience of such a feeling [of being nailed with Christ to the cross] unless, far from forgetting the Lord's passion, or being ungrateful for it, he rather contemplates—with vivid representation, penetrating intelligence, and loving will—the labors, the suffering, and the love of Jesus crucified (LV Prol. 1).[9]

I begin with this discussion of Bonaventure's style, language, and use of metaphor because I find that his exposition of the passion of Christ must be read and heard with the inner contemplative ear. Bonaventure's theology of the cross reflects much of the tradition he inherited, but its central role and manner of presentation are distinctive. When one spends a good deal of time with this material, one begins to move beyond analysis and knowledge to a "felt sense" of what Bonaventure is trying to communicate about the experience and meaning of gazing on the cross.

Images of *Imitatio Crucis*

Bonaventure's treatment of the cross can be found primarily in *The Tree of Life*, *The Mystical Vine*, and *The Office of the Lord's Passion*, and secondarily in *The Soul's Journey into God*, *On the Perfection of Life for Sisters*, *The Major Life of St. Francis*, *The Minor Life of St. Francis*, and several sermons. Bonaventure inherited, brought to new heights, and influenced the future of the tradition of devotion to the suffering humanity of Christ.[10] He borrows from twelfth-century texts of Bernard of Clairvaux and Ekbert of Schonau. Like his predecessors, Bonaventure writes in an "intimate, affective, apostrophic style, marked by familiar address to Christ."[11] He extends the gospel material with graphic descriptions of the details of the passion, such as Christ being spit upon, hurled to the ground, pushed and pulled by his tormentors, stretched on the cross, left with gaping wounds. He is among the earliest to write about Mary's mental anguish at Christ's suffering. Bonaventure influenced many later texts on the passion, including one of the most popular in the Franciscan tradition, entitled *Meditationes vitae Christi*, a work probably composed in the Franciscan milieu of Northern Italy at the end of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth.[12]

Much of this material is inspired by Old Testament texts from the Psalms and Isaiah that were applied to Christ—"They have numbered all my bones" (Ps. 21); Christ suffers from the sole of his foot to top of his head (Is. 1:6); Christ is covered with bruises and wounds like a leper (Is. 53:4); Christ's suffering and beauty is above that of humans (Ps. 44:3); the red apparel of the man in the winepress (Is. 63:1-2). In the *Lignum vitae*, Bonaventure begins

with a pericope from Paul's letter to the Galatians, "With Christ I am nailed to the cross" (Gal. 2:19), and employs the metaphor of a tree to map the events of Christ's life, dividing the meditation into twelve fruits arranged in three groups covering the origin, passion, and glory of Christ. In the *Vitis mystica*, Bonaventure builds on the words, "I am the true vine" from John's gospel (15:1). The events of the Passion are compared to the cultivation, pruning, and tying up of the vine. Throughout, Bonaventure stresses the desirability of conforming to the Passion of Christ, participating in his sufferings so that we may regain the image of his divinity. We are invited to embrace the disfigured body of Christ "in language which is physical, intense, and reciprocal."[13] He writes: "Let us embrace our wounded Christ whose hands and feet and side and heart were pierced by the wicked vine-tenders; let us pray that he may deign to tie our hearts, now so wild and impenitent, with the bond of love, and wound them with love's spear" (VM 3:6)

For Bonaventure, Jesus' life has "normative significance in the spiritual search for an authentic human existence. Spirituality is, above all, the journey of the human soul "into God." And that journey is made by conforming one's personal life to the mystery of the eternal Word enfleshed in the history of Jesus."[14] The culmination of that life is the cross—the ultimate sign of God's love for humanity. Imitation of the cross has taken endless forms across the centuries. Some of those forms are better left behind, such as the extreme forms of asceticism that characterized some medieval practices. But one effect of meditation on the cross that seems fairly constant across the centuries is its ability to nurture compassion. This presumes that the motivation for contemplation of the cross is love; but when that is the case, it can create an identification with and sensitivity to the suffering of others. With this counsel to keep the compassion of God at the forefront of our reflections on the cross, let us turn to Bonaventure's images.

Fire

Francis had a heart of flesh that could feel, sing, praise, vibrate, weep, be moved.[15] The saints asked to experience the pain of Christ on the cross because they were in love, desiring to walk with, stand in solidarity with, and actually feel the pain of the beloved. Bonaventure uses a number of images from the tradition to speak of the pilgrim's encounter with the cross—fire, forms of the stigmata, nudity, and tears. He says that Francis was "assigned an angelic ministry and was totally aflame with a Seraphic fire" (LM Prol. 1). Francis's vision of the seraph on Alverna was given so that as Christ's lover, Francis "might learn in advance that he was to be totally transformed into the likeness of Christ crucified, not by the martyrdom of his flesh, but by the fire of his love consuming his soul (*incendium mentis*; LM 13:3). On Alverna, Francis

"burned with a stronger flame of heavenly desires. . . . His unquenchable fire of love for the good Jesus had been fanned into such a blaze of flames that many waters could not quench so powerful a love" (LM 13:1,2).

Extending (and mixing!) the metaphor somewhat, Bonaventure writes of Francis: "Like a glowing coal, he seemed totally absorbed in the flame of divine love. Whenever he heard of the love of God, he was at once excited, moved and inflamed as if an inner chord of his heart had been plucked by the plectrum of the external voice" (LM 9:1). Inspired by Francis's witness, Bonaventure writes at the end of the *Itinerarium*:

> But if you wish to know how these things come about, ask grace not instruction, desire not understanding, . . . God not humans, darkness not clarity, not light but the fire that totally inflames and carries us into God by ecstatic unction and burning affections. This fire is God and his furnace is in Jerusalem (Is. 31:9); and Christ enkindles it in the heat of his burning passion, which only he truly perceives who says: My soul chooses hanging and my bones death (Jb. 7:15) (Itin 7:6).

A similar use of the symbol of fire is found in one of the sayings of the desert fathers, those eccentric fourth-century monks who went to the desert to fight the demons and live in humble deference to one another. The story goes: "A brother came to the cell of Abba Arsenius at Scetis. Waiting outside the door he saw the old man entirely like a flame."[16] Is not this image of "becoming all flame" a helpful metaphor by which to enter into the mystery of the union with Christ on the cross? It provides space in which to move around, to reflect on experiences in which we felt ourselves to be "all flame." Such experiences suggest gift, self-abandonment, total absorption, freedom, and spontaneity. Can reflection on such experiences move us toward insight into what Francis must have experienced and about what Bonaventure is trying to tell us through his image of falling asleep with Christ on the cross? And even beyond these insights, can we imagine ourselves, at some basic, primitive level, facing the cross and becoming "all flame"?

Tears

For most people, the Franciscan tradition evokes images of joy not tears. And in some instances tears are indeed a sign of joy. Bonaventure writes of Francis at the crib of Greccio: "The man of God stands before the crib, filled with affection, bathed in tears and overflowing with joy" (LM 10:7). When his father was pursuing him in anger, Francis begged for deliverance with a flood of tears which produced an experience of excessive joy (LM 2:2). And one day, while weeping for his sins (Is. 38:15), Francis experienced the joy of the Holy Spirit's forgiveness (LM 3:6).

But the symbol of tears is linked above all with redemption. Bonaventure

asks readers to weep for their sins and for others, to weep at the sufferings of Christ, indeed to join their tears to those of Christ. Again, Francis is the model. Bonaventure often recalls how Francis wept daily and so weakened his eyes by tears that he lost his sight (DM 69, 122, 138; LM 5:8; 8:1). Celano writes that Francis "wept bitterly because of the Passion of Christ, which he almost always had before his eyes. Remembering the wounds of Christ, he filled the roads with laments, without finding consolation." And after his experience before the crucifix at San Damiano, Francis had a "holy compassion for the Crucified" fixed in his soul (2Cel 10). The sources also tell us that Clare's prayer was often suffused with tears. The author of the Legend of Clare presents an image of Clare as another Mary Magdalen, weeping and kissing the feet of Jesus. And an angel of darkness comes to Clare in her sleep to deter her from weeping, threatening that it will cause her to go blind or to dissolve her brain (CL 19). Clare wept when a sister was sad or tempted (CL 38), and when Clare wept at prayer, her tears moved other sisters to tears of sorrow as well (Proc 1:7; 3:7; 6:4; 10:3). Clare wept with the suffering Christ and even wept as she taught the novices to do the same (CL 30).

Bonaventure tells us that Francis "strove with constant sighs of sorrow to root out vice and sin" from his heart and admonishes us to follow him in drenching the couch nightly with weeping (DM 63; LM 10:4). In a sermon on Luke 19:46—"My house will be a house of prayer"—Bonaventure mentions three things necessary for prayer. The first is getting ready; the second is attentiveness; and the third is passionate joy (RF 8). Bonaventure uses the metaphor of "being scrubbed clean" to describe the repentance of the first stage of prayer. One must be scrubbed clean from stubborn pride, from sensual amusement, and from frenzied activity. It is in the second stage of "scrubbing" that he uses the language of tears. Anna and Judith purified themselves with tears and weeping (1Sam. 1:10; Jdt. 12:78), and the psalmist is worn out groaning every night, drenching his pillow and soaking his bed with tears (Ps. 6:7).

