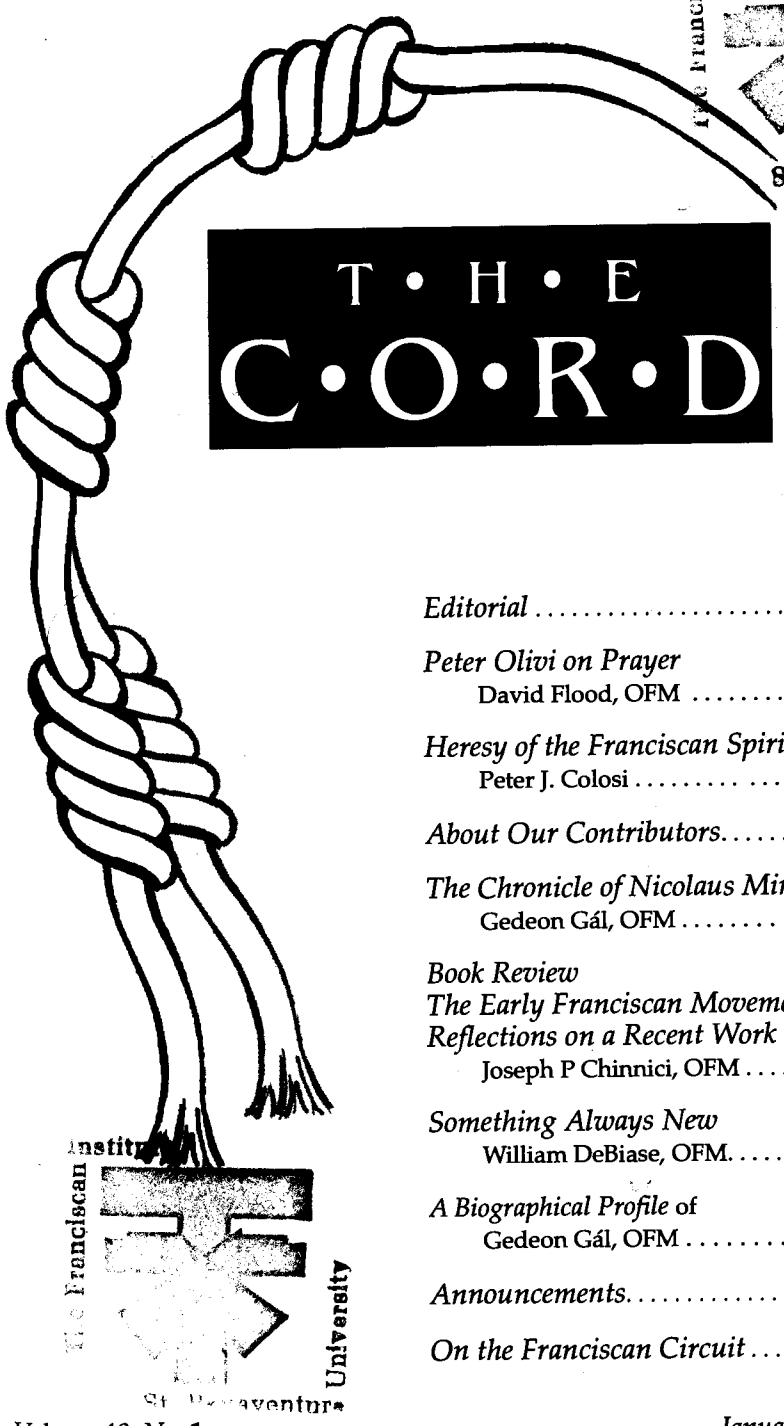
A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



THE CORD

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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

Publisher, Anthony M. Carrozzo, OFM
Editor: Elise Saggau, OSF

Editorial Assistant: Mary C. Gurley, OSF
Poetry Editor: Frances Ann Thom, OSF
Promotion: Thomas Blow, OFM
Distribution Manager: Noel Riggs

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

The Cord, 48.1 (1998)

Editorial

The word apocalyptic begins to appear with increased frequency as the year 2000 draws closer. It is a perennial phenomenon that human beings begin to radicalize their times and enhance them with the expectation that great and dramatic events are at hand. These events, it is believed, will transform peoples, societies, nations, the earth itself and change them into something more acceptable. Evil will be definitively overcome; peace will reign; and God's original intention will at last prevail.

In this issue of *The Cord*, we look at another moment in history when an apocalyptic view of the world was giving rise to great enthusiasm and great concern. And right at the heart of the movement were the Franciscans! In the first flush of their rapid growth, of the support they received from the papacy, and of the admiration and following they experienced from the populace, the Franciscans of the late 13th and early 14th centuries could hardly be blamed if they believed that a new and wonderful era was being ushered into the world through their way of life and their ministry.

This highly optimistic view received a big boost from the teachings of Joachim of Fiore, whose teachings were eventually condemned by the Church. Caught in the political and social struggles to which this enthusiasm gave rise were a number of others whose orthodoxy became questionable as a result of their leaning towards Joachimism. Among these was the Franciscan, Peter of John Olivi. In March we will observe the 700th anniversary of his death. After such a long time the contribution of this writer and teacher is again up for review. In this issue *The Cord* offers some information and reflection on his career and a sample of his writing on the Scriptures. It also offers some related articles that show us the complexity of the times in which he lived and the turbulent century that followed his death.

Peter of John Olivi was born at Sérignan, in southern France, c. 1248. He died in March, 1298, having lived as a Franciscan friar for thirty-eight years. It seems that he was only twelve years old at the time of his entrance into the Order. After his novitiate at Béziers, he studied at the University of Paris. For reasons that are not clear, he never became a master, but by the late 1270s he was teaching in Franciscan houses in southern France, where he became noted for his knowledge and for his commitment to a strict interpretation of the Rule, especially regarding the observance of poverty.

In the early 1280s his teaching became suspect and in 1283 some of his writings were censured by a commission of seven Parisian Franciscan scholars.

This censure had, of course, a negative affect on his academic career. In 1387, however, the Chapter of Montpellier vindicated his orthodoxy and the new Minister General, Matthew of Aquasparta, sent him to teach at the studium in Santa Croce in Florence.

His works continued to be controversial, however, especially as he became an exponent of the popular apocalyptic movement of his time—a movement which had been given great impetus by the teachings of Joachim of Fiore and which had a great appeal to the Franciscans.

Olivi's commitment to a strict interpretation of Franciscan and Gospel poverty made him a target for those factions in the Order which believed, for a number of reasons, that a more relaxed view was necessary. The division in the Order over poverty became highly political and engaged Church authority at the highest levels. Eventually it became an issue of orthodoxy and the very self-understanding of the Order was called into question.

Zealots in the Order saw in Olivi a model and a hero of sorts. Some of his writings suited their purposes well and they "canonized" him to their cause. After his death they developed a cult around his name and venerated his tomb as though he were a saint. The General Chapter of Lyons in 1299 condemned his writings and the General Council of Vienne in 1312 came down on three points of his teaching. In 1318 his tomb was destroyed by the friars.

Today there is an effort to review the story of Peter of John Olivi, a man as unfortunate in his friends, it seems, as in his enemies. Caught in the political cross-fires of his own historical moment, he found himself at the center of powerful and strongly emotional movements, both within the Order and within the Church. While some of his teachings might have been marginal in their orthodoxy, he managed to acquit himself well on those occasions when he had a chance to defend his positions. He appeared to have a healthy respect for authority, both in the Order and in the Church. It is an irony of history that the work of such a one should be used to precipitate a revolt against that very authority and, in the century after his death, give rise to a scandalous and revolutionary drama which would alter the self-understanding of the Order and its relationship with the Church for generations to come.

Seven hundred years later we cannot know what went on in the heart of the man, what he was like in his person, what sufferings he may have endured through the controversy that swirled around him. We can, however, take another look, with cooler heads, at the work of one who spent his life teaching Scripture and Christian doctrine and observing to the best of his ability the way of life that Francis had spelled out for his followers. Perhaps also, without canonizing him, we might see in him a figure for our times—one whose writings might inspire us to a renewed integrity in our own Franciscan commitment.

(See the *Catholic Encyclopedia* for general source material on Olivi.)

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Peter Olivi on Prayer

Translated by David Flood, OFM

The seventh centenary of Peter Olivi's death (March 14, 1298) has not only led scholars to accord him a little extra attention, it has invited them to take stock of the growing interest in his story and his writings.

Peter Olivi promoted Franciscan living theoretically and pastorally in southern France and northern Italy in the late thirteenth century. Because the Spirituals of the early fourteenth century drew on his teachings, their political ineptitude was laid at his door; he was made responsible for events which transpired after his death.

In his commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, after an introduction, Peter Olivi begins reading closely the first chapter. He gets to the line: "They were as one deep in prayer" (1:14). He pauses to reflect on prayer, the passage translated below.

In his explanations, Olivi often uses the words *habitus* and *virtus*—habit and virtue. *Habitus* has to do with the steady direction one has given one's life, whereas *virtus* covers a pattern of positive action which one readily brings into play within that general direction. In what Peter Olivi says about prayer, then, we have to do with an emergent style of life.

I have not tried to match the abstract diction in English. I have tried rather to translate the reflection.

David Flood, OFM, Translator

I.

They gave themselves to prayer. Did they ask for God's grace and his spiritual gifts or for temporal gifts as well? It seems that prayer, in its immediate sense, usually means this.

We recall that the verb "to pray" seems to come from the practice of public speakers. They end their discourse persuasively as they try to win the minds of judges and listeners to their way of thinking. In this sense, prayer to God means any act whereby we address God by trying to draw his mind to us in our favor. Since any act of this sort, as such, does draw attention, we take prayer as an appeal to God.

However, sometimes the mind at prayer does little more than wish for God's gifts without asking for them explicitly, and sometimes it engages in simple contemplation, tasting and enjoying in loving union God and things divine. These states and others like them we include under prayer.

There are several reasons for this. As long as we are in our present state, such prayer wins us merit, both when we implore and attract or when we move towards the final grace and glory we do not yet possess. Then, mixed into such actions is the intention to pray and to call on God. Furthermore, the whole process of divine worship in this life develops in longing, in prayer, and in the acquisition of grace, rather than as rest with the kingdom won. Consequently in the act of prayer we include all these things.

II.

If we take prayer this way, does the action result from some special virtue, from several virtues, or from all of them? It seems from several and from all because all the inner ways of virtue come into play here. When we pray, we long for and ask God for all virtues. In meditation and contemplation, we taste and examine them, and so they gain in clarity, take fire, and grow strong. Furthermore the very act of prayer should be humble, pure, chaste, faithful, confident, hopeful, and so on.

On the other hand, prayer seems to spring from charity alone. Basically it expresses a love which desires or enjoys or calls on and implores God and the things of God. All of this comes immediately from charity and leads to God.

. . .

On this point some say that prayer brings all virtues into play, for they all flow together in holy love of God. Others say that prayer expresses the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. A third group says that, although prayer seeks a response, it arises immediately from the virtue called religion. Religion engages in worship of God.

A fourth group proposes that we can take the origin of prayer as virtue and habit in two ways: insofar as the power to pray is there and insofar as, beyond this, the power to pray regularly occurs in the right way. Furthermore we can take these two ways in a double sense. First, if we examine what the act of praying generally implies, we see that, through prayer, the mind is led to offer God reverence and to bind itself to him. Second, we can look on prayer insofar as it branches out in holy desires and petitions and in holy enjoyment and affection in God.

If then we consider the act of prayer and its origins, we see that we can pray to God and that sometimes we do engage in prayer and pray easily and enjoyably without any special virtue moving the will. That means that it happens from love of God or from our attachment to God. And although charity

does not pray without faith guiding it and without hope encouraging it, that does not mean that faith and hope call prayer forth, just as they do not call forth love of God and things divine, although they guide and encourage charity to engage in prayer.

If we consider prayer as it unfolds and branches out into various expressions of other virtues and if we look at prayer's origins within us in our readiness to pray, we can say that more than a deeply-rooted love for God is required. We need a firmness of purpose which regularly orders and applies the mind to prayer and to a particular kind or intensity of prayer. We can call that customary prayer. This belongs to the practice of religion, as one species of a genus or a part of the whole. Here we take religion to mean the general ability and intention of a mind committed to interior and exterior acts of worship of God.

It might be that someone takes charity to cover not only its primary source but also the way it branches out in many offshoots of love of God and things divine. Then charity as routine and as word includes all virtues which have any connection or implication with the love of God. Under this supposition we can say that the simple act of praying comes from charity, if the act is pure grace. That is not the case with every act of prayer. Nor is this surprising, for not every such act is virtuous. For example, someone can wish a thing and, out of pure avarice or pride, ask for it from God; or someone can ask for it presumptuously or hypocritically or insincerely.

Answer to the Arguments

The first argument concluded that prayer involved many virtues or all of them. To this we can say that the grace of charity includes its extension into virtues necessary for salvation. Therefore the steady intention of prayer, whence comes the perfect practice of praying, includes the usual dispositions of those virtues which the intention of prayer calls into play and exercises in prayer. This does not mean that such virtues as these, taken in themselves, give rise to prayer, but only insofar as they are brought into play and lead to prayer, given the steady intention of praying. Not every inner act of chastity or sobriety or liberality is an act of prayer, but only when engaged in principally out of an intention to pray to God in words or in contemplation. Then these virtues relate to prayer as cords of a lute or a viol relate to the melody of lute music. There the movement of the hand and the plectrum by which the chords are strummed and vibrated is the first and principal movement.

We may mention as well that prayer often consists in many acts of prayer, with one prayer prior and deeper and more encompassing, the cause and motor of the other prayers. Such a prayer has more amplitude and involvement in prayer. This does not happen with those other virtues, which it activates and

uses as its means in particular and secondary acts of prayer.

From what has been said, we can see that, with regard to the other arguments, we can concede some points, others we clear up by making distinctions. Our discussion also shows that the fourth opinion agrees with the other three. For the first three can be explained in a way which agrees with the fourth.

And this is enough for now.

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The Heresy of the Franciscan Spirituals

Peter J. Colosi

This paper will investigate some key points in the history and thought of the Franciscan Spirituals, those groups of Friars Minor who chose to live according to the Rule of Saint Francis in its primitive severity and, because of this, broke away from the main body of the Friars Minor, many of them eventually drifting into heresy.[1]

The picture we get from many of the early histories of these brothers is that of a protesting minority rather than a revolting faction. They had not yet thought of a separate order, but only of a purified order. They had not developed a theology, for their whole creed was obedience to the ideal of poverty as pursued by Francis. They endured persecution, not because they boldly advanced new heresies, but because they refused to drift with the tide of prosperity and accept a standard of life prescribed for them by the pope and his advisors,[2] a life judged by them to be at odds with the lifestyle Francis mandated.

It would therefore be an error to hold that the Spirituals were, in essence, heretics from the beginning. Rather, one must see their sincere beginnings and attempt to understand exactly which points led to certain radical, even heretical positions.

The Historical Development of the Franciscan Spirituals

It is a well-known fact that from the very beginning of the Franciscan Order there existed two divergent tendencies among the Friars Minor.

> One was the determination to make the Order a potent influence on the age and a world factor in history by securing its close connection with the papacy, acquiring numerous convents, increasing membership as rapidly as possible, building fine churches, securing privileges and exemptions from the pope—in a word, by entering into competition with the established monastic orders. The

other tendency was the equally strong determination to preserve the Order from the corrupting influences of wealth and privilege, to keep the members true "Brothers Minor," imitators, not only admirers, of St. Francis.[3]

One could say that in the early years of the Order, Elias of Cortona represented the first of these positions, while Leo and the so-called "zealots" represented the second.[4] As Minister General (1232-1235), Elias, by force of his personality, combined with his executive abilities, greatly increased the material development of the Order, its missionary activity, its numbers, and its influence in Christendom. Convents were enlarged and moved to better and more populated areas, and the study of theology among the brothers grew at his encouragement.[5] Meanwhile the Spirituals retreated to the hermitages.

It was not until the middle of the thirteenth century that the Spirituals actually consolidated into an organized party of their own. Muzzy suggests three reasons as the driving force behind this consolidation. First, John of Parma, a friar sympathetic to the Spirituals, was elected Minister General (1248-1257). Second, the Spirituals took the heretical writings of Joachim of Fiore to themselves and employed them in their hopes for the dawning apocalypse. And third, John's successor, Bonaventure (1257-1274), immediately made it clear that there would be no hostility to the See of Rome or tolerance of an esoteric authority of Francis's companions.[6]

Between 1274 and 1316, the Spirituals developed into three distinct branches. The first was the group in the March of Ancona, led by Peter of Macerata (also known as Liberato) and Angelo Clareno. The second was in Tuscany, represented by Ubertino of Casale. The third was made up of the French Spirituals of Provence, whose inspiration was derived from Hugh of Digne and Peter John Olivi. All held to these three tenets:

1. The desire to observe to the letter the Rule and the Testament of Francis. The words of Francis in his Testament provided the basis for this belief:

> And through obedience I strictly command all my brothers, cleric and lay, not to place glosses on the Rule or on these words, saying: They are to be understood in this way. . . . The Lord has 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 34).[7]

2. A very high estimation of the Rule, such that they considered it to be on the same level as the Gospel. One justification for this belief they found in chapter 1 of the Rule itself where Francis says: "The Rule and Life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (RegB 1). On these grounds the Spirituals refused Papal interpretations of the Rule: "The pope cannot dispense from the Gospel, and thus he cannot dispense from or even explain the Rule in any other than a literal sense."[8]

3. The belief that the writings of Joachim of Fiore were true prophesies and that his words applied quite directly to themselves.

The Three Groups

A brief history of these three groups of Spirituals might be useful. The Spirituals of the March of Ancona were led by Peter of Macerata until his death in 1307, when Angelo of Clareno became the leader. At the Council of Lyons (1274), among the topics under discussion was the Franciscan Spirituals. A false rumor began to circulate that the mendicant orders would be told that they must begin to hold property in common.[9] There was already discontent in the Order, and this rumor acted as a catalyst for those friars who did not want to turn from the Franciscan ideal of renunciation of individual and corporate property.[10] The Provincial Chapter ordered the leaders of the group—Peter of Macerata, Angelo of Clareno, Thomas of Tolentino, and Traymundus—to recant their protestations. They refused and eventually ended up in prison on charges of heresy and of being destroyers of the Order.[11] When they were released from prison, they defended the doctrine of *usus pauper* and acclaimed Peter John Olivi as their master.[12] The group was excommunicated on Dec. 30, 1317, by Pope John XXII in the Bull *Sancta Romana*. After this they continued to exist as *Fraticelli*.[13]

The Spirituals of Provence were inspired by Hugh of Digne and Peter John Olivi. Although Hugh of Digne was concerned about the materialism infiltrating the Church, he was more deeply concerned about his own Order and struggled to defend a life lived strictly according to the Rule. He died around 1257 and, because of his writings and teaching, has been referred to as the father of the Spirituals.[14]

Peter John Olivi (1248-1298), successor to Hugh of Digne, was born in Serignan in Languedoc and joined the Order at the age of twelve in Beziers. A later part of this paper is devoted to his apocalyptic thought.

By 1289, because of the controversy surrounding his writings, there was already a group rallying around Olivi. They seem to have consolidated as a group of Spirituals in Provence around 1309 when Arnold of Villanova, a lay theologian and physician of Charles II of Sicily, appealed to the King to write to the Minister General demanding that the persecutions of the Spirituals in Provence cease. In this same year the citizens of Provence also gave vocal support to the Spirituals there. As a result of this commotion, Pope Clement V

summoned the leaders of the Spirituals and appointed a tribunal of three cardinals to hear their case. He also issued the Bull *Dudum ad apostolatus* protecting the Spirituals from the harassment and jurisdiction of the Order during the time of these proceedings.[15]

The result of this meeting was, generally speaking, twofold: the Spirituals did not receive their desired goal of a formal separation from the Order such that they could go somewhere to live the Rule literally and in peace. Yet, at the same time the pope enjoined a stricter observance of the Rule upon the Order, and, while he exhorted the Spirituals to return to their convents, he also deposed some of the superiors who had treated them unfairly. To these ends the pope issued the Bulls *Fidei catholicae fundamento* and *Exivi de paradiso*. One of the means by which the Community (the larger group in the Order against whom the Spirituals were in disagreement) attempted to keep the Spirituals from separating and forming their own order was to discredit as much as possible the teachings of their inspirer, Peter John Olivi. The Bulls, therefore, also contained condemnations of many of Olivi's errors which had been brought to light during the discussions of 1310-1312.

In 1314, Pope Clement V and Minister General Alexander of Alexandria both died and the harsh superiors were restored to office. The Spirituals of Provence responded by forcibly taking the convents at Beziers and Narbonne and ejecting the members of the Community. The Custos of Narbonne, William of Astre, excommunicated the Spirituals, whereupon, in 1316, they made an appeal to the General Council of Narbonne. In 1317 they were brought before Pope John XXII to be examined. The leaders were imprisoned and the others detained in convents. John XXII demanded obedience from them, insisting that they give up all peculiarities and submit to the mandates of the Minister General. Twenty-five of the Provence Spirituals refused to do so and were put before the Inquisition whereupon twenty-one converted. The other four were handed over to the civil power and burned as heretics at Marseilles on May 17, 1318.

The third group of Spirituals, led by Ubertino of Casale, are referred to as the Tuscan Spirituals. Ubertino of Casale joined the Order in 1273, and by 1284 was fighting full force for the spiritual cause, having met and been deeply impressed by John of Parma, Angela of Foligno, and Peter the combmaker of Siena.[16] According to Ubertino of Casale the Community friars in Tuscany were the most blatant of all of those who betrayed the ideals of St. Francis: "They had full cellars and granaries. They had amassed wealth and put it out at usury. They had even added dishonesty to avarice."[17] Because of this and also because of the violent sort of persecution which the Community in Tuscany directed against them, the Tuscan Spirituals elected their own general according to the Rule of Francis (which action ruined their reputation) and fled to

Sicily.[18] After this the Popes, Clement V, and later John XXII, easily accepted the terrible reports about the Spirituals and, along with many cardinals and the Inquisition, sought their suppression. In the Bull *Gloriosam ecclesiam*, issued by Pope John XXII on January 23, 1318, the Spirituals were formally condemned.[19]

Three other points about the Tuscan Spirituals are worth noting. The first is that they staged an uprising before their departure to Sicily in which they attempted to remove forcibly the brothers of the Community from the convents of Carmignano, Arrezzo, and Ascanio; but they were overcome by arms and fled.[20] Second, they made attempts to send messages to both Clement V and John XXII that they would obey them; however, the brothers of the Community captured and imprisoned the messengers so that they never reached the pope.[21] And finally, although they constituted a small group whose influence did not last, this whole episode was "... significant chiefly for the rapidity with which the breach with the Order was consummated. It gives us a singularly clear picture of the irreconcilable status and claims of the Community on the one hand and the Spirituals on the other."[22]

In summary, the struggle between the two factions of the Order existed almost from the beginning. The Community group supported papal interpretations of the Rule and desired to be of service to the Church in light of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215; yet many of them tended to stray from the Rule in ways which the popes did not intend. The Spiritual group sought to live the Rule unadorned and in its purity, yet tended to treat the directives of the popes and general chapters with disdain.

The Influence of Joachimism

More fundamental to the Spiritual movement than the teachings on poverty and the Rule of Francis, and a key source of the struggle between the Spirituals and the larger Church, was Joachimism, a popular medieval theological schema of salvation history that was eventually condemned as heretical. Every dispute which the Church raised against the Spirituals, whether it was concerning poverty within the Order, the Rule of Francis, or the Life of Christ and the Apostles, was seen by the Spirituals as part of the struggle involved in the transition from one stage of salvation history (and also church history) to the next. A contemporary of Francis, Joachim of Fiore (1132-1202), taught that, according to the Apocalypse commentators, the world would go through three stages: a carnal stage, a stage which is partially carnal and partially spiritual, and a stage which is completely spiritual.

The Franciscan Spirituals, following Joachim, saw themselves at the dawn of the stage of totally spiritual people. They also saw themselves as precisely

that new order of which Joachim spoke, whose purpose it would be to usher in the third and final stage. With this understanding the Spirituals began to perceive each of the teachings of the Church which opposed their own to be carnal elements from the previous stages, refusing to let go and allow the third age of spiritual enlightenment to happen.

From this concept of stages there developed still another teaching of the Spirituals, namely, the distinction between a carnal church and a spiritual church. Ernst Benz,[23] traces the stages of the development in the thought of the Franciscan Spirituals which led them to a most radical view of the Roman Church—namely, that it is identical with Satan's church. It would seem odd, to say the least, that a group of holy Catholic hermits could come to make such violent and ultimate claims about their own church; yet the progression which Benz lays out gives a good explanation of how this occurred.

Benz asserts that the Spirituals were not coming from the position of arrogant heretics. Rather they were experiencing terrible suffering and inner torture resulting from severe persecution, including the burning at the stake of some of their members. Benz claims that their radical position—that the Roman Church is the Antichrist and the whore of Babylon—was not a well-thought-out theological presupposition of their mission, but rather a reaction to severe persecution, which developed over time.[24]

The Position of Peter John Olivi

Peter John Olivi, the inspiration of the Provence Spirituals, had developed the distinction between the spiritual and the carnal church in his commentary on the Apocalypse.[25] Building on the theories of Joachim, Olivi thought the Church had to go through a seven-stage history. He recognized the legitimacy of the Church; he saw its preparation in the synagogue in the time of the Old Testament; he saw it as founded by Christ and as the institution of God for the salvation of the world in history;[26] he recognized the universality and totality of the Church. But Olivi also held that throughout the history of the Church the great holy persons and orders, which were held together with an inner historical unity, constituted the real spiritual Church. It is this concept which led to the heresy of the Franciscan Spirituals.[27]

The Spirituals did not see the bureaucratization of the Church as the beginning of its downfall. Rather, they saw it as the intervention of God, for a time, to set the harsh call of the Gospel aside in order to reach a larger number of people.[28] Thus, Olivi also held that the institutional Church, the old Church, was legitimate even during its period of moral decay.

However, for the Spirituals and Olivi the Church of the new time was not just the perfect Church which would exist beside the institutional Church or outside of it, but rather, it was the true Church of holy people which had

existed from the beginning. And they saw the mission of this true and spiritual Church to be the regeneration of the whole Church—indeed of the whole world—morally and spiritually. It had to fulfill this task even in the face of resistance from the old Church. Indeed, they held that the old Church must be dissolved into the spiritual one.

In order to understand the justification which the Spirituals felt they had for this belief, we must recall that for Joachim of Fiore the history of salvation occurs in three stages or ages—the age of the Father, the age of the Son, and the age of the Holy Spirit.[29] In the third age there would be two new spiritual orders of priests who would usher in a new and spiritual way of life. According to Joachim the spiritual Church would have its inception in the fortieth generation, which meant after the year 1200. Francis's conversion was in 1206, and the Spirituals conceived of this as the beginning of the third age spoken of by Joachim. Joachim also held that this third age would complete its inception by the forty-second generation, which means after the year 1260.[30]

Olivi, developing the thought of Joachim, gave examples of the persecution which would be leveled against the evangelical perfection of the spiritual Church during the forty-second generation—the fight over poverty, the University of Paris controversy, and the great error of those who held that the position of the mendicants is lower than that of the secular priests.[31] For Olivi, these events happened in a period which, when completed, would mark the beginning of the final period of peace. And it is this period which corresponded to Joachim's third age now dawning.

Thus, for Olivi and for the Spirituals, the fight over poverty, was just the tip of the iceberg. Lurking below it was a world view which presupposed that resistance from any group indicated a remnant from a former age which must pass away. Thus, Olivi and the Spirituals came to see themselves as the true followers of Christ and the Roman Church as the Antichrist.

The Roman Church, for Olivi, had been the true Church during the first five periods of its history. And during some of that time it even existed as the true Church while not striving for Gospel perfection; namely, during the period when it grew in numbers and power at the expense of Gospel living. The end of that period coincided roughly with the end of the second age in Joachim's schema, a brief transition period between the time of the carnal age and the fully spiritual age.

A good student of Joachim would subject himself to the Roman Church because he knew that his lifetime existed during the second age when the Roman Church was still the true Church.[32] Joachim openly taught, however, that in the third age the Church would exist without an official hierarchy and without a Roman Pope or Primate of Peter.[33] This is another point, taken over by Olivi and the Spirituals, which led them into heresy.

The new Church, they thought, would take the best traditions of the Church which had existed since the beginning and carry these on to the highest form of moral and religious life.[34] Thus, in the understanding of the Franciscan Spirituals, the universal Church as such could not be the whore of Babylon or the carnal church. It could not be such because the true Church, according to them, is that Church which has existed through the first two ages of world history, the age of the Father and the age of the Son. In the third age, the spiritual orders (presumably the mendicant Franciscans and Dominicans) were in place and active, and some of the members of the old true Church had become corrupt and struggled against the fulfillment of the new Church. This group of members who fell away became the *ecclesia reprobarum* or the *ecclesia carnalis*. These members were spread throughout the Church of Christ and included the pope. They became the church of Satan. But the true Church became the spiritual Church of the third age about which Joachim prophesied.[35]

This Church, which had always existed within the Church and had now emerged as the spiritual Church of the third age, had a concrete outline in history. It began with the Apostles, continued with the martyrs, proceeded to the Greek hermits and monks and then to the Benedictine monks and on to the Cistercians, Cluniacs, and finally to the Franciscans.[36] This Church within the Church was united throughout history in that it lived and carried on the true apostolic life of poverty, humility, and renunciation.

The spiritual Church was not understood by Olivi to be an official or institutional church. Olivi understood its inner structure to be radically different from the inner structure of the Roman Church. The inner structure of the spiritual Church was such that all its members were filled with an inner illumination driving them towards the realization of the Apostolic life. An official hierarchy or monarchical person was not present in this Church; rather, a spiritual democracy guided it.[37]

Olivi developed two further ideas in this regard—first, that the spiritual Church would have a primate, though not a pope; second, that there was and always had been a relationship existing between the two Churches. The primate of the new Church would be the Spirit itself which was to fill all of the members. The relationship between the two Churches, the spiritual, apostolic, and evangelical Church, and the universal, hierarchical, official Church was that they had always existed side by side, in a sense looking into each other. Indeed, Olivi held that the authority of the Papal Church was grounded in the uninterrupted history of the spiritual Church. The spiritual primate was to have its full authority and realization only in the time of the uncompromised living of the Gospel life during the final period.[38]

Benz, in summary, names five sources of the schism which resulted between the Roman Church and the Spirituals. The first was the very strong

belief of the Spirituals that these were surely the end times. This impression caused them to make the most stringent demands on the Roman Church. They also made three unorthodox claims for themselves: that their spiritual power was the only true and valid one; that their way of life was not only the highest form of life but also universally binding; that their time was the final time and the time of fulfillment. Finally, they demanded that the universal Church be completely absorbed into the perfect spiritual Church.[39] They claimed that the Church of Rome had become the false and carnal church, taking as evidence of this the simony, power, financial politics, worldly dealings, and vices of its members. They also saw a great error in what they called the feudal structure of the papal church.[40]

The Spirituals took these flaws as signs that the Roman Church was the Antichrist. They believed that this Roman Church was directing much of its energies specifically against them. In the Church's softening and explaining of the evangelical rule, and in its rejection of the Franciscan ideal of poverty, the Franciscan Spirituals saw the Roman Church as denying the fulfillment of its own true destiny to be perfect.[41]

In 1319 the Catalan Commission submitted its condemnation of many of the tenets held by Olivi. Among them were his view of Francis as an apocalyptic figure heralding the new age and his identification of the Franciscan Rule as synonymous with the life observed by Christ and imposed on the disciples.[42] His idea that the Roman Church had become the carnal church was also condemned. Another serious tenet of Olivi that was recognized as error was his use of the poverty issue as a criterion for determining where one stood in the great apocalyptic struggle and in predicting that those in positions of authority would be on the wrong side.[43]

Conclusion

The divisions and factions during this period in the Franciscan Order were both positive and negative. The Community was attempting to serve the Church in light of the Fourth Lateran Council. They attempted to maintain a balance between the ideals of being a religious order within the Church and the ideals of St. Francis. On the negative side many members of the Community took the privileges given to the Order by the Church as an exemption from the task of pursuing the ideals of Francis and became lax in their way of life.

The positive contribution of the Spiritual movement in the Order was its strict adherence to the Rule and way of life which Francis had given to the friars by word and deed. The negative side was its rejection of the words of counsel from the Church.

The struggle between these two groups within the Order not only characterized a tumultuous period, but had a deeply tragic result—tragic for the Spiri-

tuals in the suffering they had to endure, tragic for the Order because of the break up of its unity, tragic for the Church in that energy with potential for good was turned towards division.

Endnotes

[1]Cf. "Spirituals," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1912.

[2]David Saville Muzzy, *The Spiritual Franciscans* (New York: American Historical Association, 1905), 14.

[3]Muzzy, 53.

[4]Rosalind Brooke, *Early Franciscan Government* (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), 137-57.

[5]Brooke, 145-147.

[6]Muzzy, 53-54.

[7]All references to the writings of Francis are from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, ed. Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

[8]"Spirituals," *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

[9]John R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order: From its Origins to the Year 1517* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1988), 188.

[10]M. D. Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1961), 160 and Moorman, 188.

[11]Moorman, 188-189.

[12]Lambert, 160.

[13]The word "Fraticelli" was a term of endearment meaning "the Little Brothers," but its meaning became changed throughout these developments such that when the pope used it in the Bull *Sancta Romana* (1317) it signified rebellious heretics. Cf. Muzzy, 45-46.

[14]Moorman, 189.

[15]Muzzy, 32.

[16]Moorman, 190-91.

[17]Muzzy, 40.

[18]Muzzy, 39.

[19]Muzzy, 40-41.

[20]Muzzy, 40-41.

[21]Muzzy, 40-41.

[22]Muzzy, 41.

[23]Ernst Benz, *Ecclesia Spiritualis: Kirchenidee und Geschichtstheologie der Franziskanischen Reformation* (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1934), XII.

[24]Benz, 307.

[25]Peter John Olivi, *Lectura Super Apocalipsum.*

[26]Benz, 308.

[27]Benz, 308.

[28]Benz, 309.

[29]Morton W. Bloomfield, "Joachim of Flora," *Traditio* 13 (1957): 249-311.

[30]Benz, 314.

[31]Benz, 314.

[32]Benz, 309.

[33]Benz, 309.

[34]Benz, 309.

[35]Benz, 309-10.

[36]Benz, 310.

[37]Benz, 309-10.

[38]Benz, 311.

[39]Benz, 312.

[40]Benz, 312.

[41]Benz, 313.

[42]David Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom: A Reading of the Apocalypse Commentary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 242.

[43]Burr, 242.

About Our Contributors

Joseph Chinnici, OFM, is a member of the Province of St. Barbara, Oakland, California. A professor of history at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, he is the author of *Living Stones: the History and Structure of Catholic Spiritual Life in the United States* (Macmillan, 1988). He served as Provincial Minister for a number of years and is presently doing research and writing in Washington, DC.

Peter Colosi, a graduate of the Franciscan Institute, did his doctoral work at the International Academy for Philosophy in the Principality of Liechtenstein. A former instructor at Alvernia College in Reading, PA, he now serves as Director of Research at the Catholic Alliance in Washington, DC.

William DeBiase, OFM, has been a missionary in India and Japan. He worked for some time at a leprosarium operated by the Brothers of Mother Teresa in Calcutta. Most recently he has been on assignment in the Holy Land, at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

David Flood, OFM, a friar of the Montreal Province, has recently published *Work for Every One* (Quezon City: CCFMC office for Asia/Oceania, 1997). (See book review, page 26.) He co-authored, with Thaddée Matura, *The Birth of a Movement: A Study of the First Rule of St. Francis* (Franciscan Herald Press, 1975). His collaboration with Gedeon Gál, OFM, is making available significant sources for the history of the Franciscan Spirituals.

Gedeon Gál, OFM, a member of the Holy Name Province, has served at The Franciscan Institute since 1963. He is well-known for his collaborative efforts in producing critical editions of the works of medieval theologians and philosophers. See the biographical profile on page 34 for a more detailed account of his life.

The Chronicle of Nicolaus Minorita

Gedeon Gál, OFM

[This article is a summary of the account recorded by the friar Nicolaus Minorita in the 14th century. The article was originally published in *Editori di Quaracchi, 100 anni dopo bilancio e prospettive atti del Colloquio Internazionale, Roma 29-30 Maggio, 1995*, Pontificio Ateneo Antonianum, Rome, 1997, pp. 337-344, and is reprinted here with permission.]

The chronicle of Nicolaus Minorita concerns principally the poverty of Christ and his apostles and secondarily the poverty practiced by the Franciscans according to the Rule of St. Francis of Assisi. The controversy arose by chance in 1321, and it soon involved almost the whole of Christianity. The debate started between a Dominican inquisitor and a Franciscan lector, but it was soon joined by the pope, cardinals, bishops, theologians, and even by a king, Robert of Naples, and an emperor, Louis of Bavaria. The Franciscan's trump card was the bull of Nicholas III, *Exiit qui seminat* (August 14, 1279) which, interpreting the Rule of St. Francis, solemnly declared that the poverty of the Friars Minor, who owned nothing either privately or in common, was the highest (*altissima paupertas*) because that is what Christ preached and practiced (*verbo docuit et exemplo firmavit*) together with his apostles. According to *Exiit* the friars had no "use of right" (*usus iuris*) but only "use of fact" (*usus facti*) and that should be moderate (*usus moderatus*).