And in his meditation on the passion, *The Mystical Vine*, the reader encounters an abundance of tears. In this text, Bonaventure presents a graphic picture of the bloody, sweating Christ—our son, brother and spouse condemned. He writes, "Who would not be filled with sorrow at the sight? Who could keep back sobs and tears? As it is a devout act to rejoice for Jesus, so it is devout to weep for him. . . . Pour out a torrent of tears for him who is dying in such bonds, since he first wept for us. Stand close to him as he hangs, be still and see to what a bitter, shameful death he is condemned" (VM 4:3-4).

Bonaventure scolds the one whose heart is made of stone or has even become as hard as a diamond. Only this kind of heart would be unable to weep at the sight of the suffering Lord. Bonaventure not only speaks about hearts being softened so that they might weep, but puts us close to experience, so that

the reader who enters into the texture and flow of the text is likely to have effected in him/herself what the text is suggesting. Notice the switch from imperative to declarative sentences here: "O heart diamond-hard, immerse yourself in the plenteous blood of our kid and lamb; rest in it and become warm; once warm, be softened; once softened, let flow a fountain of tears. I will therefore seek, and then find, a wellspring of tears in the sorrow, the cross, the nails, and finally, the scarlet blood, of Jesus most mild. I will consider and I will understand, as much as he grants me to do so, the ruddiness of body and soul of the Lover different from any other, Jesus most loving" (VM 15:3). And in an earlier chapter he describes the kind of careful, meditative attention to the cross we have been discussing, a kind of loving attention that can bring the cross to life, making it real and compelling. He entreats the reader, "Look upon the face of your anointed, O Christian soul, and let your tearful eyes behold his torments; lift up your grieving heart to see the manifold afflictions he found while he was seeking you. Open your eyes wide upon the face of your anointed; listen with eager ears to any word he may speak while in such pain. And whatever you hear, store as a most precious treasure in the secret vault of your heart" (VM 6:3).

This tradition of tears that Bonaventure inherits and passes on is one that may be quite foreign to modern sensibilities. But contemporary theology, especially in its feminist forms, is recovering our affective side and its relationship to bodiliness—both linked to the gift of tears. In our culture, the physical expression of tears is more acceptable for women. Elizabeth Johnson reminds us of the relational nature of weeping. We weep not only for our own sins but for the sins of the world that cause endless suffering for those we love. She suggests that "women do more than a fair share of the crying in the world." With Jesus who weeps over Jerusalem, Rachel weeps over her children, and South American women weep for the "disappeared"[17] Physical tears symbolize the depth of religious mourning.

Weeping is a deeply human activity. Gregory of Nyssa called tears "the blood in the wounds of the soul" (*Funeral Oration for Placilla*). As it is natural for a wound to bleed so it is natural for Christians to weep for their sins and for the suffering Christ. Tears bring about not only personal consolation, but can lead to the purification and peace of the world. Conversion that produces tears of affection cannot happen unless we *feel* deeply for ourselves and for our world. For Francis and Bonaventure, this begins with loving contemplation of the Crucified. To cut ourselves off from feeling is to cut ourselves off from compassion for the world and from imitating a compassionate God.

Bonaventure's theology and spirituality of the cross might also lead us to a renewed sense of the rituals in which we weep for our sins and for the sins of the world. In the past, frequent rote confession in the sacrament of penance

led many to a numbness about sin and perhaps to an eclipse of compunction. The same may be true of the penitential rite with which we begin each eucharist. For many worshippers these words and ritual gestures have become routinized and empty, no longer capable of moving us to the profound sense of loss and mourning that is at the heart of conversion. We are embarrassed to weep and gnash our teeth. Bonaventure's powerful texts on the cross can function as an invitation to bring new life to this confession by connecting it with events from the local community and the world. Every week we become aware of new expressions of violence and indifference to humans and the environment. By bringing these stark and sinful realities to worship, we can arouse in the community feelings of deep sorrow and expressions of tears that will give renewed truth and feeling to the words, "I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters. . . ."

Nakedness

A third image that Bonaventure links to the cross is that of nudity. The theme of spiritual nudity was popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Jean Châtillon traces the origins of the phrase "naked, to follow the naked Christ" (*nudum Christum nudus sequere*) to the correspondence of St. Jerome.[18] Ambroise Nguyen Van Si writes that in the Middle Ages, spiritual nudity functioned as a symbol of distance from the world and evangelical stripping, usually linked with the birth and death of Christ.[19] Bonaventure has recourse to this image when he speaks of St. Francis and Franciscan poverty.[20] In his text, *On the Perfection of Life*, Bonaventure exhorts his readers to embrace poverty by calling to mind the poor beginnings and poor ending of the Lord. On the cross, Christ was stripped and despoiled of everything—his clothing, his body, his life, even his divine glory (DPV 3:5). Bonaventure calls on Bernard, who wrote: "See the poor Christ, born without decent shelter, lying in a manger between an ox and an ass, wrapped in poor swaddling clothes, fleeing into Egypt, riding an ass, and hanging naked upon a gibbet."[21] And in his defense of poverty against the attack of Gerard d'Abbeville, Bonaventure suggests that the way of poverty is the best way to imitate Christ in his extreme state of nudity (*Apologia Pauperum* 7:5).

Perhaps the most famous use of the image of nudity can be found in Bonaventure's *Major Life* of Francis where he recounts the story of Francis's confrontation with his father before the bishop. "Drunk with remarkable fervor," Francis stripped himself naked in front of everyone. He then clothed himself in the rags of a beggar. Bonaventure goes on: "Francis accepted it gratefully and with his own hand marked a cross on it with a piece of chalk, thus designating it as the covering of a crucified man and a half-naked beggar. Thus the servant of the Most High King was left naked so that he might follow his naked crucified Lord, whom he loved (LM 2.4).

This story of nakedness at the beginning of Francis's conversion story is complemented with one at his death. Bonaventure says of Francis's last hours: "And so, in fervor of spirit, he threw himself totally naked on the naked ground so that in that final hour of death, when the enemy could still attack him violently, he would struggle naked with a naked enemy. . . . In all things he wished to be conformed to Christ crucified, who hung on the cross poor, suffering and naked" (LM 14:4). In the end, however, the theme of nudity is completed with that of clothing, for Bonaventure writes of how Francis was clothed in body and soul with Christ crucified. The nudity of the disciples is hidden by the glorious clothing of the cross (LM 15:1).[22]

Bonaventure also associates nudity with the poverty of renunciation. While Francis's life dramatized the rejection of material reality, Bonaventure extends this stripping to the intellectual life as well.

> Whoever desires to attain the height of poverty should renounce in some way not only worldly wisdom but also learning, that having renounced such a possession, he might enter into the mighty works of the Lord (Ps. 70:15-16) and offer himself naked to the arms of the Crucified. No one can be said to have perfectly renounced the world if he still keeps the purse of his own opinion in the hidden recesses of his heart" (LM 7:2).

This image of nudity invites us to reflect on this most common of human experiences that takes place in diverse settings. There is the forced nudity of the prisoner, who like Jesus, experiences humiliation or degradation. There is the nakedness of the poor who do not have the means to clothe themselves properly. Then there is nudity that is chosen. This kind of nudity can take the form of simplicity of dress and life or psychological, intellectual, and spiritual openness. There is also the nudity of illness, of bathing, and that most precious nudity of lovers, childbirth, and children. Throughout all these experiences, one notes some common threads. Nudity produces vulnerability. Clothes serve to protect vulnerable skin from damage. Clothes also hide bumps, scars, warts, and crooked limbs. Naked, I am not able to hide the truth of my physical being. But the choice to be nude with one's beloved can be the surest sign of trust and surrender to another. It is in this moment of simple, loving openness to another human being that many of us glimpse what the saints might have meant when they talk about standing naked before God—even though our Neoplatonic heritage did not allow them to see that this spiritual experience can be deeply embedded in the physical one.

Nudity also creates an odd kind of democracy. The clothes we wear usually point to class and status, although it can also signal the freedom to express one's particular personality. But all of us come into the world naked and in a true sense leave the world naked. At these moments all human beings share a

common humanity in its stark simplicity and nothingness. When one is mindful of these common experiences of life and death, it becomes more difficult to lord it over one another, to be arrogant or to treat each other with disdain. The nakedness of the cross can be a symbol of the linkage of these various experiences. In our willingness to be vulnerable with each other, we can learn to stand in solidarity with our suffering sisters and brothers. The cross stands as assurance and hope to those who languish in prisons, who are tortured, who suffer the ravages of war and famine. Bonaventure's counsel to live simply and humbly is connected to the imagery of nakedness—literal and dramatic in the case of Francis; metaphoric and reflective in Bonaventure.

The Tree of Life

Bonaventure begins the *Tree of Life* with Paul's statement: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross (Gal. 2:19)." In this text, Bonaventure explicitly refers to the role of the imagination in the spiritual life. He says:

> Because imagination assists understanding, I have arranged in the form of an imaginary tree the few passages selected from many, and have disposed them in such a way that, in the first or lower branches, the Saviour's origin and life are described; in the middle branches, His passion; and in the top branches, His glorification" (LV Prol. 2).

The quotations on each branch are in alphabetical order for easy remembering and there is a spiritual fruit growing from each branch.

This tree is reminiscent of that in Genesis 2:10. Its roots are watered by an eternally gushing fountain that becomes a great and living river that irrigates the whole garden of the church. There are twelve branches. The leaves serve as medicine, "for indeed the word of the cross is the power of God for salvation to all who believe (Rom. 1:16)" (LV Prol. 3). The flowers are fragrant, drawing our desires. "This is the fruit born of the virginal womb, and ripened on the tree of the cross to delectable maturity by the midday heat of the Eternal Sun, that is, Christ's love" (LV Prol. 3). Like the hands of Christ extended horizontally to link us to God, the tree of life images the vertical link between earth and heaven. The flavorful fruits of this tree "refresh and strengthen the soul who meditates upon them and carefully considers each one; abhorring the example of unfaithful Adam, who preferred the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17) to the Tree of Life" (LV Prol. 5).

The point of this image is to invite us to reflect on God's love shown on the cross, but above all to reveal the intimate connections that God has established with us in Christ. The image is a vertical one, stemming in part from Bonaventure's deep sense of the hierarchical nature of the universe. But while today we shy away from ladders and hierarchies of all kinds to describe the spiritual life and our relationship with God, I think we do share with Bonaventure an appreciation of the deeper experience of the profound solidarity and loving abandon that God shares with us. Transposed into a new twenty-first century key, the image of the tree of life can feed our hunger for a truly incarnational understanding of the faith and of God's presence in and to the world.

The Vine

A related horticultural symbol is that of the vine, to which Bonaventure devotes an entire treatise, *The Mystical Vine: Treatise on the Passion of the Lord.* This text is perhaps the most graphic depiction of the details of the crucifixion. It is obvious that his aim is to move the reader to empathy, to tears, to a heart that sorrows with the sorrows of the beloved savior (4:3; 11:2; 15:1). The vine is pruned, bound, hung on a trellis that resembles a cross, the leaves of the vine are Christ's last words, the flowers are virtues, the rose is the flower colored by Jesus' blood. This is certainly a text that deserves careful meditation—especially perhaps during the penitential season.

In this text, Bonaventure compares the pruning of the vine to the stripping endured by Jesus in his incarnation and passion. By becoming man, Jesus was not only made "less than the angels" (Ps. 8:6), but he was even humbled more deeply than any human. "His glory was cut away with the knife of shame, his power with the knife of abjection, his pleasure with the knife of pain, his wealth with the knife of poverty" (VM 2:2-3). He was born poor, lived poor and died on the cross the poorest of all (VM 2:3). And then even his "friends and relatives were cut from him with the knife of fear, so that there was none to comfort him among all those who were dear to him" (VM 2:4). But this cutting is consoling because of the "abundance of fruit it yielded" (VM 2:4), thus giving his readers a way to understand, in the light of the cross, the stripping that life inevitably brings through troubles, violence, addictions, illness, and aging. Bonaventure interprets Jesus' words, "It is consummated" (Jn. 19:30) as a model to help us "persevere in the face of all our troubles, until following our Guide, Jesus most kind, we reach the end of all our tribulations and can trustingly say with him: 'It is consummated'; that is: 'By your help, not by my own strength, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept faith' (2Tm. 4:7)" (VM 12:2).

A second image is that of the binding of vines. Bonaventure notes seven kinds of binding suffered by Christ: the virgin's womb, the manger, the ropes with which he was tied at his arrest, dragged to the tribunal, affixed to the scourging post, the binding of the crown of thorns, and that of the iron of the nails that held him on the cross. The one who is freedom itself is bound for the sake of our own freedom. Bonaventure entreats: "Let us be bound with the bonds of the passion of the good and most loving Jesus, so that we may also share with him the bonds of love" (VM 4:5).

Marked with the Cross

Bonaventure used another image to speak of human conformity to the cross—that of being signed or clothed with the sign of the cross—on the forehead, by wearing the Franciscan habit, and in Francis, by the stigmata. Bonaventure notes that Francis's ministry was to

> mark with a Tau the foreheads of those who moan and grieve, signing them with the cross of penance and clothing them with his habit, which is in the form of a cross. But even more is this confirmed with the irrefutable testimony of truth by the seal of the likeness of the living God, namely of Christ crucified, which was imprinted on his body . . . by the wondrous power of the Spirit of the living God (LM Prol. 1).

At the end of the *Major Life*, Bonaventure recounts the seven incidences in which Francis bore the arms of heaven emblazoned with the sign of the cross (LM 13:10). These signs culminate in the stigmata:

> Now, finally toward the end of your life you were shown at the same time the sublime vision of the Seraph and the humble figure of the Crucified, inwardly inflaming you and outwardly marking you as the second Angel, ascending from the rising of the sun and bearing upon you the sign of the living God. . . . The first six were like steps leading to the seventh in which you have found your final rest (LM 13:10).

The stigmata is the sign that Francis had reached the summit of gospel perfection and that he served as an example to others.

And in the Prologue to *The Tree of Life*, Bonaventure speaks again of this cruciform state. He tells us that the true worshiper of God and disciple of Christ who wants to conform to the crucified Savior should strive to "carry about continuously, both in his soul and in his flesh, the cross of Christ until he can truly feel in himself " what Paul says to the Galations (2:19): "With Christ I am nailed to the cross" (LV Prol. 1). We might ask what it means to "carry the cross of Christ continuously in soul and flesh." In part 2 of *The Tree of Life*, Bonaventure suggests an answer. The four sections in this part recount Christ's passion and death in some detail. Bonaventure wants to convey a number of points.

The first is to assure the reader that Christ was fully human, suffering all the pains that we know as human beings. Bonaventure then leads us through a detailed account of Christ's passion and death. The account focuses on how Christ related to others, especially to those who were his enemies and to those who let him down—Judas the traitor, the guards, Peter, the high priest, the Jews, Pilate, Herod, the soldiers, and those who mocked Jesus. We watch to see how Jesus responds to the challenges of all these relationships. His behavior is characterized in these ways: meekness, silence, gentleness, mildness, submissive speech, charity, forgiveness, sweetness, love, grace, and words of blessing. These chapters are quite concrete in terms of presenting the most difficult of human relational situations and the ideal response that Jesus always gives. One can imagine Bonaventure himself, as administrator of the Order, faced with all kinds of opposition and contention. In this text, he might have been reminding himself and the friars of how to respond to people who betrayed or mocked or walked away from them. These are situations in which imitating Christ is challenging and difficult, indeed, but possible to those who bear the marks of the cross in their being.

Bonaventure also wants the reader to note the effect of the cross on Mary and Mary Magdalen. With Mary we are to feel desolation and to experience the Lord's word of consolation to her because her soul had been more "deeply pierced by a sword of compassion than if she had suffered in her own body" (LV 2:28). And even though the disciples fled, Mary Magdalen does not go away. She too is "ablaze with the fire of divine love," burning with such a powerful desire and wounded with such an impatient love that nothing had any taste for her except to be able to weep and lament with the psalmist, "Where is your God? (Ps. 41:4)" (LV 2:32).

> O 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 (LV 2:29).
> . . . Grant to me that I may ponder [these events]
> faithfully in my mind and experience toward you
> my God crucified and put to death for me,
> that feeling of compassion
> which your innocent mother and the penitent Magdalene
> experienced at the very hour of your passion (LV 2:32).

Bonaventure wants the reader to develop an affection, a feeling for being nailed to the cross with Christ through contemplating "the labor, suffering and love of Jesus crucified" with vividness of memory, sharpness of intellect and charity of will" (LV, Prol. 1).

One can also reflect on the fruits of this experience of being marked by the cross. Zachary Hayes suggests that "when the human person responds to the offer of God's grace in an appropriate way, the basic effects of this response may be seen in a firm sense of fidelity to God, a strength of character in oneself, and an increasing generosity and love of one's fellow human beings. The fullness of grace is found when the human person is lifted above him or herself to love God above (and "in") all creatures, and to love not only those who

belong to one's household, but even one's enemies. This depth of love is the fullest meaning of the journey of human existence in the likeness of Christ."[23]

Conclusion

I hope that this brief excursion into some of the images that Bonaventure associates with the cross has whetted your appetite to linger over them, to allow them to wash over you, to let them penetrate those affective levels of the psyche that are most effectively touched by symbol and images, to understand their particular meaning for you, and to gain insight into how to translate that meaning into action. I began with Marigwen Schumacher's suggestion that Bonaventure's style, his choice of language and images is reflective of his being in touch with his own experience of the crucified. She wrote, "To touch—to probe—to, in a way, invade the mythic impulses of Bonaventure's heart and mind, is, I feel and think, an as-yet-unexplored path into his contact with God." There is "an intrinsic, inescapable relationship between the 'what' of Bonaventure's thought and the 'how' of his expression—mysticism tangible through metaphor."[24] Our appreciation of these images completes the hermeneutic circle—from our experience of the cross to Bonaventure's written description of his experience of the cross to our reading of his text and back to our own experience of the crucified. I close with a section from one of Bonaventure's sermons on St. Francis in which he lays before his audience a most compelling and burning question: "Do you desire to imprint Christ crucified on your heart?"

> How is it that we, wretched as we are, have such cold hearts that we are not prepared to endure anything for our Lord's sake? Our hearts neither burn nor glow with love. Ardent love is a quality of the heart and the stronger this love burns in a person's heart, the more heroic and virtuous are his deeds. Do you desire to imprint Christ crucified on your heart? Do you long to be transformed into him to the point where your heart is aflame with love? Just as iron when heated to the point where it becomes molten can take the imprint of any mark or sign, so a heart burning fervently with love of Christ crucified can receive the imprint of the Crucified Lord himself or his cross. Such a loving heart is carried over to the Crucified Lord or transformed into him. That is what happened to St. Francis. . . . The cross or sign of the cross imprinted on his body symbolized his love of Christ crucified and by the flame of that love he was totally transformed into Christ (DM 92-93).