The Beginning

In 1321, in the city of Narbonne, a Beguin (very likely associated with the Third Order of St. Francis) was accused by the Dominican Inquisitor, John of Belna, (considered an enemy of the Franciscans) of having said, among other things, that "Christus et apostoli, viam perfectionis sequentes, nihil habuerunt iure proprietatis et dominii in speciali nec etiam in communi" ("Christ and his apostles, following the way of perfection, had no property whatever, either personally or in common"). Among those present was the Franciscan,

Berengarius Taloni, lector at the Narbonne friary. When he heard the charge, he protested, saying that it was not heresy but an article of the Catholic faith, defined as such in the constitution *Exiit qui seminat* by Pope Nicholas III, edited August 14, 1279. The inquisitor ordered him to retract his statement immediately. Berengarius refused. He went instead to Avignon and appealed to Pope John XXII. But the pope, who shared the opinion of the inquisitor of Narbonne, ordered him thrown into jail. At the same time, the pope proposed in writing to all the prelates and theologians in his Curia the question: Is it or isn't it heretical to assert pertinaciously that Christ and his apostles owned nothing either personally or in common?

Since Pope Nicholas III had forbidden, under pain of excommunication, change in or even discussion of the terms of *Exiit*, Pope John XXII, in his constitution *Quia nonnunquam* (March 26, 1322), suspended that prohibition, claiming that it was his right to change the decrees of his predecessors when he saw that they caused more harm than good. The Franciscans considered the definition of Nicholas III an article of faith, and now it became clear to them that Pope John intended to define the opposite.

Reaction of the Franciscans

They took matters into their own hands, and two months later, at the general chapter of Perugia (May 30, 1322), published two solemn declarations, one by the minister general and the provincials, the other by the minister general and the masters and bachelors present at the chapter. These documents, addressed to all Christendom (*universis Christifidelibus*), explained and defended the Franciscans' opinion concerning the poverty of Christ and his apostles as it was defined by Nicholas III's bull *Exiit*, § *Porro:* "Dicimus quod abdicatio proprietatis omnium rerum, tam in speciali quam etiam in communi propter Deum, meritoria est et sancta, quam et Christus, viam perfectionis ostendens, verbo docuit et exemplo firmavit." This bull, they said, is now included in the sixth book of the *Decretals* of Boniface VIII and accepted by the universal Church which is infallible.

Ad conditorem

Pope John was not pleased. How did the friars dare to decide a question which was pending in the Roman Curia? On December 8, 1322, he published the constitution *Ad conditorem canonum*, stating that since the bull *Exiit* caused more harm than good, the Holy See no longer accepted the ownership of the goods the friars used. He denied that it is possible to separate ownership and use with regard to things which are consumed by use. Pope John also said that

he could not believe that his predecessor, Nicholas III, intended to reserve to himself the juridical ownership of every piece of bread, cheese, and egg the friars ate.

On January 14, 1323, the procurator of the Franciscan order, Bonagrazia of Bergamo, a lay brother, but a learned lawyer (*utriusque iuris peritus*), in his own name and in the name of the Order, appealed, in open consistory, against *Ad conditorem*. He was promptly arrested and thrown into a foul jail (*atro*, according to one document, *teterrimo*, according to another), where he was kept till Christmas day, 1323. The pope revised *Ad conditorem*, refuting the arguments of Bonagrazia, and published it again with the same date as the earlier version. He went even further, and on November 12, 1323, published another constitution, beginning with the words *Cum inter nonnullos* (November 12, 1323), in which he decreed that from then on whoever dared to say and hold pertinaciously that Christ and his apostles owned nothing either as private persons or in common, was a heretic. The Franciscans were very upset.

The Pope and the Emperor

Meanwhile, Pope John had other headaches. Since the beginning of his pontificate, he had been involved in a bitter fight with the King of the Romans and later Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Louis of Bavaria, whose election he refused to recognize. Louis claimed that his election was valid and he did not need the approval of the pope. On May 22, 1324, in Sachsenhausen, he published a solemn declaration by which he declared Pope John deposed and appealed against him to a General Council (to be convoked). The Emperor's decree included the friars objections against *Ad conditorem* and *Cum inter nonnullos*, and called the pope a heretic. John answered Louis's accusations with the constitution *Quia quorundam* (November 13, 1324), in which he defended his constitutions and forbade further criticism of them under penalty of excommunication.

Michael of Cesena

In mid 1327, the pope summoned Michael of Cesena, general minister of the Franciscan Order, to his presence. Michael, claiming ill health, did not reach Avignon before December 1. The next day, Pope John received him kindly. They talked about certain problems concerning the Order of St. Francis. The pope wanted Michael to remain in Avignon.

In 1327, Louis of Bavaria descended with his army into Italy and on January 17, 1328, was crowned emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. John suspected the involvement of the Franciscans, especially Michael of Cesena. On April 9, 1328, he held a consistorium. Michael

was ordered to be present. The pope reprehended him very severely, especially on account of the declarations of the chapter of Perugia, which he repeatedly called heretical. The general had the courage to withstand the pope openly and directly (*in faciem restitit*, like St. Paul to St. Peter), defending the orthodoxy of the Perugia declarations. The pope called Michael stupid, insane, hardheaded, tyrannical, and a promoter of heretics. He forbade Michael to leave Avignon without papal permission. On April 13, the general composed an appeal against the pope to be made public after he and his closest associates had escaped from Avignon during the night of May 26.

The Emperor's Decree

On April 14, the emperor promulgated a law in Rome against those who committed lèse majesty or fell into some heresy. The target of that law was Pope John XXII. On April 18, 1328, in the presence of the Roman authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical, and of a great concourse of the Roman people, the emperor promulgated his decree, *Gloriosus Deus in sublimis*, by which he declared Pope John a dangerous criminal and a notorious heretic and reaffirmed his deposition. A few weeks later, on May 12, which was the feast of the Ascension, in order to provide the Church with a legitimate pontiff, Louis installed, with the assistance of the Roman clergy, a new pope in the person of Peter of Corvaro, an elderly Franciscan, who had previously been the provincial minister of the Roman province. (Nicolaus Minorita later calls him *summus cuculus*, the greatest cuckoo).

Michael Takes a Stand

Michael of Cesena, fearing for his life, during the night of May 26, escaped from Avignon in the company of Bonagrazia of Bergamo, William of Ockham, and others. At Aigues-Mortes they boarded a galley, supposedly sent for them by the emperor, and went to Pisa, where they later met the emperor and the antipope. On June 8 the Pope John XXII deposed Michael of Cesena from the office of minister general and excommunicated him together with the other fugitives. Curiously, the general chapter of the Order, in session in Bologna, on June 5, reelected Michael as general of the Order. Naturally, Pope John did not recognize the election and appointed the Franciscan cardinal, Bertrand of Tour, as vicar general of the Order. Michael, now residing in Pisa, on July 9, 1328, sent a letter to the whole Order, explaining the reasons for his escape and forbidding the friars to obey the heretic pope, justly deposed by the Roman clergy and the emperor

In Pisa, on September 18, 1328, Michael of Cesena published a solemn appeal, to Holy Mother Church and to a future General Council, against John

XXII. It is called *Appellatio in forma maiore* and is 170 pages long! In it he points out the many errors and heresies the pope incurred in his three constitutions: *Ad conditorem*, *Cum inter nonnullos*, and *Quia quorundam*. Michael's criticism is supported by hundreds of authorities, adduced from the sacred Scriptures, from the Fathers of the Church, and from both the Canon and Civil Laws. Naturally, this book-length appeal was a work of collaboration between a number of learned friars, all masters of theology, with Bonagrazia of Bergamo, *armarium utriusque iuris*, contributing his spectacular juridical expertise.

There was no reaction to it from Avignon. Perhaps, Michael realized that it was not reasonable to expect the pope, or even his assistants, to read a 170-page appeal. Therefore he condensed it into no more than twenty-five pages. It is called *Appellatio in forma minore*. Although he dated it September 18 (the date of the long appeal), it was not published till December 12, 1328.

It is this shorter appeal that Pope John answered, almost a year later, on November 17, 1329, with fifty-five pages of a long polemical pamphlet (not considered a constitution), which begins with the words *Quia vir reprobus*: that depraved individual. In it the pope (or rather some of his Dominican theologians) refutes the arguments of the Franciscans, letting the accusation of heresy fly against Michael as freely as it was hurled against the pope in Michael's appeal.

Michael's Deposition

In the meantime, some of the friars found Michael's appeal objectionable. The chronicler recites three of the objections with their refutations. The general chapter of the Order, convoked by the vicar general, Cardinal Bertrand of Tour, in Paris, on June 10, 1329, deposed Michael of Cesena and elected as general the candidate of John XXII, Gerald Odonis. Cardinal Bertrand made sure that provincials favorable to Michael were not present at the chapter. He had them deposed and appointed friars willing to vote according to the wishes of the pope.

After the chapter, four masters, Henry of Thalheim, Francis of Ascoli (Marchia), William of Ockham, and Bonagrazia of Bergamo stood up for the rights of Michael of Cesena with a twenty-six page appeal, *Allegationes religiosorum virorum*. In this document they attempted to prove with many arguments that Michael was still the legitimate general of the Order and Gerald an illegitimate intruder, elected by a manipulated chapter which voted according to the intentions of a heretic pope.

Michael of Cesena considered Pope John's pamphlet, *Quia vir reprobus*, an enormous insult not only to his own person but also to the whole Franciscan Order and to the Catholic faith. Michael answered John from Munich, on March 26, 1330, with a 237-page appeal, addressed to all the faithful (*universis*

Christifidelibus), refuting the pope's arguments against him one by one, returning insult for insult.

John's Erroneous Teachings

Around 1330 Pope John was about eighty-five years old, but he kept on preaching, and sometimes he said things which did not sound strictly orthodox. For instance, in one sermon he said that the blessed in heaven will see, as a great novelty, that the three persons of the Trinity are not distinct at all. Novelty, indeed; it was the heresy of Sabellius. In another, he preached that the Son is greater than the Father or the Holy Spirit (*salva reverentia Patris et Spiritus Sancti, Filius est maior utroque*). Why? The Father and the Holy Spirit are only God, but the Son is both God and man. Another time he said that there is no difference between God's absolute and ordained power—error of Peter Abelard: God did what he did because he had no other choice. Statements such as these may have been no more than slips of the tongue; but he had one particular conviction which he held constantly, insistently, and firmly: the souls of the faithful departed, no matter how pure they are or free of sin, will not enjoy the beatific vision before the day of the last judgment, nor will the damned go to hell before that day. Otherwise the description of the last judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 is meaningless. He claimed that St. Bernard was of the same opinion.

This was contrary to the accepted teaching of the Church, yet it became a fixed idea in the mind of the elderly Pope John. He promoted those who shared (or pretended to share) his opinion and persecuted those who dared to preach against it. At the insistence of some of his cardinals, he retracted it on December 3, 1334, a day before he died. But Michael of Cesena and the dissident Franciscans did not consider John's retraction truthful, sincere, and adequate. According to them, he died a heretic. Michael made sure that all the Franciscans were informed of the pope's errors and heresies.

Michael's Position Hardens

In the meantime, some notable friars tried to convince Michael of Cesena to return to the unity of the Order. Michael explained again the reasons why he felt justified, nay obliged, to refuse obedience to a heretic pope. Michael's letter was handed to Gerald Odonis while Gerald was presiding at the general chapter of the Order, convoked, at Pope John's direction, at Perpignan, May 19, 1331.

Gerald answered with a vituperative letter, calling Michael the minister of Satan and renewing the condemnation of the Paris general chapter against

him and against his four closest associates. Michael disdained to answer such a venomous and defamatory letter. Instead, Nicolaus Minorita himself answered it, starting with a verse from the book of Proverbs: "Answer the fool according to his folly, lest he become wise in his own eyes": Gerald is not a legitimate general, his letter is false and worthless and deserves to be thrown into fire together with its author.

After the chapter of Perpignan, Gerald also wrote a personal letter to Michael, opening it with a verse from the prophet Jeremiah: "Why are you trying to justify your wicked ways?" Michael answered him and his accusations in a thirty-page letter, written in a more moderate tone, ending with an exhortation taken from a letter of St. Augustine to Pascentius the Arian: Let's not waste our time with insulting each other but pay attention rather to the problems which concerns both of us.

Benedict XII

Pope John died December 4, 1334, and on December 20, 1334, the cardinals elected James of Fournier who took the name of Benedict XII. He was a learned man, but after his election the first thing he said to his cardinals was: "you have elected an ass." Michael of Cesena and the dissident friars were not happy with Benedict XII's papacy. It is true that Benedict in his bull *Benedictus Deus* (29 January 1336) reaffirmed the traditional teaching of the Church concerning the beatific vision, but he did not condemn the other errors and heresies of his predecessor. Rather he tried to excuse them and called Pope John '*felicis recordationis*' (of happy memory). On August 23, 1338, Michael published in Munich a twenty-page appeal against Benedict and addressed it to a General Council to be convoked in the near future. He listed again the principal errors and heresies of Pope John which Benedict had failed to condemn. The appeal was cosigned by the three most faithful assistants of the deposed general, who were with him in Munich: Henry of Thalheim, William of Ockham, and Bonagrazia of Bergamo.

The Emperor's Position Hardens

The emperor also had his reservations. His initial hopes for reconciliation with the Holy See and for lifting the excommunication of Pope John came to nothing, due mostly to the interference of the king of France, Philip VI. On August 6, 1338, Louis published a solemn declaration in Frankfurt, emphasizing that imperial power and authority do not derive from the pope but directly from God through the electors. Whoever is legitimately elected is the rightful emperor without confirmation by the pope. In defense of his imperial jurisdiction he also appeals to a future General Council. Subsequently, he lists the rights of the empire and his grievances against the abuses of John XXII and Benedict XII. The same day he also published a law, to be observed in perpetuity (*ad perpetuum valitura*), reaffirming that the imperial authority comes directly from God.

Since earlier, at the request of John XXII, some subjects of the empire had taken an oath not to obey the emperor, Bonagrazia of Bergamo, *utriusque iuris peritus*, assured them that they were not obliged to observe it. On the contrary, by observing it, they would endanger the salvation of their souls. The emperor forwarded all these documents to Pope Benedict XII but received no answer.

Nicolaus Minorita's chronicle ends with a sixty-page treatise concerning the powers of the pope: *De potestate papas*. It is called 'beautiful and useful' (*pulcher et utilis*). It was composed, at the request of the emperor and other notable personalities, by a group of experts learned in theology and in both civil and canon laws. They seek to show, with a great display of erudition, that the pope does not have the fullness of power (*plenitudo potestatis*) in temporal matters either by divine or by human right. Further, they claim that the pope does not have fullness of power even in spiritual matters, because he cannot dissolve a valid marriage; he cannot impose upon the faithful the observance of virginity; nor can he make a law which would exempt him from a charge of heresy. If he has no fullness of power in matters spiritual, how can he have full power in matters temporal, they ask.

The *Chronicle of Nicolaus Minorita* (Franciscan Institute Publications, 1996) is a 1200-page collection of important documents edited by Gedeon Gál, OFM. It is not a critical edition but a *sourcebook*—"a fundamental document or record upon which subsequent writings, compositions, opinions, etc., can be based." As an introduction to the sourcebook, David Flood, OFM, wrote a forty-page introduction: *Franciscan Property: A Brief Survey from the Time of St. Francis to Pope John XXII*. Flood also summarized in English the chronicle and the documents it includes. Thus the *Chronicle of Nicolaus Minorita* will be understandable even to scholars who do not read Latin. Clement Schmitt, OFM, former editor in chief of the *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, recognizes this work as a most important contribution to the history of the Franciscan Order.

Accept with kindness and a divine love
the fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .
They are spirit and life.
. . .Preserve them together with
their holy manner of working even to the end.
(Francis, 1EpFid, 20-21)

The Cord, 48.1 (1998)

Book Review

The Early Franciscan Movement: Reflections on a Recent Work

Work for Every One, Francis of Assisi and the Ethic of Service by David Flood, OFM. Quezon City, Philippines: CCFMC Office for Asia/Oceania, Interfranciscan Center, 1997. USA/Canada/Europe, 195 pp., paper $12.50.

There are a few scholars in our Franciscan orbit who make a concerted effort to relate their historical research to developments in the contemporary Church and society. David Flood, OFM, is one of these, and it is with pleasure that I review his most recent book. While reading the book, it became clear to me that it raised significant issues of a much deeper nature for our Franciscan family; and perhaps some reflections on it could stimulate other people to offer their views on the formational, educational, ecclesiological, and social questions which are confronted almost every day in our experience and which can be informed by scholarly progress.

Indeed, since the publication in German of his doctoral thesis work on the *Earlier Rule* in 1967, David Flood has shed the light of his prodigious and original research on the original intention and subsequent development of the early Franciscan movement. The present work is one of a piece with the earlier critical studies summarized in *The Birth of a Movement* (1975) and *Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Movement* (1989). The earlier works concentrated most specifically on the redacted text of the *Regula Non Bullata*, interpreting it against the social and economic background of Assisi and in a dialectical movement with the brooding shadowy presence of the more powerful ecclesiastical world. *Work for Every One*, however, concentrates on the alliance the early friars formed with the laity of their time through a shared evangelical understanding of "work as service."

Flood furthers his earlier studies by drawing significant parallels between

and interrelating the text of the Earlier Rule with "The Message" (Second Letter to the Faithful). As always, the author rightfully insists on the social and economic meaning of the movement within the context of Assisi's Peace Pacts, especially the Charter of 1210. He furthers positions taken in *Haversack* and more extensive scholarly articles on the movement's economic critique of Assisian society and the general collapse of the critical alliance formed between the friars and the lay penitents after the papal interpretation of the movement rendered in *Quo Elongati* (1230). The scholarship is presented with the overall aims of both extending the horizons of our thinking about the early movement and stimulating a genuine social involvement with practical consequences for the followers of St. Francis.

Work for Every One follows a developmental outline. After situating his argument within a contemporary context, Flood analyzes the social meaning of the Earlier Rule (chapters 1, 7-10, 17, 21, and 23) while making insightful comments on the Admonitions (e.g.6 and 18), the Message to the Rulers, and Salutation of the Virtues. Those familiar with his earlier works will appreciate this initial summary of his approach. The heart of the book is Chapter 2, "Hard Work," in which the structure and content of The Message receive full consideration. Here the sentence outline of this most important Franciscan writing is very helpful and deepens our understanding beyond that of Esser, Lehmann, and others.

The key line, Flood argues, is vs. 40: "We should also deny ourselves and put our bodies under the yoke of bondage (*servitus*) and holy obedience, just as each one has promised the Lord." He summarizes the meaning of the Latin text: "*Servitus* suggests the service in which one engages, the labor one contributes to the common cause. The reference to obedience, which controls and guides *servitus*, confirms that meaning. Consequently, in these words, Francis sums up the movement's policy of work as service" (p. 96).

This penitential life of work is something which the friars learned as they labored alongside the lay men and women in the almshouses and leprosaria of the day. Work, in the hands of the early followers of the movement, was a tool of social transformation which made people "subject to each other." A person engaged in work as a common task in order to promote the dignity of the neighbor. This notion stood in stark contrast to that of Assisi's competitive society where work existed in order to accumulate property, to appropriate, and to acquire status and power. This presents a different picture of the early followers of Francis engaged as they were in a dynamic project of social change with its own theory, its critique of the dominant society, and its ethic.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of *Work for Every One*, with a glance at *Quo Elongati*, Haymo of Faversham, the prologue to the *Constitutions of Narbonne*, and a "policy statement on the Penitents" from c. 1268 trace what the author calls the Order's "fall from historical grace." The book concludes: "Work for everyone. It is a

good story. It is not the story usually told about Francis of Assisi. We can use good work stories today, whereas, more and more, the usual Francis stories are losing their luster. Their day has passed" (p. 184). An appendix contains helpful translations of sections from the Earlier Rule, The Message, and the policy statement of the 1260s.

This short book is insightful in its analysis and challenging in its implications. Coupled with Thaddée Matura's recently translated *Francis of Assisi, The Message in His Writings* (Franciscan Institute, 1997), *Work for Every One* provides a fresh and needed look at the social, spiritual, and theological unity of the Franciscan movement and its meaning for our time. It advances from a different perspective the analysis begun by Theophile Desbonnets in *From Intuition to Institution: the Franciscans* (1988), and the reader can delight in the wonderful story about Flood and Desbonnets repeated on page 50 of the present book. It should also be noted that many of Flood's insights, especially those into the Earlier Rule, find great support among lay professional historians who are revisioning the traditional picture of the early Franciscan movement, the relationship between the men and women, the popular base of penitential spirituality, the meaning of poverty, and the stresses and strains which culminated in the development of the Later Rule and eventually turned a movement to the service of the pastoral policies of the ecclesiastical establishment.

In general, eschewing the hagiographical tradition of the biographies, this revision emphasizes the Earlier Rule, The Letter to All the Faithful, and the Testament. (See the recent publication *Francesco d'Assisi e il primo secolo di storia francescana*, Einaudi, 1997). The thrust of this research raises a host of questions for those who teach Franciscan history and spirituality and particularly for practicioners of the Franciscan life who wish to take the charism and its life in the Church seriously. Scholarship has cut a large part of the ground out from a perspective dominated by the canonical categories of the First, Second, and Third Orders.

Having said all of this and conscious of my own background in administration, lack of expertise in the area, and the important qualities of *Work for Every One*, I would like to conclude this review with some critical observations. The reader can be somewhat dismayed at the often tendentious and gratuitous nature of many of the comments in Flood's work. Francis himself is not immune. According to the historian's lights, the Testament's third admonition, on obedience, "sanctions a hierarchical notion of obedience at clear odds with movement life. . . . From Francis or not, the admonition and its obedience puts too much confidence and power into the hands of the ruling body and has to be discussed, criticized, and set aside" (p. 140). A similar dialectical and confrontational understanding emerges from the discussion of Chapter 5 of the Early Rule which is interpreted as a discussion of the misuse

of power and the need to "control the ministers" (p. 133).

Does this whole reading presuppose idealized notions of democratic and hierarchical processes? From my own reading of the writings of Francis and Clare, I have the impression that there are two languages always at work in their history and their experience, languages which espouse both vertical and horozontal understandings of the locus of authority. It is precisely the interaction of these different fraternal and hierarchical dimensions of obedience which provide the context for their social project and their following of Christ. I have found an interactive and dialogic grid to be more illuminating than a dialectical one.

In the same fashion, there is Flood's brief comment about the Later Rule: "One purpose of the change from the Early Rule to the Rule of 1223 was to separate the basic text of the brotherhood from the realm of experience and put it under the control of canon law" (p. 74). Perhaps. But while restoring Francis to his own history, what does such a statement say about the history of its participants? Does a methodology which concentrates on the writings of Francis here presuppose an argument which emerges fully only in the later biographies? Or is some other historical grid involved? Does such a reading presuppose an overly conflictual reading of the Earlier Rule and the life of the brothers? Could it be that the self-understanding of Francis and Clare about their place in Church and society evolved, albeit with tensions? Along the same lines, while one can criticize *Quo Elongati's* interpretation, could it be that Gregory IX's viewpoint reflected his own struggle with forces much larger and even destructively suspicious of the young Franciscan movement?

Internal developments after the death of Francis receive an especially difficult treatment. Although there is a brief theoretical defense of learning (p. 91), sprinkled throughout the book are fairly consistent remarks about the twisting influence of the "learned brothers": "Or, to put it differently, they were no more than prudent and helpful and wisely sensitive as they let the spirit of the world worm its way into Franciscan discourse" (p.132; cf. pp. 101, 110, 129. 132). Haymo of Haversham, admittedly the architect of some profound changes in the Order, "sort of entered it as the head of his own little order of high-powered clerics" (p. 143). "The critical consensus of a movement faded and the organization turned into a machine of salvation" (p. 147). The complete gloss on the movement occurred with the *Constitutions of Narbonne*: "Gospel life now means sitting at home. As told. Worrying about the snake. Without having challenged and debated the ruling on work, the constitutions have not only made the popular mingling of early Franciscan labor impossible; they have made it wrong" (p. 167).

Much of this development is symbolically focussed in Chapter 3 of *Work for Every One*, a discussion of a story about the conversion of a lay couple to a life of penitence. I believe that there is a germ of insight here, but the presup-

positions for the interpretation offered would need to be fully stated, the eisegetical nature of the presentation more fully acknowledged and weighed against an historical picture which refuses to elevate the early movement into a state of pre-lapsarian nature and grants to all participants a place within their own history.

Running throughout the work appears to be a theory of social change which is dependent on a bi-polar understanding of society. Such an analysis can be illuminating but perhaps overly constrictive. The world of Assisi is equated with "the politics of the body," with its concern about appropriation, the construction of a social self, competition for wealth and status, exclusion of the weak. This is contrasted with the movement's "politics of the Lord," which is characterized by a system of stewardship, work as service for others, the returning of all good things to God, the inclusion of all people. Was either the world of Assisi or the world of the brothers that unified?

In a parallel way, historical developments from 1209 to 1260 are described as the change from social to moral discourse; from solidarity with people to pastoral service for them; from work to official preaching; from a movement critical of society to an Order which participates in society's structures; from a fraternity to a subinstitution of the hierarchical Church; from a project based on dynamic interaction, shared poverty, and experience to one based on mutual restraint, ascetical poise, and canon law (cf. pp. 21, 74, 111 for some examples). Even Victor Turner's relationship between *communitas* and structure is more processive than this description of a "fall from historical grace." I wonder what would happen to such an analysis of Franciscan history if a more dialogic view of social change informed the discussion? (Cf. Mary Douglass, *Risk and Blame, Essays in Cultural Theory.*)

My own expertise is in the history of popular religiosity in American Catholicism, and perhaps a parallel example from that field might be helpful. During the 1960s the historiography of popular religion was dominated by an interpretive grid which placed a dialectical and adversarial interpretation on the terms elite/popular, literate/illiterate, official/spontaneous, institutional/personal, much as society itself was divided into communal and hierarchical blocks of interest, and religious life was understood to operate within the charismatic/institutional polarities of the Church. More recently, in the last ten years, historians have moved beyond this type of bi-polar analysis to see the mediate relationships between the popular and elite sectors, defining both experiences as existing within a much larger field of discourse. In fact, elite and popular expressions of religion interacted, were mutually appropriated, and became agents of reciprocal change. Here the long view of social development dominates, and in the mind of this historian-administrator, a more historically accurate picture is allowed to emerge, one which makes of all participants dramatic actors in the same human story.

At this point the discussion might appear to be overly academic. I do not think so. From my experience, how we envision the relationship between the two Rules, the interaction between Francis, Guido, and Hugolino, the interplay between *fraternitas* and *ordo*, or the role of Bonaventure has significant manifestations. It affects our formation programs, our attitudes towards the Church, our view of Franciscan institutional life, and our general stance on the role of religious in society. Are we counter-cultural examples? ecclesiastical pastoral agents? mediating figures dwelling in some intermediate zone between the marginated and the powerful? Or a mixture of these stances and many more? Are formation programs designed to establish an ideal "style" in interface with provincial communal life, or are the two dimensions of initial and ongoing formation continuous? Do we idealize some aspects of our own history and omit others? What is our understanding of obedience? How do we frame our own commitment to social change or ecclesiastical reform and what expectations guide us?

I mention these questions in closing precisely because I find *Work for Every One* insightful in its analysis, challenging in its picture of our origins, and provocative in placing its finger on important historiographical, theological, ecclesiological, and political questions. And, for our own guidance, it is time that our Franciscan family began seriously to address these issues which go way beyond the experience of Francis and Clare. This book is reviewed in *The Cord* because those of us concerned about the Franciscan charism, the Church, and society, must begin to interface scholarly approaches and pastoral concerns in a way that is conversant with contemporary experience and fruitful for the Gospel way of life. However we approach his work, it is to David Flood's credit that he witnesses academically and socially to the importance of that endeavor.

Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M.

Those of us concerned about the Franciscan charism, the Church, and society, must begin to interface scholarly approaches and pastoral concerns in a way that is conversant with contemporary experience and fruitful for the Gospel way of life. (Chinnici)

The Cord, 48.1 (1998)

Something Always New

William DeBiase, OFM

The Franciscan charism has many attractive elements. Among these is its newness. There is something within the message which is always generating new life. After eight hundred years one would expect it to have been plumbed to its depth many times over. It seems almost impossible that the corpus of Franciscan literature could hold another volume. After eight centuries the poor man of Assisi still attracts people The facts speak for themselves. New books about Francis are constantly coming out, fresh and exciting insights are being revealed, and people are still being drawn to him. It just does not seem to be getting old.

When we say something is new we say a lot about it. It is unused. It holds a dream. It may also inspire fear. To be new does not mean simply the novel, the faddish. These come and go, usually without leaving too much in their wake.

The Franciscan charism is unused. This is a difficult statement considering its eight hundred year history. We can say something is unused in the sense that its full meaning has yet to be revealed. In marriage, for example, two people can maintain the springtime of their youth simply by being constantly surprised at the personality of the other. A man once told me that on his wedding day he thought he knew and understood his bride perfectly. After thirty-five years of marriage, he has come to the conclusion that he does not understand her at all. Something new was always coming forth even after all those years.

In this sense, Francis is "unused." His charismatic personality has not yet been fully revealed. His vision is always being looked at in the context of the times in which it has to be lived. It is as unused as the Gospel upon which it is based. The Gospel is always entering the world, the lives of people, in new and

very surprising ways. A thing becomes fully used only after all its potential for surprising has been exhausted. The Gospel will never get to this stage and therefore neither will the personality of Francis. To put it simply, the charism still has the power to surprise people.

The new thing holds a dream. Young couples preparing for marriage radiate overpowering dreams—they are on a different planet. But isn't that the nature of a dream? It places us in a different world. To have a dream means that we are not tied down by the present. It expresses a part of our being that says today is worth living. The dream of Francis is not finished. To have a dream is the promise of "newness." Without a dream life gets to be drudgery. The Franciscan dream is to share in the dream which God has for the human race. Francis did not live his own dream but that of God. This is never finished but is always being worked out inside the lives of people and events. A real dream never gets old and no dream is more real than the dream of God for us.

There can be a certain amount of fear in facing something new, in facing our dream. Once again we look at the example of young couples shortly before their wedding. Many times they enter into a state of uncontrollable nervousness. This new thing which they are entering upon is also frightening to them. The thing which they want more than anything else is a two-edged sword. The great joy that they experience is mixed with the intuitive sense that they will have to let go of many things if their love is going to grow. This letting go is the promise of newness. The young couple realizes that from the wedding day on they will not be making decisions just from their own viewpoint. Letting go will be part of their lives. Once they stop things will become cold—the romance disappear. To the extent that they let go new worlds will unfold.

The Franciscan charism is a call to letting go. It is breaking loose from the confines of my own world and entering into the world of another—God. This letting go is the willingness to live not my dream but the dream of God. A very important incident in the life of Francis is the time he gave his clothing to a poor knight. This clothing for Francis was the symbol of a dream—his desire to be a knight. He gave that dream up and in doing so became free to follow another dream. Before giving his clothes away Francis's life was determined. He would be a knight in shining armor. He would go dashing off, cover himself with honor, and find the lady of his dreams. Things were to be different, however. When Francis gave those clothes away, he did not know what the future held. If he had held onto those clothes it is possible that we would never have had a Francis of Assisi.

After saying all this it seems that perhaps the greatest challenge we have as Franciscans is to be open to the revelation of the charism in our lives. To be aware that there are still unused parts, to be convinced that the dream is still real, and to have the courage to let go of one dream for another.

A Biographical Profile of Gedeon Gál, OFM

The Franciscan Institute
St. Bonaventure University
St. Bonaventure, New York

Father Gedeon Gál, OFM, was born in Toszeg, Hungary, on January 9, 1915. When he was only eleven years old he left home to attend the secondary school at Szolnok, ten miles away, where he lived with the Franciscan friars. In 1932, Father Gedeon entered the Franciscan novitiate at Szécsény and in 1933 made his first profession. He did his theological studies at Gyöngyös, a Franciscan seminary that was founded in the 15th century.

Father Gedeon was ordained on September 10, 1939, and began to teach religion in Jászberény at two state schools; but just two years later he was sent to the Pontificio Ateneo Antoniano in Rome to study philosophy. The Second World War had already begun, and in 1943 an American bomb was dropped on the house in Grottoferrata near Rome where Father Gedeon had been staying. His research on a modern Hungarian philosopher was completely destroyed plus the sources he was using. This event influenced him to turn his attention to medieval philosophy, and he began to work on John Duns Scotus's *Theoremata*. After attaining his degree, he was not able to return to Hungary because of the war.

In 1945 Father Gedeon received an assignment to Collegio Internazional di S. Bonaventura, Quaracchi, near Florence, and here worked with Victorin Doucet, OFM, Celestino Piana, OFM, and Ignatius Brady, OFM, to produce fourteen volumes in the *Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica Medii Aevi*, two volumes in the *Bibliotheca Franciscan Ascetic Medii Aevi*, and to begin the third edition of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.

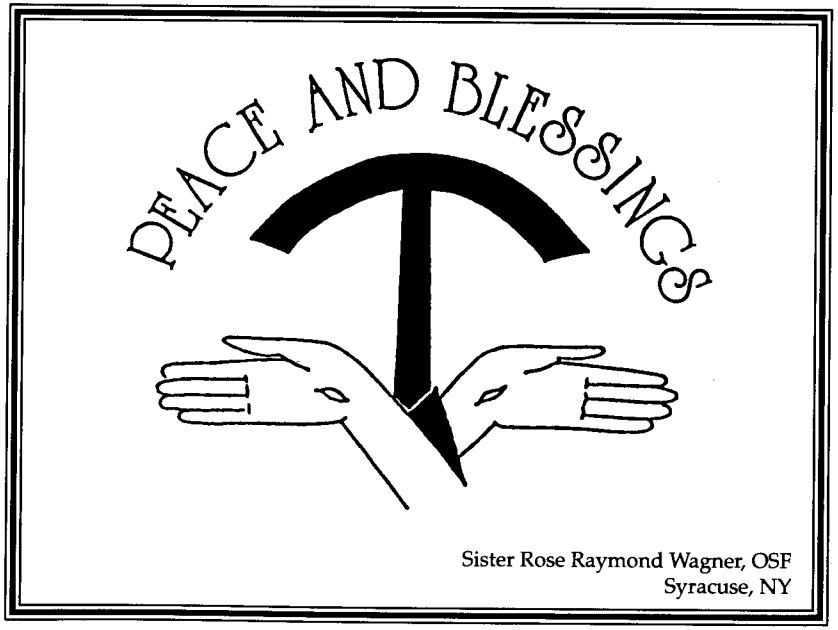
Father Gedeon joined the research staff at The Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure's in 1963. In the years since then he has collaborated with other researchers in producing the seventeen volumes of the *Philosophical and Theological Works of William of Ockham*, the *Lectura secunda* of Adam de Wodeham, and the *Philosophical Works of John Duns Scotus* (in progress).

Father Gedeon continues to be a strong presence at The Franciscan Institute. He has recently published, with David Flood, OFM, *Nicolaus Minorita Chronica*, (documents tracing the 14th century poverty controversy, see pp. 18-25 of this issue), and *Peter of John Olivi on the Bible.*

Many of those who have worked with Father Gedeon remember him fondly. In a recent issue of *Franciscan Studies*, Stephen Brown reminisces:

> Working with Father Gedeon was always enjoyable—calm and enjoyable. He is a very unassuming man, who, as he might say, preferred editing philosophical or theological texts to pumping gas. It was a job; but some jobs are better than others. He never imagined, and even less claimed, that he was doing something earth-shaking. He created an atmosphere of relaxed seriousness. . . . He is a practical, humble friar. Working with a man who never taught formally is an experience in the mystery of learning. He never stopped teaching—and I feel myself to be one of the luckiest pupils alive, benefiting so much from this quiet Magister (*Franciscan Studies*, 53 [1993], 1, 5).

(Details about the life and work of Father Gedeon Gál can be found in *Franciscan Studies* 45 [1985], vii-xii, and 53 [1993], 1-5.)



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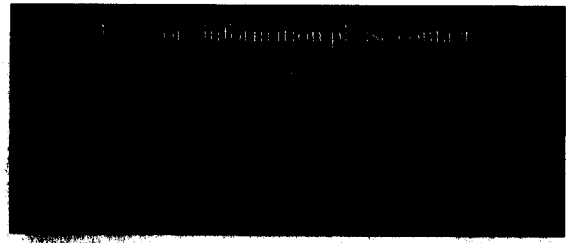

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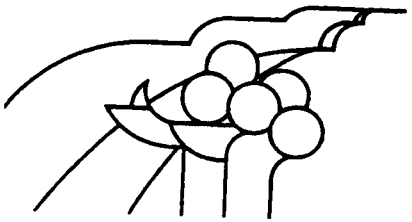

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COMING EVENTS 1998

Saturday, January 31 (snowdate, Feb. 7)
Franciscan Evangelization Today. With Mary Motte, FMM. Sponsored by Franciscan Federation, Region I. At Francisan Missionaries of Mary, 399 Fruit Hill Ave., Providence, RI 02911. Contact: Marie Bernadette Wyman, OSF, Immaculate Conception Motherhouse, 49 Jackson Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706.