Endnotes

[1]*The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov*, ed. Pam Morris (London: Edward Arnold, 1994).

[2]Marigwen Schumacher, "Mysticism in Metaphor." In *S. Bonaventura 1274-1974*, Vol. 2 (Grottaferrata, Rome: Collegio San Bonaventura, 1973), 361-386.

[3]Schumacher, 362.

[4]Schumacher, 364.

[5]Schumacher, 365.

[6]Bernard Cooke, *The Distancing of God: The Ambiguity of Symbol in History and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 163.

[7]Schumacher, 366. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1936ff) I, col. 1842.

[8]Schumacher, 384.

[9]The following abbreviations will be used in the text to refer to the works of Bonaventure: *Tree of Life/Lignum vitae* (LV); *The Mystical Vine/Vitis mystica* (VM); *The Office of the Lord's Passion/ Officium de passione Domini* (OPD); *The Soul's Journey into God/Itinerarium* (Itin.); *On the Perfection of Life for Sisters/De perfectione vitae ad sorores* (DPV); *The Major Life of St. Francis/Legenda maior* (LM); *The Minor Life of St. Francis/Legenda minor* (LMin). References to the five sermons for the feast of St. Francis can be found in *The Disciple and the Master*, trans. Eric Doyle (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983)(DM); references to other sermons can be found in *Bonaventure: Rooted in Faith*, trans. Marigwen Schumacher (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974)(RF). Abbreviations for works on Francis and Clare include: *Second Life* by Thomas of Celano (2Cel); *Legend of Saint Clare* (CL).

[10]See *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* by Thomas H. Bestul (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) for an excellent analysis of this important medieval tradition.

[11]Bestul, 44.

[12]Bestul, 48. English translation, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, trans. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961).

[13]Bestul, 46.

[14]Zachary Hayes, "Bonaventure: Mystery of the Triune God," *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. Kenan Osborne (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1994), 85.

[15]Leonardo Boff, *Saint Francis* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 27-28.

[16]*The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Benedicta Ward (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1975), 13.

[17]Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 259.

[18]Jean Châtillon, "Nudum Christum nudus sequere: Note sur les origines et la signification du thème de la nudité spirituelle dans les écrits de saint Bonaventure," (Grottaferrata, 1974), 719-772.

[19]Ambroise Nguyen Van Si, *La théologie de l'imitation du Christ d'après Saint Bonaventure*. Bibliotheca pontificii athenaei antoniani, 33 (Rome: Edizione Antonianum, 1991), 114-115.

[20]Francis does not use this image at all. It occurs twice in Clare's writings, once in her Testament and once in her first letter to Agnes (TestCl 45; 1 LAg 27).

[21]Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones*, 3, "In Tempore Resurrectionis Domini," 1.

[22]Nguyen Van Si, 116.

[23]Hayes, 100.

[24]Hayes, 362.

The Cord, 47.6 (1997)

Religious Poverty from the African Perspective

Leonie Kindiki, LSoSF

Contemporary society has "baptized" Africa as a poor continent. Yes and no. The issue is relative. In terms of material benefits, and compared to the more advanced countries, Africa is poor. But Africa has been richly endowed with a rich cultural heritage and values, which she can give to de-valued societies. My task in this brief paper is to find some similarities between the concept of poverty in African traditional societies and Franciscan poverty today.

Who Were "The Poor" in Traditional Africa?

In traditional African society, there was no poverty or destitution in the ordinary sense of the words. Today, poverty and destitution are on the increase due to many factors, the main one being the introduction of a money economy to our societies.

The African idea of poverty is curious, to me. In some ways it has similarities to our Franciscan Gospel poverty.

The idea of material poverty was foreign to the African because, in the context of our traditional societies, people did not understand themselves to be surrounded by inanimate objects but rather by living human beings. People were more important than material possessions. Property and material wealth were sought after, but they were not a means to an end. Their importance lay only in that they were viewed as a blessing from God and the ancestors. One showed gratitude to God by generously sharing one's possessions with others.

On the other hand, those who had a piece of land on which to build a house and grow food were not considered materially poor. People could survive with a few domestic animals and fowls. One could manage with very few material possessions, but never without the community, clan, or family.

An individual in Africa saw him/herself as part of the larger community. The community was the hub and life of the individual; that is to say, there was

a mutual dependency—the individual contributed to the welfare of the community and vice versa. The community was central to relationships and to every social activity.

Poverty, for the African, was not to be able to share what one had with others in the clan or community. One shared things such as food, skills, abilities, talents, prowess, time, energy, celebrations, and religious rituals. Life revolved around the community. Communal activities such as tilling the soil, sowing, weeding, harvesting depended on a concerted effort. Meanness was therefore completely discouraged. Hospitality and generosity were very important values. Not to have these two values was to be poor. There was no room for individualism, for to be self-centered was to live and die poor. A person's wealth was measured not so much by what he or she possessed, but by the friends he or she had in the community. A poor person was one who did not have relatives, children, or friends. Such a person was poor because he or she was not able to share life and possessions with others.

There was another category of poor people. These were the social rejects such as witches, murderers, adulterers, thieves, and those who had committed incest. These people had defiled the land and society, and so were evicted from the community. They were publicly ostracized and sent into exile as a gesture of purifying the land. They became lonely fugitives with no family, name, or clan to call their own. To be cut off from the life of the community, from the ancestral land, and from one's clan was the ultimate form of poverty one could face.

In African traditional societies, therefore, material things were not a means to an end. Individualism, the scourge of our modern society, was something foreign. Not to be disturbed by the troubles, pains, and sufferings of other people in the community was the highest form of deprivation-destitution-poverty. To be rich and fully alive was to share in the flow of life, which had its mainstream in the community. The source of this life was God on whom everyone depended for life and well-being.

Pierre Brunette, OFM, (Canadian Province) gave a seminar on "contemplation as a source of our mission" to the men and women Franciscans in the Uganda region. Among the many things he said, the following struck me: "Once we opt to live in a religious community, we cease to be poor. We become rich because we have the presence and companionship of our brothers and sisters in the community/fraternity. The truly poor person in our modern world, is the one who has no one to talk to or turn to."

Our Franciscan vow of poverty goes beyond material poverty to poverty of spirit. The gist of poverty is total dependence on the goodness and generosity of God. Whatever we are and have are God's freely given gifts to us. We have nothing to call our own except, as St. Francis says, our vices and our sins

(RegNB 17). Our vow of poverty takes us, therefore, from the mire of self-centeredness to other-centeredness. In Franciscan poverty we share our skills, talents, time, love, etc. with others. It sends us out to empower others with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which we receive from contemplation and the sacramental life that we live.

With what can I compare the life of poverty? In Africa, most homes still have huge clay water pots. These are very useful, especially in the hottest months of the year. Each pot is filled with cool water, and the family members, or any passer-by who is thirsty, quench their thirst from it. When the pot gets empty, it is immediately refilled to continue serving the community.

God is always gift-giving, pouring forth what we need in a perpetual gesture of generosity. We receive God's gifts in a spirit of gratitude and humility and, in turn, let go by sharing them with others in our fraternities and ministries. Ultimately, all goes back to God and the circle of gift-giving continues.

Our vow of poverty thus builds up relationships, because the more one has, the less one has the need to interact with others. Our way of life demands inter-dependence if we are to grow spiritually. I think our vow of poverty, if lived authentically, has the capacity to make us fully human beings. The circle of gift-giving, which is at the marrow of God's poverty, is primarily living our identity as creatures created in God's image. In the end we return to God. The challenge for us African Franciscans is to incorporate and live these beautiful African values of generosity, hospitality, and relationships in our Franciscan way of life. May God give us the grace to live this gospel poverty we have freely chosen.

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 lay in a manger,
how, with an ox and an ass standing by,
he lay upon the hay
where he had been placed.
(Francis, 1Cel. 84.)

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Authority and Obedience in Africa: A Franciscan Reading

Damien Isabell, OFM

I have entitled this article "a Franciscan reading" and not "an African reading" for the obvious reason that I am not African. However, I have spent thirteen rich years in Zaire so I feel somewhat qualified to begin integrating and interpreting my experience. My hope is that this reflection will prompt other articles on inculturation of Franciscanism.

Structure of African Society

Hierarchy

Anyone who lives for even a short time in Africa discovers how the society is hierarchically structured. For example, no one dares to take an initiative that would affect the whole community without first addressing the chief. In African families the "grand frère," the oldest boy, as well as the paternal uncle, exercises great authority over the younger members of the family. Mediation is also a sign of this hierarchy for no one approaches a chief without first passing through a mediator.

The Africans I know have a great respect for authority. In some ways their identity depends on the acceptance of their place within the hierarchy. My friends in South Africa define this acceptance as "humility." Perhaps this explains why the Africans I know are not impulsive in their relationships with their superiors for they can never forget their place within the hierarchy.

God is at the top of the hierarchy; the ancestors are the mediators between God and the people. Ordinarily the elderly are considered to be closer to the ancestors than are the young. Chiefs, medicine men, diviners, and par-

ents also enjoy a special relationship with them. Hall is correct when he defines African identity as "I participate therefore I am."[1]

An example of how this hierarchy affects the treatment of mental illness is instructive. In the West, a classical psychiatrist analyzes a patient in private. But an African will pose the question: "Where does this psychiatrist's authority come from? Who gives him or her the right to intervene in my life?" Many Africans would prefer to have recourse to those with authority in the community, for such persons represent the ancestors. Therapy, then, would be done in a community setting. All the members of the community would help the troubled person to discover the source of his or her difficulty. In many cases the problem will stem from a breach of respect for the traditions and for the relationships demanded by these traditions. If, for example, someone did not perform all the prescribed rites before a wedding or at the time of a funeral, this could provoke serious problems both in a person's and in a family's life.