Sunday, February 1-Friday, February 6
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
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
Walking in His Footprints. A Retreat for Franciscan Friars. With Joseph Rayes, OFM. At the Franciscan Center, Andover, MA. (See ad, page 42.)

Friday, February 13-Monday, February 16
A Franciscan Hermitage Experience. Contact: Franciscan Renewal Center, 0858 SW Palatine Hill Rd. Portland, OR 97219; ph. 503-636-1590.

Monday, February 23-Friday, March 6
Living in Our Franciscan Experience. (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
Legenda Major: Francis' Life as a Paradigm for the Spiritual Journey. With Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. At Tau Center. (See ad, page 40.)

Friday, March 6-Saturday, March 7
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
Franciscan Discernment Retreat. With Clare D'Auria, OSF. Franciscan Spirit and Life Center. (See ad, page 44.)

Friday, April 3-Wednesday, April 8
The Prayer of Francis and Clare. A retreat with André Cirino, OFM. Franciscan Spirit and Life Center. (See ad, page 44.)

Thursday, April 16-Sunday, April 19
A Franciscan Hermitage Experience. Contact: Franciscan Renewal Center, 0858 SW Palatine Hill Rd. Portland, OR 97219; ph. 503-636-1590.

Thursday, April 23-Thursday, April 27
Franciscan Challenge. Inter-congregational workshop on Franciscan sources/spirituality. $275. At Tau Center. (See ad, page 40.)

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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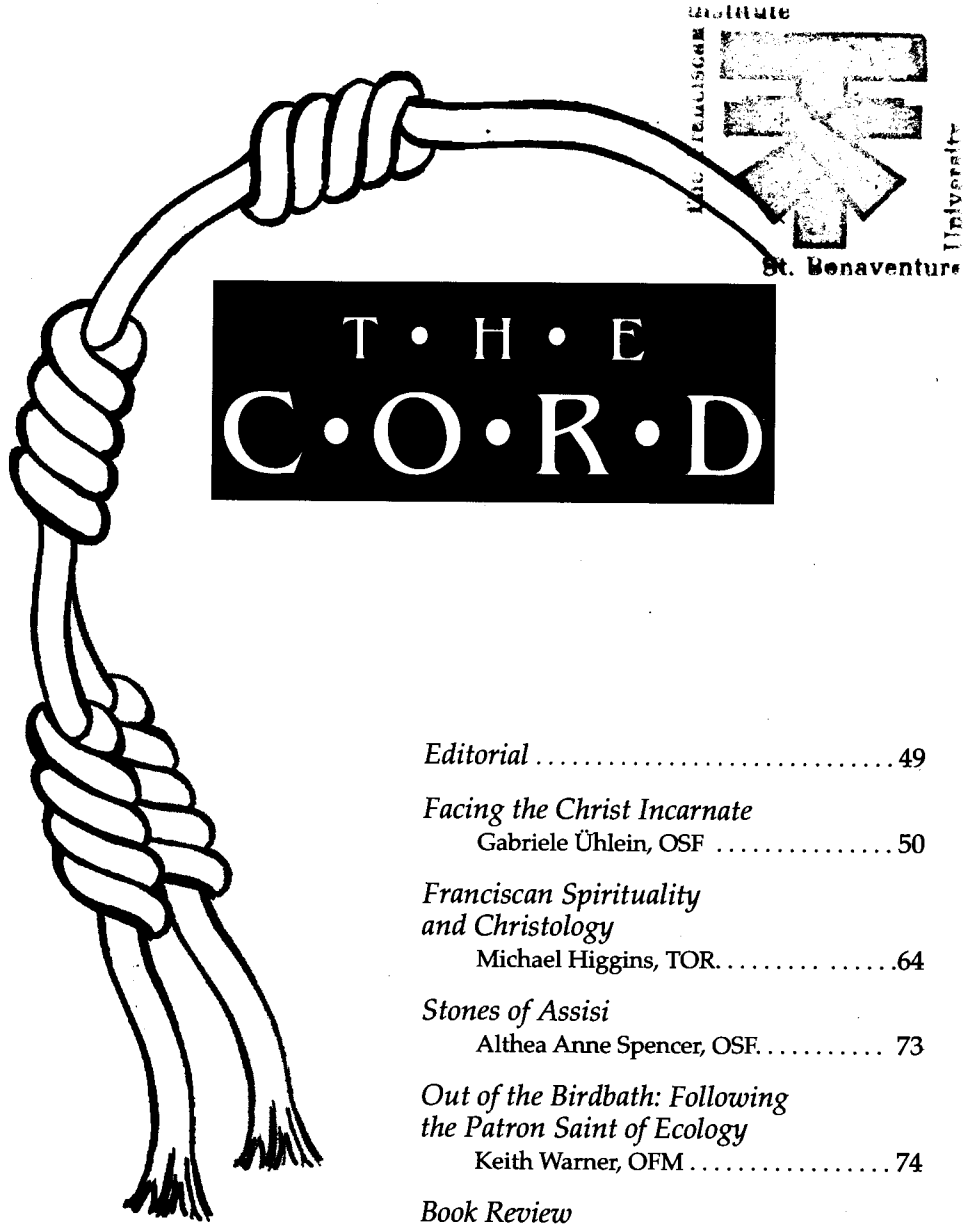

Volume 48, No. 2

March/April 1998

THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

Publisher, Anthony M. Carrozzo, OFM
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). (2Cel 5:8).
   (RegNB 23:2). (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.

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Editorial

Watching the opening ceremonies of the winter Olympics was a moving, if brief, experience of global unity. For a fleeting moment it seemed as though the entire world hung suspended in an aura of peace, goodwill, and even happiness. The ritual had, at times, a mystical quality. Realizing that we were among millions of other human beings doing exactly the same thing at exactly the same time throughout the entire world was truly awesome. As Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" rang out from five continents simultaneously, we could glimpse how our world could be, what it is meant to be. Perhaps, in just that moment, we saw the world and all creation through God's eyes.

Technology made such a moment possible for us. We are among the most blessed of all human beings. But with such blessing comes commensurate responsibility. When the mystical moment has passed, the work still lies before us—the work of building a world that will truly be the world we envisioned in that moment. The saints are those whose vision of a beautifully fulfilled world stirs and energizes them to commit themselves completely to the human enterprise. They live in the faith that what God had in mind for the world from the beginning will surely be the end result—and that each of us is lovingly placed here and graced to participate in the drama of this unfolding.

Franciscans believe that what God intended for the world was completely epitomized in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was what God had in mind from the first moment of creation. As we gaze on Christ we are able to see the wonderful unity, peace, and happiness that was the original inspiration of creation. The awesome moment of truth in front of our televisions is a pale image of the profound revelation that is expressed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in his continued life among us in the Spirit.

In this issue of *The Cord* we offer two reflections on the meaning of facing the Christ Incarnate. Gabriele Ühlein and Michael Higgins gave these originally as participants in a program sponsored by the Franciscan Federation of the Third Order Regular. Keith Warner's article calls us to the ecological responsibility that accompanies such a Christological view of our world.

The God of Jesus Christ is not an Olympian God who remains on an inaccessible summit and looks down on us from some lofty height. This is a God who joins us as a brother and works with us to make a divine dream come true.

Facing the Christ Incarnate: an Experience in Living Christology

Gabriele Ühlein, OSF

This is what we proclaim to you:
What was from the beginning,
what we have heard,
what we have seen with our eyes,
what we have looked upon
and our hands have touched —
We speak of the Word of Life.
This life become visible;
we have seen and bear witness to it
(1John 1:1-2).[1]

These are the words that begin the First Letter of John, and they are the words that, along with an image of the face of the San Damiano Christ, have welcomed over fifteen hundred participants to the *Facing the Christ Incarnate* experience. The program was begun by the Franciscan Federation in 1996 at the request of the membership. Joseph Chinnici, OFM, keynote presenter at the 1994 annual Franciscan Federation Conference, dared Franciscans to answer the profound "prejudice against the incarnation"[2] in the prevailing American culture. He urged them to bring "out of our storehouse the flesh and blood of our tradition in such a way as to feed future generations."[3]

As a result, the next year Zachary Hayes, OFM, professor of historical and systematic theology at Chicago Theological Union was invited to provide a contemporary Christological grounding for the 1995 Franciscan Federation first Joint Conference. He noted that Franciscans are "the immediate heirs" and the "custodians" of a tradition capable of spiritual healing at a level of global magnitude. He went on to add that "there has been no period in history when the doctrine of the cosmic Christ was so important as it is right now."[4] Thus Hayes's contemporary articulation of Franciscan Christology and Chinnici's cultural-historical analysis of the incarnational Franciscan tradition became the founding reference points for the *Facing the Christ Incarnate* program.

At the heart of the program is the flesh and blood reality of daily living in the world. If there is to be a specifically Franciscan antidote to the "bias against the incarnation," it will be because individual Franciscans enflesh a countercultural understanding of what it means to experience the Christ incarnate and thereby give this transformative reality a tangible, embraceable face. As Franciscan heirs to a living "fioretti" or storytelling tradition, we can begin with a consideration of our own experience. But we must also place our individual reflections in thoughtful conversation with not only other contemporary Franciscans but also the Christological tradition that has preceded us.

The efficacy of such a Franciscan Christological project, however, will not be measured in terms of its specific systematics alone. Rather, its ultimate measure will be its capacity to reveal evermore deeply, the "living stones" that we are—all of us together—in Christ. Hence each participant of *Facing the Christ Incarnate* was asked to reflect on just that very revelation: How have *you* experienced the face of Christ? How have *you* experienced the power of God's presence in being human? How have *you* experienced the bias against the Incarnation in our human condition?

As a result, the experience of the program has a profoundly confessional character. When individual stories are told, and the retreat experience unfolds, often a remarkable rapport and deep level of sharing becomes evident. We each have recognized the face of Christ. We each have experienced God-with-us in flesh and blood. We each have also managed to insulate ourselves selectively against the incarnation ever present to us. Our mutual sharing—our "apologia"—is thus not simply a result of the specific external facts and circumstances of our lives and relationships. Since we interpret and edit our stories in the telling, they also reveal the inner private Christological synthesis that informs the quality of our experiences. And there is always more to learn.

To this end, a consideration of the ambiguous nature of the word "facing" in the program's title is helpful. To turn to "face" the Christ incarnate is to give that very incarnate Christ a "face." It cannot be otherwise. To see the Christ requires that we look with "Christ-eyes." It is as if, in the very act of "facing" the Christ, the seer and the seen simultaneously participate in the transformative experience of seeing the face of Christ in flesh and blood. It is as if "facing" and being "faced" are subjective aspects of one unitive objective reality. To see the Christ-face I must look, not with the biased limited vision of my own eyes, but with Christ's own eyes. For my own Christ-face to be seen requires of the seer the same Christ-like looking.

It is no wonder therefore, that the bias against the incarnation is so prevalent. Often that which I "see" is presumed to be too small to be so profound a revelation of God-with-us. But this is not the only form of the bias. How quick I am to assume that the God who is ever with us, is not "big enough" to be present in what I take to be God-forsaken. *To reflect on "facing" the Christ incarnate then, is to come face to face with both vast transcendent divinity and gritty flesh and blood minority*. This reconciliation of opposites—the divine become one among us—is the central gospel koan each of us struggles with and is both the measure and stumbling block of Franciscan spirituality itself. Is this not the very Paschal paradox:—that the God-with-us is present and available to be "faced" even in what heretofore we thought to be God forsaken?

What follows here will not be a review of the *Facing the Christ Incarnate* program, nor is it intended as a systematic development of a Franciscan theology. It is rather presented in the spirit of the sharing that is possible between the brothers and the sisters as we look to find each other in Christ. I offer it as my attempt to make sense of my experience. My hope is that it might be a "conversation starter" of sorts and invite others to speak from their own "flesh and blood" richness and their own God-given capacity to love as Christ loves.

Love Is Not Loved; Nobody Understands Love

I begin my own reflection with a consideration of my face in a mirror—a sort of spontaneous shared conversation with myself as to what I see, who I see, and what experience is reflected back to me. Different each time, the sharings have nonetheless made clear for me the confusion within myself, within our tradition, and within religious life in general around the holy particularities of our individual "faces." In the experience of "facing" the Christ incarnate, a particular "face" is required. Yet there is a bias toward "effacing"—that is, an inappropriate "effacing" of myself, as well as others, as convenience or ignorance might move me.

The faceless seldom move our hearts or prompt our creativity. It takes much faith and great wisdom to acknowledge the truth that God has a "face," possibly even my own face, that yearns to be fully recognized by our senses and our spiritual sensibilities. The incarnate God speaks in enfleshed words that yearn for access to human hearts and in creaturely ways yearn for creative human participation. I believe that such an awareness of "facing" (that is, ascribing a face to, or seeing the face of) the incarnate Christ is what allowed Francis of Assisi to run weeping through the streets exclaiming: "Love is not loved; nobody understands Love." And it made the La Verna requests of St. Francis possible: to know, to feel in body and soul the pain of the most bitter passion, and to feel the exclusive love that made such suffering endurable on our behalf.

It is fitting poetry then for St. Francis, fresh from his La Verna experience (with his body now marked as Christ's was), to bless Leo with both peace and a "face." Francis prays that Leo be blessed, kept by God, divinely "faced," and given peace. The La Verna story and the Franciscan prayers from it that we treasure reveal the particular genius of our Franciscan spirituality. Francis knows this truth—that even at the most God-forsaken crucifixion moment of human experience, Love can live and God is. Francis knows too just what a greatness is required of God to become so empty and small. Francis's La Verna Praises of God are the only possible fitting response.

Moreover, our fioretti tradition[5] goes on to tell us that Francis's first human act toward another after encountering the seraphic glory is the comforting and "blessing" of his depressed and anxious friend. May God face Leo, too. May God give Leo a peace that will forever elude the understanding of a world biased against such divinely humble and incarnate experience.

La Verna affords Francis the ability to offer a subversive spiritual peace—the capacity to attend to the individual transforming experiences of "God-with-us" in our own encounter of the cross and seraph, in the living, breathing fabric of our bodies. It takes very great courage, great "enheartenment," to "face" suffering passion and broken crucified dreams and not resort to violence or despair. Franciscan spiritual practice in the world can be measured by its capacity to "enhearten" and bless, much as Francis did Leo. Little did Francis dream that subsequent generations would claim that blessing as their own, to bless with and encourage.

It is worth noting that Francis does not tell Leo to be at peace because he, Francis, had just been divinely visited. Rather, Francis prays that Leo might have his own experience of the face of God. This action reveals an aptitude peculiar to the Poverello—the ability to hold the incarnate Paschal paradox in peace, to allow the experience of the paradox to generate divine praise, and to bless. Francis intends others to be blessed, not with his experience, but rather with their own La Verna experience, and thus know for themselves the peace that he now knows.

Moreover, the peace that Francis offers Leo is no less than Christ's peace. He intends it as a comfort to Leo, and in that blessing moment, Francis becomes the image of Christ for Leo. Fittingly, Francis freshly bears the marks of Christ in his own flesh. Thus I am reminded that my own visitation moments and transformations into an experience of Christ for others take place within the particularities of my own life. And they are revealed in my own capacity for blessing—with the loving desire and sure conviction that the incomprehensible Peace of God will be birthed in the flesh and blood lives of those I so bless. But more is required of Francis and of us. I must also come to understand that this enfleshed peace-bringing is not only for myself and/or

the two-legged creatures who are like me. The whole of the world, in all its rich diversity of expression, continues to await eagerly such Christ-fullness.

Toward a Christological Re-formation

For the past two years, the brochure for *Facing the Christ Incarnate* with its distinctive face of Christ from the San Damiano icon, its words from the First Letter of John, and the accompanying image of the world with a human fingerprint[6] upon it have been a constant in my life. I have carried them cross-country, encountered them constantly in the program correspondence, and have even faced them in my dreams once or twice. I must confess that the image of the fingerprinted world has proved to be most troublesome for me, and consequently most revelatory of my own particular bias against the incarnation.

This image was inspired by Bonaventure's understanding that creation reveals its creator much as a sculpture reveals its maker by the inevitable fingerprints the creative process leaves in the clay. The image was intended to suggest a beloved creation bearing the signature of its creator and to celebrate the *imago dei* enfleshed in that very world. But I am also acutely aware of the enormous burden the human species presently places upon the eco-systems of this planet. We know that the "fingerprint" of our collective species is omnipresent in the bio-sphere in troublesome ways which Francis and Clare never could have imagined. The fingerprint on the world presents me with a painful and ominous reminder of how my species has not yet learned that the earth is not ours to appropriate.

Might I find the face of Christ incarnate even in the midst of our present difficult ecological reality? Do I dare to trust the transformative nature of incarnational presence in what I presume to be a God-forsaken eco-system degradation? In response, I am haunted by the keynote words of Zachary Hayes, who stated that

> there is an intrinsic connection between the mystery of creation and the mystery of the incarnation. We discover in a deeper sense, in what we see and hear and touch in Jesus, the divine clue as to the structure and meaning of not only humanity but of the entire universe.[7]

I must confess that I have not resolved this puzzle for myself, and thus must continue to keep vigil with the paradox of the human as both revealer and crucifier of the divine incarnate human-earth connection. The particular Franciscan perspectives that therefore present the most challenge for me as I grapple with this problem are:

a) the centrality of the figure of Christ,
b) God as loving Father, and
c) creation as mirror and image of God.

Hayes observes that these are the very three confessions that were "developed into distinctive theological perspectives by the authors of the Order."[8] He also goes on to note that Francis expressed these convictions in his own individual way as did Clare.[9] I might add that for any specific theological reflection to qualify as Franciscan, it also must affirm all three. What is mine to do then is to express these same insights in a manner appropriate to the particulars of the world I perceive. I shall attempt that here. But there is a caveat—to express them in a way that is continually transformative in the spirit of the Fifth Admonition as suggested by Hayes: "Try to recognize the dignity that God has conferred upon you. He created and formed your body in the image of His beloved son, and your soul in His likeness."[10]

On Contemplating the Figure of Christ

Setting aside contemporary gender bias concerns for the moment, the Fifth Admonition expresses a profound Christ-centered basis for a life-long process of ongoing transformation. The purpose of this conversion process is to reveal ever more clearly the Christ-likeness that is ours from the first moment of our creaturehood. It is precisely here that the purpose of our penitential form of life springs into fresh relief for me. Penitential practices ought to be gladly chosen, not as punishment, but as a means to affirm and support our capacity both to be and to recognize the *imago Dei*—"facing" the Christ incarnate for all other creatures and indeed all creation.

The penitential life at its finest ought to confirm my original likeness to Christ, the beloved of God. Penitential practices at their best, ought to be chosen with an eye to their ability to evoke the Christ "face." I ought to practice those penances that allow me best to recognize the Christ in myself and all that I see. Moreover, while "the Cross" (and specifically for Franciscans, the San Damiano icon) is the premier archetype of the fullness of Christ's love, it is not to be understood as the ultimate penitential act to be sought after and desired by either ourselves or God. The cross is the consequence of living the Christ-life in a world that is not yet unbiased enough, not yet ripe enough, to hold so much fullness. Thus Francis's cries as he runs through Assisi: "Love is not loved; no one understands Love."

In our spiritual maturation and ripening we are not meant to pursue crucifixion. We are meant to pursue love. Our suffering and crucifixion are not the measure of our Christ-likeness. Our loving is. "What is mine to do" as Francis exhorts, is to be "subject and submissive to all persons in the world, not only to human

beings, but even to all beasts and wild animals" (SalVirt 16-18) out of the fullest love I can muster. My ever-ripening capacity to "face" the Christ incarnate is revealed in the particulars of my life to the extent that I love myself, my neighbor, and the full gorgeous wholeness of the creation in which all of us are held inescapably together in divine loving. My own suffering and crucifixion are inevitable in that embrace, but so is my resurrection and my fullness of life. Of this we have the very assurance of the Word made flesh.

On Contemplating God as Loving Father

It is not my intention at the moment to speak to specific doctrinal Trinitarian concerns. Rather I am led to speak about how, as a contemporary Franciscan woman, I can come to a reasonable measure of peace with the "Father" language that permeates the Franciscan corpus. I have given careful consideration to the words I might choose to express the fullness implied by a Franciscan understanding of the First Person of the Trinity.[11] Clearly the "Father-role" requires a capacity for an omnipotently creative bringing forth, a begetting, a birthing, a loving into being that is at its heart the evocative source of none other than Christ, the first begotten. The vocation of the Christ then, as the first begotten become incarnate, is to give a "face" to that source—to reveal "the Father," as Scripture tells us. *The incarnate Christ bears no less than the Creator's face.*

My sense of what the Creator might have intended to be revealed through the incarnation is confirmed by Meister Eckart's oft-quoted insight: "From all eternity God lies on a birthing bed." This image of birthing "from all eternity" is compelling for me perhaps because I have always felt close to God while being creative. To lose myself in creativity, as participative artist or as audience, is for me a timeless pleasure. Or is it because I am companioning my mother as I write this? It is our first Christmas shortly after the unexpected death of my father. To live daily with the one from whose incarnation I was born to flesh and blood life is a compelling and potent meditation. Perhaps it is also because I am familiar with Sara Ruddick's book *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace.*[12] In it she describes several aspects of what she calls "maternal practice," and I can think of no better behavioral descriptors for the faces of those who have mirrored God to me—that is, Love loving. I understand the hallmarks of Ruddick's "maternal practice" to be as follows:

1. *Holds close, welcomes change.* This is the ability to continue to be in loving relationship as the child grows. The changes heralding the ripening of the child into creative maturity are cause for celebration and not regret. There is no attempt to arrest the transformation process. Change is welcomed for its ongoing revelation of the divine—an evolution into an evermore expansive experience of the possibilities of God-with-us.

2. *Attends to the particular rather than to the abstract general.* Each child is loved in her or his unique particularity. The notion of loving each child equally is exhibited not in uniform behavior toward each, but rather is given expression through attentive and individualized responses to the needs and best interests of each child. Each of us, and each bit of creation is loved uniquely and in a never again to be repeated articulation of divine love.

3. *Appreciates the unique her/his-story expressed in costly human flesh.* Not one of us has the same exuberant experience nor occupies the same place in time and space. And we have, each according to our own particular life, felt the cost of embodiment. There is no doubt our incarnation exacts its price. Our bodies require care, feel pain, suffer sickness, diminish, and ultimately slip from all of us. To know this is to be capable of great compassion and wise loving. Does not the face of Christ companion us even there too?

4. *Sees the lovable and extends a love that "knowledge" does not destroy.* There is a certain capacity for loving that does not diminish in the light of truthfulness. No matter what children may do, no matter what the consequences of their behavior, the love that is there for them remains steady, and indeed can continue to grow. For the past to be known, even its inevitable unsavory aspects, and for God's loving to continue in the wake of such knowing is the certain hope of every penitent.

What is particularly useful about these observable and eminently experienceable behaviors is that they are not gender specific. They serve as descriptors of God's activity in my life. Those who have been a "face of Christ" for me have either embodied or evoked such responses. These behaviors provide for me a transgender appropriation of God-like loving values that allow for the full range of human variation in every way imaginable. Here diversity is not a problem. Differences are wondrous opportunities to reveal further the capacity for loving inherent in the incarnate human experience. Cast in the widest way, such loving can find fruitful expression not only in immediate familial relationships, but can afford too a basis for community life and creativity in inter-religious dialogue and political accord.

But "maternal practice" in and of itself, is theologically neutral. For "maternal practice" to be useful in my own spiritual development, it requires a humble, disciplined contemplation—such that when I experience these be-

haviors, I can recognize the face of God-with-us. Only then can these behaviors be for me reflective of God and of the full range of the human Christ experience. In addition, in this particular spiritual context, not just the "cross" event, but all the human adventures and artful dimensions of the Christ-life can be understood as operative in the "facing" of my own life. When I contemplate the Christ-life, I contemplate the fullest life that is possible. For example, I too can experience annunciation, undergo transfiguration, meet another at Jacob's well, and intercede for the one discovered in sin. The gospel life, that is, the revelation of God-with-us, is no less than my life in its fullest possible truth. Love loving.

On Contemplating Creation

I have already confessed earlier my ambivalence regarding the effects of the human presence in creation. I must grapple with a Franciscan tradition that insists on an important connection between the mysteries of the incarnation and creation. Quoted by Hayes, St. Bonaventure expresses this fact most succinctly:

> All things are said to be transformed in the transfiguration of Christ, in as far as something in each creature was transfigured in Christ. For as a human being, Christ has something in common with all creatures. With the stone he shares existence; with the plants he shares life; with the animals he shares sensation; and with the angels he shares intelligence. Therefore all things are said to be transformed in Christ since—in his human nature—he embraces something of every creature in himself when he was transfigured.[13]

Hayes makes much of the Christic center this paragraph of Bonaventure presumes. I am equally intrigued by this apparent focus. Here not just the human but all things are caught up together in a common matrix. And that matrix is the Christ, the first-begotten beloved divine expression ultimately spoken in human incarnation. Thus Bonaventure understands the Word—the Christ—to impact and transform the cosmic whole of things. In this process the Cosmos is loved as the human is loved, for it is no less than the very stuff from which the flesh and blood incarnation of the first-born Christ, Word come among us as one of us, is articulated.

It could never be the intent of the God who birthed creation in love to discard eventually the physical Cosmos. Nor can we. To trivialize or diminish any of its awesomeness is to truncate the very vocabulary by which the Word of God originally found, and continues to find, incarnate expression.[14] *Every bit of creation, no matter how infinitesimal, reveals its loving creator.*[15] Nothing is

without possibility of transfiguration. Creation in its full Christed expression, becomes the body of the eternal Word and primary text of divine self-revelation—vast, monumental, and of which we are but a small part.

In my own life and in the life of the worshipping community, the cosmos is not merely background. It provides the necessary support and context for my physical life. It is a divine expression requiring my finest contemplative respect. Its value lies not so much in what I might use it for, but what it can reveal to me about its loving Creator and mine. The act most befitting the cosmos is not the pursuit of its utilitarian possibilities and riches, but rather an appreciation and celebration of the divine revelatory richness of expression it manifests, so generously and so irrepressibly.

Simply to utilize the creation I might find at my immediate disposal then—no matter how pragmatic or well meaning—is simply materialistic appropriation. But use it as humans we must. *We live by the congenial dispensation of our cosmic kin, and are thus nested in a cosmos whose purpose and "destiny" is the familial cosmic destiny of the human.* What this familial bond requires of us in turn is a spiritual sensitivity that understands that God intended for us to be participants in "redemptive completion" and not "salvific consumerism." Such a sensitivity becomes all the more urgent the more technologically creative we become in reaping the economic benefits of our "kinship." Likewise required of us is a willingness to consider the necessary means of affording a "fullness of life" for the whole of my "kin" in widest possible embrace.

Understanding ourselves as participants in creation's ultimate completion in Christ has a profound moral implication. We are nothing if not beloved participants in a great cosmic "kin-dom" coming.[16] While we may well opt to act as if estranged from this "kin-dom," or suffer involuntary ignorance of it, it is the whole of the cosmos, and thereby we too are completed in Christ. I do not participate in creation in order to appropriate it for my personal salvation at whatever level I might take that to be. To judge what is appropriate participation only in terms of personal or political rights, possessions, and control, while necessary, is inadequate in light of the great community in which we are nested and upon whose verdancy our very existence depends.

To paraphrase from the native tradition of the American continent, *we belong to this creation, this creation does not belong to us.* To act as if it does, is material consumerism in its most toxic incarnation. Similarly, I also ought not think of the Christ as somehow only "out there." The Christ incarnate is not separate from the created world I encounter in everyday life. In this sense therefore it is more accurate to say, as the Scriptures also affirm, that I am "in" Christ, rather than that Christ is "in" me. Nor is it the purpose of the incarnate Christ to "save" or "exempt" me from this world. It is in the very matter of the world that the incarnate Christ takes on flesh and blood expression.

Toward an Intentional Incarnational Presence in the World

If we are to confirm the kinship with creation that St. Francis immortalized in his *Canticle of the Creatures*, we ought to be able to say that we "love that world. And [our] love for the world need not replace [our] love for God."[17] Given the above three meditations (for that is how I hope they are received) on the Christ, the Father, and Creation, what might there be in the Franciscan tradition that can provide both wisdom and encouragement to live as intentional incarnational presence in this awesome world and in the circumstances of the life we face today?

Included in the *Facing the Christ Incarnate* program is an opportunity to hear from specially invited local guests the story of their experience of "facing" the Christ incarnate in their lives and ministry. They are "hosted" by a so-called "heritage guest," a member of the team that for the occasion takes on the persona of a Franciscan from the historical tradition, such as Lady Jacoba, Giles, Leo, Francis, Clare, or even the foundress of a particular congregation. There is a certain grace that accompanies this role-playing and the shared stories of the heritage guests. I find myself listening differently no matter how familiar the words might be, when they are spoken by a sister or brother—a living fioretti—whose face I can see, and who can see mine.

The ensuing conversation in which all present participate is often a deep, heartfelt exchange. While specific trappings of culture, role expectations, and world circumstances vary and differentiate, there is a profound solidarity of heart that emerges in the story-telling and the dialogue. I am continually awed by the level of mutual vulnerability and encouragement these "fioretti" moments afford. To call forth the stories and to honor them as revelatory is a precious Franciscan tradition. And the wisdom that the heritage guest offers is some variation of what Clare wrote to Agnes in her third letter: "I consider you a co-worker of God . . . and a support of the weak members of his ineffable body. Who is there then that would not encourage me to rejoice over such marvelous joys?" (3LAg 8-9).[18]

The heritage guest best confirms the common spiritual inheritance of all the participants and can urge as Clare did of Agnes when she wrote to her: "Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance. And transform your whole being into the image of the Godhead Itself through contemplation" (3LAg 13).

For Clare, to become vulnerable to seeing God is to become transformed into God's image, the very purpose of creation. Only in such mysterious knowing can I understand littleness, compassionate hospitality, and gratitude. Often, in doing humbling or troublesome work or in addressing personal fear or collective prejudice, we find the Christ incarnate most necessarily and most

transformatively "faced." Hunger, lack, loss, discomfort, powerlessness, and the suffering of greed and materialistic attachment are part of the human condition. What is given me to do then is to be willingly little, knowingly subject to the vicissitudes of this life, everywhere Christ-hospitable, and in every circumstance blessing, as Francis did Leo: may the "face" of God manifest and give peace.

Such a spiritual practice of blessing presence requires a certain penitential maturity. I weep for the good that could be and is no longer or is not yet. I rejoice for what already is and praise God for what is still to come. I try everywhere and in every circumstance to be a willing participant in the creativity of love. In the process of this practice, should I find myself "taken where I would rather not go," it requires that, even in those places, I dare to anticipate the transformation possible only with God. Surely this surpasses all reason and expectation and no other refuge than the Paschal paradox. In the presumed God-forsaken place, God-with-us is found as companion and mirror—incarnate, crucified, and resurrected.

Finally one more aspect must be considered. Conversations subsequent to *Facing the Christ Incarnate* need to affirm the cosmic dimensions of our incarnational vocation. We struggle daily with our issues of human interdependence, trying to discern the best ways to be brother and sister to each other. No Franciscan who is a Franciscan can say of a human body: "It is nothing." What we are only now beginning to realize *from within the tradition* is that no Franciscan who is a Franciscan can say of any aspect of creation: "It is nothing." For the Word to be incarnate among us requires not only human participation, but earth's hospitable cosmic clay and sunlight for flesh and blood. Brother Sun, Mother Earth, Sisters Water and Moon: these names are not accidental flights of poetic fancy, but express our profound non-optional familial participation in the cosmic Christ event.

A Parting Toast

One of the most helpful images for me from *Facing the Christ Incarnate* is that of fruit ripening. To recall that grapes ripen over time, that there are distinct phases in the planting and maturation processes is useful when grappling with the notion of the Cosmic Christ in my spiritual practice. To understand and then to actualize this concept is much like participating in a ripening process. It requires of me a particular graced love, a particular active interest and willingness, and much patience.

I must wryly admit that it is "patience" that affords me the most "growth opportunities." Desiring sudden revelation or result, I forget the ripening process proceeds gradually and is punctuated with only apparently sudden trans-

formations. What are experienced as dramatic breakthroughs are actually the result of the "day-to-day-ness" of barely perceptible growth. Suddenly the seedling bursts out of the ground into the light. Suddenly a branch is pruned. Suddenly the fruit is plucked and pressed. And only in its own time is the divine wine in apparent "suddenness" poured out and celebrated.

So it is in "facing" the incarnate Christ. And so it is in ripening into our own cosmic Franciscan destiny. There are the "sudden" circumstances of my life that profoundly alter my way of being in the world and my understanding of it. And there is my perception of the "day-to-day-ness" of my life. What I am beginning to discover is that it matters profoundly what I think of my life's dailyness. What affords the vintner patience in the wine-growing process is the vision of the loveliness of the mature wine.[19] That vision *from the beginning* lovingly informs the planting and the pruning. It determines *from the beginning* the length of time the wine ages, and it is what is celebrated in the actual savoring of the wine itself. To complete the metaphor, it might be said that *from the beginning* it is the destiny of the Word as the Christ become flesh and blood to be woven into the cosmic fabric of creation. *From the beginning* it is the destiny of the cosmos to ripen to fullness in Christ. *From the beginning* it is the destiny of the human to participate in that same incarnate destiny. Thus it is my task to allow the vision of my cosmic participation in this divinely intended end, to inform my patience and my daily life.

It is my hope that the considerations I have offered here stimulate a desire for further conversation. They are what is most currently "ripe" in my own reflection. *Facing the Christ Incarnate* was and continues to be for me a rich source of grace. I now conclude with the full text of Clare's exhortation to Agnes, already partially quoted earlier. It is an appropriate way to bless "what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched," and it is a happy toast to the cosmic adventure we share in Franciscan community.

Place your mind in the mirror of eternity!
Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!
Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance!
And transform your whole being into the image of the God-head Itself through contemplation!
So that you may feel what his friends feel
as they taste the hidden sweetness
which God himself has reserved from the beginning
for those who love Him (3LAg 12-14).

Endnotes

[1]Quoted directly from the cover of the *Facing the Christ Incarnate* brochure as designed by Kathleen Moffatt, OSF.

[2]Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM, "The Prophetic Heart: The Evangelical Form of Religious Life in the Contemporary United States," *The Cord*, 44.11(Nov., 1994): 298.

[3]Chinnici, 304.

[4]The quote is directly from the *Facing the Christ Incarnate* brochure. See Zachary Hayes, OFM, "Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity: The Roots of Franciscan Christocentrism and Its Implications for Today," *The Cord*, 46.1(Jan./Feb., 1996): 3-17.

[5]See the complete text of these prayers of St. Francis and the accompanying notations in *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 99-100.

[6]The fingerprint image was initially suggested by Bill Short, OFM.

[7]Hayes, 7.

[8]Hayes, 3.

[9]Hayes, 3.

[10]As cited in Hayes, 4.

[11]What I am sharing here is not so much a discussion of the specific culture-bound gendered appellation of "Father." Instead, I want to name the First Person of the Trinity with those words that express my own best graced intuition of that ever mysterious and ultimately ineffable reality. For me this reality is best expressed in words that harken back to the process of Christ-begetting. Yet I must also acknowledge that the words I speak will never fully capture the whole process. Inherent to the conversation is a willing humility to learn what other possibilities there are for what is best understood in our Franciscan tradition as Love loving. There is much I do not yet know.

[12]Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

[13]Bonaventura, *Sermo I, Dom II* in *Quad.* IX, 215-219, as quoted by Hayes, 13.

[14]I am indebted to Thomas Berry for this notion. It was part of a lecture he delivered in 1982 at Mundelein College, Chicago.

[15]Cf. LM 9:1 in *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, the Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*, tr. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 262-3.

[16]I am indebted to Georgene Wilson, OSF, for this term. She introduces it in *Sabbath Bread* (San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, nd).

[17]Hayes, 16.

[18]Quotations from Clare's writings are from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

[19]This image is taken from St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God.* It came to my attention via Jack Wintz, OFM, "Christ, the Head of Creation," *America* (Sept. 14, 1996): 22-23.

From the beginning it is the destiny of the Word as the Christ become flesh and blood to be woven into the cosmic fabric of creation. From the beginning it is the destiny of the cosmos to ripen to fullness in Christ. From the beginning it is the destiny of the human to participate in that same incarnate destiny.

(Gabriele Uhlein, OSF)

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Franciscan Spirituality and Christology

Michael Higgins, TOR

The Place of Christ in Franciscan Spirituality

Due to Francis's intense devotion to Jesus, Franciscan spirituality has often been described as profoundly Christocentric. Francis encountered in Jesus the fullest expression of the length that God was willing to go to reach out to all women and men and enter into relationship with them. The key moments of this Divine inbreaking were highlighted for Francis in the Incarnation, the Passion, and the Eucharist—in the Crib, the Cross, and the Chalice. "There is nothing that shows more graphically the humility and the poverty which the Divine Word accepted in becoming incarnate than in the helplessness of infancy, the defencelessness of the crucifixion, and the silence of the Eucharist."[1]

These elements of the saving power of God were experienced by Francis in a very personal way. He saw in Christ the paradigm *par excellence* of how poverty and obedience are expressions of a loving relationship with Divine love. God had touched his life in such a profound way that he yearned to live as Christ had lived and thus to become a worthy son of "so noble a Father." The recreation of the first Christmas scene at Greccio, the intense love for the Eucharist, and the mystical events of a lonely retreat on La Verna and the reception of the stigmata bear eloquent witness to Francis's tremendous devotion to Christ. However, the ordinary events of the Saint's life give us an even more profound insight into his spirituality.