The people express respect for and obedience to the ancestors by pouring a few drops of beer onto the ground before drinking. Before undergoing an operation a person will invoke the ancestors. A woman who wants to have a child will appeal to the ancestors. When someone is preparing to leave on a journey, an elder will bless the traveler with saliva in honor of the ancestors. Obedience is not limited only to an individual or to a specific order; it is as large as the African tradition.

Tradition

It is evident that Africans live by traditions, as do all peoples. Respect for tradition is affirmation of identity. Refusal to respect a tradition means separation from the mainstream of the community, which is the equivalent of death for an African. A tradition may be changed or even rejected, but only by consensus and not by personal rebellion.

The authority of traditions is especially felt in critical moments of life. For example, when people face sickness and misfortune in the family, the cause may be attributed to the living dead, unless magic or sorcery and witchcraft are held responsible. The spirits of the living dead (the ancestors) serve as an explanation of what caused things to go wrong. In order to put things right the spirits have to be satisfied by the performance of rituals, by following their requests, or by correcting any breaches of the proper conduct towards them. Generally the diviner or medicine man is consulted in order to find out exactly what the alleged spirits may wish.

But on the whole, the spirits of those who died recently are benevolent toward their families as long as they are remembered and properly treated.[2] This is tradition in action. This is obedience. Traditions exist to preserve and

to increase life. But traditions are not frozen; they can admit new elements (such as Christianity) if they contribute to the life and well-being of the tribe.

> African Christians seem to accommodate Christianity readily in their traditional world-view. This is taking place particularly around the notion of God. They give up certain ideas, beliefs and practices in their traditional life, and assimilate newer understanding of God's dealings with men as proclaimed in Christianity. They also acquire the vision of a new hope of men being reunited with God at the end of the ages.[3]

Nonetheless, it is common for many African Christians to live on two rails. Instead of observing a monorail Christianity, many Africans obey their African traditions alongside their Christian faith. Many go to Catholic services and then to those of a sect; or they visit the medicine man in the afternoon. Many call on the priest to anoint their sick only after having consulted traditional healers or diviners. They have a great sense of obedience to the authority of the tradition.

When some Africans lose a close member of their family, they go into convulsions of crying. They isolate themselves in their rooms; they remove their shoes; they cut their hair; they will not eat with others. Their relatives and friends come to sit with them, to cry with them, to console them. According to the tradition, they must hold a wake and perform other rites which Westerners may scorn, but which depend on the authority of the ancestors. For example, in one tribe when the wife dies, her family comes and despoils the husband's house, taking with them everything that belonged to the wife. These people are Christians and see no incompatibility between the Christian spirit and the demands of the ancestors. (It would be interesting to analyze American customs to see which ones come from the faith and which ones are inspired by secular or tribal sources.)

Balance and Respect

> [Happiness] is not to be sought through a rapacious individual grasping after the power force latent in other human beings. That is the way of witchcraft. A man's well-being consists rather in keeping in harmony with the cosmic totality. When things go well with him he knows he is at peace and of a piece with the scheme of things, and there can be no greater good than that. If things go wrong, then somewhere he has fallen out of step. He feels lost. The totality has become hostile and, if he has a run of bad luck, he falls a prey to acute insecurity and anxiety. The whole system of divination exists to help him discover the point at which the harmony has been broken and how it may be restored.[4]

This thirst for harmony and communion explains the gregariousness of many Africans, for in it they feel reinforced in their identity. Silence, meditation, and isolated forms of prayer are not very popular among many Africans. A young African Franciscan writes: "A spirituality that is too individualistic and egoistic, which is separated from the community, is not welcomed by the African who thirsts for an affirming presence of his brothers. . . . African spirituality is a 'living with' in communion and fraternal charity. It is an active life."

Another young Franciscan doubts that this charity is always disinterested, for according to the tradition, solidarity is a two way street. One helps another in order to be helped later on when there is a need. That is the tradition. But the reality is that people do help out one another, and they do so in the name of the tradition. It is difficult to sort out motivations.

Among the "Shi" people, "it is wrong to burst out laughing at whatever moment for it would be a breach of solidarity, a lack of respect for the others." The Mushi "must control his gestures and words" because the presence of the other calls into question his spontaneity (a young Zairian Franciscan).

As we can see, obedience is considered a way of living together. It is based on respect, it seeks balance and equilibrium in the community.

Some Reflections on this Experience

Relationships with a Superior

It should be clear that a superior in this tradition is not just someone who has an official title. Ancestors are superiors, older brothers and paternal uncles are superiors as well. Obedience extends to them and to the traditions handed down by the ancestors. Of course, "the community needs a chief, a guide, a man of balanced judgment and self-control in order to reinforce the life of the clan, as well as the unity, fidelity, and confidence of its members" (a young Zairian Franciscan). If a man does not have these qualities, he can be removed, chased out, and in some cases killed. Instead of representing the will of God, which is the well-being of all, a bad chief has become a sorcerer and must be eliminated. A sorcerer is the opposite of the obedient person for he or she has no love for the well-being of the community.

Africans bring their living tradition into Franciscan life, eliminating what is negative in these traditions and reinforcing what is positive. This is an active obedience, an intelligent obedience towards all that have authority. In religious life many have a fearful respect for a superior and there is no buddy-buddy relationship between them. Expectations on a superior are very high, for the superior must promote life and represent the community to the outside world. In the case of someone who no longer seems to serve the community, the members, like Francis, would work for this person's removal.

The one who is chosen to be a superior in Africa has to balance the Franciscan idea of servanthood with the traditional image of a chief, somewhat like an American superior has to balance the model of religious superior with that of the benevolent head of a corporation! We have already mentioned the "initiatic mentality" which attributes the secrets of the traditions to the elders. These elders will, in turn, share these secrets only with those who are willing to undergo certain rites of initiation. A superior who would guard the secrets and not share them with the brothers or sisters would be a superior contested by African Franciscan subjects, for their assimilation of the Franciscan value of fraternity has created a desire for participation in the life of the fraternity.

African Franciscans feel the obligation to obey certain precious traditions such as hospitality, rites of the dead, feasts which reinforce life, rites of return after a journey, responsibility. A few examples might help us better understand African Franciscan obedience. Every Franciscan fraternity must know how to provide a warm welcome to outsiders as well as to members of their own families. Even when it is impossible to give food or drink to everyone who comes, the African Franciscan tries to be gentle and invites the guests to sit down somewhere. Because of the traditions, one is uncomfortable when there is nothing to offer guests. Instead of inquiring right away about the reasons for the visit, the African asks questions in order to discern how the visitors and their families are, where they are coming from, and so forth. Only after these introductory rites will one inquire into the reasons for the visit. A superior has to dialogue with the brothers or sisters in order to discern how this tradition can be preserved and to what extent the fraternity can respond to the demands of others. This is a perpetual source of conflict and of creativity.

Concerning the rites for the dead, tradition demands that bad news be revealed to the bereaved only when the latter is in a proper psychological state to receive it. For example, if a superior receives the news of the death of a close relative of a brother, and if that brother is doing his examinations, the superior must wait until the examinations are over before telling him. If the bereaved brother has to travel far in order to go to the wake, the superior will send along with him another brother in order to keep him company in his grief.

This same kind of obedience is applied to daily life. Never must a superior humiliate a brother or sister in public. A good superior is one who is sensitive to the physical and psychological needs of the brothers and sisters and does not humiliate them by depriving them of what is necessary. All authority is at the service of life. At times the superior has to help the members reflect on their lives and give them advice. "Donner des conseils" is a key expression in African life— give advice. Another key expression is "encourager," to encourage, give courage to, one another. One of the greatest sins in Africa is to "discourage" another person. This is true for Franciscan life as well.

Obedience

It seems that obedience is at the center of African life and, as we have seen, it is not limited to a superior-subject relationship. Obedience extends to the traditions and to all of creation as well. The laws of God's nature are to be obeyed. Perhaps this helps us give new importance to some of St. Francis's teachings on obedience. Recall how he spoke about being obedient to animals (Salutation to the Virtues); how he commanded his brothers to be subject to all peoples in mission lands (RegNB 16); how he told his brothers to live a life of servanthood, being willing to lay down their lives for others (Adm 3:9); how he told his brothers to keep very secret their brothers' sins, that which Africans would call solidarity (RegNB 11:5-11). Obedience is a fundamental attitude by which a person recognizes the presence of other persons and other things and respects their place in the hierarchy of creation.

Poverty

In this context we also have to reflect on poverty. For the highest law of God is that a person have life and contribute to the life of the community. The highest service that a person can render to another is to be with him or her, to encourage him or her. To close oneself up in possessions, not to use possessions to enhance the lives of others, this is to be an egoist, a sorcerer. One does not contribute to the life of others. Franciscan life professes to have nothing of one's own, but we do not forget how Francis insisted that the brothers have what is necessary for their body and soul and have everything necessary for their trades. No friar has the right to deprive another of what is necessary for life in the name of poverty. The highest law is that of life, the greatest obedience is to be at the service of life.