Several stories from the early biographies make clear that what separates Francis from those inspired by a stunning sunset is that Francis found beauty and significance also in the less aesthetically pleasing aspects of the physical world. A worm signified Christ because in Psalm 22, David, ancestor and prefiguration of Christ, proclaimed, "I am a worm and no man." In a leper, Francis discovered the image of Christ as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. When Francis saw two sticks crossed on the ground, they led him to meditate on Christ and his cross.[2]

Francis's gift was to be able to see differently. When one is in mindful relationship with God, the Mystery of all that is, the whole of creation is seen as being imbued with the very presence of divinity.

The Incarnation—Jesus Christ, the God-Man

God confirms the dignity of women and men not only in creating them in love and in the Divine image and likeness, but also, more forcibly, in the awe inspiring event of the Incarnation (cf. RegNB 23). Francis often underlines the love of God which is manifested in the humiliation of Christ in the Incarnation. Praise should be given to God who has created all things "spiritual and corporal and, . . . made us in [the Divine] image" (RegNB 23:1), who "sent the beloved Son from on high and He was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary" (OffPass 5:3). And, when men and women fell into sin, this loving God "brought about [Christ's] birth as true God and true man" (RegNB 23:3). The Son then "humbled Himself when he came from the royal throne into the womb of the Virgin" (Adm 1:16). This act of self-emptying had such a profound impact on Francis that he often could think of nothing else (1Cel 84). The fact that Christ took "the flesh of humanity and our frailty" from the Virgin Mary and became human (2EpFid 4) surprised and delighted Francis. He states that Christ did not take on only our human flesh, he took on our frailty as well—the fullness of what it means to be human, body and soul, with all the limits of the human condition.

It is a common misconception that Francis saw the body only as sinful and as something that has to be tamed, whipped into submission, and castigated. While there are some elements of this kind of thinking, particularly in the way that he treated his own body, his writings frequently point out the goodness of the human body:

- The human body was the instrument God used to enter into creation in a dramatic way in the Incarnation (Adm 1:16-22).
- It is through our human bodies that we are able to touch other people and enter into relationship with them and the rest of creation (1EpFid 1-4; 2EpFid; CantSol).
- It is through our bodies that we are able to encounter Christ in this world and to receive him in the Eucharist (2EpFid 14).

- It is through our human bodies that we are able to be followers of Christ. Men and women are to be disciples of Christ not only in the spirit, but with the fullness of who they are, both spirit and body (OffPass; RegNB 16; 2EpFid; Adm 6:2).

From these texts it is clear that following Christ implies the donation of one's whole self, body and spirit. The physical dimension of women and men is an integral aspect of our relationship with God.

Christ in the Passion

Christ was, according to Francis, "the Good Shepherd Who suffered the passion of the cross to save His sheep" (Adm 6:1). This was the result of Christ's obedience to God, a sign of Divine love for women and men, and the consequence of a life lived in radical openness to the guiding force of the Divine will. Therefore, in the passion Jesus submitted his will to the will of God, and the will of God

> . . . was such that the blessed and glorious Son, Whom He gave to us and Who was born for us, should, through His own blood, offer Himself as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross: not for Himself through Whom all things were made, but for our sins, leaving us an example that we should follow in His footprints (2EpFid 11-13).

The death of Jesus was, for Francis, the consequence of the irresistible power of Divine love and goodness. He died from a love that did not know compromise, based as it was on an all consuming desire to be one with the Divine will which was directed to the salvation of all men and women.

The self-emptying of Jesus, demonstrated most clearly in the Incarnation and his free choice of poverty, became the model of faith for Francis. He saw in Christ a man who embraced the Divine will in love, even to the point of dying on the cross, and he wanted to do the same.

Christ in the Eucharist

In the Incarnation and Passion of Christ the love of God is demonstrated, the full dignity of humanity is shown, and men and women are given the opportunity to share in the fullness of Divine life and love. For Francis, this Divine favor continues in the Eucharist, which is nothing less than a continuation of the Incarnation and the ongoing fruit of the Passion. It is the very presence of Christ among us. The only difference between this sacramental

presence and the historical presence of Jesus is one of modality. Francis expresses this clearly:

> Why do you not recognize the truth and believe in the Son of God? See, daily He humbles Himself as when He came from the royal throne in the womb of the Virgin; daily He comes to us in a humble form; daily He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of the priest. And as He appeared to the holy apostles in true flesh, so now He reveals Himself to us in the sacred bread. And as they saw only His flesh by means of their bodily sight, yet believed Him to be God as they contemplated Him with the eyes of faith, so, as we see bread and wine with [our] bodily eyes, we too are to see and firmly believe them to be His most holy Body and Blood living and true. And in this way the Lord is always with His faithful (Adm 1:15-22).

Through participation in the sacrament, men and women become united with Christ, share intimately in the love and saving power of God, and are connected more deeply with all of creation.

> Let the whole of humanity tremble, the whole world shake, and the heavens exult, when Christ, the Son of the living God is [present] on the altar in the hands of a priest. O admirable heights and sublime lowliness! O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! That the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself, that for our salvation He hides Himself under the little form of bread! Look at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before Him. Humble yourselves, as well, that you may be exalted by Him. Therefore, hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves so that He who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally (EpOrd 26-29).

And in the Letter to the Clergy he writes:

> In this world we have and see nothing corporally of the Most High except [His] Body and Blood, and the words through which we have been made and have been redeemed from death to life. . . . Are we not moved by a sense of piety concerning all these things, since the good Lord offers Himself into our hands and we handle Him and receive Him daily with our mouth (EpCler 3,8).

Francis's great love of the Eucharist helps explain why he had such a strong reverence for priests and encouraged them to live a holy life:

> Listen: if the blessed Virgin is so honored, as it is right, since she carried [Christ] in [her] most holy womb; if the blessed Baptist trembled and did not dare to touch the holy head of God; if the tomb

> in which he lay for some time is so venerated, how holy, just, and worthy must be the person who touches [Him] with his hands, receives [Him] in the heart and mouth, and offers [Him] to others to be received. Look at your dignity, you [who are] priests, and be holy since He is holy. And as the Lord God has honored you above all persons because of this ministry, so you should love, reverence, and honor Him above all others (EpOrd 21-24).

Francis's insistence on the cleanliness of the vessels and linens used in the celebration of Mass, as well as his encouragement to the priests to live holy lives, was a natural outcome of his reverence for the Eucharist and his devotion to Churches. However, even when priests sinned and fell short of their calling, Francis continued to venerate them:

> I act in this way since I see nothing corporally of the Most High Son of God in this world except His Most holy Body and Blood which they receive and which they alone administer to others (Test 9).

The Christocentric Nature of Franciscan Theology

The special relationship that Francis had with Christ and his ardent devotion to the significant events in the Savior's life spilled over into every action and colored every thought of the Saint. The relationship conferred a special Christocentric character to his spirituality, a spirituality that was born in a personal encounter with Divine love. Francis was such a popular figure in his own time and down through the ages that it is easy to see how his experience of God gave birth to a uniquely "Franciscan" way of doing theology—a theology which preoccupied itself primarily with the place of Christ in human life and in creation and with God's activity in all parts of creation through love and grace.

Francis placed Christ at the center of his love because he experienced Christ as the center of God, One and Three, and at the center of creation. In a word, Christ always and everywhere led him to God. Franciscan theologians, influenced and guided by the example of the Poverello, struggled to give sound theological expression to the centrality of Christ—the One sent by God into the world because of Divine love, the One who was the model and channel of creation, the One who established the possibility of salvation through the redemptive power of the Paschal Mystery, and the One who remains with his people always in the Eucharist.

For Francis, the first absolute is God, the Divine One who cleared up the darkness of his heart, who entered into relationship with him, and who guided him throughout his life. Christ is the one who showed him how best to be in relationship to this great and awesome God and who showed him what a truly

Christian life is all about. Christ assumed the central position in Francis's spirituality. With the force of his very being, in his actions and preaching, and through his profound example of humility and poverty, Jesus revealed and pointed the way to God, the Most High. Franciscan theologians, from Alexander of Hales to Duns Scotus, used this Christocentric vision as a point of departure in their own speculative theologizing about the mystery of God.

The theology of St. Bonaventure (1217-1274) is "imbued with characteristically Franciscan concerns and qualities, to such a degree that some interpreters see him as the most complete embodiment of the spirit of the Franciscan school."[3] For Francis, the experience of God in and through the person of Christ, which expressed the reality of God as the Supreme Good, characterized his spirituality. However, the Poverello was not a theologian and never wrote about his experience in a theological or systematic way. This is certainly not the case with Bonaventure. Influenced by Francis, Bonaventure developed a theology that is highly Trinitarian and Christocentric while maintaining a distinctly "Franciscan" flavor based on the love and goodness of God. It is a theology that is at once profoundly personal and intellectually lofty and complex. The foundation of his Christology is grounded in the firm belief that Jesus, the center of all reality, became incarnate and visible to women and men.

> In its deepest sense, is not the question of the saving significance of Christ precisely the question of how we, in our relationship to Christ, find a saving, healing, integrating relation with the reality of God? . . . The work of Bonaventure reflects the same concern.[4]

Christ is the exemplar of all that it means to be holy and the fullest example of what it means to live a moral life. His example, though, is not merely one way among many possible ways to live, but it is the obligatory way for men and women. Since Christ is the center of all that is, when one lives as Christ did and acts as Christ acted, then one is able to participate in the very structure of reality itself.

> Christ is the blueprint, the form, or the inspiring image that God uses as a model in molding every part of creation. The human person in a special way reveals that creative model.[5]

Thus, the focus of a life of grace is ultimately one of conformity to Christ. By becoming more and more like Christ, we enter into an ever deeper relationship to God. In this sense, Bonaventure's Christology is very practical. However, on another level, it is intensely mystical in nature.

Yet Bonaventure is able to avoid the Gnostic and Docetic tendency inherent in cosmic Christologies to ignore or deny the full humanity of Christ.

> This is the significance of his strong and insistent appeal to the actual historical form of Jesus' life; and above all to his human poverty and weakness; to his real human obedience which caused such anguish and suffering and led eventually to the violent death on the cross. This is what Christians call an incarnation.[6]

The challenge of the Christian life, our very destiny, is to become more Christ-like. He is, after all, the revelation of the ultimate structure of all that is and the clearest example of what it means to be in relation with God. When we participate in this mystery we personalize the reality of our sonship or daughtership in relation to Divine love itself. "It is in this deepest level of God-likeness that the created world is brought to its God-appointed end in man."[7]

Duns Scotus (1266-1308) is the Franciscan theologian who best expressed theologically what was implicit in the spirituality of St. Francis: the centrality of Christ in all of creation and the great dignity of women and men. He presented Christ as the unique key through which all of the created universe, especially women and men who are called to participate in Divine life itself, can be interpreted. In other words, theology has God as its prime and absolute objective, and God, through Divine grace and love, created everything—natural and supernatural—through Christ. Christ was not created outside of God, nor was he created at all. He was from all times part of the uncreated triune Godhead. However, he entered creation in a profound and inextricable fashion in the Incarnation—the fullest expression of God's willingness to enter into the very stuff of human existence in order to be in relationship with men and women. In the reality of Christ's human existence, humanity itself is elevated to an immeasurable dignity. In this sense, Christ becomes the highest of all creation in every sense of the word and the model for all of human life and endeavors. Specifically, Christ is the "first" absolute in the Divine plan and greater by far than any imperfection caused by human sinfulness or imperfection. Thus, even if Adam had not sinned, the Word of God most definitely would have become Incarnate in the God-man, Jesus Christ. Scotus put it this way:

> I say that the Incarnation of Christ was not foreseen as occasioned by sin, but was immediately foreseen from all eternity by God as a good more proximate to the end. Thus Christ in his human nature is foreseen as closer to the end [God had in mind in creating] than the others—speaking of those predestined, for each and everyone of these was first ordered to grace and glory before the fall.[8]

William Short presents this wonderful image of Scotus's position:

> The Incarnation of the Word is the highest good, the supreme expression of God's love. By comparison with the infinity of love revealed in the Incarnation, Adam's sin and correcting its effects appear as a lesser good. (To use a metaphor, why build the Taj Mahal to cover a pothole?)[9]

In essence, then, the universe is not sin-centered, but rather Christ-centered. Further, since God created all things through Christ, every being and every aspect of creation ultimately finds its reason for existence in him. "The human nature of Christ is the motif the Divine Architect was to carry out in the rest of creation. . . . The whole universe is full of Christ."[10] As every point in the circumference of a circle is defined by its distance from the center of the circle, so every facet of creation can define itself only in relation to Christ, the center of all. The cross, with its four arms, points to every direction of the universe. At the center of the cross is Christ. In the same way, Christ is the center of all of creation—spiritual and physical—and is the ultimate source of meaning.

> The Incarnational thrust within Scotus's thought defines it as a specifically Christian view of reality. Jesus Christ stands at the center of the Scotistic universe as the fullness of human nature in union with God. Scotistic thought centers around the importance of each person and the unique dignity of each human act and of each human life. Salvation history recounts the story of concrete and contingent events in which God freely chose to enter into the unfolding of a particular human life. Each life, each moment, then, offers an opportunity for the discovery of the value and dignity each one of us holds in the eyes of God.[11]

Scotus is also the theologian who developed an acceptable theological explanation for what would become the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Many theologians, including Origen, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Thomas Aquinas, had rejected this concept as impossible. They reasoned that Scripture is clear in its presentation of Christ as the Redeemer of all women and men. This would not be true if even one person had not needed redemption because she was not subject to original sin in her conception. Scotus responded that if Mary had in fact been preserved from original sin, then it must have been the result of the merits of her son. Christ was therefore her redeemer as much as he was the redeemer of everyone else. Thus, the Immaculate Conception poses no problem to the universality of Christ's redemptive role. With this rather simple argument, Scotus provided a theologically sound basis for the eventual acceptance of the Immaculate Conception as an article of faith.

Summary Points

The basis for the grandeur and dignity of humanity is grounded in Francis's conviction that women and men are beings created by God, created in the image and likeness of Christ, and redeemed through the instrumentality of the Incarnation. All of human existence is set against the backdrop of love. God, who is love, created men and women through love and for love. Human existence is, in a very real sense, an incarnation of the love of God and a consequence of Divine love. Every man and women, then, is an incarnation of God.

One important implication of this Franciscan vision of human existence is this: if we are indeed made in the image of Christ, both in our physical and spiritual dimensions, then the more human we become the more Christ-like we become. Therefore, holiness does not consist in the denial of humanity and everything that makes up who we are as humans. Rather, it is found precisely in the embrace of our humanity.

Endnotes

[1]Eric Doyle, OFM, and Damian McElrath, "St. Francis of Assisi and the Christocentric Character of Franciscan Life and Doctrine," in *Franciscan Christology*, ed. Damian McElrath (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1980), 10.

[2]William R. Cook. *Francis of Assisi* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1989), 54-5.

[3]Zachary Hayes, "The Life and Christological Thought of St. Bonaventure," in *Franciscan Christology*, 59.

[4]Hayes, 63.

[5]William Short, *The Franciscans* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 114.

[6]Hayes, 64.

[7]Hayes, 67.

[8]Duns Scotus, "Redemption and the Incarnation," trans. Allan B. Wolter, OFM, in *Franciscan Christology*, 153.

[9]Short, 115.

[10]Alan B. Wolter, "John Duns Scotus on the Primacy and Personality of Christ," *Franciscan Christology*, 141.

[11]Mary Elizabeth Ingham, "John Duns Scotus: An Integrated Vision," in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed., Kenan B. Osborne, OFM, (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 227.

> *If we are indeed made in the image of Christ, both in our physical and spiritual dimensions, then the more human we become the more Christ-like we become.*
>
> *(Michael Higgins, TOR)*

Stones of Assisi

I have never seen you, Assisi,
aside from photos and postcards;
yet, I feel I know you.
Your story has been told to me over and over.

There you are, high on a hill;
a beacon for all to see.
Your buildings glimmering in the sun,
Standing high above, beckoning all
to raise their hearts to our Lord
as you do your towers.
You have stood as a light among the nations;
a sign of peace; a sign of hope,
ever since the Poor Little Man
walked your streets begging and preaching.

Here you were, Assisi, in the final preparation days
to celebrate the Feast of the Poor Little Man
when God called from the depths of Mother Earth.

God called and all the stones trembled in awe.
God bellowed out, "I AM," and the foundations
shook and bowed in adoration.
The stones heard and recognized God's voice
and crumbled to the ground in homage of
"I AM."

The world was in shock.
What does it mean?
How can this be?
Our Assisi which stands for peace for all humankind
lies in heaps of rubble.

Oh! The heaps know, as does all the rubble . . .
"I AM" has spoken again.
The Poor Little Man in his grave knows . . .
"I AM" has spoken again.

"Go rebuild my Church which has fallen into ruin,"
the stones shouted as they fell to the ground.
Not with brick and mortar, but rebuild it with hearts
afire in the Spirit:
Rebuild it with the joy and penance of the
Poor Little Man.

Assisi, I have never seen you aside from photos,
but your story is being told once again to the world, and,
"I AM" is whispering from among
the piles of debris.

Althea Anne Spencer, OSF

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Out of the Birdbath: Following the Patron Saint of Ecology

Keith Warner, OFM

On Easter Sunday, 1980, Pope John Paul II named Francis of Assisi the patron saint of ecology. As we approach the twentieth anniversary of this event, it is important that as a Franciscan family we begin to address environmental issues more seriously and to reflect on what it means to be followers of *il Poverello* in an age of ecological crisis. This essay, which makes no pretense to being either scholarly or comprehensive, addresses the issues through the lens of Christian Franciscan spirituality and offers some ideas on how we might get involved in solutions.

What Role Can Franciscans Play?

There is sometimes an odd disconnection between the difficult and practical struggle to defend the integrity of creation and the majority of discussions that I have had around these matters. Often when I listen to Franciscans talk about nature I feel that I'm looking at one of the nineteenth century romantic painters, who created fantastic and beautiful landscapes of the American frontier. While this point of view is preferable to one which sees nature only in terms of consumption, we must move beyond seeing nature exclusively as a gift of beauty. We need to face the facts of our environmental crises and hold in tension creation's beauty and the unprecedented threats it faces. We Franciscans seem reluctant to commit our time or resources to these concerns.

Question: where are the Franciscans in the debate about the environment? Question: what efforts are being made to address environmental issues from a Franciscan perspective? Question: does the Franciscan family have a distinct

contribution to make? As followers of the patron saint of ecology, we have a responsibility to devote at least part of our life's effort to imitating his example of love for creation. How might we do this?

Incarnational Spirituality

The two major components of importance are to construct a Franciscan theological lens for viewing nature and environmental problems, and to help those with whom we minister to realize that our environmental behavior is an expression of our spirituality. The first is perhaps an assignment of a more specialized nature, but it cannot stand alone. In Francis's writings and the historical sources of his life we have evidence of his spirituality of nature. Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and John Duns Scotus have developed the Franciscan theological frameworks that help approach the question.

But we need a contemporary, fully developed Franciscan theology of nature as a way to organize our thoughts and perspectives on nature and to provide a response to environmental crises that is both consistent and faithful. Until recently the relationship between humanity and nature was much more simple, and inherited biblical attitudes toward nature were sufficient to provide guidance in this area. The human/nature relationship is now far more strained and problematic than it has ever been, and there is need for a more positive view of nature which assigns non-human creation a value. Until there is a broader awareness of the consequences of indifference toward the environment *and* a consensus to value the survival of non-human creation over human convenience and greater consumption, we will not see noticeable improvement in the well-being of the earth's natural systems. In our Franciscan tradition we have the basis for articulating a theological approach that can provide this framework.

For many, Creation spirituality has provided a refreshing change from theologies concerned exclusively with human endeavor. Writers such as Thomas Berry, Matthew Fox, and Brian Swimme have argued for a re-interpretation of the creation story which is more positive and centered on the inherent goodness of creation. While there is much to like about Creation spirituality, it can also be a bit utopian, short on specific suggestions for how to address our problems. It is a prescription for how human/nonhuman and human/divine relationships ought to be, yet it fails to explain adequately how to move in that direction. Creation spirituality seems at times to be more concerned with rejecting major pieces of Christian theology than renewing it in a way relevant to the social and ecological problems we currently face.

Franciscans cannot accept Berry's, Fox's, and Swimme's works uncritically. For while both Franciscan spirituality and Creation spirituality advocate a deep

sense of relationship with nature, there are points of conflict between them. Two of the conflicts revolve around the person of Christ and the means of reforming human behavior. The Franciscan theological tradition has the insight and tools which can help connect the faith of ordinary Christians with the need to see the well-being of all of creation as something in which God takes great interest. The importance placed on the incarnation of Christ unites Christocentric and creation-oriented theologies.

Christocentrism has always been a defining characteristic of Franciscanism based on Francis's mandate to follow "the teaching and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ" (RegNB 1:1). While there is need to broaden the focus of God's salvific activity beyond just the human species, there are problems with theologies that fail to make any connection between Jesus and our relationship with nature or the material world. Perhaps Christians would be more open to an ecological theology if it were connected to the Jesus they worship on Sunday morning.

Franciscan Christocentrism, Redemptive Completion, and the Cosmic, Ecological Christ

It's remarkable how succinctly the theology of the cosmic Christ in the Franciscan tradition addresses the need for an understanding of Jesus that lays a foundation for a greater valuation of the natural world.[1] A Franciscan understanding of Jesus' life and person, as interpreted by Bonaventure and Scotus, connects the Jesus-story with our contemporary needs to re-value nature. A deeper reflection on the mystery of the incarnation of Christ is a portal into a more sophisticated understanding of God's belief in the goodness of the created world. The incarnation marked a threshold in the relationship between God and humanity, and God and the whole created world. God chose to sacramentalize the world in a more profound and unprecedented way. This belief in the goodness of creation has always been present in the Franciscan tradition, but we are now in a social situation in which we need to give this belief greater prominence.

In his succinct essay on John Duns Scotus, *Incarnation, Individuality, and Diversity*, Kenan Osborne writes:

> Jesus, in his humanity, indeed sacramentalizes the finality of God's whole world, a world in which human freedom and mis-freedom (sin) exist. The whole world is sacramentalized, not just the "nice" part of it. The incarnation, then, begins one might say, with the very first act of God *ad extra*—the first creative moment of our world. The incarnation is a process moving through the history of our created world, and with each subsequent step the meaning of the world, the finality of the world, the "why" of the world emerges to some degree in a clearer way. We are finding out more about the incarnation than ever before. It is an ascending experience. Like climbing a mountain, the higher one goes, the wider and broader one's perspective. In the Jesus-event, a major revelation of the meaning of creation, the "why" of creation, takes place. This is what the world and its history are all about.[2]

This understanding of incarnation is deeply Christocentric and, at the same time, embraces material creation as good. God's generosity to us is expressed through creation, and the incarnation of Christ sacramentalizes that creation.

> The cosmos, as Bonaventure writes, is the primal book of divine self-revelation. And the meaning of the cosmos is concentrated in humanity and radicalized in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, the doctrine of the primacy of Christ points the believer to an understanding of the inherent meaning of the cosmos. There has probably been no period in history when this doctrine of the cosmic Christ was as important as it is right now.[3]

In Hayes's explanation of Franciscan Christocentrism, we are freed from the dilemma of being forced to choose between a creational theology and a redemptive theology. Hayes proposes Bonaventure's theory of redemptive completion as a way to integrate a positive appreciation of creation and humanity's need for redemption.

> Completion refers to the process of bringing creation to its God-intended end which is anticipated already in the destiny of Christ. Redemption refers to the necessary process of dealing with all the obstacles that stand in the way. Such a model could be easily related to the sense of an emerging cosmos as it appears to us today in the light of the sciences. This would allow us to create a larger framework for spirituality and theology which would have some resonance with the cultural images that have such a pervasive impact on the minds of our people.[4]

These two contemporary theologians, among others, remind us that Jesus Christ is not irrelevant to our environmental problems. Although not a trained theologian, Francis had a profound insight into the love of God expressed through creation. Francis, Bonaventure, Scotus and many others have preached a theology broad enough to embrace the Christ of the Scriptures, our Christian tradition, and a theology of nature as inherently valuable and good.

Francis also understood the human heart, and his prescription for its change was to do penance. He identified himself as penitent and chose to follow Jesus in this way. While our ecological situation may be quite different today, there are several key penitential values that point us toward what I believe would be a Franciscan response to environmental problems. Some of these values are: humility as expressed through poverty and simplicity; service to the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized; participation in the mystery of the Eucharist; and peacemaking.

Here again we see a clear contrast with Creation spirituality. Fox and Berry have both been criticized because they fail to take into account the difficulty of changing human behavior. Berry writes beautifully of the mystery and celebration of the vitality of life on our planet, and his prose is truly inspiring. Fox, like most Creation spirituality writers, is uncomfortable with the idea that human beings are fallen and in need of redemption, and he prefers an emphasis on "original grace." He suggests that the release of the "mystic child" within us will lead us to want to share our wealth and develop a respect for the Earth.

A major problem with Creation spirituality, however, is that it fails to take into account the real brokenness and darkness in human nature brought about by sin. Compulsive greed and chronic indifference are the two greatest obstacles to a healthy relationship with creation. Mainstream Christianity and Creation spirituality have failed to acknowledge that sin has an ecological dimension. We North Americans are grasping for so much wealth that it cannot possibly be sustained. Our lifestyle is robbing the underdeveloped world as well as nature's ability to restore herself. We are refusing to accept our place—a classic definition of sin. Creation spirituality, without an emphasis on repentance, and life-changing *metanoia*, will remain a utopian or eschatological vision.[5]

Creation spirituality does, however, provoke us to reflect on what the human/nature relationship could be. Reflection on Francis's writings and spirituality, gives evidence that the model for all of the relationships in which humans participate is the model of human family. The two texts which provide the clearest indication of this are *The Canticle of the Creatures* and the *First Letter to the Faithful.* In the latter, Francis writes of how our decision to do penance places us in relationship with Jesus. When we do penance we become the spouse, brother, and mother of Jesus (1EpFid 1:17). The strongest theme to emerge from this part of the *Letter* is that we become related to Jesus when we become penitents.

Francis assumes this same underlying grid of familial relationship when he writes the capstone of his theological vision, *The Canticle of the Creatures.* This poem expresses, through powerful symbolic language, how the elements of nature are praiseworthy and related both to God and to humanity. Francis praises the diversity and beauty of the plant kingdom: "Praised be You, my Lord, through our sister mother earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs" (CanSol 9). He admits that we humans are subject to sin and in need of forgiveness, but he affirms the even more fundamental truth that we are all related. This work seems to capture the sense of peace and reconciliation Francis achieved with the various parts of himself at the end of his life. I believe that Francis was named the patron saint of ecology not only because he loved nature but also because he articulated a mystical vision of the interrelatedness of all creation in his life and in his *Canticle.*

Francis's lyrical vision of the goodness of the world presents a vision in clear contrast to the pessimism of the heretical Cathars of his time. Italian social historian Raoul Manselli wrote a biography of Francis that is most useful in helping us understand Francis in the context of the popular religious currents of his era.

> Francis's repeated affirmation of deep devotion to the Eucharist and to the permanent presence of Christ on earth that it signified was directed in turn against the Cathars. Similarly, the *Canticle*'s praise of God as Creator and for what he created strikes at the heart of one of the basic tenets of Catharism, according to which the Creator, or at least the ruler, of the physical world is Satan, as portrayed in the heresy's many and varying myths.
>
> Against these ideas Francis did not resort to theological argumentation that would have been foreign to his temperament and, frankly, to his level of education. Rather, he brings out two aspects of the world: the omnipotence of God and the positive quality of creation as a work of beauty, implying as well its goodness. . . . The universe, therefore, cannot be evil: this is the conclusion contained in Francis's *Canticle.* Nor is it hell within which angels are imprisoned. Rather, it is the work and the result of an extraordinary, almighty goodness that, in the creation of the universe, reveals itself to be beauty as well.[6]

In *The Canticle of the Creatures,* therefore, we understand Francis's view of nature as a sacramental expression of God's generous love, a love which binds us to interdependent relationship. As in Francis's era, we live in a time that devalues nature's inherent goodness. The Cathars rejected this notion on reli-

gious grounds, while today our society strips, beats and pollutes nature for economic profit. Both stances are fundamental rejections of the incarnation.

Beyond the Stewardship Model: Nature as Family

In the past thirty years religious people in North America have begun to address the abuse of nature, generally by asserting that the Genesis story has been misunderstood and appropriated to justify profit at the expense of ecological wholeness. Christians and Jews have pointed to Genesis as a model for environmental stewardship. Stewardship is, indeed, a good idea, and a model which can help bring sanity to a species destroying its own life-support systems. But those of us in the Franciscan tradition have an additional model to which we can turn: the *familial* model of relating to creation left to us by Francis. In the stewardship model, humans care for the earth because they want to take care of themselves and future generations: God "put us in charge" of the beauty and bounty of earth. The familial model values relationship with the beauty and diversity of creation, celebrating the interaction between ourselves and earth's many creatures.

Obviously we cannot live without objectifying parts of nature and using them for our food and well-being, but at the same time, we are called to reflect on God's generosity to us expressed in the diverse colors, shapes, power, smells, textures, intricacy, and magnificence of creation. Agriculture necessarily operates out of the stewardship model, but we all need to practice some appreciation of nature for its own sake, whether it be bird-watching, flower planting, or other forms of immersing oneself in creation. Creation has intrinsic value, and we do well to remind ourselves of this through regular activities. Nature observation is a spiritual discipline.

Cortesia and Creation

Francis is perhaps most original when he extends his notion of chivalric courtesy to non-human creatures. He was, of course, deeply influenced by the ideals of the troubadour and courtly love. He "spiritualized" the notion of *cortesia*, a term far stronger than the English word "courtesy." *Cortesia* implies the notion of honorable deference, respect, largesse, special and personal consideration of the needs of others, especially the poor and vulnerable. Francis embodied a joyous humility in his respect for the good of creation.[7] The courtesy of Francis charms us even today. Generosity, respect and honor, all pillars of courtesy, are much-needed virtues in the contemporary world, especially in areas of conflict over environmental issues. At stake in the heated arguments is the well-being of plants, animals, and humans. All forms of life have an inherent right to exist, and elementary courtesy requires that we acknowledge this.

What form might these attitudes, so fully embodied by Francis in the Middle Ages, take among us today? Celebrating our relationship with Brother Wind, Sister Water, Brother Fire, and our sister Mother Earth must serve as the foundation, but for many this must be preceded by acknowledging the existence of interdependent relationships. In the industrialized West we have forgotten how dependent are our bodies on safe and pure air, water, and food. As Franciscans, whose legacy it is to celebrate the simple elements of life which most take for granted, we can provide a tremendous service to the Church and world by reminding our brothers and sisters to be grateful for the gifts of each day. Like Creation spirituality, a Franciscan incarnational spirituality will begin by changing our internal focus or consciousness. Personal, familial, and communal celebrations can help this immensely.

Proclaiming peace and reconciliation was another expression of Francis's courtesy. We can imitate him by being environmental peacemakers. Just as Francis built peace in the relationship between the bishop and podestà by singing *The Canticle of the Creatures*, we can bring reconciliation to the conflicts around us by practicing and promoting respect for the existence and well-being of others. By honoring both parties in a conflictual situation we invite others to adopt a stance of respect and to acknowledge the right of others to exist. Direct confrontation of personal and corporate greed can be ineffectual. If we encourage others to acknowledge, respect, and enjoy the relationships they have with others, greed can be replaced with courtesy, a practice fully consistent with Francis's *cortesia*.

Eco-penance

In the face of the global scale of environmental problems, there is often a felt paralysis and despair. So many people are making so many choices that cumulatively damage the earth's oceans, forests, food supply, and atmosphere. Is there any reason to hope for a change of heart? I take great solace in being able to turn to the example of Francis. In the face of conflict, war, vice, and violence, he practiced penance. More than simply manufactured feelings of regret, the Franciscan practice of penance is embodied humility. It consists in acknowledging our brokenness and sinfulness, our dependence on God's grace, and our need for conversion to the gospel of Jesus. In our age we can adopt Francis's stance of penance and humility in our relationship with the environment. We need to acknowledge that our environmental problems are not caused by species other than ourselves. We need to admit that we are in need of God's grace to reform our behavior so that we might live in peace with creation, which is God's plan. We need to practice eco-penance.

Eco-penance is both an interior attitude and a praxis. It promotes consistency between the statement of values we make about creation and our behav-

ior toward it. The practice of eco-penance includes a sense of personal responsibility for the environmental impacts of our lifestyle, and that of our society, and will lead to efforts to reduce the harmful effects that we have on other forms of life and the planetary habitat on which we all depend. We can call upon the Church and world to join us in adopting this stance and then take action appropriate to our local area.

Eco-penance promotes a sense of connection with the earth and relationship with other creatures, but it can take various forms—political advocacy, local actions, and communal prayer. In many cases the most important action on behalf of other forms of life takes place in the political realm, whether writing letters of advocacy on behalf of endangered species or speaking at public meetings to urge the clean-up of abandoned toxic sites near family homes. Or the best way may be to create and maintain a passion for creation through a local project which shows specific, observable results. Beach and creek clean-ups can generate great enthusiasm because people can see the fruits of their labors. A community garden can provoke a neighborhood to a greater connection to their locale and foster a greater awareness of the need for clean air, soil, and water. This kind of activity is even more powerful if it is accompanied by reflection and social analysis. Transformation of individuals and structures is most possible when action is joined to reflection. How powerful might it be if a parish community had a period of theological reflection the week before a clean-up day and hosted a large celebration afterward!

As Franciscans we could foster more of these good actions not only by participating in them but also by bringing concern for the earth into our prayer. We have the ability to influence our parishes, retreat houses, and educational institutions by including concern for creation in our teaching, our homilies, and prayers. There is no reason that concern for other forms of life and our planet's health could not be made a major part of a parish penance services during Advent or Lent. If we did nothing else, simply encouraging the need to simplify our lifestyles by reducing consumption and spending more time with friends, family, and nature would do wonders for those among whom we minister, and encourage those who work in the environmental movement as well.

A Distinctive Franciscan Contribution

One of the greatest strengths in the Franciscan tradition has been the diversity of responses to God's generous love. There are many ways in which Franciscans can begin to take action to address the threats to our sister mother earth. I would like to highlight two broad issues in particular—environmental justice and biological diversity.

Environmental justice is an issue that ties together two dimensions of our Franciscan charism—concern for creation and option for the poor and

marginalized—by stressing equal protections for those typically ignored in the pursuit of the environmental agenda, people of color and the poor. Environmental justice directly links environmental concerns with social justice issues by addressing the disproportionate impact of pollution on the poor. Low-income neighborhoods suffer more than those with greater income because they cannot marshal the resources to defend themselves from those who have more political and social power. The appalling contrast between the obese bodies in the industrialized nations and the distended bellies of starving children in the poorer nations is a powerful picture. Environmental racism is yet another manifestation of injustice. For example, immigrants from Mexico working in agriculture may suffer the harmful effects of pesticides. Powerful agribusiness corporations have resisted efforts to restrict the use of these chemicals, but when there is an incident in the fields, the media often doesn't report it because it doesn't concern "their audience."

For those who do not yet feel comfortable embracing concern for creation, or who do not yet see any connection between their religious faith and environmental concern, environmental justice is a perfect "starter issue." Anyone with an awareness of God's justice can see the harmful effects of environmental injustice in the United States and throughout the world. Concern for environmental justice is, of course, more than a "starter issue," but we can begin to express our solidarity with suffering human and nonhuman communities by taking action to defend their well-being.

The second issue, biological diversity, addresses the interdependence of the many forms of plant, animal and insect species on our planet. When human activities injure one species, its loss may impact many other forms of life. For example, in the Yellowstone ecosystem there are only about 200 grizzly bears left; these are the only grizzly bears in the United States outside of Alaska. They have suffered a decline for many reasons, most significantly the loss and fragmentation of habitat. But ecologists have suggested that one additional factor may have been the destruction of the wolf population around the beginning of the century. Grizzlies are not fast enough to catch deer, bison, and elk, but when wolves were present, the bears used to find carcasses taken down by a wolf pack and then chase the wolves away and feast on the rest of the dead carcass. Perhaps by re-introducing wolves to this ecosystem in 1995 we have helped the bears as well.

Our ecosystems need all their "pieces," all their species. Biological diversity, however, is not simply an abstract concept removed from our everyday existence. Many medicines are based on new chemical compounds discovered in rare species in the tropics. People in the United States used to consume a far more diverse diet than they do today, but industrial agriculture now finds it easier to manage a smaller number of crops. Because of disruptions to our

planet's climate, biological diversity is needed even more today. Such diversity between species and within species provides more flexibility for responding to environmental changes.