Conclusion

Admittedly, this article does not talk about authority and obedience in traditional terms. I feel that Africa is giving us a new or at least a renewed way of looking at these two realities. The elements that I have described reveal a profound respect for what has preceded us, a gentle and devoted service to the life which we are living, and a great sense of responsibility to contribute to the life of others. To do otherwise would be disobedience; it would be sorcery.

Authority and obedience are at the service of the cohesion of the clan. Evangelically, authority and obedience are at the service of God's kingdom. There is a tight relationship between how the brothers and sisters live and the implantation of the kingdom. Since each level of the hierarchy is held together

by an awareness of one's place and one's responsibility, we might conclude that humility and responsibility are at the center of African spirituality. True, these have to be broadened beyond the clan and the tribe, but it is potentially a great force that can contribute much to the Franciscan Order.

Endnotes

[1]In John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence Amid African Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 42-3.

[2]See John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (London: Heinemann, 1975), 78-79.

[3]Mbiti, 189.

[4]Hall, in Taylor, 66-67.

From Bonaventure's reflection on the "Second Feast," Bringing Forth Christ: Five Feasts of the Child Jesus.
(Trans. Eric Doyle [Oxford: SLG Press], 7-8.)

Let us consider and mark well how the blessed Son of God, already conceived spiritually, is born spiritually in the soul. He is born when, after good advice, due thought and prayer for God's protection, we put into practice our resolution to lead a more perfect life. That is to say, he is born when the soul begins to do that which it long had in mind, but was afraid to undertake through fear of its own weakness. The angels rejoice at this most blessed birth, they glorify God and announce peace (Lk. 2:13).

Once this birth has taken place the devout soul knows and tastes how good the Lord Jesus is (Ps. 34:9). And in truth we find how good he is when we nourish him with our prayers, bathe him in the waters of our warm and loving tears, wrap him in the swaddling cloths of our desires, carry him in an embrace of holy love, kiss him over and over again with heartfelt longings and cherish him in the bosom of our inmost heart.

The Cord, 47.6 (1997)

A Sermon on the Trinity Inspired by St. Bonaventure

Philippe Yates, OFM

When Trinity Sunday approaches many priests wonder how on earth they can talk to their congregations about such an unearthly doctrine as that of the Trinity. It seems so much like a mathematical puzzle; you know, one of those that you receive in Christmas crackers where you have to fit various pieces together in order to make a pyramid or some other shape. No matter how hard you try there always seems to be one piece that doesn't quite fit. So it can be when we try to explain how three can be one and one three, perfect in unity yet differentiated into three persons. Not only is such a way of talking about the Trinity quite mind-boggling, but ultimately it doesn't help us to understand God any better and leads us to the conviction that the mystery of the Trinity is best left alone.

The Trinity in Our Life

But there are ways of looking at the Trinity that are not in the least mathematical and that lead, as well, to a richer understanding of what the Trinity means to us as Christians. Of course we can't ever hope to plumb the depths of meaning in the Trinity, but we can have greater insight into this wonderful mystery. I hope that as we come to some greater understanding of the implications of the doctrine of the Trinity, we will be able to contemplate it in prayer and so be drawn into the life of the Trinity which is the source and model of all life and of all that we know. This sermon is not supposed to be the last word on the Trinity, but instead a starting point so that we can meditate and reflect on the meaning of the Trinity in our own lives.

We can know some things about God just by reflecting on the world and on our human situation.[1] We can wonder that anything at all exists and surmise that God must be what underlies the existence of everything. So we can

see that God is at the root of all being and that our being is grounded in God's. We can say that God's Being is what supports the existence of all the universe. Similarly we can look at the harmony, the balance, and the order in the universe, despite all the forces that scientists tell us work to create chaos and imbalance, and we can surmise that there is one mind, one force behind all that exists. In this way we can see that God is One. These are the sorts of things that an open mind can surmise for itself about God. But the doctrine of the Trinity is so unusual that we could not guess at it unless it were revealed to us. We could not recognize the Trinity in our experience of the world and in our human situation without the help that God gives us in the Scriptures. So it seems that it is to the Scriptures that we must turn in order to get an inkling of how to approach this mystery of the Trinity.

In the Old Testament it is God's unity that is stressed continually.[2] In the New Testament the concept of the Trinity is introduced in Matthew's Gospel where the disciples are given the mission to go and baptize all nations "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19).[3] It took many years and much argument before Christians finally worked out the implications of this statement and realized that it was telling us there exist distinctions within God's unity. Within the Godhead there are three Persons of equal dignity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Now God doesn't reveal aspects of the godhead just so we can marvel at how complicated God can make everything. God's revelations always mean something for us. They tell us something about how we should understand God to be, how God treats us, and because we are made in God's image, how we should treat each other and the world around us. So the doctrine of the Trinity must also tell us something important about who God is, how God interacts with us, and how we should act.

When theologians investigated what the Trinity meant, various different theories emerged. One influential one was Augustine's, that the Trinity corresponded to a triad of powers in the human mind, the powers of memory, will, and understanding. But although this reveals something of the working of the Trinity, to my mind it is not very inspirational, and I prefer to start with some of the descriptions of God in the Scriptures rather than with human psychology.

The Trinity as Goodness

Christ tells us that "No one is good but God alone" (Mk. 10:18; Lk. 18:19),[4] so it seems that in our Christian understanding goodness is an attribute that can only fully be given to God. This attribute of God seems an appropriate place from which to start when trying to understand the Trinity.[5] Before we

look at the Trinity, though, let's look at our concept of goodness. Try to describe goodness to yourself. I'll bet that the way you described goodness was by using an example of a good action or a group of actions such as: goodness is somebody doing a completely selfless act, or goodness is caring for other people more than for yourself. We can't think of goodness in the abstract; it is always manifested by a reaching out to another person. We can say that goodness always reaches out and wants to share itself with another; goodness of its very nature needs to be communicated to another. If this is true of human goodness, then how much more must it be true of the goodness of God?[6] If God is good, then God must have an object that God can reach out to in goodness, otherwise it would be meaningless to speak of God being good.

So we may ask, if God is good, then what is the object of God's goodness—to whom is God good? Our first answer would probably be that God is good to us, to all God's creatures, but on reflection this answer seems inadequate.[7] God is absolutely boundless, infinite, and eternal, and so God's goodness is likewise boundless, infinite, and eternal. Can our universe with its limits in time and space really be thought of as an adequate object of God's goodness? God's goodness cannot be exhausted on a universe which, no matter how big, is in some way limited. We know from faith that God created the universe from nothing and therefore it is limited in time; but we also have confirmation of this from science which tells us that the universe started in a big bang and will end either in a big crunch or in a gradual dissipation. Scientists can also tell us the limits of our universe in space. God's goodness could not be adequately poured out on a limited universe.

We also know from faith that God is almighty, and yet by saying that God needed to create the universe in order to be good, we would be saying that a good God is obliged to create. Being obliged to create would put a limit on God's power—God could not choose not to do this. Thus if God were good, God could not be almighty; and if God were almighty, God could not be good.[8] This is clearly absurd and so we need to look outside creation for the object of God's goodness.

The only other possibility is that God's goodness is poured out within the Godhead. For this to happen there would need to be at least two members of the Godhead, one who is the source of goodness and one onto whom goodness can be poured.[9] God's goodness must be the most perfect goodness because of God's own perfection. So when God communicates goodness, God's communication must be the most perfect communication of goodness that is possible. But goodness can be communicated in two ways—either by nature or by an act of the will.[10] An example of both these types of goodness can be seen in a couple having a family. The couple pass on to each of their children their goodness in the form of the genes that each child inherits from both parents; that is what we call the natural communication of goodness. The couple pass

on another type of goodness when they take care to ensure that each child has enough to eat, is taught right from wrong, and is given a loving home environment in which to grow and develop. That is communication of goodness by acts of the will.

Since God's goodness must be perfect, God must pass on goodness in both ways. Within the Godhead, the Father passes on goodness to the Son in the first way by sharing with the Son the very being of God. All that the Father is he passes on to the Son through his generation of the Son. The Son as recipient of the Father's goodness is himself perfectly good and returns goodness to the Father. They then both join in choosing by an act of the will to communicate goodness to the Spirit who thus flows from the goodness of the Father and the Son. In this way both the types of goodness are communicated within the Godhead, and we can say that God is the highest good.[11] The doctrine of the Trinity has thus taught us how it is that God can be completely good and how it is that all goodness can reside in God even before God chooses to create any creature.

The Trinity as Love

Another way of understanding the Trinity comes from the New Testament insight that God is love (1Jn. 4:8).[12] We can follow a type of argument similar to that we just followed when discussing God as good. Love never exists in the abstract; when we hear that someone is in love our first reaction is to ask "With whom?" (or more probably but less grammatically "Who with?"). We know that one is never just "in love," but always in love with someone and that for love to exist there must be a lover and a beloved. In love the lover gives of oneself to the beloved, offering oneself for the good of the beloved, always seeking the good of the beloved, and thinking little of one's own benefit. The lover even goes so far as to sacrifice oneself for the benefit of the beloved. In order for love to be perfect the beloved must be proportionate to the lover—that is they must be equals. For example, the love of a husband for his wife is more perfect than the love of a pigeon fancier for pigeons, for the wife is equal to her husband, whereas the pigeons are in no way equal to the pigeon fancier. Each type of love may be genuine, but the former, when authentic, will always be more perfect. It is a true relationship in which the partners can reciprocate their feelings, whereas the pigeons can never feel in the same way about the pigeon fancier as he or she does about them.