Psalm 148 and the canticle of the three young men in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:56-88) are the scripture passages which are the clearest influences on *The Canticle of the Creatures*, and both speak of the value of diversity—fishes, sea monsters, different kinds of trees, beasts, creeping things, flying birds, all things growing from the earth. God loves all kinds of diversity and individuality; otherwise, God wouldn't have made it so! Christianity has celebrated the goodness of this diversity, but we Christians have never had to confront the threats to its diversity that we do today. John Duns Scotus provides another way of viewing diversity through the lens of *haecceitas*, or "thisness," but a proper discussion of the intersection of his thought and biodiversity is beyond the scope of this essay. Because Scripture and Francis speak so eloquently of diversity, indeed because they treasure it, we are called to be its advocates today.

Few other Christians have the rich theological tradition of relationship with nonhuman creation and of valuing diversity and individuality. Because of this tradition, we Franciscans are uniquely positioned to address issues of species diversity and to become better advocates for all forms of life.

Conclusion

While there are many environmental issues we could take on as a Franciscan family, we can best serve the Church and the world by articulating a Franciscan incarnational spirituality which unites Christocentrism and love of creation. Creation spirituality and eco-spirituality are both good, but they do not tie us into the Christian story with sufficient strength to sustain us. The issues of ecology, biodiversity, and environmental justice seem to be most clearly connected to the heart of the enduring concerns of Franciscans over time. We were all drawn to the charism of Francis and we aspire to incorporate that into our own life and ministries. Given our tradition of working with the common person, we can use our varied means of ministering, whether through word or deed, to present a gospel which is broad enough to include concern for creation.

We can incorporate an awareness of the ecological implications in our ministry and prayer by bringing creation into our liturgies, by praying for solutions to environmental problems and greater sensitivity to other species, by advocating justice for those impacted by environmental abuse, by exploring an ecological dimension to our practice of penance, and by living simply so that others (human and nonhuman) may simply live.

As Franciscans we are called in a special way to a healthy relationship with creation. As followers of the patron saint of ecology, we have a special responsibility to model a loving, familial relationship with all creation, especially with those members, human and nonhuman, who are threatened by actions of violence, greed, and callousness. We are called to be advocates for those who cannot speak of the suffering caused by human ignorance and indifference. As Franciscans in the late twentieth century, we are heirs to a rich theological tradition that can provide a framework for incorporating environmental sensitivity into religious practice and activity. We are a resource for the Church, and we are capable of embodying Francis's passionate love of creation in our word and in our example.

Endnotes

[1]See Zachary Hayes, OFM, "Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity," *The Cord*, 46.1 (Jan./Feb., 1996): 3-17.

[2]Kenan Osborne, OFM, "Incarnation, Individuality and Diversity," *The Cord*, 45.3 (May/June, 1995): 23-24.

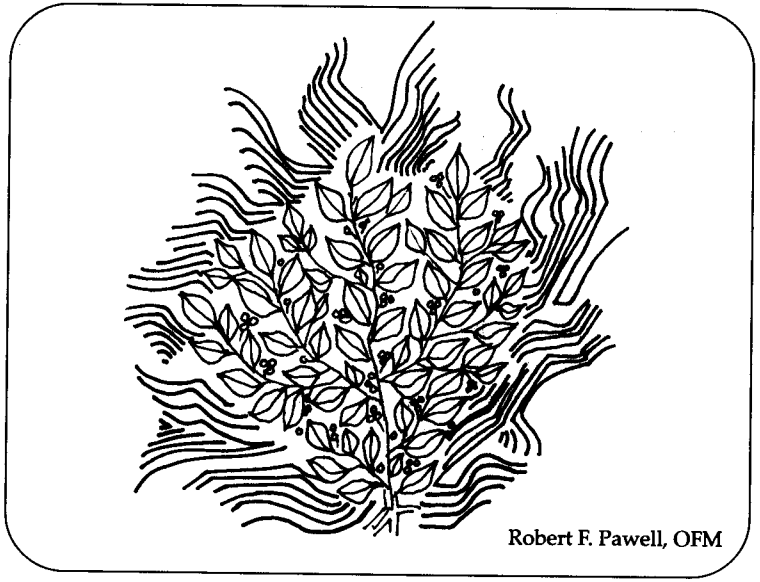
[3]Hayes, 13-14.

[4]Hayes, 16.

[5]For a critique of Creation spirituality, see Sallie McFague, *Body of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 69-73.

[6]Raoul Manselli, *St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Paul Duggan (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1988), 316-317.

[7]For a discussion of Francis's courtesy toward nature as innovation, see Roger Sorrell, *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 69-75. This work is the best treatment of Francis's attitudes toward nature.



Robert F. Pawell, OFM

BOOK REVIEW

William R. Hugo, OFM Cap. *Studying the Life of Francis of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook*. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996. Xv., 223 pages, ISBN: 0-8199-0970-X, $17.95.

As the title of this workbook suggests, William Hugo provides beginners with both tools and a method for studying the early hagiographical works written about Francis, as well as Francis's own writings. In Part I, he provides the basic tools which are necessary for developing a critical attitude toward the texts. The goal for Hugo is "accurate history: the facts as best we can know them" (p. 10). To this end, he first underlines that an awareness of the biases which shape one's perspective is essential from the outset. Hugo then turns to the use of positive criticism, or the literary and historical-critical method; an understanding of the purpose and techniques of the hagiographical genre; and, with regard to the Franciscan texts themselves, a basic knowledge of the current scholarly positions surrounding each of the texts. From all of this emerges his approach to history as a three-fold process of collecting data critically, organizing data meaningfully, and interpreting the data accordingly (p. 116).

In Part II, Hugo provides work sheets which students would use to study various aspects of the life of Francis, e.g., Francis's family, his illness, Bishop Guido, the first companions, etc. Here the method of form criticism is applied to parallel texts across the tradition, with a series of questions intended to lead the student to an informed position concerning what might be regarded as the historical truth of the event. In addition, Hugo provides extended treatment of a number of questions including Francis's encounter with lepers, a conversion paradigm, the life of Penance, Francis's Eucharistic writings, the genesis of the First Order Rule, and the Stigmata. All of this, Hugo insists, is simply the prolegomena for arriving at the meaning of the text for today, a hermeneutical question which demands another set of skills. But, as Hugo insists throughout: "I believe our spirituality and theology are only as good as the history on which they rest" (p. 217).

Concerning the primary sources, hagiographical texts which give us "clues about what really happened" (p. 28), Hugo recommends systematic suspicion since a medieval person's criteria for truth are very different from our own. His own admitted bias toward miracles leads him to articulate at the outset of Part II that "My principle is to search for the most humanly understandable rendering of a story" (p. 78). Here too, however, one could raise the issue of different understandings: do we today understand what it is to be human in the same manner as the medieval person would?

The way we answer this question will ultimately determine the value we place on hagiography as a resource for history. Hagiography does not intend itself as history according to our standards—hagiography is about the construction of meaning, of what it means to be so humanly alive to God that an individual's life can become revelatory of the divine. In other words, the truth of a person's life is not limited to historical facts but appears in the meaning those historical facts express—this is what hagiography does. So, which is the best source, or where does the true Francis appear? Actually, the real Francis appears in each text; one is not more true than another! Each recounts the true meaning of Francis on its own terms. Or, to apply David's Tracy category of the classic to our texts, they all contain a residue of meaning and need to be approached as such.

The primary hagiographical texts which Hugo uses include those found in the *Omnibus*, to which he adds the *Anonymous of Perugia*, the *Actus*, and the *Chronicles* of Thomas of Eccleston, Jordan of Giano, and Salimbene. Hugo does not include the *Liturgical Texts* or the *Life of St. Francis* of Julian of Speyer, nor the *Versified Legend of St. Francis* by Henry of Avranches, nor does he refer to the Lemmens *Speculum* or the Little Manuscript, each of which have been given much more attention in the recent decade. Like all of us, Hugo awaits the publication of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, which will make most of these sources available to us in English. (Contrary to Hugo's statements in the *Workbook*, the staff of the Franciscan Institute is not preparing this text for publication).

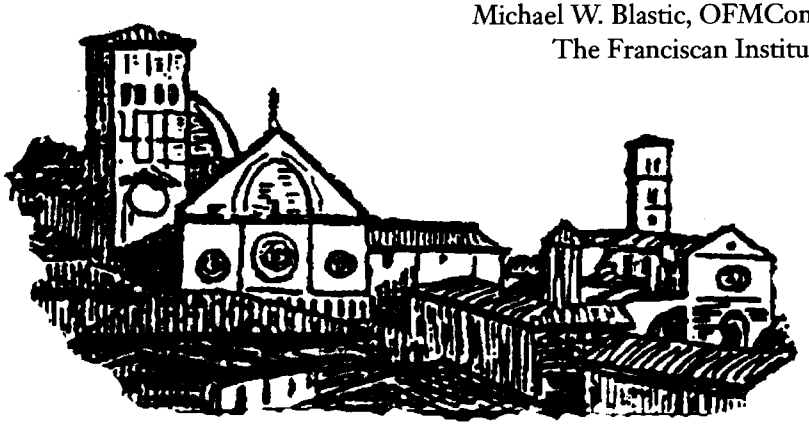
Hugo provides the basic information concerning editions, dating, and questions surrounding each text treated. Scholarly interest in these texts continues, especially in Italy, with a corresponding number of publications. (A very fine summary of all this can be found in Felice Accrocca, "Some Knotty Problems in the Franciscan Sources," *Greyfriars Review* 11:2 [1997]: 143-183.) Again, Hugo is very clear about his biases toward specific texts. His "favorite and most trusted source for the life of Francis" is the *Anonymous of Perugia* (p. 43). The *Vita prima* of Celano is a "mixed bag" (p. 40). His least favorite and of "questionable value" is the *Legend of Perugia* (p. 52). While I would not question his biases, I do wonder whether announcing his biases so clearly might

not just bias the students who would use his workbook. His position that "The important thing is that we are aware of each other's biases in this regard" (p. 52) seems to confuse bias with criticism.

It is possible to be critical of a source without being biased—this seems to be the very goal of the historical-critical method, while it is certainly possible too, to use the historical-critical method in a biased manner. For example, Hugo's bias against the *Legend of Perugia*, which seems to be linked to his connection of this source to the Spiritual Wing of the Franciscan movement, blinds him to the text's focus on Francis as example for his brothers and the resulting centrality of exemplarity as a quality of Franciscan life. At least one reading of the *Legend of Perugia*, which employs no miracles to tell its story of Francis and which gives no special importance to the Stigmata of Francis, sees a very human Francis in the last two years of his life, struggling with his own suffering and limitations to be faithful to what the Lord called him to do—to be an example of gospel living. To approach the text with a negative bias seems to preclude any appreciation for the text as a bearer of Franciscan meaning.

My criticisms of Hugo regarding his approach to the genre of hagiography, his quest for the real history behind the text, and his announced biases toward certain texts should not be read as a dismissal of the *Workbook*. Quite the contrary. Hugo has provided a valuable service to the Franciscan world. He presents the tools and a method which provide access to the primary sources concerning Francis of Assisi for the beginner and non-specialist. My hope is that once the long-awaited *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* does appear, Hugo will do a revision of the *Workbook* based on the texts it makes available in English. My hope also is that Hugo would add a Part III to his text, dedicated to a hermeneutics of retrieval focused on the text as bearer of meaning and not simply as resource for historical facts. Of course, that is my bias toward the primary sources and not Hugo's.

Michael W. Blastic, OFMConv.
The Franciscan Institute



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Contributors

Michael Blastic, OFMConv., is a member of the Chicago Province and is currently teaching at The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, New York. His article on "Contemplation and Compassion" has recently appeared in *Franciscan Leadership in Ministry: Foundations in History, Theology, and Spirituality*, Vol. 7 of the Spirit and Life Series (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997).

Michael Higgins, TOR, is a member of the Sacred Heart Province of the friars of the Third Order Regular. He currently serves as Director of Novices at the TOR inter-provincialate novitiate, St. Bonaventure Friary, Loretto, Pennsylvania. He is a doctoral candidate at the Antonianum in Rome.

Robert F. Pawell, OFM, a member of Sacred Heart Province, is stationed at Holy Evangelists Friary in Chicago, a community dedicated to the Ministry of the Word. A retreat minister since 1971, he has also worked with the Taizé Community and Project Lazarus for persons with AIDS. An itinerant preacher, he travels with paper and pens, supplying both *The Cord* and *Haversack* with illustrations that come to him as he journeys and preaches.

Althea Anne Spencer, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She is on the Steering Committee of the Franciscan Federation, Region 2. A certified massage therapist, she serves as a Parish Social Minister at St. John of God Parish, McKees Rocks, PA, and also does clown ministry.

Gabriele Ühlein, OSF, is a Franciscan Sister of Wheaton, Illinois, and a member of the Franciscan Federation Spirit and Life Committee. A Jungian and process theologian, her recent interdisciplinary doctorate from The Chicago Theological Seminary explored eco-feminist possibilities for both a theological and psychological understanding of the human in a trans-gender species context. She is currently preparing her dissertation reflections for publication.

Keith Warner, OFM, a friar of the St. Barbara Province, is a geographer, deep ecologist, and naturalist. He works for St. Anthony Foundation in San Francisco, California, where he leads educational workshops on economic justice and ecological sustainability from the perspective of Franciscan values. With John E. Carroll, he co-edited *Religion in Ecology: Scientists Speak* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1998).

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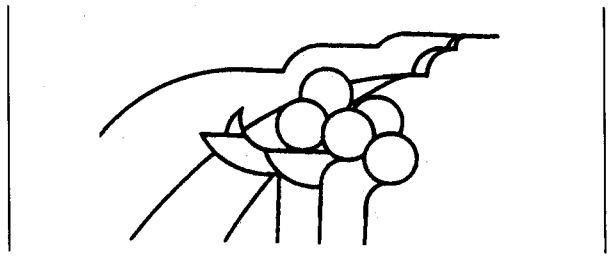

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ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT
COMING EVENTS 1998

Friday, April 3-Wednesday, April 8
The Prayer of Francis and Clare. A retreat with André Cirino, OFM. Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340; ph. 412-881-9207.

Thursday, April 16-Sunday, April 19
A **Franciscan Hermitage Experience.** Contact: Franciscan Renewal Center, 0858 SW Palatine Hill Rd. Portland, OR 97219; ph. 503-636-1590.

Thursday, April 23-Thursday, April 27
Franciscan Challenge. Inter-congregational workshop on Franciscan sources/ spirituality. Edward Coughlin, OFM, and Roberta McKelvie, OSF. $275. At Tau Center,. 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993, fax: 507-453-0910.

Friday, May 1-Sunday, May 3
Franciscan Retreat Weekend. With James Gavin, OFMCap. $100. At Franciscan Center, 49 Jackson Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706; ph. 914-478-3696 or 3930.

Friday, May 1-Sunday, May 3
Dreams and Francis of Assisi—Dream Images. With Bernie Tickerhoof, TOR, and J. Lora Dambroski, OSF. At Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340; ph. 412-881-9207.

Saturday, May 23-Tuesday, May 26
Harmony: The Gift of Clare and Francis. With Regis Armstrong, OFMCap., and Ingrid Peterson, OSF. At Franciscan Retreat Center, Andover, MA (see ad p. 95).

Friday, May 29-Sunday, May 31
Franciscan Studies:The Difference Women are Making. Washington Theological Union. Regis Armstrong, Maria Calisi, Margaret Carney, Ilia Delio, Paul LaChance, Dominic Monti, Roberta McKelvie, Elise Saggau, Gabriele Uhlein. Contact: Linda Dougherty, 6896 Laurel St., NW, Washington, DC 20012; ph. 202-541-5235.

Saturday, May 30-Saturday, June 6
On Being Simply Human. Retreat with Michael Blastic, OFMConv. $350. At Tau Center, Winona (see above for contact information).

Sunday, July 12-Saturday, July 18
The Way of Desire: The Human Journey into God. With Adele Thibaudeau, OSF, and Jerry Schroeder, OFMCap. At Siena Center, 5635 Erie St., Racine, WI 53402-1900; ph. 414-639-4100, fax: 414-639-9702.

Friday, July 24-Friday, July 31
Carrying the Hermitage in our Hearts. With Michael Higgins, TOR. $350. At Tau Center, Winona (see above for contact information).

Monday, August 17-Thursday, August 20
33rd Franciscan Federation Conference. At Hyatt Regency Hotel, Milwaukee, WI. Contact Franciscan Federation, P.O. Box 29080, Washington, DC; ph. 202-529-2334 (see ad p. 92).

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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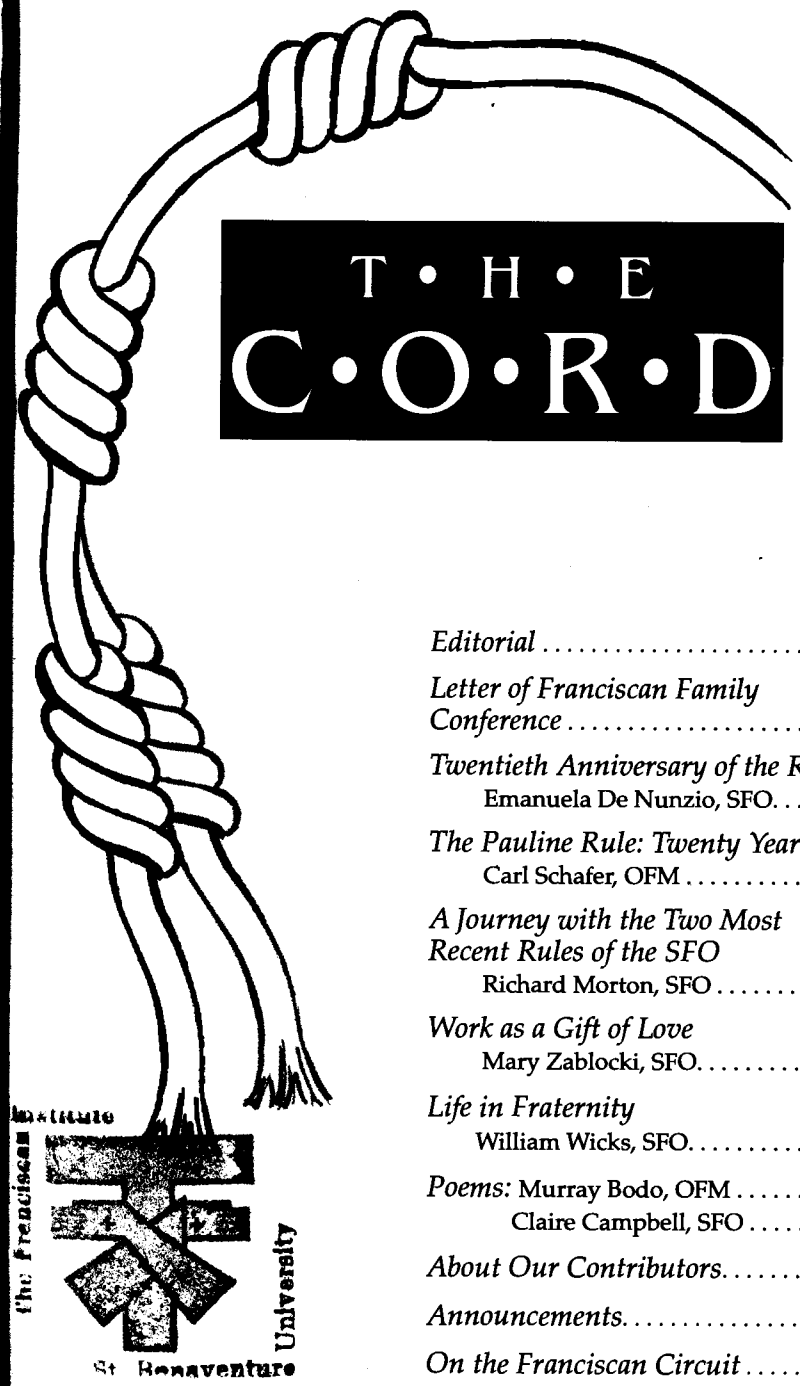

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Editorial Assistant: Mary C. Gurley, OSF
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To save unnecessary delay and expense, contributors are asked to observe the following directives:

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). (2Cel 5:8).
   (RegNB 23:2). (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

For over eight hundred years the words and example of Francis and Clare of Assisi have inspired people all over the world, women and men, clerics and lay, to follow more closely in the footprints of Jesus Christ, to live the Gospel life with greater integrity, to celebrate the pure gift of life with joy and gratitude. The movement which Francis and Clare began has amazingly spanned the centuries and the various cultures of the global community and still draws followers today from every walk of life.

One struggles to grasp the inexplicable charm of these founders, the perennial attractiveness of their "way of life." In our own times of renewal there has been a concerted effort to draw energy from the founding charism. For members of the Third Order, both Secular and Regular, this has resulted in a formulation of new Rules, more faithful to the spirit of the original Franciscan impulse and more relevant to the times in which we live. These Rules were the result of an unprecedented process of wide consultation and years of dialog and study.

In 1978 Paul VI gave formal approval to the new Rule for the Secular Franciscan Order. The twenty years since then have witnessed a serious restructuring and re-imagining among the Secular Franciscans. This year, 1998, the Franciscan Family celebrates the twentieth anniversary of the Pauline Rule, supporting the Secular Brothers and Sisters by honoring their efforts and achievements, not only over the past twenty years, but over the eight hundred years in which they have allowed the Spirit of God and the Spirit's holy operation to guide their lives and way of being in the world.

Archbishop Rembert Weakland observes:

> The sign of the life of the Spirit among us is the belief that this world counts and that somehow what happens here and now will be a part of the Kingdom as it is brought to fulfillment by the Spirit. . . . This new attitude toward the world forms the basis of all lay spirituality and has been an enrichment for the lives of so many. I sense that it is one of the most important works of the Spirit in our age.[1]

In this issue *The Cord* joins in the celebration, offering reflections on the life of Secular Franciscans today. We thank them for their faithfulness in bringing the work of the Spirit into play wherever they find themselves in this world, for their untiring commitment to the truth that "this world counts."

[1]"Afterthoughts," *Faith and the Human Enterprise: A Post-Vatican II Vision* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 157-8.

Second Letter of the Conference of the Franciscan Family on the Occasion of the Jubilee 2000, In the Year of the Holy Spirit

"Above all, seek the spirit of the Lord and his holy operation"

Brothers and Sisters,

"The year 1998, the second of the preparatory phase of the Jubilee, will be dedicated in a particular way to the Holy Spirit and to His sanctifying presence within the Church." So wrote Pope John Paul II in his *Tertio millennio adveniente* (n. 44). Following on the letter "Reconciled in Jesus Christ," which we sent you last year, we would like to take the opportunity offered to us Franciscans this year by this circumstance to become more conscious of the place taken by the Holy Spirit in the experience of Francis and Clare and of the place which He ought to take today in the lives of their followers. May it at the same time stimulate us to discover what is the original contribution which the great Franciscan Family can bring to the movement of rediscovery of the Spirit taking place throughout the Church.

The Holy Spirit in the Experience of Francis and Clare

The Holy Spirit is the real secret which explains the life of Francis, the hidden spring from which flowed every intuition and initiative of his. Rereading the first biographies of the Saint in this light, one remains impressed by a singular fact: every chapter of these, it can be said, begins with a formula of the type "moved by the Spirit," or "full of the grace of the Spirit," or "by divine inspiration" Francis said, went, did. . . . All the great turning points of his life are attributed to the specific action of the Spirit. It was "under the impulse of the Spirit" that Francis entered San Damiano and received the command: "Go,

Francis, repair my house," and it was the same Spirit that gradually revealed to him its meaning and significance (LM 2:1).[1] It was again "by the grace of the Holy Spirit" that he later discovered that the Lord had not called him and his companions "only for their salvation, but also for that of many others." He discovered, in other words, also the apostolic and missionary dimension of his Order (L3S 10:36).

In his work of "formation" of the other friars, too, he let himself be guided by the Spirit: "The blessed father Francis was being daily filled with the consolation and the grace of the Holy Spirit; and with all vigilance and solicitude he was forming his new sons" (1Cel 1, 11:26).

As has been said by eminent scholars, the movement set in motion by Francis was "the greatest charismatic movement in the history of the Church." The "charismatic" traits were the novelty, the spontaneity, the immediacy of his action. His discourses were "full of the power of the Holy Spirit;" he invoked the Spirit before he began to preach, and his words poured out in such a way as to make it evident to all that "it was not he who spoke, but the Spirit of the Lord (LM 2:2, 12:7)." Some of his typical gestures are of a clearly charismatic kind. Every time that "he was full of the ardour of the Holy Spirit, to express the exuberant warmth of his heart" he began to speak in French (1Cel 7:16; 2Cel 8:13). This was obviously his way of speaking "in tongues." He did not even shrink at times from asking God to reveal His will to him "at the first opening of the Bible (1Cel 2:92)."

All this brings us to understand where is to be found the ultimate explanation of Francis's "conformity" with Christ: not in a self-imposed program of methodical imitation of Christ in this or that virtue, but in having in himself the Spirit of Christ and the same sentiments which were in Him. His was an imitation of Christ which was "pneumatic" before it was ascetic.

The Holy Spirit which is the secret of the life of Christ, his "inseparable companion," as St. Basil describes him, who inspires his every action and guides his every step, is also the intimate secret of the life of Francis. . . . And what is said of Francis, must likewise be said of his "little plant" Clare, on whom one day the Holy Spirit was seen to descend under the form of two wings (Proc). In fact it is "one and the same Spirit" which has called the brothers and sisters (2Cel 145:193). These have been "espoused with the Holy Spirit" in imitation of Mary, "Spouse of the Holy Spirit" (a title which Francis himself helped to introduce into the language of theology) (OffPass).

What Francis Taught His Followers Regarding the Holy Spirit

Francis was not content with himself living the whole of his life "in the Spirit," but through his Rule and Admonitions tried to stamp upon the life of

all his followers also this great opening to the Spirit. He once proclaimed the Holy Spirit to be "the Minister General of the Order," regretting the fact that he could not insert this idea into his Rule, because this had already been approved by papal bull (2Cel 145:193). What the friars should desire above all things is to have "the Spirit of God at work within them (RegB 10)." Both those who work with their hands and those who, like Antony, dedicate themselves to study and teaching, should strive "not to extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion" (RegB 5).

The Seraphic Father has also left us very valuable criteria, biblical in tone, for discerning on the one hand when a religious lives according to the Spirit and on the other when he follows the letter and the flesh: "A religious has been killed by the letter when he has no desire to follow the spirit of Sacred Scripture, but wants to know what it says only so that he can explain it to others. On the other hand, those have received life from the spirit of Sacred Scripture who, by their words and example, refer to the most high God, to whom belongs all good, all that they know or wish to know, and do not allow their knowledge to become a source of self-complacency" (Adm 7, 12).

St. Bonaventure, faithful interpreter in this, too, of the thought of the Founder, has made of the anointing by the Spirit ("spiritual unction") the characteristic of the Franciscan Order. He distinguishes among the various religious Orders of his time "those who pay attention primarily to speculation and secondarily to unction and those who pay attention primarily to unction and secondarily to speculation," placing the Seraphic Order among the latter.[2]

Our Service of the Spirit

In our life as followers of Francis and Clare, how are we to rediscover this powerful spiritual lymph which was there at our origin? Today's Church is aware of many and widely varying needs, but none of them is more urgent than this: to offer a genuine response to the world's thirst for spirituality. Well-known is the statement made by Paul VI: "Many times We have asked ourselves what is the first and last need that we see in this blessed and beloved Church of ours. . . . And you know what it is: the Holy Spirit! The Church has need of a perennial Pentecost; has need of fire in her heart, the word on her lips, prophecy in her glance."[3]

The world, if it does not find in Christian communities a spiritual alternative to the materialism and arid technologism which characterize today's society especially in rich countries, will look elsewhere, at times in extremely doubtful places and forms. The attraction exercised especially on the young by such centers of spirituality as Taizé, for example, demonstrates the positive aspect of the same tendency. But where have the Christian faithful more right to find

"dwellings of the Spirit" than in our Franciscan communities or fraternities? Many bishops want us in their local Churches expressly in order to respond to this need.

St. Francis has indicated to us the guiding principle for carrying out this task: presenting the spirit of holy prayer and devotion. In other words, prayer. It is above all in prayer that the Holy Spirit creates "intimacy with God." We may note a constant fact in Scripture: the Holy Spirit comes to those whom he finds in prayer. He came to Jesus after he had received baptism when "he was in prayer" (cf. Lk. 3:21); he came upon the apostles while they were "of one mind and persevering in prayer, with Mary, the mother of Jesus" (cf. Acts 1:14). And Jesus himself has said that the heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to "those who ask him" (Lk. 11:13.) St. Bonaventure says that the Holy Spirit comes "where he is loved, where he is invited, where he is expected."[4]

Alongside this principal duty, attention may certainly also be given to other interests and other types of "service of the Spirit" (2Cor. 3:8). The Holy Spirit—as the Second Vatican Council affirmed—is at work also outside the visible boundaries of the Church, to guide the development of the social order and give everyone "the possibility of coming into contact with the paschal mystery of Christ."[5] It is up to us Franciscan men and women to play our part in maintaining in life and developing "the spirit of Assisi" which has been given its highest expression in the meeting of the heads of all the religions promoted by John Paul II around the tomb of St. Francis in 1986—a spirit of dialogue, of peace-making, of respect for creation.

We should not forget, either, that the first visible effect of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was that of uniting in the one faith many different peoples. He is the Spirit of unity and he is present wherever unity is created or reinforced: between the partners of a marriage, in the community, in the whole world. To be noted also is that one of the most precious "fruits of the Spirit" is peace (cf. Gal. 5:19).

In our own days, the Holy Spirit has raised in the Church a great variety of ecclesial movements which are one of the more visible signs of the "new Pentecost" hoped for by Pope John XXIII on the occasion of the Council. We must learn to appreciate this "grace of the Spirit" which is diffused in the Church today, seeing in it an effective invitation for our life and presence in the Church.

Let us also keep in mind that some components of the great Franciscan Family have in recent years received special impulses towards renewing their lives by force of the Spirit, thanks to the formulation of their Rule. On 8 December 1997, in fact, occurred the fifteenth anniversary of the approval of the "Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis," and on 26 June 1998, there will be commemorated the twentieth anniversary

of the approval of the renewed Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. It is worth while giving due attention to these anniversaries in order to build a greater understanding and a determination to render an authentic service to the Spirit in the Church.

Indications and Proposals

On the basis of what we have just indicated as a possible "service to the Spirit" in today's Church, we would like to offer some simple suggestions of a practical and operational kind.

The Primacy of the Spirit

For the Franciscan Family, the most precious fruit of this year dedicated to the Holy Spirit should be a renewed effort to restore primacy to the spirit. Not only in a quantitative sense, by giving more time to prayer, but also in a qualitative sense, by bringing it about that every activity—manual, academic, pastoral—is imbued with that "spirit of prayer and devotion to which all other things are meant to contribute," as our Seraphic Father exhorts us. To the renewal of the Franciscan charism may equally be applied what Pope John Paul II had to say of the renewal of the Church in general after the Council: it "cannot become a reality in any other way than in the Holy Spirit, that is to say with the help of his light and his power."[6] This is the opportune moment to commit ourselves to making our Franciscan churches and houses and, as far as possible, our SFO Fraternities, into authentic "centers of spirituality." Let us, for example, examine ways of making available "schools of prayer," "times of the Spirit," a well-qualified "spiritual direction," the practice and the spread of the *lectio divina* or a meditative and shared reading of spiritual texts (especially Franciscan ones).

The Spirit of Unity

The children of Francis and Clare are called to live the spirit of unity especially among themselves, developing constantly closer bonds of esteem, of concord, and of collaboration between the different Franciscan Families, recalling in the words of Dante that the first companions of Francis edified the world most of all by "their concord and their joyful semblance."[7] We want to insist, as we did in last year's pre-Jubilee letter, on inviting to an ever closer communion and collaboration within the great Franciscan Family. We ask that, as far as possible, our forces be united in various fields: for example in formation, in particular as regards properly Franciscan formation, in spiritual animation, in cultural, apostolic, and charitable fields. Within the three Franciscan

Orders (with all due respect to the specific vocation of the Sisters of the Second Order) encouragement should be given to meetings even of an informal kind, to exchanges, common moments of prayer and reflection, concrete initiatives of communion and fraternity.

Ecumenical engagement should find in the Franciscan Family a particular willingness: the "spirit of Assisi" should make us particularly attentive and solicitous promoters of ecumenical initiatives.

Peace

We have recalled that one of the most precious "fruits of the Spirit" is peace, and we know how much our Seraphic Father himself desired to be an instrument of peace and have his Brothers spread it throughout the world, even through the manner in which they greeted the people (LP 67). The Franciscan Family ought to be in the "front line" wherever there is work for peace. Where ethnic conflicts of all kinds tear nations apart and create situations of high tension, we ought to be promoters of peaceful concord, even if this means accepting initiatives which require great courage and upholding positions which are openly inspired by the Gospel and the "new commandment" of mutual love. This presupposes that in our own midst above all we take the greatest care to eliminate the remotest trace of antagonism, hegemony, or division.

The Richness of the Ecclesial Movements

Different movements throw light upon the need for a more living faith, a more concrete charity, a more heartfelt and spontaneous prayer: all these are values which Franciscan spirituality puts at our disposal abundantly in our choice of life. They stimulate our Fraternities to be more alive, more amenable to renewal, more open to welcoming the new things of the Spirit, more capable of letting the demands of obedience and fraternity prevail over our personal choices and experiences. We should be ready to welcome and make use of these stimulating reminders, recognizing them as *incentives to letting the rich spirituality proper to our charism grow young again* and wisely drawing from them pointers for the way in which we incarnate in our lives the spirituality proper to our charism. If we do not renew ourselves, we run the risk of no longer saying anything or giving anything to the Church and to the world.

Conclusion

We recognize that throughout the Franciscan Family the values which we have underlined in this letter already find positive and encouraging imple-

mentation. But we would invite you not to be content with what has already been done and is now being done, but to strive for new goals, always mindful of the exhortation of our Father St. Francis: "My Brothers, we must begin to serve our Lord and God. Until now we have done very little" (LM 14:1).

At the moment of writing this letter we have before our eyes the sad state of the earthquake-damaged Franciscan sanctuaries of Assisi: places which are "indispensable" to our spirituality and our living contact with Francis. While we hope for their rapid restoration so that they may remain the longed-for goal of pilgrimages, in the light of the Great Jubilee to come we pray that together with the material work there may also take place a "reconstruction" of our ever more authentic fidelity to Francis and Clare and, through them, to Christ and the Gospel.

We ask our Poor Clare Sisters for a special prayer of intercession that with the help of our Father St. Francis and our Mother St. Clare we may let ourselves be molded by the Spirit as "new creatures" (cf. 1Cor. 11:7), docile to the Spirit which "renews all things" (AP 21:5).

Rome, 1 January 1998

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Secretary of the CFF

Endnotes

[1]References to the writings and early biographies are from the *Omnibus*.
[2]St. Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, 22:21 (ed. Quaracchi, IX, p. 269).
[3]Discourse on 29 November 1972 (*Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, X, p. 1210s.).
[4]St. Bonaventure, *Sermons*, Fourth Sunday after Easter, 2 (ed. Quaracchi, IX, p. 311).
[5]Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22 and 26.
[6]*AAS*, 73 (1981), p. 521.
[7]"*la loro concordia e i lor sembianti*"—Dante, *Paradiso*, XI, 76 s.

The Cord, 48.3 (1998)

The Twentieth Anniversary of the Rule

A Letter from the General Minister, SFO

Celebrating an anniversary is not an end in itself. It seeks to make an event live again; it attempts to remember some person, incident, or gift. For us, Secular Franciscans, the twentieth anniversary of the Rule is an occasion to rediscover this "gift of the Spirit which leads to the Father."

For me, this twentieth anniversary of the Rule evokes vivid memories and stirs up profound feelings—twenty years of the Rule, twenty years of my life; twenty years of the Lord's fidelity which has led me by the hand along a path still unknown, twenty years of the fragility of my response.

It is well known that this Rule was the result of an evolution that had been developing for a long time in the Franciscan Third Order. The work of elaborating the text lasted twelve years and involved extensive consultations, which included lay and religious experts as well as leaders of the Order from various nations. But, notwithstanding the openness of the process, the final result expressed the hopes and efforts of but a relative few.

The vast majority of Third Order members (then estimated to be over one million, some 435,000 in Italy alone) knew little or nothing about it. For many, their first encounter with the new Rule was truly a shock. Many members of the Third Order remained bewildered and disconcerted: "no longer were there specific requirements for acceptance; . . . no mention of the scapular, cord, recitation of twelve Our Fathers; . . . no norms of life, abstinence, penances; . . . no mention of indulgences, confession, communion, daily mass. . . ." The omission of specific practices, then-considered important, caused confusion and disappointment. And what about the unity and the autonomy sanctioned by the new Rule? For centuries, the members of the Third Order

had been accustomed to division into Obediences; described themselves quite naturally as *Friar Minor*, *Conventual*, or *Capuchin* Third Order members; and felt tied to only one friary. They expected to be instructed, guided, and directed in a relationship of filial dependence (not fraternal cooperation).

I remember the first formation courses, the first spiritual exercises given on the new Rule. Many older members responded with rejection and bitterness. The new Rule was not the rule that they had professed, to which they had conformed an entire life. Somewhere along the way someone had changed direction and they did not feel like starting again from the beginning.

How much has changed since those first years! The new Rule has not produced divisions, but has been accepted much more rapidly than many would have thought—a sign that it is truly a "gift of the Spirit which leads to the Father." In a relatively brief time, "Third Order Franciscans" became "Secular Franciscans." They found in the Pauline Rule everything that is essential and of universal value for the life of lay Franciscans—in both its spirit and structure. The Rule provides a foundational structure containing those elements that would enable a disciple of St. Francis of Assisi to follow more closely the Lord Jesus Christ while remaining in the world.

As was stated in the Apostolic Letter of approval and in the letter of the four Franciscan Ministers General, the Rule contains two elements of renewal:

- a return to the origins, that is, to the spiritual experience of Francis of Assisi and of the brothers and sisters of penance who received from him their inspiration and guidance;
- an openness to the Spirit in the signs of the times, following the teaching and encouragement given them by the Second Vatican Council.

It does not make much sense to do an analysis, even if synthetic, of the contents of the Rule. For me, it is a way of

- following the gospel
- according to the example of St. Francis
- under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Following the Gospel

Article 4 provides the key to reading the whole Rule. There, for the first time in an explicit manner, the entire Franciscan Family is presented as following the same path. For all (Friars, Clares, Seculars) "the rule and life is to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." All Franciscans, in whatever state of life, are called to become what had been promised in Baptism. In giving to his followers a "form of life," St. Francis hoped to prepare in the Church men and women able "to live the gospel."

What does it mean for Secular Franciscans "to observe the gospel"? Above all it means to know God as Father, to have Jesus Christ as the inspiration, model, and criterion of our every action, and to allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit of the Lord. It also means to realize in our apostolates the love of others in a spirit of service; to work in a context proper to our secular state, witnessing a life of penance as continual conversion to the gospel; to realize a universal fraternity in Christ; to dedicate ourselves to the works of mercy, to the promotion of justice and peace, and to the safeguarding of creation.

According to the Example of St. Francis

No matter what some critics say, the Rule of 1978 is more "Franciscan" than those which preceded it—not only because it includes as *Prologue* (and integral part) the *Exhortation of St. Francis to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*, but also because it contains continual references to his writings and spirituality. The Rule presents Francis as the inspiration and pattern for following Christ, for living the gospel, for rebuilding the Church, and for loving and serving the lowly.

Francis sends us to the gospel, which is, at the same time, both beginning and end. But, in a certain sense, the gospel also points to Francis, who shows us how to live the gospel with simplicity of heart and integrity of faith. And we Franciscans must live the gospel; all that we are and do must be informed by the gospel, without limiting ourselves to a "careful reading" or intellectual contemplation.

Francis adhered perfectly to the gospel: to the *entire* gospel, and to the gospel *only*. Francis had no interest in following the model of monastic institutions, having received from the Lord a right and just way of life to follow. This insistence of Francis provides an efficacious lesson for us who often feel at a loss before the growth and success of contemporary ecclesial movements. We have no need to copy anyone. We have our own way to follow, and God wills that we might be able to follow it to its depths.

Under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

The true disciple of St. Francis must be attentive to the Spirit, always ready to do "that which pleases the Lord." Followers of St. Francis embrace this attitude of great spiritual tension, truly in love with the Lord not as servants but as friends.

All of this emerges above all in the *Prologue*, in which Francis promises to those who produce worthy fruits of penance that "the spirit of the Lord will

rest upon them and he will make his home and dwelling among them." This means becoming contemplative people, marked by our personal experience of God, abandoned to the mysterious richness of grace which enfolds us and profoundly affects us.

In the Rule the Holy Spirit is presented through actions—present in the Church and raising up in the Church spiritual families, calling the faithful to follow Christ, moving them "to strive for perfect charity," leading them into truth. And the Holy Spirit alone can lead Secular Franciscans to let "prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do." Without the Spirit, all apostolic activity would be translated into a sort of sterile activism, and dedication to the needy and marginalized would become nothing more than philanthropy.

The twentieth anniversary of the Rule can lead us to discover in it new riches and unexplored depths. Spirit-full, it is inexhaustible, always provocative. It always calls us forth because life in the Spirit has no limits, has no end.

Emanuela De Nunzio, SFO
General Minister
Rome, March, 1998

Translated from the Italian by
Robert M. Stewart, OFM

How St. Francis Teaches Us to Open Heaven

When I was a boy, I thought that heaven
must start behind the stars, their lights
holes in the night that covered God like curtains.
There had to be a secret cord that drew them,
revealing God's apartments. St. Francis
said an enemy's hand was creased with
codes that told the merest boy how to
open God's bright heaven. The hidden
handle was the enemy's very hand, and
hateful eyes were openings to glory. But
how was I to know what lightless labyrinths
those creases trace, how long it takes to
travel easy there before the handle turns.

Murray Bodo, OFM

The Cord, 48.3 (1998)

THE PAULINE RULE
Twenty Years After

Carl Schafer, OFM

This is the sequel to an article I wrote five years ago, entitled, "The Pauline Rule—Fifteen Years After," which was published in *The Cord*, November 1993. I presuppose all that I wrote on that occasion, but will return in the last paragraphs to some of the questions and points that I raised.

I will concentrate more on the state of the Secular Franciscan Order as I experience it twenty years after it received the Rule from Pope Paul VI in 1978. I hope to show to what extent the Pauline Rule is embodied in the SFO today.

Having finished my term as General Assistant in 1997, I consider this article to be a kind of Last Testament, in which I take the liberty to add some personal comments and to conclude with some recommendations.

Unity

As a consequence of the Rule of 1978, the secular Franciscan Order has been restructured as a single Order with Fraternities at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

The restructuring of the Order has been widely achieved, but some National Fraternities are still in the process of unifying their structure. Canada has worked consistently at its problem, which is almost resolved. In Italy, the difficulties are enormous and will take more time to resolve. Some want unity structured from above while others want to build up to national unity from below.

There are still unresolved issues in a number of other countries regarding unity in structure. Often the problems are kept hidden and are not confronted. Needless to say, these countries would not care to be named. Some National Councils (e.g., India) are composed of representatives belonging to the obediences of the friars. The old obediential Third Order Provinces are renamed

"Regional Fraternities." This is not the restructuring of the SFO that the Rule and Constitutions call for.

"Provincial" is a structure that belongs properly to the religious Orders of friars, not to the SFO, but the term is still preferred in Germany. The corresponding secular term and structure is "Regional Fraternity," which is usually not co-terminal with a particular province of friars.

Far more important than unity of structure is unity of spirit. In fact, structural unity must be built on the spiritual unity of minds and hearts; otherwise, unity is fictitious and structural unity is an imposition. I am convinced that, in every country and at every level of Fraternity, much hard work has yet to be done in order to achieve unity of spirit. Unity of structures would then follow automatically, because the spirit creates the structures that are best suited to express itself.

National Fraternities

What strikes me, after making many visits, is that each country is different and so is the state of the SFO national fraternities. Generalizations can be misleading. One cannot speak about the Third World countries or about the ex-Communist countries as though they form a monolithic or homogeneous block.

The state of the SFO in Mexico is vastly different from the state of the SFO in Thailand, although both countries are classified as Third World. Mexico, with 102,415 members, is the largest national fraternity after Italy (120,000). The Third Order has flourished in Mexico throughout its history of nearly five hundred years of evangelization. The Secular Franciscan Order has inherited its cultural expression and religious spirit, but now it is solidly based on the Vatican II model.

Thailand has one local fraternity canonically established two years ago in Bangkok, with barely more than five professed members. Without a Franciscan history or tradition, all that it has in common with Mexico is that it too is solidly based on the Vatican II model.

The SFO exists in almost every country of Africa and in the islands to the east. There are recognized National Fraternities in Zambia, South Africa, Madagascar, and Mauritius. But there are thirteen National Fraternities in formation and six countries with local fraternities in formation. The state of these fraternities varies from vibrant to embryonic.

In Africa it is not difficult to find people to join local fraternities. It is difficult to give them a proper formation, and it is very difficult to find spiritual assistants and animators to accompany them all. Without proper accompaniment and formation, a fraternity can easily develop into a sect.

The Third Order existed in all the ex-Communist countries. Since 1989 the Secular Franciscan Order is coming into its inheritance. At present there

are seven recognized National Fraternities (Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia), four National Fraternities in formation (Byelorussia, Latvia, Rumania, Ukraine), and three countries with local fraternities in formation (Albania, Estonia, Russia). In many of these countries, the very fabric of the human person has to be restored. Formation in the SFO must begin there.

Since the 1970s many members (but not all) in France, Germany, and the Benelux countries have presented a particular problem regarding the acceptance of the Rule and General Constitutions, especially with regard to profession. It is not only that they reject terminology which they consider proper to religious life. There has also been a general reluctance to commit oneself to lifelong binding promises in both secular society and in the priesthood and religious life.

In the past five years, there has been a marked improvement in dialogue between the national fraternities of Europe. The National Council of France, in particular, has gone deeply into studying the Rule and General Constitutions. The voluntary and unofficial association of Secular Franciscans from Eastern and Western Europe at annual EUFRA- Meetings and EUFRA- Weeks has also helped the dialogue.

Acceptance of the Rule and General Constitutions has not been a problem for the SFO in the United States, which does not mean that the Secular Franciscans do not take their profession seriously or that they simply submit to ritual. But in the United States, as in Western Europe, a major problem is the advanced age of the members and the absence of younger people. I think this is another aspect of the reluctance of people to commit themselves to a group with obligations to fulfill.

International Fraternity

International government has been emphasized. The present Presidency of the International Council, elected in 1996, includes three men and six women from eight different countries and four General Assistants from three other countries.

The Minister General, Emanuela De Nunzio, from Italy, is in her second term. The Vice Minister General, Encarnacion Del Pozo, is from Spain. The Presidency Councillors are: Jean Pierre Rossi (French Area) from France; Emerencia Rossato (Italian Area) from Italy; Marianne Powell (English Area) from Denmark; Rosalvo Mota (Portuguese Area) from Brazil; Alicia Gallardo (Spanish Area) from Chile; Wilhelmina Visser-Pelsma (German Area) from the Netherlands; Pedro Nunu da Silva Coelho (Franciscan Youth) from Portugal.

At the moment (September, 1997), the four General Assistants are: Fr. Ben(itius) Brevoort, OFMCap, President of the Conference of General Assis-

tants; Fr. Zvonimir Brusac, TOR, Secretary; Fr. Valentin Redondo, OFMConv; Fr. Carl Schafer, OFM. We come from Indonesia, Croatia, Spain, and Australia, respectively.

Fr. Ben was reconfirmed in November 1996 and is in his second six-year term. Fr. Zvonimir was appointed in September 1995. Fr. Valentin took up his appointment in October 1996. After the General Chapter of the Friars Minor in May 1997 and before the end of the year, I will be replaced as General Assistant, having held that office since July 1985 for twelve years, which is the maximum permitted by the *Statutes for Assistance*, Art. 11.

The SFO Minister General lives in Rome, as do the four General Assistants. But the Presidency makes a conscious effort to avoid central government and government from Rome. Not all the national councils would agree that the government is in fact decentralized or free of excessive Roman influence. Some are allergic to anyone or anything that comes out of Rome.

Autonomy

On paper (in the Rule and General Constitutions), the SFO is autonomous. But it will not be autonomous in fact until it is united as a single Order in every regional and national fraternity, until the Councils at the various levels are capable of governing the fraternities, and until the Order is self-sufficient financially.

These conditions involve outgrowing the obediential divisions of the friars that were introduced into the Secular Third Order in the course of its history, dependence on the friar to direct the fraternity, and financial dependence on the friars.

Given the responsibility of *altius moderamen* that the Holy See places on the four Orders of friars, it is difficult for the friars to avoid being "Directors" of the fraternities, as they used to be by law before 1978, and to fit into the councils as "spiritual assistants" in accordance with the new legislation and spirit. However, autonomous government of the fraternities on the part of elected secular ministers and councillors has made considerable progress.

Certainly, restructuring and autonomy have borne fruit for the vitality of Secular Franciscan life, as is attested in the United States of America, where the restructuring into regional fraternities was recently completed.

Finance

Financial autonomy has a long way to go, as I said five years ago. The idea that everything must come cost-free is still strong, not only in those countries where foreign missionaries provided everything free of charge, but also in the rest of the world where the friars often provided for the slight financial requirements of the local fraternities.

Few Secular Franciscans, even in the "rich" countries, such as Germany and the United States, are themselves rich. The majority belongs to the middle class, and many are economically poor. St. Francis did not attract many rich people to follow him, and so it is today. In fact, he attracted many marginal people. There would be something seriously out of order if the SFO attracted mainly rich people and gave slight welcome to unimportant people.

I believe that the Minister General and Presidency have stated a sound principle: that even the poorest member can contribute something to the financial support of the fraternity. If every single one of the half-million members contributed a minimal something, the SFO would be much better off financially than it is at present.

The response of the National Councils to the International Secretariat's appeal to contribute to the support of the Order at the general level has improved over the past ten years, but it is still not general and is far from adequate. In 1986, only fourteen Councils contributed. In 1996, thirty-two out of eighty-eight national entities contributed, but not all these contributors were National Councils. There are forty-nine National Councils. This would seem to indicate that many National Councils do not receive financial support from their own base.

The response of a number of National Councils to the Presidency's appeal for funds for the promotion of the SFO in Eastern Europe and Northern Asia has been very generous. These National Councils already send their annual contribution to the International Secretariat.

Statistics

The most recent statistics of the Secular Franciscan Order were prepared before the General Chapter in 1996. Briefly, they are as follows:

According to continents:

Europe: 195,839; Latin America: 170,786; North America: 36,353; Asia: 24,451; Africa: 13,908; Oceania: 1,500. Total: 442,837.

According to language areas:

Spanish: 165,856; Italian: 126,098; English: 72,616; German: 34,586; Portuguese: 24,813; French: 18,868 (includes French-speaking Canada). Total: 442,837.

General Constitutions

Implanting the General Constitutions has depended on having them translated into many languages besides the official ones (English, French, Italian, Spanish). The work of translation is still going on, seven years after their promulgation in 1990. Because many Secular Franciscans have not yet received a

text they can understand, the Presidency asked for a prorogation of the definitive approval of the General Constitutions, to give the Order time to experience them.

The Constitutions have been put to use particularly in national elective Chapters, where the Minister General or her delegate, together with the General Assistant, has insisted on following the Constitutions. It would seem that this has been the first time that many of the National Councils have had to take the General Constitutions seriously. If one can make a general judgment from these encounters, it would seem that the General Constitutions are not well known.

They were long awaited, since 1978, and have been welcomed almost universally. The National Council of France has submitted a re-written text for consideration when the General Constitutions are definitively approved at the General Chapter in 1999. At that Chapter, the work on the final draft of the General Constitutions will be completed for definitive approval by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

The Secular Dimension

The General Chapter held in Mexico in 1993 concentrated on the secular dimension of the Secular Franciscan vocation. In my opinion, the secular dimension is best understood and lived by some in the secularized societies of Western Europe, of Asia and Oceania, and particularly in the United States.

Eastern European Catholics are sick of atheistic secularization, and many find it hard to understand the concept and the practice of Christian secularity. They yearn for a return to the church-life that they knew before the Second World War and before the Second Vatican Council. Some are deeply resentful of the changes brought by Vatican II and stress that they had no part in making those decisions.

Africans and Latin Americans want to sacralize their secular life. For example, especially in Africa, there is a desire to wear a religious habit, and, especially in Latin America, there is an intense devotion to the Blessed Virgin and the saints. Thereby, the members isolate themselves from secular life and create a holy space to live in.

Evangelization

Some fraternities have turned the corner from being inward-looking, devotional sodalities, unknown outside the four walls of the church, to being both prayerful and actively evangelizing. The national fraternity of the SFO in Italy, assisted by the Friars Minor, is an outstanding example of a large-scale evangelizing fraternity. Vietnam, Korea, the United States, and Brazil are noteworthy also.

The mission of the SFO is the same everywhere, as is the secular Franciscan vocation and charism. The vocation is to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi (cf. Rule, 1). The charism is to live in fraternity (cf. Gen. Const. 100.3). The mission is to "Rebuild my Church" (cf. Gen. Const. 100.1). Just how the mission is to be accomplished must be discerned by the people in the place. There is still a lot of discernment to be done by many National Councils.

Many would still think of Africa or Latin America as mission regions. But we are inclined nowadays to consider the whole world as "the region of the missions" and the entire Church itself as a missionary region.

The ideals and the theory have been worked out in the Rule and General Constitutions, which stress strongly that the members are first to be evangelized and then to be evangelizers. They are to be evangelized through following their vocation, through conversion and formation, and through spiritual assistance and animation. They are to evangelize others in the family, in the workplace, in the secular community, and in the church community, both in the local fraternity and beyond it.

What remains to be done in most national fraternities is to put the ideals and the theory into practice. The old Third Order model of privatized spirituality is still rather prevalent. Today's Secular Franciscans have to transcend the image of pious but ineffectual Tertiaries.

Spiritual Assistance

The religious major superiors and the spiritual assistants at all levels need to know the SFO General Constitutions better, so that they can help the Secular Franciscans to be more aware of their need to be evangelized and to evangelize.

The Franciscan religious can help the secular Franciscans most of all by their example in being evangelized themselves and then in being the evangelizers of others. I am convinced that the friars could do much more to ensure that they live "in life-giving union" with the seculars (cf. SFO Rule, 1).

The *Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO*, published in 1992, have yet to be applied to each national and regional fraternity. Like the Rule and General Constitutions that they are based on, they can be applied only to those national and regional fraternities where the Secular Franciscan Order has achieved unity.

Conferences of General Assistants, National Assistants, and Regional Assistants have been formed on the basis of collegial activity. They cannot function without the collaboration between the Ministers General, the Assistants General, the Ministers Provincial, the National Assistants, and the Regional Assistants.

To the extent that the *Statutes for Assistance* have been put into effect, the collaboration between the different obediences has been greatly strengthened. However, there is a great variation in collaboration, from none to total, depending often on the personalities of particular friars.

Franciscan Youth

The collaboration between the SFO and Franciscan Youth has been greatly strengthened in the past five years. The documents on Franciscan Youth, published by the Presidency of the SFO International Council in 1996, clarified the identity of the Franciscan Youth Movement and strengthened the collaboration between the SFO and Franciscan Youth in those places where they have been applied.

More National Councils, including the Council in the United States, have actively promoted the Franciscan Youth Movement and also Franciscan Children. The Presidency is working on making Franciscan Children an international movement.

Challenges and Priorities

The General Chapter, held in July 1996, did not propose priorities but it published its conclusions in the *Bollettino CIOFS*, 1996, n. 2. Under the headings, "Animate," "Guide," and "Coordinate," the Chapter indicated what it expected of the Presidency and the National Councils. From this, one can ascertain the Chapter's priorities—promote specialized formation; apply the principle of subsidiarity; stimulate communication.

The SFO is a cross-section of the local Church and of the universal Church. It is like the Church in miniature. Its challenges and priorities are the same as those of the universal and local Church. Articles 98 to 103 of the SFO General Constitutions make this point implicitly but strongly.

The SFO Fraternities at all levels will need to follow closely the statements delivered or written by the Pope and the Roman Congregations and by their local bishop or bishops' conference in order to discern their challenges and priorities in view of the Third Millennium. The Presidency of the SFO International Council intends to communicate regularly with all the Fraternities, in order to call them to reflect on the Church's priorities and to act with initiative.

Recommendations

Reviewing the Pauline Rule twenty years after and in view of the present situation of the Secular Franciscan Order, which exists in almost every country of the world, I would like to make some recommendations.

At the local fraternity level:

The local fraternity is where the Secular Franciscan enters the Order, follows his vocation and is formed initially and for the rest of his life.

The initial formation is most important. I would recommend that greater effort be put into it, both by the candidates and by the Fraternity Councils, especially the Formators and the Assistants.

The Fraternity Councils need a lot of strengthening. I would recommend that the members receive a specialized formation, so that they are able to govern the fraternity effectively and carry out the responsibility of deciding on the admission and profession of the candidates.

At the regional fraternity level:

The regional fraternity is the key to the unity of the SFO in any national fraternity.

Often, the friars belonging to the different Orders who assist the local fraternities are the main obstacle to the unity of the regional fraternity. I would recommend that the friars cooperate by working in Conferences of National Assistants and in Conferences of Regional Assistants so as to give a collegial assistance to the regional fraternity and Council.

Competent secular leaders are often lacking at the regional level. Consequently, the National Council often tends to do the work proper to the Regional Council, such as providing for the canonical establishment of local fraternities. I would recommend that, instead of doing the work of the Regional Councils, the National Councils teach the Regional Ministers and Councillors how to do it and to be patient with them until they succeed in learning. I recommend that the National Councils also provide courses for the formation of the regional leaders, and that the Regional Councils be made competent to provide courses for the formation of local leaders.

> *Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, since the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them 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.*
>
> (Francis, 1EpFid 5-7)

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A Journey with the Two Most Recent Rules of the Secular Franciscan Order

Richard Morton, SFO

To fully appreciate the present, you need to have knowledge of the past. For history illuminates the here and now with the light of understanding so the present may be seen as gift.

> At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel if it is to carry out its task. In language intelligible to every generation, she should be able to answer the ever recurring questions which men ask about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other. We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live.[1]

The Beginning

In the 1960s, I found myself in a search to identify an organization or a movement within the Catholic Church that would satisfy my desire to deepen my spiritual life. For the spiritual dimension of my life seemed to be status quo, a situation which made me somewhat uncomfortable. Something was telling me that, as a never miss Mass on Sunday Catholic Christian, there must be more to church than just that minimum. In response to this discomfort, I joined several organizations and soon realized that they were not what I was searching for. Then one day, a Franciscan friar at our parish invited me to join six others and become a member of the first formation class for our as yet to be established local fraternity. He said, "Trust me, it's what you've been looking for." Little did I know where that simple "yes" would lead!

After the dutiful completion of the three months of postulancy and the twelve months of novitiate, I, and the others in the formation class, made our lifelong commitment on March 31, 1970. We professed: "In the presence of almighty God, in honor of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, of blessed father Francis and of all the saints, I promise to observe all the time of my life the commandments of God and the Rule of the Third Order instituted by the same blessed Francis, according to the form approved by Nicholas the Fourth and Leo the Thirteenth; also to satisfy at the pleasure of the Visitor, for transgressions committed against the same Rule."[2] As I read these words today, my head spins in amazement. Did I really profess that? If those were the words of profession, what did the Rule and the Constitutions say?

To satisfy my curiosity and to refresh my memory, I recently perused a copy of the Rule and Constitutions of the Third Order of St. Francis for that time.[3] What did I find? First, I found the Leonine Rule very prescriptive in nature with both it and the Constitutions using what would be considered today obsolete terminology such as: tertiaries, isolated tertiary, commissary, minister prefects, master of novices. The *Ritual for Public Functions: Franciscan Third Order*, which accompanied the Leonine Rule, was filled with Latin.

To give a flavor of the Leonine Rule, the first article addressed competency for membership. "Only those may be received as members who have completed their fourteenth year, and are of good character, peace-loving, and above all of tried fidelity in the practice of the Catholic Faith and in loyalty to the Roman Church and the apostolic see."[4] The second and third articles of the Rule addressed the fact that "Married women may not be received without the husband's knowledge and consent . . ."[5] and that "The members shall wear the small scapular and cord as prescribed; if they do not, they deprive themselves of the rights and privileges of the order."[6] To highlight the focus on rights and privileges, there was an entire chapter in the Constitutions entitled Rights and Privileges,[7] containing thirteen articles.

In spite of the Third Order of St. Francis being an order with only secular membership, the administrative control of the order was in the hands of the friar spiritual directors. They had the final say, when they chose to exercise their authority, on all matters except financial.

Words we consider essential in any Franciscan Rule today were not contained in the Leonine Rule. Nowhere were such words as gospel, Jesus Christ, apostolate, prayer, formation, conversion, brothers and sisters, contemplation. When referring to the tertiary's prayer life, we find directives such as: ". . . recite the divine office" or "say daily twelve Our Fathers,"[8] ". . . attend Mass . . . ,"[9] "say in common five decades of the rosary . . . [and] . . . pray with fervent charity for the eternal rest of the deceased."[10]

Within a year and a half of my profession, I was serving as a Provincial Minister and began to attend the council meetings of the North American

Federation. The federation preceded the Pauline Rule and the National Fraternity as we know it today. In addition to the provinces in the United States, the federation included the SFO provinces in Canada.

The meetings of the federation tended to be somewhat stormy at times, what with the changes of Vatican II not being well understood nor appreciated by many of those in attendance. Also, there seemed to be an undercurrent of competition and differences in the expression of the nature of secular spirituality. Those differences were usually based on the differences found in the four different traditions of the friars. The resultant lack of unity was evident and carried over into the early National Fraternity days.

Reinforcing this sense of disunity was the provincial structure in which the local fraternities found themselves. All fraternities established by each First Order or Third Order Regular friar province were organized into provinces regardless of where they might be geographically located. This resulted in overlapping provinces in the same geographical area (up to seven in some cases). From an efficiency and understandability standpoint, this organization didn't make sense at all. But, most important, it did little to build a sense of unity among the members. There were many instances where two fraternities were located several blocks from each other and neither knew the other existed because they each belonged to different provinces.

This was the Order I professed to be a member of for a lifetime. I look back now and wonder why I ever decided to make such a commitment under the terms of the then extant Rule and Constitutions. Why were there so many directives and regulations? Where was the secular leadership? Where was the sense of unity? Was there a spirituality for seculars living in the world? Where was the Spirit hiding?

Transition

The Spirit continues to speak in various ways, not only in the ancient past but in more recent times as well. And so it was with Vatican II.

As a result of the mandates of Vatican II, a revised Rule (hereafter referred to as the Pauline Rule[11]) for the now Secular Franciscan Order was written and approved. Thus, a new era dawned for the Order. Gone, with a stroke of a pen, was the Leonine Rule approved by Pope Leo XIII in 1883 with its outdated language, passé mentality, and other anachronisms. Also obsolete was the 1957 revision of the Constitutions. That document too had outlived its relevance.

The Pauline Rule was later supported by new Constitutions[12] for the SFO approved in 1990. These two documents are the foundation for an entirely new expression of the life and purpose of the SFO in the terms directed by *Perfectae Caritatis*. Taken together, they are a refreshing breeze that contained

the winds of change for a significant redirection and a fresh, new expression of the spirituality and organization of the former Third Order of St. Francis.

The Pauline Rule is very specific in directing the SFO to be more fully centered on living the gospel of Jesus in the spirit of its founder, St. Francis of Assisi.[13] The sisters and brothers are to be grounded in, and driven by, prayer and contemplation.[14] Areas of apostolic action are clearly identified in the Rule.[15] The Order is to be administered by its secular members in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect with regard to the friars. A new, simplified organizational structure[16] helps to promote a sense of unity so each member is able to experience the oneness of the Order and its international scope.

New Beginnings

I was again serving as a member of a provincial council at the time the Pauline Rule was approved. Prior to its approval, some changes had already begun to occur. Perhaps the most noticeable at our provincial council meetings and possibly at many others, was the relinquishing by the friars of their dominance and/or control of the business of the council and the province. The provincial minister began to preside at the council meetings and carried an air of authority by doing so.

An interesting scene occurred at the first provincial council meeting after the promulgation of the Rule. The provincial spiritual assistant and the provincial minister acted out a short skit for the benefit of the council members to demonstrate the new relationship between the friars and the seculars. They both stood in front of the council, and the friar started speaking with the provincial minister saying very little. A copy of the Pauline Rule was brought forward and the speaking relationship between the friar and the minister changed dramatically. They began to speak the words alternately. This was meant to be a very graphic demonstration of the new relationship between the secular leadership and the friar spiritual assistants. It was to be one of "co-responsibility" and was later more fully articulated in the Constitutions.[17] I have never forgotten that occasion as it was an initial visible sign of that which was yet to be fully realized.

With the Rule came new terms defining and describing the change in the relationship between the friars and the seculars. In addition to the term co-responsibility, we find other new expressions on the vocabulary of the Order—"altius moderamen,"[18] "life-giving union with each other,"[19] "spiritual assistance,"[20] "vital reciprocity."[21] The resulting new relationship was the seed that began to sprout into a renewed spirit and sense of identity for the SFO as well as a new level of mutual respect, cooperation, and trust between the seculars and their brother friars. The harvest from this new-found relationship will continue to be fruitful for both the seculars and the entire Franciscan family.

In response to the realities of the new relationship between the seculars and the friars and to help reinforce a sense of unity among the SFO, a Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) has been formed. The purpose of the conference is to coordinate the activities of the provincial spiritual assistants and to provide for the uniform application of their *altius moderamen*. The conference is comprised of one friar from each of the four different friar obediences.

Gradually, the real meaning of the organizational requirement of the Rule began to be understood. In October 1989, in response to a suggestion to the National Fraternity Council signed by five spiritual assistants, the Council embarked on the process of regionalization as mandated in Article 20 of the Rule describing the structure of the Order: "The Secular Franciscan Order is divided into fraternities of various levels: local, regional, national, international."

The key word is "regional" and not provincial. Regional describes an organization based on geography and not on the local fraternity's friars' province affiliation. Initially, there was significant resistance from both the secular and the friars about changing the structure of the national fraternity. However, the process of regionalization was successfully completed in October 1997. There is no doubt in my mind that regionalization was the work of the Holy Spirit. For, how could a significant reorganization of a body of over 18,000 members in over 750 local fraternities spread over forty-eight states, organized into over thirty provinces with each province having many years of history and unique cultures and traditions be accomplished with no significant problems and a two-page guideline document for direction if the Holy Spirit wasn't the primary architect and orchestrator of the process?

One footnote. From a retrospective viewpoint, the letter from the five friars was the beginning of a significant change in the influence the friars had on the decisions of the National Fraternity Council. Prior to regionalization, the friar provincial assistants, thirty plus in number, were permitted to vote on decisions of the National Fraternity Council and therefore had a major effect on the decisions of the Council. Since regionalization and the implementation of the new National Statutes, the four members of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants are the only friars entitled to vote.

With the Pauline Rule came the need to update completely all formation programs and material. This provided the impetus to develop formation material based on the results of Vatican II and the latest models used for the initiation of new members into the Church. Formation programs based on the RCIA model are available and use the latest models for adult learning. There is now a definite commitment to the necessity of substantial ongoing formation programs at all levels of fraternity within the Order.

The apostolic commissions have become another addition to the Order since 1978. They help focus the membership into four important apostolic

areas highlighted in the Rule:[22] ecology, family, peace and justice, and work. Each commission now has its chairperson/co-chairperson at the national fraternity level with many regional fraternities doing the same. The commission chairs help to promote Franciscan values beyond the boundaries of the Order.

Much more could be written concerning the effect the Pauline Rule has had to date on the SFO than can be accommodated here. What I have attempted to describe up to this point are some of the more fundamental aspects of the transition from the old to the new as I have experienced them. To summarize. Initially, there was the need for change because the old was outdated. Then came the intervention of the Spirit in the life of the Church and in the Order to institute the needed redirection which included the Pauline Rule. The Pauline Rule then opened the doors for a secular spirituality to develop based on the life of Jesus of the gospels as modeled by St. Francis. In addition, it directed organizational changes that have resulted in the SFO becoming a more truly *Secular* Franciscan Order that is now responsible for its own administration. Let it suffice to say that we have only seen the beginning. Who knows where the Spirit will lead the followers of Francis?

The Future

And so the transition between the two Rules continues even to this day. With the advent of the Pauline Rule, a culture change was required to move beyond the Leonine Rule. This has been accomplished during the past twenty years during which the Pauline Rule has been in effect. However, there is still much that needs to be done if the totality of the spiritual depth of the Pauline Rule and the challenges it presents are to become an integral part of the life of the Order. We need to have each of the sisters and brothers move beyond just possessing the intellectual knowledge contained in the Rule and the gospel, for knowledge in and of itself, is not enough. I pray that this will happen as more and more of our sisters and brothers "let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do."[23]

From my own experience and observations, I believe that the Pauline Rule has made it possible for the SFO to become a more viable, prophetic voice in the Church and in society. However, if the Order is ever to reach its full potential, much more needs to be done than has been accomplished thus far, both at the individual level and at the various fraternity levels.

Consider the following. Perhaps all SFO members can begin to believe beyond all doubt that the Lord dwells within them as *the God within* and then to believe that the *God within* moves them to seek the abundant fruits of fraternity in the midst of its many trials. Thus, supported by fraternity, they may be better able to move beyond their own self-imposed limitations as individuals. And then, utilizing the energy that fraternity gives, they may be driven with

far more passion to live the gospel life in all its ramifications.

The term refounding is frequently used to describe a process for institutions and organizations to find new life and purpose. They are told to return to their founding stories to recapture the excitement generated in the early history so as to be re-energized to address the issues of contemporary society at their very roots. To do so is to enter willingly into the Paschal Mystery (death) so that new life emerges. It is less about vision and planning and more about entering into the mystery of God's plan.[24] Perhaps, if this process were to be pursued by the various levels of fraternity, unimaginable forms of new fraternal and apostolic life would evolve.

We continue to be challenged as never before to develop a passion to live the gospel, to be on fire with the Spirit, and to take risks to go beyond our boundaries of comfort. For, how else will we be able to be more effective "instruments of peace" and love in the portion of the world into which we have been placed by the good Lord?

Endnotes

[1]Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," *Gaudium et Spes*, 4.

[2]*Ritual for Public Functions: Franciscan Third Order* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1955), 36.

[3]*Rule and Constitutions: Franciscan Third Order* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1959); hereafer referred to as the "Leonine Rule" and "Constitutions."

[4]Leonine Rule, 1:1.

[5]Leonine Rule, 1:2.

[6]Leonine Rule, 1:3.

[7]Constitutions, 4.

[8]Leonine Rule, 2:6.

[9]Leonine Rule, 2:11.

[10]Leonine Rule, 2:14.

[11]Note that the name, Pauline Rule, is not the official title for the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. I am only using it in this paper to avoid confusion with any previous Rule.

[12]*The General Constitutions: Secular Franciscan Order* (Menahga, MN: Franciscan Resources, 1990).

[13]Pauline Rule, 4.

[14]Pauline Rule, 8.

[15]Pauline Rule, 15-19.

[16]Pauline Rule, 20.

[17]*General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order*, 95:3.

[18]*General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order*, 85:2.

[19]Pauline Rule, 1.

[20]Pauline Rule, 26.

[21]Leon Bedrune, OFM, "Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order in the Church Today," *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order*, 138, 3.

[22]Pauline Rule, 15-19

[23]Pauline Rule, 8.

[24]Ref. Sr. Brenda Hermann, MSBT

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About Our Contributors

Murray Bodo, OFM, a friar of St. John the Baptist Province, Cincinnati, is a priest and poet. He has authored a number of books and is an occasional contributor to *The Cord*, for which he serves on the editorial board. At present he is a writer-in-residence and assistant professor of English at Thomas More College, Crestview Hills, Kentucky.

Claire Campbell, SFO, is a Secular Franciscan from Hendersonville, North Carolina. Her article, "Brother Wolf," was published in the September/October, 1997, issue of *The Cord*.

Emanuela De Nunzio, SFO, is General Minister for the Secular Franciscan Order. She made her profession as a Secular Franciscan on October 3, 1949. Presently, she lives in Rome, where for thirty-five years she has worked as director of "Ente Nazionale." Widowed at forty-five, she dedicated herself to the SFO, holding various national offices until elected Minister General in 1990. She was re-elected in 1996.

Raphael Fulwider, OSF, is a Franciscan Sister of Syracuse, New York. She lives at the Franciscan Hermitage at Alverna Heights, NY. She has been an art teacher and is currently involved in creative works that express God's love for the world.

Richard Morton, SFO, was National Minister for the Secular Franciscan Order, USA, from 1991-1997. He resides in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota. An electrical engineer by profession, he served as an engineering manager for Honeywell. He is now retired. His article on "Integrating a Franciscan Spirituality of Work into Leadership of the Workplace," appeared in *The Cord* in Nov./Dec., 1996.

Carl Schafer, OFM, a member of the Province of the Holy Spirit, Australia, was General Assistant to the Secular Franciscan Order from 1985 to 1997. In that capacity he traveled extensively, working with Secular Franciscans throughout the world and editing the "Letter to the Assistants" in four languages. He is now stationed in the Holy Land.

William Wicks, SFO, is the present National Minister for the Secular Franciscan Order, USA. A member of the Order since 1981, he lives in Santa Maria, California, with his wife Francis, who is also a Secular Franciscan. They have five children and five grandchildren. Retired from his work of thirty years as a Systems Engineer, he is an active member of St. Anthony of Padua fraternity in Santa Maria.

Mary Zablocki, SFO, a registered nurse at Sisters' Hospital in Buffalo, New York, has served as minister of her local fraternity and, together with her husband, Ed, has co-chaired the Work Commission of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order—USA, since 1995. Mary and Ed have two sons, Francis and Paul. Mary has contributed articles and poetry to *New Covenant* and to *The Cord*.