For God to be love, God must have a beloved. Just as we saw that creation is inadequate as a recipient of the good that is God, so we can also see that it is insufficient as a recipient of the love that God offers. Creation is limited in time and space and so could never be proportionate to God who is eternal and infinite. Creation could never be an equal able to return with equality the love

that God pours out on it. Therefore if we are to say that God is love, then we must find a beloved who is proportionate to the lover. Once more we find the beloved in the person of the Son whom the Father begets and into whom the Father pours all his love, to whom the Father gives all that he is. The Son as the beloved returns to the Father all the love that he receives from the Father. The Son has been endowed by the Father with all the Father's dignity and honor and so is the co-eternal equal of the Father.

So much for the Father and the Son; but we must also explain how the predicate of love requires a third person also. When human love is perfect it does not remain narcissistically enclosed in a relationship of two people, but flows out into others, the two people join their wills in loving others. We recognize this in the marriage ceremony where the partners are asked if they are prepared to accept children lovingly from God. For the love of the spouses to be perfect, it must be open to children, so that the spouses can join their wills in loving another, their child. This openness to children is also symbolic of an openness to others so that the relationship between the spouses becomes a source of support for the community around them and not just a mutual appreciation society.[13] If this openness is necessary for human love then it is all the more important for divine love which must be perfect in every way. That is why the Father and the Son join in an act of the will to engender the Spirit, a third person whom they both can love conjointly and completely.

The Roles of the Three Persons

In both the understandings of the Trinity that I have detailed we can see the eternal roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit played out in a similar way, which is what one would expect if the understandings reflect anything at all of the reality of the Godhead. The Father is the source of the Godhead, the fountain head, the one from whom the other two persons emanate.[14] The Father offers goodness and love completely to the other two persons of the Trinity. The love is totally generous and the goodness likewise. The Father is the sole source of the Son and conjointly with the Son is the source of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is at the other end of the scale—the Spirit is totally receptive, responding with generosity to the love which both the Father and the Son lavish on the Spirit. The Spirit is the receiver of the goodness of both the Father and the Son and responds to both of them with equal goodness. The Spirit is the only totally receptive person in the Trinity, which is why the Spirit is often spoken of as Gift.[15] When we give a gift to someone we do not expect to get anything in return; if we did it would not be a gift but a bribe. When we are offered gifts, it is sometimes difficult for us to receive them graciously;

sometimes our pride intervenes ("I don't need your help") or sometimes it is our cynicism that gets in the way ("There's no such thing as a free lunch; what are you after?"). And yet, when gifts are freely offered and graciously received, they are signs of generosity, liberality, and mutual concern, and they do much to build up a relationship. We can see in the receptivity of the Holy Spirit, the gracious acceptance of the most perfect gift, the gift of self offered jointly by the Father and the Son. God's overflowing generosity and liberality are manifested in the relationship of the Spirit with the Father and the Son, and the perfect mutual concern of the persons of the Trinity becomes evident in the offering and acceptance of the gift of self.

The Son occupies an intermediary or central position between the Father and the Spirit. He receives goodness and love from the Father; the Father shares with him all that he is. The Son not only receives love and goodness from the Father and responds to that love and goodness, but also passes on love and goodness to the Spirit by cooperating with the Father in the production of the Holy Spirit. Thus we find in the Son both the generosity of the Father and the receptivity of the Spirit. The Son receives from the Father and offers to the Spirit, both goodness and love.

Names and Attributes

When God is spoken of in the scriptures and in theology, God is given many names or attributes. Some of the attributes, like "being," are attributes of God's nature and are therefore shared equally by all three persons of the Trinity. Some are personal and refer to one or other of the persons of the Trinity, for example their names—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We could not refer to the Father as the Son or the Holy Spirit because the name of Father sums up something about the first person of the Trinity that the other names do not.

There are other names or attributes that, while they refer to the nature of God and therefore are shared by all three persons, can also be said to be most appropriately given to one or other of them. By such an appropriation we can highlight the particularity of each of the persons of the Trinity. All three of the persons of the Trinity possess power, wisdom, and goodness, but we usually attribute these qualities most especially to one or other of the three persons. We say that the Father is most appropriately given the attribute of power because he is the source of the Trinity and the two other persons emanate from him. We say that the Son is most appropriately given the attribute of wisdom, because he proceeds from the Father and knows all that is in the mind of the Father. The Spirit is most appropriately called goodness because the Father and the Son join together in an act of freely willed goodness to produce the Holy Spirit.[16]

We have so far looked at the Trinity in terms of its interior life, but the conclusions we have reached also bear on the relations of the Trinity with creation, that is with us and the universe we live in. The Trinity is complete and sufficient unto itself and so has no need of creation. This means that the act of creating was not undertaken out of any necessity; instead it was a freely chosen act of goodness and love. God could have created any world God wanted, but God wanted to create a world that reflected God's glory outside the Godhead.

Relationship with Creation

When we look at Monet's paintings of London we can see the impression that Monet had of the old city. His paintings show a fog-bound yet elegant and stately metropolis, mysterious and yet familiar. From the work of art we discover something about Monet, his feelings and his genius. In a sense the paintings give glory to the artist and reflect his nature. We can say something similar about creation reflecting the glory of God.[17] But a work of art without anyone to observe it and find meaning in it is incomplete; it is like a word spoken in a deserted room, a communication which has no destination, or a book without a reader. Therefore it was most fitting for God to create creatures that could appreciate creation and see in it a reflection of God's glory, which is the purpose of humanity within creation. When we look at the world with eyes of faith, we are drawn to contemplate the glory of the Creator and in our contemplation to bring creation back with us to the Creator.[18] That is our role here on earth—to reflect on the world and so be drawn back into the life of the Trinity which it reflects. In doing this we carry the world back with us to its source, God.

This has significant consequences for our self-understanding and for our understanding of the world around us. Not only does it impact on our understanding but also on our actions. Our attitude to creation should be one of reverent awe, because it reflects the glory of God. To mar the beauty of Creation by thoughtless or greedy exploitation of natural resources is not simply foolish but in a sense blasphemous. It is like destroying the photograph of a loved one or scarring a painting that has contributed meaning to the lives of millions. It is like these but far worse, because the one we insult, the one whose image we desecrate, is the very one who has given us all that we are and who calls us only to return love for love and goodness for goodness. To treat another human being with anything less than respect is likewise an extreme discourtesy to the one whose image we find mirrored in each human person.

We are created in God's image and likeness[19] and so in a sense we stand at the head of creation, the best example of creation's possibilities; but we don't

reflect the dignity of our creation unless we act in accordance with our nature. We are the image of God. Therefore we are called to act with the goodness and love that are characteristic of God. These lead us into relations with our fellow creatures just as God's love and goodness are reflected in the perfect communication between the three persons of the Trinity. We cannot fulfill our destiny in isolation, but are called to reach out to others and build community with them, so that relations between creatures can reflect the harmony of the Creator.

Conclusion

These are just some of the ways that our contemplation of the Trinity can affect our lives. They serve to illustrate the never-ending process to which we are called—to contemplate the world and to see there the attributes of God. Through the Scriptures we come to a deeper understanding of God. We can then reflect on our position in the world in the light of our understanding of God. This reflection leads us back once more to God. In this way we are drawn ever deeper into understanding both the world we inhabit and the God we worship. If we are wise this process will never stop throughout our lives.

Endnotes

[1]"For from the greatness and beauty of created things, their Creator can be seen and known" (Wis. 13:5), quoted by Bonaventure in *The Soul's Journey into God*, 1: 9 (hereafter indicated as Itin.) All the citations from this work are taken from *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, trans. E. Cousins (New York, Paulist Press, 1978).

[2]"The first [method] looks chiefly to the Old Testament which proclaims most of all the unity of the divine essence." Itin 5:2.

[3]"The second method looks to the New Testament which determines the plurality of Persons by baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Itin 5:2.

[4]Cf. Itin 5:2.

[5]"Now just as being itself is the root principle of viewing the essential attributes, and the name through which the others become known, so the good itself is the principal foundation for contemplating the emanations." Itin 6:1.

[6]"For good is said to be self-diffusive; and the highest good must be most self-diffusive." Itin 6:2. Bonaventure draws his notion of good as self-diffusive from pseudo-Dionysius.

[7]"For the diffusion in time in creation is no more than a center or point in relation to the immensity of the divine goodness." Itin 6:2.

[8]"Il n'a besoin de rien en agissant hors de lui." *Breviloquium*, partie 2, 1:4, *Le monde créature de Dieu, texte latin de Quaracchi et traduction française* (Paris, Editions Franciscaines, 1967). All references to the *Breviloquium* are to this series of eight volumes. It is henceforth indicated as Brev.

[9]"Therefore, unless there were eternally in the highest good a production which is actual and consubstantial . . . it would by no means be the highest good because it would not diffuse itself in the highest degree." Itin 6:2.

[10]"Il n'existe que deux modes parfaits d'émanation, selon la nature et selon la volonté." Brev, partie 1, 3:2.

[11]Itin 6:2.

[12]This argument comes primarily from Richard of St. Victor, but is taken up by Bonaventure. "In analyzing the trinitarian dynamic as one of love, Bonaventure follows Richard of St. Victor in arguing that the three persons represent three modalities of love." Z. Hayes, "Bonaventure," in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. K. Osborne (New York: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 58. In his commentary on the *Sentences* Bonaventure identifies the procession of the Spirit as the best example of procession by way of love because the procession of the Spirit is primarily an act of the will, which is the basis of love. I Sent. d. 6, a. u., q. 2, resp.