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Work as a Gift of Love: A Secular Franciscan Perspective

Mary Zablocki, SFO

Work and the Original Sin

As far back as the first book of Genesis, we as a race have recorded the value of work. "God saw all that he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen.1:31). Everything God made was deemed good. All that was created was good, from the very first glimmer of light to the companions God created in man and woman. "God saw that it was good" is repeated over and over in the first account of the creation. (Gen. 1:1-31) Of course, we might say, it was good because it was of God. God created the world. God created man and woman, beasts and stars, water and land. This is nature. This is raw, unblemished, and untarnished life. Of course it is good.

God is not the only creator however, and even as far back as the book of Genesis, there is evidence that it did not take long for man and woman to contribute their own creations to the early world. Humans, tempted by the serpent, created not only the first sin, but the first need for discipline. There are those who would say they managed to ruin all that was good. Our sin, the original sin, blew us right out of the garden of Eden into the world of back-breaking labor. Is this not a punishment for all of us to bear?

Every generation since has borne the burden of work. We have been dominated by the weather, the tyranny of slavery, the need to feed ourselves, and to provide the necessities of life for our children. We have labored at everything from hoeing dry rocky soil to stitching tiny threads in airless sweatshops. We have worked frenetically in fear of the master who owns us; we have worked in freedom, becoming wealthy beyond any measure of justice. Since Adam and Eve were put out of the garden, we have worked. Since Cain murdered Abel, we have killed, maimed, and destroyed each other in the name of success,

profit, survival. We have robbed, pillaged and gone to war over the right to have what we feel is rightfully ours. We believe that what we work for is ours, and even what we inherit without working for is ours.

Generation after generation we have persisted in a pattern of thinking that diminishes the inherent goodness of work. We, like Adam and Eve, listen and are tempted by the same serpent. Our sin persists. We witlessly replace creative privilege with the relentless pursuit of power and knowledge. We embrace the knowledge of good and evil which was indeed, the original temptation, and armed with this knowledge use and manipulate our work as a means to further our knowledge and power to even greater heights. We have forgotten the divine element of work, and our role as caretakers of that which God has made (Gen. 2:15). Is it any wonder that we feel oppressed, rushed, and unfulfilled? Do we really need to look for reasons why we, in every generation, have exhausted ourselves from morning till night working?

Another View of Work

It seems hard to believe that the prevailing attitude about work throughout human history has been so negative. And yet, is it that hard? We cling with stubborn tenacity to the image of ourselves as fallen creatures, either blaming our sinful natures for our difficulties or exonerating ourselves from responsibility for our own behavior by blaming that same human condition. We sound like Adam and Eve, pointing out reasons why we fail to behave like God, when we were made in God's image as a pure act of love (Gen. 1:27).

If we go back to the passage in Genesis where we are recorded as being made in God's own image, we can present a case for the creative and redemptive character of our work. As images that reflect the person of God, we share in God's creative and redemptive role. References to work throughout Scripture reinforce this. It is the work of building an ark, mandated by Yahweh, that enabled Noah to share in God's renewal of the human race after the flood (Gen. 6:13-22). It is the cooperative work of human hands that built the great temple of Solomon (1Kings 5:19-26). Jesus used parables of workers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16), servants investing their masters money (Lk. 19:11-26), and the sower in the field (Mk. 4:1-9). All of these stories teach lessons about how work fits into the divine plan.

Peter was working when he was called by Jesus, and Jesus used his livelihood to teach him about evangelization (Mk. 1:16-20). Jesus himself worked very hard, healing and comforting people, performing miracles and preaching. Even when he needed to rest, he was faced with more people who needed him ((Mt. 8:18, 23-27; Mt. 13:1-3; Mt. 14:22, 34-36). The last thing Jesus did before his night of agony in Gethsemene was an act of loving service. Not only

did he wash the feet of his beloved apostles, he used the act as a lesson of love for all time.

Francis and Work

It is no surprise then that St. Francis, whose heart was aflame with love, would take these passages from Scripture and make them his own. Francis, from the very beginning of his conversion, worked. He interpreted the words of Jesus, "Go rebuild my church," literally and began to pile one stone upon another to repair the Portiuncula and other dilapidated chapels around Assisi. Though he departed from his father's home in disgrace, leaving his father to run the business without his help, Francis never stopped working. Nowhere do we see the Poverello as an indolent wastral, destined to live a life of poverty because he would not work.

On the contrary, Francis is a stirring example of work at its finest. His work was as pure as the work mandated to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Unencumbered by the demands of an earthly master, Francis was free to do his work with love. Unfettered by the need to earn wages, Francis could give away his time and energy to do whatever needed to be done for God. Free of the burden of pride, jealousy, and resentment about his lot in life, Francis was able to sweat and labor at the most menial and degrading tasks all the while singing with joy. It was this type of free, pure work that Francis expected of his friars (RegNB 7; RegB 5).

All Francis did he did for God. And God in Francis's eyes was reflected in the faces of the homeliest, the dirtiest, the sorriest specimens of his society. It was Francis's deep love for God that enabled him to look at even the most flawed of beings and see, like God saw at the beginning of time, that it was good. Francis was so in love with God that he could not separate the created from the creator. He embraced not only the powerless lepers and the poor of Assisi, but the powerful church magisterium; and his love for priests is well documented (Test 6-9). It was this love that drew his brothers to him. It was the purity of his rule, based as it was on the gospels, that won him the approval of Rome.

What Francis wrote about work encouraged the brothers to continue to work at whatever trade they had practiced before they joined him, and he allowed them to keep the tools of their trade (RegNB 7). Francis wrote in his Testament: "And I used to work with my hands, and I [still] desire to work; and I firmly wish that all my brothers give themselves to honest work. Let those who do not know how [to work] learn, not from desire of receiving wages for their work but as an example and in order to avoid idleness" (Test 20-21).

Franciscans and Work

In the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, approved by Rome on June 24, 1978, there is an article devoted exclusively to work. Article 16 reads: "Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community."

Once again, in the eloquent language of this current rule for Secular Franciscans, we are brought back to the Scriptural designation of work as gift. We are exhorted to use this gift, but moreover to esteem this gift. We must be willing to take our work as gift and share it with others even as we receive their work as their gift to us. This agape, this exchange of talents, fosters in us a deep appreciation of the value of others' work. So often we allow ourselves to be tempted by pride in our work. While there is nothing at all wrong with satisfaction in a job well done we must never lose sight of the value of human work no matter what it is and who is doing it. If a genius, a master in his field, mistreats the woman who dusts his desk, then where is the redemptive value in his work? If a woman who has struggled to achieve a high ranking position takes every opportunity to diminish the value of men under her authority, where is her creative effort?

It is our calling as Franciscans to immerse ourselves in the Scriptures, particularly the gospel, and therein discover the true meaning of our work as creative and redemptive. It is our responsibility also to do our work in such a manner as to preach by example the gospel we love. We are the apostles of this century. We, along with every baptized Christian, are the anointed ones today. We are called in the words of Isaiah to be healers, liberators, bearers of good news (Is. 61:1-2). These words of Jesus are for us: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mt. 16:24). In the words of Francis, we again hear the same loving exhortation to carry on the work of creation and redemption: "I have done what was mine to do, may Christ teach you what you are to do" (2Cel 214).

Even in his last moments, Francis did not presume to teach his followers how to follow God. Instead, as always, he turned their focus on Christ, once again drawing them into the Scriptures he so loved, guiding them to find the truth in Jesus, the source and embodiment of truth.

Rule of the Secular Franciscans and Work

This is where we too, as followers of St. Francis centuries later, will find the way to do "what [we] are to do." Our Secular Franciscan rule is purposely non-prescriptive. It allows us to live our lives as members of society at large without dictating what we are to wear or eat or how often we must practice

devotions and what those devotions must be. The Rule, by its very flexibility, places the responsibility for our relationship with God squarely on our shoulders, just as Francis did with his followers at the time of his death.

"Secular Franciscans should devote themselves to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel" (Rule, Art.4). It is in this careful reading of the gospels that we will find the way to do our work well, but Francis does not stop there. Just as he and his early followers loved and needed the sacraments, so we too are called to avail ourselves, particularly of the Eucharist.

"Let them participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist" (Rule, Art. 8). Our active participation in the liturgy is essential to our spiritual nourishment, especially in our work lives. Surprisingly, the sacrament is about work. The word "liturgy" means "work of the people." In the beginning of this work we listen to the words of the Scriptures inspiring us, and if we open our hearts and minds, we take away not only inspiration but the graces needed to carry this sacred work into our secular lives.

At the offertory, we present the church with money, earned from the work of our hands; but richer still is the gift we carry to the altar of God. We offer bread and wine and then witness the celebrant blessing these gifts as fruit of the vine and "work of human hands." God makes the vine and God provides the fruit, but we make the wine. God provides the grain and the water and the salt for our bread, but it is the work of the baker that brings it in this form to the altar. As these symbolic gifts are carried reverently to the altar, so too are all of our efforts, our successes and failures, our dealings and filings and faxings and deliverings, borne to the God who loves us. We give to God the fruits of our work, the work of human hands.

No matter how menial, no matter how little we are paid for our work, united with the gifts on the altar it becomes a part of the communal work of human hands. On the other hand, no matter how inflated our sense of self-importance, our work is present in the humble symbols of bread and wine. Regardless of whether we are vital to our jobs or whether our self-importance is unwarranted, on the altar of God our work is equal to the work of all other human hands. When the priest raises the bread and wine and consecrates them, changing them into the body and blood of Jesus, he is raising the symbols of our work, the work of our hands, and consecrating our efforts, changing them into the body and blood of Christ. What happens is more gracious than most of us realize.

This body of Christ, consecrated by the grace of God in the hands of the priest, is then fed back to the members whose work brought it to the altar in the first place. How wonderful to contemplate! How filled with joy we must be to know that we have helped create this wonderful miracle. How can we not

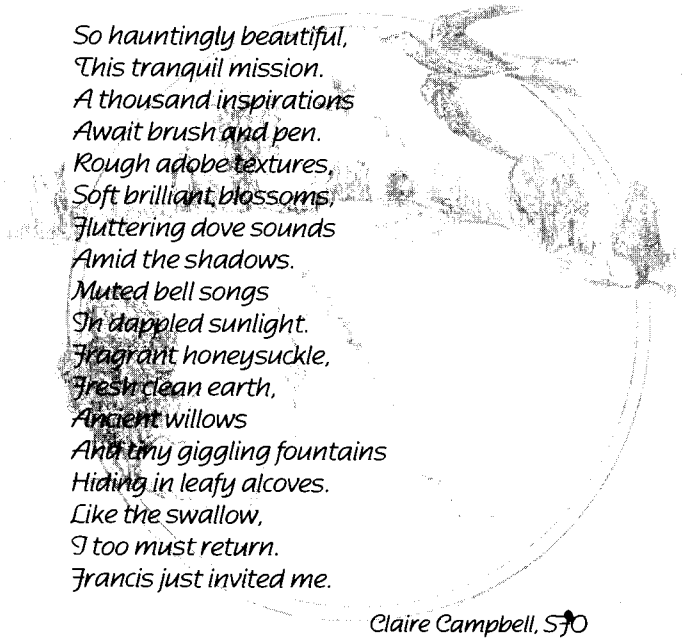
go singing in the streets knowing that we have played such a sweet intimate role in the redemption of humankind!

Sharing the Gift

Can we believe this? Can we take this and get in the car with it on Monday morning, drive with it to work, walk with it through our days and evenings, and sleep in peace and joy with it at night? Do we realize the power for good that comes with this grace? Do we even have a clue how magnificent this gift is? God is so good! It is no wonder the mystics weep and the martyrs go to their deaths singing for joy.

We have a mission. Our task is to challenge the naysayers and the overwhelming negative energy they spread. The beginning of this article is filled with the negative voices we hear all around us. It is our mission to love both work and worker so much that others will see God's greatness in both. We are called to be Christ on earth. We are well-equipped to do this, and nothing should stand in our way. Let us begin, for up until now we have done nothing.

San Juan Capistrano



So hauntingly beautiful,
This tranquil mission.
A thousand inspirations
Await brush and pen.
Rough adobe textures,
Soft brilliant blossoms,
Fluttering dove sounds
Amid the shadows.
Muted bell songs
In dappled sunlight.
Fragrant honeysuckle,
Fresh clean earth,
Ancient willows
And tiny giggling fountains
Hiding in leafy alcoves.
Like the swallow,
I too must return.
Francis just invited me.

Claire Campbell, SFO

Raphael Fulwider, OSF,

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Life in Fraternity

William Wicks, SFO

Introduction

"When the Lord gave me brothers, there was no one to tell me what I should do; but the Most High himself made it clear to me that I must live the life of the Gospel" (Test 14).[1] As Secular Franciscans, the Lord gives us brothers, and sisters too. "The Rule and Life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . ."[2] We do this by "following the example of St. Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people."[3]

Fraternity is the means by which, and the environment through which, we are called to live the Gospel. "The vocation of the SFO [Secular Franciscan Order] is a vocation to live the Gospel in fraternal communion. For this purpose, the members of the SFO gather in ecclesial communities which are called fraternities."[4] Brothers and sisters are there to provide support and encouragement. They are there to teach. They are there to correct. They are there to help me live the Gospel, and I am there to help them live the Gospel.

This article will reveal three necessary aspects of fraternal life. It must be a community of love, it must be a place for ongoing conversion, and it must be a place of support for living the Gospel in the world. Referenced sources quoted in this article include the words, Friars, Brothers, Sisters, and men. These writings, which are filled with wisdom, are also applicable to brothers and sisters, men and women, of the Secular Franciscan Order. So please read these quotes with this redirect in mind.

Community of Love

> The fraternity, summoned by the Holy Spirit in Christ's name, is an aspect of penitential life that is highly meaningful and irreplaceable. The brothers help each other to grow in the love of God through reciprocal love, encouragement, fraternal correction, and so forth. Together they overcome difficulties, are freed from selfishness, and give witness of conversion to God.[5,6]

> Francis' writings suggests that he understood the gift of brothers as more than simply supportive instruments of the Lord. They were both necessary conditions and necessary expressions of the Gospel life, which demands witness to the Community of God's Love, that is, the Trinity. In order to bring to birth the "spirit of the truth of the Gospel," he needed brothers "according to the Spirit."[7]

> When the Friars or Sisters love each other mutually, the Spirit of God lives in them, and God Himself, the Father Almighty, the Son and Spirit set up their dwelling among them. As sons of the same heavenly Father, and as a unity, called to share the divine life, they are brothers of Christ. "Oh how holy and delightful . . . to have such a brother." Both in teaching and practice, Francis has given birth to a fraternal life which is intense and rich with overtones."[8]

The fraternity, first and foremost, must be a community of love. In her testament, St. Clare tells us: "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."[9]

> An important quality of community is the lived experience of togetherness (that "unity of mutual love"). . . . The implications of this quality for life in community are as follows.
>
> a) Community is a gift to be discovered and lived out; it is dependent upon the urgings of grace and the demands of God's initiative, and not just upon one's own categories of acceptance, whims of decision, or choice of partners.
> b) Community is based upon a free and responsible acceptance of a call; it is togetherness because of personal self-giving, willful decision, and the obligation flowing from intimacy, not just legislation or communal structures. It is a concrete expression of "one body, one spirit in Christ," the being of "one mind and one heart," not a togetherness based upon regular observance or uniformity.
> c) Community life has to reflect the Father's loving us intensely, his choosing us to come together in Jesus Christ, his giving the energy of the Holy Spirit to restore all things in Christ.
> d) Life in community recognizes the dignity of every person to be a chosen child of God, to be redeemed by Christ, to have the potential to respond to the Spirit's urging, to be the artisan of one's

own world, to embody a unique blend of characteristics or talents."[10]

"The fidelity and authenticity of our commitment, manifested to community, provides a model for those in the world of what a life with God can mean and demonstrates to them the possibilities of their own hearts to strive for holiness."[11] The earliest Franciscans, "free from all selfish love, poured all their affection into the heart of the community." Fraternal love displays a unity for the world to see.

> The unanimity of the sisters [Poor Clares], "possessing the one love, united in spirit and ideas" (Phil. 2:2) was the countenance of God's gentleness, the sacrament of God's tenderness, the witness of God's kindly regard. . . . As Jesus prayed, "that they may be one in us [so] that the world may believe that you sent me" and "that their unity may be complete [so that] the world [may] know . . . that you love me" and "that your love for me may live in them and I may live in them" (Jn. 17:21, 23, 26), so life in community is meant to both show and secure the gentle, loving, and caring presence of the Most High."[12]

The Challenges of Fraternal Life

But unity is not easy to come by. A fraternity is made up of all kinds of people, and we are not all alike. These differences should be respected. Mary Ann Julian, SFO, writes:

> Our fraternities are the nurseries where God prepares, nurtures, and strengthens us for our work in the world. In these "gardens of love," all plants (us) are unique, varied, purposeful. Each has the capacity to give honor to God and to benefit others in some way. Now temptations blow through the garden and often the way we "rub against each other" causes us to become irritated. If we rely, or take pride, in our own gifts, friction and division will occur. If we learn to die to self and submit to the loving care of the Gardener (and our lawful superiors), His beauty, His love, and His peace will increase in us and overflow to all the world.[13]

Lester Bach, OFM Cap., also indicates that all is not peaches and cream:

> The community will experience the Exodus experience again and again. Some problems persist beyond their time. Failure is not easy to handle. . . . We will have more than our share of humanness. Still, we are committed to create a climate where humanness is understood and accepted. On the other hand, we have good celebrations. We have prayer experiences that move us to tears of joy. We are gently surprised by the dedication of a brother and sister. We are impressed with the joy of one who suffers. We realize our strength as a people dedicated to Jesus, willing to "keep on keeping on" no matter what the price. We learn so much from the example of others in the community. It is good to know we are not alone on this pilgrimage to God. We learn about Jesus through the honest sharing in community. We learn to celebrate the ordinary gifts that life brings. We find joy in our covenant with the poor. Service brings us satisfaction. New members bring us happiness in seeing another person answering the Gospel call of Jesus. When Sister Death calls someone home, we gather together both in grief at our loss and thanksgiving for eternal life. When our experience helps someone else, the gift is mutually satisfying.[14]

Patti Normile, SFO, writes: "Any house, whether a structure or a spiritual home, must be tended in order to thrive and survive. Our spiritual houses—families, parishes, communities [fraternities] and nations—must be cared for by people who love them."[15]

Personal Conversion and Apostolic Responsibility

In addition to being a community of Love, a fraternity should be a place of conversion and a launching pad for apostolic activity of the members. Chapter 3 of our Rule, entitled "Life in Fraternity" (life with brothers and sisters), tells us that

> the local fraternity . . . becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of us members.[16]

The commentary in the booklet, *From Gospel to Life*, states: "The local fraternity is the basic living organism of the whole Secular Franciscan Order and a visible sign of Church in miniature. . . . It is the center for spiritual growth, apostolic outreach, and loving union among members."[17]

The above paragraph alludes to two facets of our Fraternity Life—our internal calling and our external calling, our internal spiritual growth and our external apostolic works. Both are important for our life as Secular Franciscans.

There are two expectations that all of us should have for our life in fraternity. One, our fraternity should be a place where we are offered an opportu-

nity for conversion, for spiritual growth. Two, we should be provided support and encouragement for the life that we live outside of fraternity—our life of Gospel living. These two are connected as understood by our Rule, paragraph 4, which calls us to go from Gospel (conversion) to Life (apostolate).

Other opportunities for conversion may come from reading holy writings, especially those written by and about St. Francis and St. Clare. Conversion can also come by participating in liturgy, by listening to our brothers and sisters, and by the experiences that we encounter in our daily lives, especially when we are involved in apostolic action.

Means of Conversion

The Eucharist should be the center of life in fraternity.

The plan of penance and ongoing conversion involves the choice of *participating fully in the Eucharist* so that the Body of Christ—Head and members—will become a main source of support and accountability for one's decision to bring renewal through the cross: "and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Eucharist as covenant, sacrifice, meal, celebration, community-builder, reconciliation, and life-style is a primary experience of intimate Real Presence to activate and actualize the union between the penitential person and the loving Lord.[18]

A fraternity, which would really be a symbol and means of conversion to God, comprises:

- A serious and constant effort at union among the brothers who are called by God to the life of penance.
- The responsibility on the part of each religious to see the brothers as the first friends of his life, a life which he or she has willingly chosen through the inspiration of God. The first Franciscans "long to meet each other and are happy to stay together."
- The need on the part of each individual religious (secular) and of everyone at the community level to unfailingly use those means which further fraternity and union with God.
- The good will to eliminate those obstacles which challenge the very meaning of fraternal life, these being: individualism, autonomy, self-centeredness, self-motivation, absenteeism, dissatisfaction, and so forth.[19]

The Apostolic Life

The outer journeys—journeys into the world, the external calling, the apostolic life, the going from Gospel to life—are the other side of the spiritual

coin of the internal/external calling indicated by our Rule of Life. For Francis the realization of this outer calling was a moment of his conversion.

When Francis set out to live "according to the form of the holy Gospel," he came to understand this twofold requirement, although there were dark moments when he could not see his way clearly. However, once he realized that he could not live for himself alone but had to live for others, too, his commitment to spreading the Gospel assumed more importance than the call to the solitude of a hermitage which he had felt at the time of his conversion. He came to see that he had to travel through the world preaching and sharing the treasures he had discovered, which was Christ and His Gospel. . . . Yet his path of penance [pilgrimage] was not to be the solitary road of the recluse but rather the turbulent highway of everyday life along which he would travel with all classes of people, with whom he would share his Gospel experience as a beacon to guide them to their destination in heaven.[20]

Francis used to tell his friars that their vocation was not so much to seek their own salvation as to go through the world exhorting others more by their example than by their words; that is, they were to give example of light to those wrapped in the darkness of sin.[21]

He calls us to a Franciscan way to live the Gospel. "I council, admonish and exhort my brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ, that, when they go about the world, they do not quarrel or fight with words, or judge others, rather, let them be meek, peaceful and unassuming and humble, speaking courteously to everyone, as is becoming.[22]

While remaining faithful to our Franciscan heritage, especially in preaching, we shall have to approach the problems of our modern apostolate in a very different way. The society we live in is no longer the united Christendom of the Middle Ages, in which religion entered every phase of life—culture, ideology, etc. Today, a secularist society is regarded as the logical norm, and the faith is seen as a personal choice not always favored by the world around us.[23]

While the apostolic plans of the first fraternity were suited to the needs of their time and place, they are not pertinent to today's world. Yet, when we examine the early friars' activities, we can see—and endeavor to live by—the Gospel values which inspired and sustained them and which generally speaking, were as follows:

The example of our Gospel life—In a society in which there are already too many words, it is difficult to communicate the Gospel message by using long sermons and convincing arguments. If our words are not supported by the way we follow Christ in our daily lives, they are just so much more meaningless noise. Our apostolate, preaching the Gospel in the modern world, will retain its original freshness and vitality only if we ourselves are living by the words we preach.

Spreading the Gospel rather than administering the sacraments—The "new evangelization" now so emphasized in the Church is the result of an awareness that the Christian world has become "de-Christianized" in spite of its long sacramental history. Yet the urgent need for this new evangelization should not cause us to fall into the trap of thinking that all we have to do is return to the past. If we are to spread the Gospel today, we must first believe that it can be done. To think otherwise would be to deny that God is present through His Spirit in the world in which He has placed us.

Being with those who have been marginalized by poverty and lack of opportunity—Traditionally, and with good reason, we Franciscans have been regarded as "men of the people." Still, we must do more than support the ordinary people in their simple faith, important though that duty is. We must, in addition, lead them to accept that living the Gospel has ethical consequences in the life of even the humblest member of society."[24]

Fraternity as Pilgrimage

Fraternity is a place of internal and external pilgrimage. We, as fraternity, walk together on the road of life encountering moments of great and small conversions and rejoice in these moments. We encounter opportunities of grace in the lands of everyday life, just as the pilgrims of the Middle Ages encountered opportunities of grace on their physical journey to far away lands. In today's culture, the lands of everyday life can be just as alien as those faraway lands. The opportunity for entering into the Paschal mystery is just as real today as it was during St. Francis's time. This is why we need the support of fraternity.

> Pilgrimage . . . was often taken to be a sacramental in the Middle Ages; certainly, it often mediated grace to the changing person in a changing world. . . . The notion of pilgrimage, for our own time, 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 conversions in life.[25]
>
> Benedictinism and Bernard of Clairvaux moved the idea of pilgrimage to a journey one undertakes in the heart and a need to keep oneself unentangled from the snares of the world. . . . 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. . . . Francis did not conceive of pilgrimage as exclusively an inner journey, but as an inner journey which corresponded to an outer one.[26]

Fraternity members are fellow travelers on these inner and outer journeys. They may add balm to spiritual bruises and elation to spiritual successes: our moments of personal conversions. They share the ups and downs of the journey with each other.

The Spiritual Assistant

I would be remiss if I failed to underscore the importance of the Spiritual Assistant role in the enrichment of Fraternities. The Friars or Spiritual Animators (religious, diocesan clergy, or certified Secular Franciscans) contribute to the Fraternity by their participation as an equal member of the Executive Council, provide ongoing formation, preside at the liturgies, and, most important, are present with us at our gatherings.

Conclusion

The very nature of the Franciscan charism begs for fraternity. Whenever Seculars get together, fraternity is experienced. In the conduct of the business of the Executive Council, fraternity is formed. Even though the National Fraternity Council meets once a year, the meeting is always like an annual family get together with newly-elected members being welcomed like long lost relatives. Regional fraternities periodically conduct days of recollections or weekend retreats. There, family is formed. At our recent Quinquennial Congress, participants were divided into small fraternities for periodic sharing relative to the daily presentations. By the end of the Congress we cared so much for each other that parting was difficult. It is as if we are all related, all belong to a large family, a family with Francis as our spiritual father.

But the basic unit of the Order is the local fraternity. This is the privileged place where we are involved in apostolic and social activities, where we experi-

ence spiritual growth, and where we experience family love. May St. Francis and St. Clare and their communities continue to be an inspiration to us in our life in fraternity.

Endnotes

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[6]Note: Replace the words "Friars," "Brothers," "Sisters" with "brothers and sisters" and "men" with "men and women of the Secular Franciscan Order."

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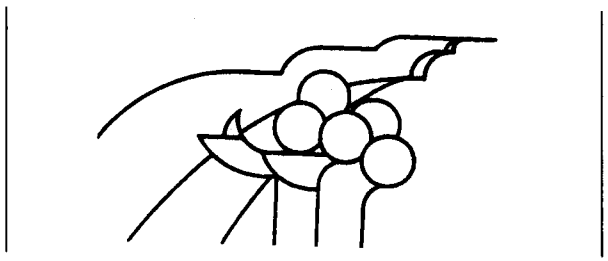

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Saturday, May 23-Tuesday, May 26
Harmony: The Gift of Clare and Francis, with Regis Armstrong, OFMCap., and Ingrid Peterson, OSF. At Franciscan Retreat Center, Andover, MA. Contact: Franciscan Networking Seminar, 3722 SE Henry St., Portland, OR 97202, ph. 508-851-3391.

Saturday, May 23
Rebirth of a Charism, Federation Seminar on TOR Rule. At Marycrest Retreat Center, Denver, CO (see ad, p. 149).

Friday, May 29-Sunday, May 31
Franciscan Studies:The Difference Women are Making. Washington Theological Union. Regis Armstrong, Maria Calisi, Margaret Carney, Ilia Delio, Paul LaChance, Dominic Monti, Roberta McKelvie, Elise Saggau, Gabriele Uhlein. Contact: Linda Dougherty, 6896 Laurel St., NW, Washington, DC 20012; ph. 202-541-5235.

Saturday, May 30-Saturday, June 6
On Being Simply Human. Retreat, with Michael Blastic, OFMConv. $350. At Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993, fax 507-453-0910; taucentr@luminet.net.

Sunday, May 31-Saturday, June 6
Lord, Teach Us To Pray. A retreat with Berard Doerger, OFM. At Mount St. Francis, Colorado Springs. Contact: Marilyn Uhing, OSF, 7665 Assisi Heights, Colorado Springs, CO 80919-3836, ph. 719-598-5486.

Saturday, June 20
Rebirth of a Charism, Federation Seminar on TOR Rule. At Felician Sisters, Chicago, IL (see ad, p. 149).

Saturday, June 20-Friday, June 26
Environmental Health Conference, sponsored by Secular Franciscan Order, USA. At Graymoor Christian Unity Center, Garrison, NY. (See ad p. 153.)

Saturday June 20-Friday, June 26
Heeding the Call of Jesus. A retreat with Joseph Rayes, OFM. At Mount St. Francis, Colorado Springs. Contact: Marilyn Uhing, OSF, 7665 Assisi Heights, Colorado Springs, CO 80919-3836, ph. 719-598-5486.

Sunday, June 21-Saturday, June 27
Jesus at the Heart of Life: Discovering the Joy of Being Human. A retreat with Nicholas Lohkamp, OFM. At Franciscan Renewal Center. Contact: Pat Meyer, OSF, 321 Clay St., Carey, OH 43316, ph. 419-396-7970.

Sunday, July 5-Saturday, July 11
Harvesting the Power of the Spirit. A retreat with John Petrikovic, OFMCap. At Mount St. Francis, Colorado Springs. Contact: Marilyn Uhing, OSF, 7665 Assisi Heights, Colorado Springs, CO 80919-3836, ph. 719-598-5486.

Sunday, July 12-Saturday, July 18
The Way of Desire: The Human Journey into God, with Adele Thibaudeau, OSF, and Jerry Schroeder, OFMCap. At Siena Center, 5635 Erie St., Racine, WI 53402-1900; ph. 414-639-4100, fax: 414-639-9702.

Friday, July 24-Friday, July 31
Carrying the Hermitage in our Hearts, with Michael Higgins, TOR. $350. At Tau Center, Winona (see ad, p. 150).

Sunday, August 9-Saturday, August 22
LIFE Program, with Joseph Rayes, OFM, and Madonna Hoying, SFP. At Mount St. Francis, Colorado Springs (see ad, p. 151).

Friday, August 14-Saturday, August 22
The Soul's Journey Into God. A retreat with Andre Cirino, OFM, and Josef Raischl. $400.00. At Stella Maris Retreat Center, Skaneateles, NY. Contact: Stella Maris Retreat Center, 130 E. Genesee St., Skaneateles, NY 13152.

Monday, August 17-Thursday, August 20
33rd Franciscan Federation Conference. At Hyatt Regency Hotel, Milwaukee, WI. Contact Franciscan Federation, P.O. Box 29080, Washington, DC; ph. 202-529-2334 (see ad p. 148).

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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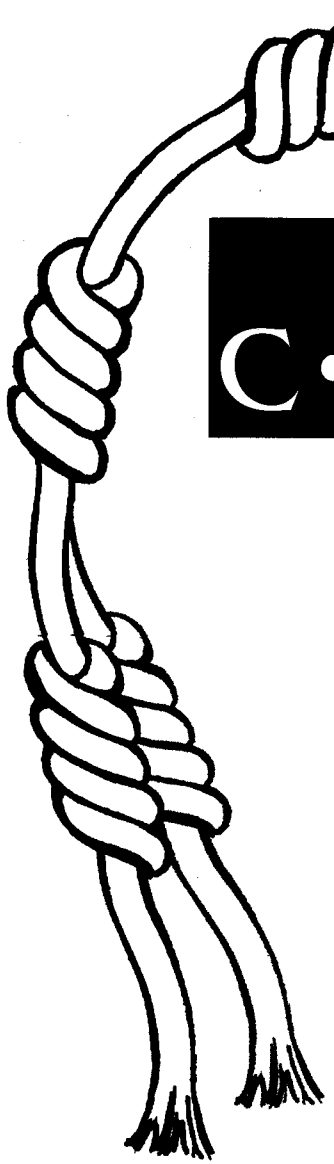

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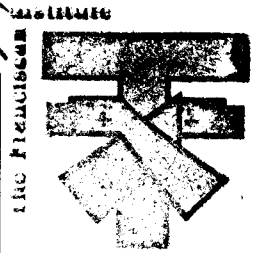

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A Franciscan Spiritual Review

Publisher: Anthony M. Carrozzo, OFM
Editor: Elise Saggau, OSF

Editorial Assistant: Mary C. Gurley, OSF
Poetry Editor: Frances Ann Thom, OSF
Promotion: Thomas Blow, OFM
Distribution Manager: Noel Riggs
Production Assistant: Megan Schutte

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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). (2Cel 5:8).
   (RegNB 23:2). (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.

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The Cord, 48.4 (1998)

Editorial

I do not wish you to marvel that the jar was filled with oil;
but should you marvel, it would be better to marvel at the One
Who filled the jar because He filled with an ever-flowing oil
Clare's mind which He sprinkled with a blessed dew,
and immediately spread her name throughout the world.
(Versified Legend of the Virgin Clare, 490)

The Franciscan tradition contemplates God as self-diffusive Good. God's creative activity is a continual outpouring of Self, which is Good, which is Love. The Franciscan spirit lives in continual amazement at this reality—that out of the "nothing" that we are of ourselves, God makes something quite extraordinary, even effective. The image of the empty oil jar in Clare's Legend reflects this experience. The empty jar waits to be filled by the goodness and kindness of the almsgiver. Mysteriously and inexplicably, it is found to be filled to overflowing. The storyteller sees in this an image of Clare, who, hidden away and empty of self, became an impressive vehicle for the overflowing abundance of God's mercy throughout the world. The great "Almsgiver" lavishes Goodness upon the earth and its inhabitants—no holds barred, no strings attached—through those unique persons who come closest to the image of God in their self-emptying love.

This is a challenge for all of us who fear any threat to our self-possession and sense of personal importance. Our faith and hope are sustained by those brothers and sisters who, in their lives, have somehow come to mediate God through self-emptying. We look to them; we try to follow them; and in our own way we learn the lessons they learned. Through our own empty vessels the Spirit of God flows mysteriously into the world.

In this issue of *The Cord* we read the reflections of a number of writers for whom Clare of Assisi is an unparalleled model. As they share with us their "oil," we are personally enriched by this sister and mother whose fragrance has permeated the world.

A note: Because in *The Cord's* files we have a number of artistic contributions which cannot be identified by the name of the artist, we will sometimes use artwork without attribution. If, at any time, you can identify the artist, please notify the editor so proper credit can be given. Thank you.

The Cord, 48.4 (1998)

Clare of Assisi and the Tradition of Spiritual Guidance[1]

Frances Teresa Downing, OSC

In an order which lacks any overt tradition of giving direction to others and whose foundress was born eight hundred years ago, leaving us only four letters, a Rule, and a Testament, it might seem rash to try to talk about our tradition of spiritual guidance—especially when many readers of this article will be well-versed in other traditions. On the other hand, a great deal of spiritual guidance has certainly gone on in Poor Clare parlors over the centuries. There are undoubtedly attitudes and insights rooted in Clare's life and writings which reveal themselves through phrases like: "Clare says . . ." ; "Clare taught . . ." ; "Clare found . . . ."

Although there is much study yet to be done on Clare's letters, they do seem to have been written for the purpose of giving guidance. They were only discovered relatively recently, by Achille Ratti, later Pius XI, when he was librarian at Milan. It was he who somehow established that the parchment in his hand had been written in Prague between 18 January 1283 and 8 November 1322. Scholars are still finding their way into the theological universe of the letters and there is much to be learned, not least about the thirteenth-century conventions governing correspondence between two educated, aristocratic women in positions of leadership. Yet a great deal can be said with confidence, and language barriers are falling as we realize how deeply rooted in Scripture Clare was and how steeped in Francis's writings. Certainly her letters are not just mystical outpourings of little relevance, though at first they can seem fairly impenetrable.

The fundamental insight of Clare, as of Francis, is that God has, freely and out of goodness, called us all into the life of the Trinity as sisters and brothers of the Son and of each other, and through this movement we repair the Church. The specific contribution of Clare is her profound awareness of

the kenosis of the Word made flesh. The focus of this kenosis is Paradise. Franciscan thinking, at least since Scotus, has maintained that Christ would have become human even had there been no sin, and today the call is still the same: to come to the glory of God by treading the way of Christ's poverty—a reverse journey, so to speak. Bearing in mind the disadvantages of separating a "spirituality" from a "life," we can say that from this Clare developed a spirituality of glory which was remarkable and remarkably incarnational.

Co-workers of God

The gift of God for which we have most cause to give thanks, said Clare, is our vocation, our call (TestCl 2).[2] Here she is talking not only about a vocation to religious life in the restrictive sense but also about the universal call to be the recipients of God's gifts. We are all invited to experience how good God is, and this optimistic approach is summed up in Clare's image of the mirror. The Word mirrors the Godhead to us and we have been set by the Lord as mirrors and examples to each other, reflecting what we ourselves have seen (3LAg 12; TestCl 19). Her stress was always on experience rather than on concepts: we discover for ourselves how good God is, and Clare can urge us to do this with confidence because of her own experience. So any kind of guidance, to Clare's mind, must be able to call on the experience of the guide. Put like that, it sounds a basic requirement of common sense, and certainly she and Francis used their experience as a paradigm. The basic act of God was to give them brothers and sisters, not by way of a trial but as the beginning of the restored kingdom and the start of a whole new way of living human life. The initiative was God's.