[13]Cf. I Sent. d. 10,a. 2, q. 1,resp.

[14]Brev, partie 1, 3:7.

[15]"L'Esprit Saint est proprement le Don." Brev, partie 1, 3:9.

[16]Brev, partie 1, 6:1.

[17]"On peut conclure que la création du monde est semblable à un livre dans lequel éclate, est représentée et est lue la Trinité créatrice." Brev, partie 2, 12:1.

[18]"In relation to our position in creation the universe itself is a ladder by which we can ascend into God." Itin 1:2. "Toutes les choses corporelles sont faites pour le service de l'homme, de sorte que par toutes ces choses, l'homme est poussé à aimer et à louer l'auteur des mondes, dont la providence a disposé toutes choses." Brev, partie 2, 4:5.

[19]Itin 3:1.

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Book Review

Francis of Assisi: The Message in His Writings. By Thaddée Matura, OFM. Translated by Paul Barrett, OFMCap. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997. Pp. 194. Paper, $12.

> But as the Lord granted me to speak and to write the Rule and these words simply and purely, so shall you understand them simply and without gloss, and observe them with their holy manner of working until the end (Test 39).

To anyone familiar with the work of Thaddée Matura, OFM, it should come as no surprise that this, his latest book, not only focuses its content on the writings of Francis of Assisi, but also takes very seriously this "admonition" which the saint enjoined upon his brothers at the end of The Testament. For in this text Matura presents, as he writes in his "Foreword," "a systematic analysis of the global vision that inspired Francis to write," and he does so "simply and without gloss," deriving his synthesis from the texts themselves with nothing imposed from outside of them.

To attempt such a concordance-like approach to the writings is a daunting task to begin with, even when one considers the invaluable assistance which computers can provide. The process is akin to counting and separating out the pieces in a thousand piece puzzle. However, placing these same pieces side by side in such way that one is able to see both the message and the portrait of Francis come into full view takes the kind of painstaking faithfulness to the message and an uncompromising love of the man that only few scholars like Matura are capable of.

As he states clearly in his "Foreword," Matura's work with the writings of Francis over the past thirty years has convinced him that "the message conveyed in Francis's writings and the one which all the biographical literature attributes to him, not only do not overlap, but positively diverge, if only because the focus of each is different." Indeed, any student of literary genre knows that even the most carefully researched biography communicates more about the biographer than it does about the historical figure whose life is being chronicled. What Matura does in this book, then, is to maintain consistently the distinction between the historical figure of Francis and his written message.

In Chapter 2, "Keys to Reading Francis," Matura roots his close examination of Francis's written message in what he identifies as the two writings which "provide a comprehensive overview of Francis's vision, namely, chapter 23 of the Earlier Rule and the principal passages in the Second Letter to the Faithful." His examination of these texts clearly demonstrates his scholarship. However, the analysis is punctuated with lyrical, even poetic moments: God, "this abyss of love waiting to receive us" (36).

With his analyses of these texts, Matura also presents the main themes which Part II of his book explores: Francis's Trinitarian vision of God with its emphasis on the primacy of the Father, the sending of the Word, and the Spirit's holy manner of working; God's loving plan of salvation with the human person as integral to that plan; the journey of conversion as a turning toward this loving God in Christ; the different vocations which Francis distinguished and suggested as ways to walk that journey.

The divergence between the historical Francis and the author Francis is clearly visible in Chapter 4, "Humanity, a Vision of Contrasts." Even in the course of his analysis of Francis's view of the human person, Matura is aware that his listing of the words Francis uses to describe the human person creates a "nauseating catalogue" (99). This view contrasts with the images of brotherhood, sisterhood, and perfect joy which we want to and justifiably can also attribute to the more popular portrait of Francis. However, harsh as this view of human nature may appear to the reader, Matura contends that it is more "clear-sightedness and realism" than it is "pessimism" and is "based on an assessment of human behavior which [Francis] found in the Gospels but which is often overlooked" (100).

Matura attempts to create a work that straddles the fence between tedious and meticulous study that intrigues and delights specialists and a more popular and easily accessible approach. The author favors the technical, however, even with all of his efforts "to keep a foot in both camps" (xii). With the exception of Chapter 1, "The Man and His Message," and Chapter 7, "Interpretation and Relevance of Francis's Vision," which frame the text, this is a work for those who can be patient with exegesis and the scrupulous attention to the detailed analysis of words which the process necessitates. Moreover, as Matura recommends, unless the reader is very familiar with the writings of Francis, it would be well to have a text close at hand (xiv).

With the text of Francis's writings and Matura's work in hand, the reader can certainly come to understand more clearly the words of both—if not "simply," at least "without gloss." More importantly, both for Francis and for Matura, the reader's desire may be intensified to "observe them with their holy manner of working until the end."

Clare A. D'Auria, OSF

Contributors

Clare A. D'Auria, OSF, is a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, and Associate Director of the Religious Formation Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland. The main focus of her writing and speaking activities has been Franciscan Evangelical Life.

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Philippe Yates, OFM, is a friar of the English Province, currently pursuing doctoral studies in canon law at the Pontificio Ateneo "Antonianum" in Rome. An earlier contribution to *The Cord* focused on Franciscan eremitism (Jan./Feb, 1996).

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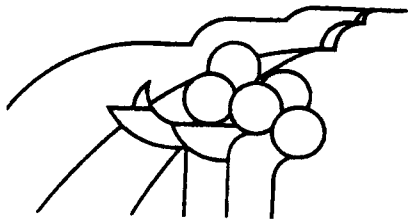

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Biographical Profiles

ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT
COMING EVENTS 1997-1998

Sunday, November 30-Sunday, December 7, 1997

Bringing Forth Christ. Advent retreat based on Bonaventure's Five Feasts of the Child Jesus. André Cirino, OFM. $230. Contact: Marie Therese Kalb, OSF, Shalom Retreat Center, 1001 Davis St., Dubuque, IA 52001.

Friday, December 5-Sunday, December 7, 1997

Facing the Christ Incarnate. At Immacualte Conception Convent, Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies. Ingrid Peterson, Maureen Clare Hall, Eleanor Granger. Contact: Franciscan Federation, P.O. Box 29080, Washington, DC 20017, ph. 202-529-2334, fax 202-529-7016.

Friday, December 12-Sunday, December 14, 1997

Advent Retreat Weekend. With Edward Coughlin, OFM. At Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. Contact: Andrea Likovich, Franciscan Spiritual Center, 609 S. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014, ph. 610-558-6152, fax 610-558-6122.

Sunday, February 1-Friday, February 6, 1998

Franciscan Gathering XVIII. Toward a Franciscan Spirituality for the 3rd Millennium. With Gabriele Uhlein, OSF. At Franciscan Center, Tampa, FL. Contact: Jo Marie Streva, OSF, Franciscan Center, 3010 Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603, ph. 813-229-2695, fax 813-228-0748.

Tuesday, February 3-Friday, February 13, 1998

Mexico GATE Pilgrimage Retreat for Franciscans. Roberta Cusack, OSF. Contact: GATE, 912 Market St., LaCrosse, WI 54601-8800, ph. 608-791-5283, fax 608-782-6301.

Sunday, February 8-Sunday, February 15, 1998

Walking in His Footprints. A Retreat for Franciscan Friars. With Joseph Rayes, OFM. At the Franciscan Center, Andover, MA. Contact: Franciscan Center, 459 River Road, Andover, MA 01810, ph. 978-851-3391, fax 978-858-0675.

Monday, February 23-Friday, March 6, 1998

LIFE program. With Joseph Rayes, OFM and Madonna Hoying, SFP. At the Franciscan Center, Tampa, FL. Contact: Madonna Hoying, 2473 Banning Road, Cincinnati, OH 45239, ph. 513-522-7516.

Thursday, March 5-Sunday, March 8, 1998

Legenda Major: Francis' Life as a Paradigm for the Spiritual Journey. With Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. At Tau Center. Contact: Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987, ph. 507-454-2993, fax 507-453-0910.

Friday, March 6-Saturday, March 7, 1998

Meeting Our Prophetic Tradition: Walking Beyond the Margin. With Marie Dennis and Joseph Nangle, OFM. At the Franciscan Center, Syracuse, NY. Contact: Marion Kikukawa, OSF, 2500 Grant Boulevard, Syracuse, NY 13208, ph. 315-425-0103.

Friday, March 6-Sunday, March 8, 1998

Franciscan Discernment Retreat. With Clare D'Auria, OSF. $80. Contact: Barbara Zilch, OSF, Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 14234-2340, ph. 412-881-9207.

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy
EpCust	Letter to the Custodians
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo
EpMin	Letter to a Minister
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies
ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
LaudDei	Praises of God
LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours.
OffPass	Office of the Passion
OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
RegB	Later Rule
RegNB	Earlier Rule
RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
Test	Testament
TestS	Testament written in Siena
UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCl	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCl	Blessing of Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2Cel	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
AP	Anonymous of Perugia
CL	Legend of Clare
CSD	Consideration of the Stigmata
Fior	Fioretti
JdV	Witness of Jacque de Vitry
LM	Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LMin	Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LP	Legend of Perugia
L3S	Legend of the Three Companions
Proc	Acts of the Process of Canonization of St. Clare
SC	Sacrum Commercium
SP	Mirror of Perfection