Everything else followed from this. All her life Clare maintained that Francis had taught her about Jesus Christ (Proc 12:3), especially about Christ poor and humiliated on the cross. Christ is the way, she said, and Francis showed it to me (TestCl 5); and as a result, she and her first sisters "willingly bound ourselves to our Lady, most holy Poverty" (TestCl 39). Poverty, as Clare understood it, was a deep dedication to Christ as well as a personalization of the only one who actually shared the cross with him (SC 21).[3] Then on this Christ-centered canvas she drew unique lines of spiritual guidance by examining our relationships with God and people.

This relational approach gives her thought a very feminine character. Her images are often women's images, to do with nurturing and tending, with mirrors and sensitivity to beauty, with motherhood in God, with nourishing each other, with grieving over the pain of others. Her thought is very coherent, less idiosyncratic than Francis's, as if her Palm Sunday flight from home had generated such a degree of commitment to Christ that the rest of her life was

simply a deepening of insights already perceived.

Although Francis influenced her greatly, her main ideas were undoubtedly her own, and she was well able to differ from him (over money, for example, and clothing—which may mean hygiene). She constantly reflected on what had happened to her, not assuming that others' paths must be the same but learning from it about the workings of God. Her insights into poverty in particular were all-embracing. She took it for granted that the gifts given were to be shared and not only with the sisters (Proc 1:9), for we are told that she "begot many sons and daughters in Jesus Christ, as is seen today" (Proc 20:7).

One of her outstanding characteristics was her love for the world and everything in it. She also believed that the "treasure without equal is hidden in the field of the world and in human hearts" (3LAg 7). This meant that she saw the ordinary details of human life as filled with God. People are good and God is hidden in them, and just as God works from within to strengthen those who find it all too much, so must we work from without (3LAg 7, 8). She developed this from Paul's statement that we are co-workers of God. This is a call to be life-givers, like God to be examples and mirrors to everyone and especially to those who stumble (TestCl 19, 20). As co-workers of God we are at God's disposal and in this way those early sisters expressed and experienced their mendicancy. On the most profound level, they were true pilgrims, traveling light.

In one sense Clare saw everything as a matter of exchange, as the admirable *commercium* of the Christmas liturgy. Christ "chose to appear despised, needy and poor in this world so that those who lived in utter poverty and destitution, and in absolute need of nourishment from heaven, might become rich in him" (1LAg 19, 20). It was an exchange of love: let us love him totally who gave himself totally for us (3LAg 15); or in the words of the Song of Songs: "I will not let you go until . . . ." With time and reflection, poverty gained even greater depth as Francis and Clare pondered on the self-emptying of Christ's passion. For Clare the process went still further when she saw the features of Christ's passion in the stigmata on Francis's own body, those mysterious wounds on his hands and feet and in his side. These wounds bled and were painful and, for those close to Francis, it seemed as if they were actually watching redemption at work in their midst, as if the passion were being enacted before their eyes. They were profoundly affected by what they saw and the incarnation of Christ gained that immediacy which has marked Franciscan spirituality and theology ever since.

Mothers of Christ

Like the early friars, the Poor Ladies of San Damiano set out to live as much like Christ as possible, obeying the gospel literally and sometimes quixotically, imitating Christ in every detail, taking Mary as a model for the inner attitudes of their hearts. Clare, particularly, found in Mary a well of contemplative tenderness, and seems to have felt a certain spiritual parallel between what Mary was to Christ in his public life and what she herself was for Francis. This deepened and intensified when they brought Francis's ruined body for her to see. The echoes of Mary receiving her Son's body from the cross could not have passed Clare by, nor did they fail to resound throughout her spirituality.

From their admiration for Mary, Francis and Clare developed a remarkable theology. Mary was the model Christian. She was invited into a generative union with the Spirit which issued in the birth of the Word made flesh, and it is this birth which regenerates the Church and the world. Mary was therefore the bride and the spouse of the Spirit and the mother of Christ. She became—in Francis's surprisingly Vatican-II-sounding words—the virgin made Church (SalBMV 1). In other words, she was the prototype of the Church whose mission is to bring Christ to birth in the world through union with the Spirit. When we imitate Mary, we walk this same road. We are all, men and women alike, "virgins made Church" when we are drawn into this union with the Spirit and bring Christ to birth in new hearts. So the apostolic fruitfulness of Mary is ours, individually and collectively; we, though many, work together at the one work of bringing forth the one Christ in many lives.

We, like the Church, are the mother, sister, and spouse of God, like Mary. These three roles, which are the calling for each of us, focus on our relationship with Christ; but we enter them through the Holy Spirit, through what Francis called God's "holy manner of working." We carry Christ, he said, in our hearts and bodies and we give birth to him through his holy manner of working (1EpFid 1:10). Mary was like Christ's doorway into human nature just as she is our doorway into the Trinity. In herself she gives us a model for our own relationship within the Trinity. Francis first spoke about this with the sisters very early on, saying in the short *Formula vitae* which he wrote for them: "By divine inspiration you have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse" (FormViv).[4]

That this became a basic insight of wide application is borne out by the fact that Francis developed the idea in a further letter, not to the sisters but to all the faithful. Twenty years later, we find Clare saying it in one of her letters in almost the same words (1LAg 12). Between them they weave into our relationship with God a tapestry of insights through which we become his dwelling place and his throne (Clare). We are spouses when we are united to Christ by the Spirit. We are brothers and sisters when we are united with him in doing the Father's will (Francis). But if spouse, then mothers also. We are

mothers when we give birth to him in the lives of others by example (Francis). This fruit is given to our single-mindedness, for when we bestow our affections on the transient, we lose the fruit of love (Clare, playing off *diligere* and *caritas*).

Speaking about this universal vocation to fruitfulness, Meister Eckhart, writing some years later, has a symbolic passage of wondrous confusion:

> If man were to be virgin always, no fruit could ever come from him. To become fruitful it is necessary for him to be a woman. "Woman" is the highest attribute that can be given to the soul, and is much higher than "virgin." That man receive God into himself is good, and in this receptivity he is virgin. But it is better when God becomes fruitful in him. This becoming fruitful through the gift is alone the thankfulness for the gift. In this, the spirit is a woman in reproductive gratitude, where Jesus is reborn in God's paternal heart.[5]

In an age which was far less hung up about sexuality than ours, this kind of preaching seems to have been possible. What appears to be happening for us today is that we hunger for teaching about these matters because God's holy manner of working goes on, the Spirit continues to invite us to union and fruition, and we are experiencing a need for guidance. We are not finding it in Victorian spiritual writers but it is to be found, when unwrapped, in writers from a simpler and less neurotic age. This is surely part of the reason for the great popularity of writers like Meister Eckhart, Julian of Norwich, Hildegard of Bingen, and others. Certainly this theology of spiritual motherhood gave Clare a language to express her own experience. At the same time it is interesting to note that she was never maternalistic with her sisters but remarkably consultative—by any standards. In the Rule alone she spoke of herself as a sister some sixty-six times and as an abbess only a handful of times. To be sister was her basic relationship; to be mother of Christ her spiritual calling.

Developing that, she says to us: "If a mother love and nourish her daughter according to the flesh, how much more lovingly must a sister love and nourish her spiritual sister" (RCl 8:16). Motherhood has been replaced by the nurturing and self-sacrificing love of Christ as the ultimate in human love. "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you" (John 13:15)— something far more challenging. Now we are not only to love like a mother feeding and looking after her children (1Thess. 2:7) but much more. Nor will it do to hope that this is just for the Poor Clares, because Clare knew that the Lord had called her to be a mirror and example to all the world. This is the kernel of her teaching: the example of Christ's total self-giving is the standard for us all.

Clare's realization that she was to be an example and mirror for everyone in the world follows logically from the example of Christ. Nor is she using the

phrase "in the world" in contradistinction to religious life, which until recently was apparently "out of this world." Clare means, quite simply, everyone. It is our calling, she says in her Testament, to demonstrate how to work with "talents" (TestCl 18) and not bury them in the ground. Those who are called to observe the gospel by living in obedience, without anything of their own, and in chastity are to be exemplars, but everyone is called to live the gospel. There was a whole series of such exemplars in Clare's universe in which Christ looks to the Father and is an example for us; Francis looks to Christ and is an example for Clare; she looks to Christ and Francis and is an example to us, as to her sisters. We in our turn look to Christ so as to be an example to others in the world, and they in their turn . . . . This is what she means by standing together with the one by whom all things are held together (3LAg 36).

A Spirituality of Glory

The essence of Clare's vision of spiritual living is total love (cf. 3LAg 22, 23; 4LAg 11). Poverty is another way of saying this because it imitates the total self-giving of Christ. He made himself poor for us in this world, he emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave (Phil. 2:7), and Clare saw that we are all invited to share this glory by sharing in this emptying of ourselves. To possess or to have power over anything is to shore ourselves up against the pain of this emptiness. It is the possessing, not the thing possessed, which wounds us, because possessiveness precludes glory. To appropriate anything to ourselves, Francis taught, is to exalt ourselves and thereby to remove ourselves from the true exaltation of Christ. It is to generate a hollow and false kind of "being lifted up" which is quite other than being lifted up with Christ on the cross which is our true glory. On the cross, glory came to Christ; it was his hour.

One of the areas where Clare gives us really helpful teaching is in her example of how to hold the Godhead and the wounded humanity of Christ in a right tension. She never lost sight of the full stature of Christ but encompassed both the pain of his humanity and the glory of his Godhead in the one perspective. As she saw it, both are offered us, shared with us, a precondition and a consequence of being led into the richer meaning of the incarnation. As we learn to see the world transformed and to shed our more materialistic values, we come to John's recognition of the glory in Christ's hour on the cross. This is no esoteric teaching for the few, but the result of God's loving and generous outpouring of grace. She advises us:

> Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!
> Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!
> Place your heart in the image of the divine substance!
> (3LAg 12, 13)

"Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance," or, as it could be translated: Set your heart on the image of the divine substance, namely Christ. We become Godlike and Godly but not God, not the divine substance itself. The image of the divine substance is Christ, the brilliance of glory and the mirror of eternity. Clare's spirituality and her theology are a lovely example of the fruits of prolonged reflection on the incarnation and the way in which the whole universe is transformed because the Word became flesh. If she learned from the Letter to the Hebrews and from Paul about the glory on the face of Christ, she seems to have learned from John to see this glory on the wounded face of Jesus. Her letters are filled with most tender phrases about the passion of Christ, even while they overflow with words like brightness, radiance, beauty, the fire of love, splendor, brilliance of eternal light.

The wounded humanity of Jesus is our way. "Christ is the way and Francis showed it to me." Jesus was lifted up on the cross like a mirror hung at the roadside. The wonder is that the reflections of this mirror lead us to reflect upon it and so to reflect it. We cannot gaze on Christ without becoming Christlike, without, in Clare's words, carrying him spiritually in our body (3LAg 25). Such a maternal possession reveals the transitory nature of all other ownership. Through pondering in our hearts as Mary did, we place our minds before the mirror of eternity and are made bright in its brightness, we are transformed into the image of the Godhead itself. We share in God's own fruitfulness and taste the hidden sweetness which God has reserved for those who love him.

She learned this, it seems, from her own experience, but found its articulation in St. Paul: "We, with unveiled faces reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, grow brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image we reflect" (2Cor. 3:18). Could anybody named Clare, Clara in Latin, be impervious to a text which read: *in eandem imaginem transformemur a claritate in claritatem, tamquam a Domino Spiritu* (2Cor. 3:18)? It was like a definition of her life and spirituality, the image reflected in her daily life refracted by contemplation, making her more and more herself, *a claritate in claritatem.*

Guidelines for Prayer

If there is any one text in Scripture which encapsulates Clare's attitude to Christ and Christian living, it is surely John 13:15: "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you." How in our prayer are we to do this? How are we to bring this quite "high" teaching of Clare's down to the gravelly path of ordinary life? Clare was even more of a pragmatist than Francis, and she knew quite well that daily life is the sterling experiment of our

spirituality. Francis used to say that what we are before God is what we are—in short, not much. He also said that when those who we think ought to be nice to us fail to be so, then the truth of ourselves is revealed to ourselves (and to others, perhaps). The experience of let-down, anger, rejection, and so on, surfaces the hidden truth in our hearts just as heat brings an abscess to a head. If we seriously want to live Christ's life, then we shall be pleased at this because it reveals to us what work we need to undertake.

Clare was of the same pragmatic turn of mind and, in all spiritual guidance, would certainly have asked questions about relationships in daily life. She talks about them in her Rule and, as abbess, advises her sisters and her successors not to be disturbed or angry by another's sin, because the sin of others does not prevent love in us as much as anger and disturbance do. She gives strong advice about asking for and giving forgiveness (RCl 9:7). She warns us to be on our guard against pride, empty glory, jealousy, greediness, care and anxiety about temporal things, taking away the characters of others, muttering, being out of harmony with others, cherishing divisions—quite a realistic list (cf. RCl 3:4; 7:2; 8:1; 9:5, 7; 10:6, 8, 9).

She also insists that we take full responsibility for ourselves, copying Francis in saying that if we are commanded to do something which we believe to be "against our soul" (RCl 10:3), then we should not do it. This is all part of her conviction about personal responsibility, which also led her to require a meeting "at least once a week." There, beginning with the abbess, everyone is to ask for forgiveness. All these injunctions are to do with relationships because, in depth, it is to this that we are called. This is where the Trinitarian prototype finds its expression in our lives. In an ideal world, all our human relationships would mirror Trinitarian ones, and we would reflect the glory of God to each other. The power of Francis and Clare is that they truly believed that our obedience in Christ can begin to effect this. Their magic is that sometimes they can almost convince us of this, too.

The heart of Clare's teaching on prayer is summarized in one passage of her last letter, written only a few months before she died. She starts by repeating that what God wants is to give us joy, not as a reward for good behavior but as a gift. The one who has been given this, she says, is indeed a happy person, for the more we glimpse of God's beauty, the more rapt in it we shall become until gradually all our wayward heart falls into line. Her words are: "How very happy is the person who has been granted to cleave with every fiber of her heart to one so beautiful that the heavenly hosts of the blessed never grow weary of wonder" (4LAg 9-10). This is gift to us from God but it is also a gift from us to God. It is God's love which awakens love in us just as it is God's glory that glorifies us and makes us the *claritas* on the face of Christ. She goes on:

By such contemplation we are renewed,
by such kindliness, flooded,
by such sweetness, filled,
We are gently enlightened by such a memory.
God is a fragrance to bring the dead to life again,
a vision of such glory as to make all the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem blessed (4LAg 11-13).

She then gives us a whole program of prayer summarized in a series of verbs:

Clare Ellen, OSC

look into this mirror of Christ daily,
ponder there your own face,
see what you need to become ready for God,
contemplate in this mirror Christ and his stupendous poverty,
look at his work on our behalf,
consider his humility,
contemplate his love,
consider, look and contemplate (4LAg 14-18).

Consider, look, contemplate—a program for prayer and for life. We have already seen the connection she made between reflecting upon and reflecting, and here it is at work again. Looking at Christ, we see how to imitate him. Imitating him, we become like him. Like him, we reflect him and bring him to birth in the lives of others. This is what is meant by observing the gospel.

Endnotes

[1]This article is a reprint of "Clare of Assisi," first published in *The Way*, July, 1995, Freedom, vol 35, no 3, by permission of the Editors, Heythrop College, Kensington Square, London W8 5HQ.

[2]The translation of Clare's writings throughout is my own, and the numbering follows that of the Latin text of Pecker, Godet, and Matura: *Écrits* (Paris: Les EDITIONS du Cerf, 1985). All Francis's and Clare's writings can be found in Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., trans. and ed., *Francis and Clare, the Complete Works* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1982). Documents relating to the early Poor Clares as well as Clare's own writings can also be found in Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., trans. and ed., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1988).

[3]The full text is in M. A. Habig, ed., *Francis of Assisi: Omnibus of Sources* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 1549.

[4]This Form of Life was probably written in 1212 or 1213.

[5]Meister Eckhart, "Sermon on St Matthew," unpublished translation.

The Cord, 48.4 (1998)

Letter of St. Clare of Assisi to the Whole World

Molly Lim Yeo Tee, FMM

What is Clare's message to the people of our world as we move into the new millennium? If Clare has a message for the world today, I believe it is something relevant, helpful, and inspiring. This imaginary letter draws from her actual letters, her Testament, and other writings, using her words where appropriate. It includes her message on living the Gospel, on contemplation, on Mary as our model, on the privilege of poverty, on seeking goodness, on perseverance, and on gazing always upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It concludes with her farewell and her blessing. May the Lord use me as her instrument in sharing her message.

(Because of the nature of this document, the many references to Scripture and to Clare's writings will be found in the endnotes, rather than in the text.)

Date: *7th June, 1997, Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*

To : *All my dearly beloved Sisters and Brothers in the whole world*

From: *Clare of Assisi, your faithful servant, the most lowly and unworthy handmaid of Christ*

Dearly Beloved Sisters and Brothers:

Greetings of Peace and Love!

I greatly rejoice and exult in the Lord[1] for the progress you have made in the world as you search for a better life, better communication, and more happiness. Many of you are making great efforts to do what is best with all the possible means at hand. I love you very much and I am concerned that often you find yourselves restless and unsatisfied. As a handmaid of the Lord and

your servant I am offering you some of my thoughts which may be helpful to you now and in the coming millennium. Hopefully you will enjoy walking on these stepping stones towards the road of true joy and happiness in life. I wish the year 2000 and beyond to be for you a time of great peace, joy, and love.

Many of you remember my affluent family, which lived near San Rufino Church in Assisi. My mother was a holy woman. She liked pilgrimages and often went to the nearby church to pray. When I was born she was inspired to give me the name Clare which means "light." From my youth, God guided me to love goodness, compassion, daily prayer, and respect for my parents. When I grew up God led me to find and understand true joy in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord inspired me to take a new step of contemplative Gospel life, instead of the normal arranged married life of the time.

The love of God drew me and the Holy Spirit inspired me, giving me the courage to leave my home to follow the path taken by Francis of Assisi towards the perfection of the Gospel and union with the Most Loving and All Good God, our Creator and our heart's greatest desire. In the monastery at San Damiano with my Sisters, the Lord expressed through me new feminine virtues, a new culture of common life, a new style of being sister and bride, a new freedom for women. He taught me to hold fast to the privilege of poverty, to be a servant, and to express a new way of Gospel living in the monastery. I experienced the gift of contemplation and mysticism. I felt the growth of a new body of Christ and the newness of life that was attractive to many sisters and brothers. I thank God for creating me and for blessing my life. It was a long and narrow road but Francis and I found a true treasure—the perfection of joy and total happiness in God.

I hope you will all understand why I am focusing my message on the great graces received when one lives according to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.[2] As you know, many great saints throughout the centuries have found the essential key that enabled them to reach the climax and fullness of life and joy in the All Good and Loving God—the heart's greatest desire and peace par excellence.

I am inclined to start by praising those who are persevering in contemplative prayer, in the love of God, love of neighbor, and love of all creatures. Your holy conduct and irreproachable life is a great joy, consolation, and blessing for many brothers and sisters on earth. In knowing and meditating on the Gospel, many of you have chosen to live like "Christ, Poor and Crucified"[3] and to serve the needy of this world. You have rejected all earthly riches, fame, and security and chosen a life according to the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. You were inspired when you saw how he gave himself willingly and totally in redeeming love for all creatures. You started by giving your whole heart, mind, and soul to love Him in return. Pray and always be vigilant.[4] The

work you have begun well complete progressively, and the ministry you have accepted fulfill in holy poverty and sincere humility.[5]

May I urge you, dearest brothers and sisters, to meditate frequently upon the Scriptures so that you might know Christ deeply.[6] Follow the footprints of Mary and always hold Christ spiritually and possess Him in your chaste and virginal bodies. God became human because Mary said "yes." The Word became flesh. Feminine nature and virtues hold a privileged place before God in the example of Mary[7] holding Jesus in the cloister of her womb and on her virginal lap. She was attentive, she pondered on the Word, she responded to the Spirit, she was dynamic and firm. In her relationships she was gentle, tender, caring, and innovative. Mary is your model; learn from her and your reward will be great in heaven![8] You will truly merit to be called a brother, sister, spouse, and mother[9] of the son of the Most High Father and of the glorious Virgin Mary. Indeed by choosing poverty like Mary and Jesus, you inherit the kingdom and enjoy the fruit of love.

O blessed poverty,
who bestows eternal riches
on those who love and embrace her!
O holy poverty,
God promises the kingdom of heaven
and, in fact, offers eternal glory and a blessed life
to those who possess and desire you!
God-centered poverty
whom the Lord Jesus Christ
Who ruled and now rules heaven and earth,
Who spoke and things were made,
condescended to embrace before all else.[10]

All brothers and sisters who cast aside the garments of earthly riches will overcome the one who fights against us. Be strengthened and persevere from good to better, from virtue to virtue,[11] through continuous contemplation of the poor Christ. In his love for us, he was the greatest and poorest of all servants and was obedient unto death, even on the cross. He purchased for us eternal life by entering through the narrow gate.[12]

What a great and praiseworthy exchange:
to leave the things of time for those of eternity,
to choose the things of heaven for the goods of earth,
to receive a hundred-fold in place of one,
and to possess a blessed eternal life! [13]

I give thanks each day to the Giver of Grace, from whom every good and perfect gift proceeds, for all you good people, dearest brothers and sisters

dwelling on earth. The Father of Perfection[14] has adorned you with splendors of virtue and illuminated you with marks of perfection. Hold fast always to the holiest poverty, great humility, and most ardent charity, and keep your steps close to the Lord Jesus Christ.

What you hold, may you always hold,
What you do, may you always do and never abandon.
But with swift pace, light step.
Unswerving feet,
so that even your steps stir up no dust,
may you go forward
securely, joyfully and swiftly,
on the path of prudent happiness,
not believing anything,
not agreeing with anything
that would dissuade you from this resolution
or that would place a stumbling block for you on the way,
so that you may offer your vows to the Most High
in the pursuit of that perfection
to which the Spirit of the Lord has called you.[15]

Seek good and right counsel and walk securely in the way of the All Good God. If anyone would hinder your perfection, though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel. Gaze upon the Lord, consider Him, contemplate Him. For your salvation He became the lowliest of humankind—despised, struck, scourged. He suffered and died on the Cross.[16] If you suffer with Him, you will reign with Him. If you weep with Him, you shall rejoice with Him. If you imitate Him, you shall possess heavenly mansions in the splendor of the saints and, in the Book of Life, your name shall be called glorious among all humanity forever.[17]

In the world, pride destroys human nature and vanity infatuates human hearts. But humility, faith, and poverty are the treasures hidden in the field of the world and of the human heart.[18] By special gifts of wisdom, the word of Christ, and the grace of God, you will choose the treasure and always rejoice in the Lord. Do not let bitterness or sadness overwhelm you, dearly beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, joy of the Angels, and Crown of creation.

Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!
Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!
Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance!
And transform your entire being into the image
of the Godhead Itself through contemplation.
So that you too may feel what His friends feel

as they taste the hidden sweetness
that God Himself has reserved from the beginning
for those who love Him. [19]

This is affirmed in the Gospel when Jesus said: "Whoever loves me will be loved by My Father and I too shall love him, and We shall come to him and make Our dwelling place with him."[20] It is clearly shown here that the faithful person, the most worthy of all creatures because of the grace of God, is greater than heaven itself. The heavens and the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator, and only the faithful soul is His dwelling place and throne, and this only through the charity that the wicked lack.[21]

I beg of you, my dearest brothers and sisters, to gaze upon the Lord Jesus Christ, your mirror, each day. Study your face within it. Allow Him to transform you into His likeness. You will then become worthy sons and daughters of the Most High King, with the flowers and garments of all the virtues. Indeed, blessed poverty, holy humility, and inexpressible charity are reflected in that mirror. With the grace of God you can become like the mirror. From this moment on let yourselves be inflamed more strongly with the fervor of charity.[22] Contemplate His ineffable delights, eternal riches and honors. Long for them in the great desire and love of your heart; seek and never be tired till you have finished the race and happily won the prize.[23]

In your contemplation, may you always remember the poor, the sick, and the suffering. Pray to God for one another, for by carrying each other's burdens we will easily fulfill the law of Christ.[24]

I beg you to receive my words with kindness and devotion, seeing in them the motherly affection that in the fire of charity I daily feel toward you.[25]

Farewell until we meet at the throne of the glory of the great God.[26] In as much as I can, I recommend to your charity the bearers of this letter, the Beloved of God. Amen.

I, Clare, a servant of Christ, a little plant of our most holy Father Francis, a sister and mother to you, although unworthy, pray for you and bless you through our Lord Jesus Christ, through His mercy and the intercession of His most holy Mother Mary, through blessed Michael the Archangel and all the holy angels of God, through our blessed Father Francis and all men and women saints. May the heavenly Father give you and confirm for you this most holy blessing in heaven and on earth. On earth, may He multiply you among His servants in His grace and in His virtues. In heaven, may He exalt you and glorify you among His men and women saints.[27]

May the Lord always be with you [28]
and may you always be with Him. Amen.[29]

Endnotes

[1]Hab. 3:18

[2]Cf. RCl Prol; 1:2; 2:7, 24; 6:3, 7; 8:2, 6; 9:4, 7-9; 10:3, 6, 9, 12; 12:13; 1LAg 2, 3, 4, 12, 13, 17, 18, 24, 27, 31, 34; 2LAg 18, 20; 3LAg 2, 4, 17-18; 4LAg 2, 37; LEr 1, 9, 11; TestCl 5, 35, 37, 46, 48, 59; BCl 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16. All references to Clare's writings are from *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. Regis Armstrong, OFMCap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993).

[3]Cf. Gratien de Paris, OFM Cap., *I Know Christ* (Franciscan Institute Publications, 1957), 66; 2Cel 105.

[4]Cf. Matt. 26:41, LEr 13.

[5]Cf. 2Tim. 4:5; LEr 14; 1LAg 31; 3LAg 4, 25; 4LAg 18, 20, 22; RCl 4:18, 10:1; 12:13; TestC 46, 56, 69.

[6]3LAg 14-17; RegNB 23:1-7; 2EpFid 48-53, 63-71; Mk. 1:15; Phil. 2:5.

[7]Clare in many ways imitated Mary, and she is referred to as the "footprint of Mary."

[8]Matt. 5:12.

[9]2Cor. 11:2, Matt. 12:50.

[10]1LAg 15-17.

[11]Cf. Ps. 83:8.

[12]Cf. Matt. 7:13-14.

[13]1LAg 30.

[14]Matt. 5:48.

[15]2LAg 11-14.

[16]Cf. 2LAg 20-23.

[17]Cf. 2L Ag 21-23.

[18]Cf. Matt. 13:44.

[19]Cf. 3LAg 12-14; for the theme of mirror cf. Brian Purfield, OFM, "Reflections in the Mirror—The Images of Christ in the Spiritual Life of St. Clare of Assisi," thesis (Canterbury: FSC, 1989), 166; Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., "Clare of Assisi: The Mirror Mystic," *The Cord* (July-August, 1985): 195-202; Cf. Heb. 1:3; 2Cor. 3:18; Ps. 30:20; 1Cor. 2:9. This mirror method of contemplation is further developed in 4LAg 15-32.

[20]John 14: 21, 23.

[21]3LAg 21-22.

[22]Cf. 4LAg 27.

[23]Cf. 4LAg 27-32; cf. also Cant. 1:3. Insights into these passages should be sought in the rich spirituality of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which delighted in commenting on the Canticle of Canticles.

[24]Cf. James 5:16; Gal. 6:2; LEr 17.

[25]Cf. 4LAg 37.

[26]Tit. 2:13.

[27]BCl 6-10.

[28]Cf. 2 Cor 13:11, Jn 12:26, 1 Thess 4:17.

[29]BCl 16.

Let Mother Church rejoice because she has begotten and reared such a daughter!
(Alexander IV, Bull of Canonization)

The Cord, 48.4 (1998)

Clare's Trinitarian Prayer

Marie Beha, OSC

In a previous article on Clare's prayer,[1] we focused on its liturgical and Christological aspects, describing how in her Rule she prescribed the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours and the reception of the Sacraments, while in her Letters she advised, "Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus," especially the Jesus of crib and cross.

But the Jesus of all Christian prayer is One in Three. Though Clare did not write explicitly of the Trinity in the same way that Francis did, her prayer was necessarily Trinitarian, because growing in loving relationship with God always means becoming more intimate with Father, Son, and Spirit. That this was the direction of Clare's prayer is clear in her writings as well as in her life.

We see an example of this as she begins her Blessing of all the sisters "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (BCl 1)[2] and goes on to anticipate that the "Heavenly Father [will] give you and confirm for you this most holy blessing" (BCl 8). It is even more touchingly witnessed to by one of the sisters at the process of Clare's canonization: "One evening a few days before her death, she began to speak to the Trinity and to say very softly other words to God many educated people would hardly understand" (Proc 14: 7). Her heart was speaking what her life had first articulated.

As our own life of prayer develops, we move beyond Old Testament monotheism into an interpersonal relationship with Father, Son, and Spirit. We no longer relate to God generically, but rather respond to each Person of the Trinity as gloriously unique. Similarly, Clare's lived theology of the Trinity issued in a different naming of, and a specific way of relating to, God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Praying to God the Father

When Clare prayed to God the Father, she addressed her petitions to the "most high, heavenly Father" (RCl 6: 1; TestCl 24) or "heavenly Father" (RCl 6: 3; TestCl 14; BCl 8). Aware of her own poverty and neediness, she also prayed to the "Father of Mercies" (TestCl 2, 58; BCl 12) and, preserving her Christological emphasis, to "the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (TestCl 2, 77). She acknowledged this same Father as the "Giver of grace," the "Author of Salvation," (3LAg 2) and the "Father of all perfection" (2LAg 3, 4). Whatever Clare "had" she had received, and so her heart overflowed in praise and gratitude to the one "from Whom every good and perfect gift proceeds" (2LAg 3).

In her writings, Clare goes on to specify some of these gifts, emphasizing her vocation (TestCl 2). She seems to have associated this particularly with God the Father and with "our most blessed Father Francis," indicating that her "vocation and choice" had come initially from God through Francis (TestCl 16). This same patterning of divine initiative through the instrumentality of Francis is reflected when she speaks of moving to San Damiano, "by the will of God and our most blessed father Francis" (TestCl 30), and of the rapid growth of the Poor Ladies during Clare's lifetime through the grace and mercy of the Lord who "made our number increase so that He would fulfill what He had foretold through His saint" (TestCl 31). Finally, she summarizes this whole vocational gifting of the Father by praying at the conclusion of her Testament that "the Lord Himself, Who has given a good beginning, will also give the increase and final perseverance" (TestCl 78). This strengthening action of the Father was a matter of daily experience for Clare. She counted on it, especially in that very difficult time "after the passing of our holy father Francis, who was our pillar [of strength] and, after God, our one consolation and support" (TestCl 38).

Clare also seems to have delighted in imaging the relationship between God and her soul in terms of King and Spouse. She reminds Agnes that she is "spouse of the Most High King of heaven" (3LAg 1), "the spouse of the King of all ages" (4LAg 4), and "the most chaste bride of the Most High King" (4LAg 17). The imagery is essentially Biblical but is also a very a natural way for a noble lady of her times to relate to the "most high" Father.

What Clare does in all of this is to challenge us, not to reproduce her specific ways of naming and imaging God the Father, but to discover Who God is for us, here in our twentieth century and now at this point in our lives. How do we name the first Person of the Trinity whom we have traditionally called "Father"? How do we see our relationship to this giver of all good gifts?

Praying to God the Spirit

Just as everything begins with God the Father, so the power of the Spirit continues this divine work in the world of Clare and her sisters. Most often she refers to the Third Person of the Trinity as the "Spirit of the Lord" (2LAg 14; RCl 9:9); an emphasis that flows naturally from her Christology. She also speaks of the Holy Spirit more conventionally, reminding her sisters that they have "taken the Holy Spirit as . . . Spouse" and done so "by divine inspiration" (RCl 6: 3).

Clare's experience of the Spirit gives to her prayer and her life a sense of being "inspirited." With a theological accuracy that could only come from a heart formed in the ways of the Lord, she speaks of the Spirit who gives her joy (4LAg 7) and who empowers her warm expressions of love for Agnes. "What more can I say? Let the tongue of the flesh be silent when I seek to express my love for you; and let the tongue of the Spirit speak" (4LAg 36).

It is the Spirit who, at the beginning of her conversion, "enlightened" Clare's heart to "do penance" (TestCl 24), and it is the same divine inspiration that will move others "desiring to accept this life" (RCl 2:1) and "choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel" (RCl 6:3).

In her *Rule*, Clare urges her sisters to "devote themselves to what they should desire to have above all else: the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity" (RCl 10:9). As a consequence of her confidence in this maturing power of the Spirit, Clare dispenses with detailed prescriptions of personal conduct, trusting her sisters to discern wisely as to how they should act. For example, rather than legislating silence as an absolute as was done in other rules of this period, she permits the sisters "to communicate whatever is necessary always and everywhere, briefly and in a low tone of voice" (RCl 5:4). She leaves the decision as to what is necessary to each individual. With similar breadth of spirit, she makes the common sense determination that "Should anything be sent to a sister by her relatives or others, let the Abbess give it to the sister. If she needs it, the sister may use it; otherwise, let her give it lovingly to a sister who does need it" (RCl 8:10). Again the responsibility is the sister's, not the abbess's. This is the kind of trust that creates trustworthy individuals, free to respond in flexible and highly personal ways to the inspirations of God's Spirit.

Because divine inspiration is not the prerogative of age or rank, Clare expects that the Spirit will be alive and active in each and all of the sisters, "revealing what is best to the least among us." As a consequence of this faith, she prescribes that the most important decisions will be made not by the abbess alone but by the total community acting collegially. Decisions about who will be admitted (RCl 2:1), who will be elected as abbess (RCl 4:1), her fitness

to continue in office (RCl 4:7), how poverty will be observed (RCl 4:20), and whatever else involves "the welfare and integrity of the monastery" (RCl 4:17) are to be made by all the sisters. What concerns all is decided by all, since all are inspired by the same Spirit.

Allowing ourselves to be formed by this Holy Spirit of the Lord will have the same happy consequence in our lives, enabling, even impelling, us to live in increasing truth and unity, joy and peace. Inspired by the Spirit of the Lord we will continue to mature, both as individuals and as communities, till we grow into full stature in Christ.

This is what happened in Clare's life. Sustained by the Spirit in her dying moments, she was heard speaking to her own soul: "Go calmly in peace, for you will have a good escort, because He Who created you has sent you the Holy Spirit and has always guarded you as a mother does her child who loves her" (Proc 3:20). It was a fit summary of a life that had been "inspired by the Holy Spirit from the beginning" (Proc 20:5).

Praying to God the Son

Just as Clare's prayer showed an increasingly personalized relationship with the "most High Father" and the "Spirit of the Lord," so too did she grow in intimacy with Lord Jesus Christ, "the Son of the Most High Father and of the glorious Virgin" (1LAg 24). She also proclaims Jesus as "King of all ages" (4LAg 4) and "King of angels" (4LAg 21). Expressing her heart's devotion, she prayed to Jesus enfleshed in the crib and suffering on the cross, naming him the "poor Christ" (2LAg 18), "the Poor Crucified" (1LAg 13), and the "Lamb" (4LAg 3). As we shall see, Incarnation and Paschal mystery were the double focus of her heart's devotion; her life and prayer were essentially Christological. Christ was her "Way" (TestCl 5) and the "Truth" of her gospel form of life (3LAg 23).

Clare summarized her personal relationship to the "Son of the Most High" as "spouse and mother and sister" (1LAg 12, 14, 24). The metaphors are audacious yet familiar. We all share a basic referent to these fundamental human experiences; we know what they mean. But when applied to the Son of God! Only the reassurance of Jesus' own gospel usage could justify such boldness. "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matt. 12:50). Since the whole "form of life" of both Francis and Clare was to "live according to the holy gospel" and to do this in the closeness of fraternal community, it was only natural that their prayer would be shaped by the familial intimacy of Jesus' promise.

Though Clare sometimes spoke of being queen and spouse of God the Father, imaging herself and her sisters as spouses of Jesus seemed especially

dear to her. It is a title that reappears frequently in her correspondence with Agnes, as when she reminds her that she is "Lady because of the Lord, your Spouse" (2LAg 24), and "Bride of the lamb, the eternal King" (4LAg 2).

In lyrical prose she shared with her friend: "When you have loved him, you are chaste; when you have touched him, you become more pure; when you have accepted him, you are a virgin. Whose power is stronger, Whose generosity more abundant, Whose appearance more beautiful, Whose love more tender, Whose courtesy more gracious" (1LAg 8). Though writing in the safe anonymity of "you," Clare revealed what long hours of contemplative gazing had taught her heart. She knew from personal experience how the human desire to "love" and "touch" and "accept" is sublimated in the self-gift of chastity, purity, and virginity.

Clare also used the title "spouse" to encourage Agnes who had "been beautifully adorned with the sign of an undefiled virginity and a most holy poverty" (1LAg 13) and whose life of sacrifice was inspired by "Your Spouse," who "became for your salvation the lowest of men, was despised, struck, scourged untold times through his entire body, and then died amid the suffering of the Cross" (2LAg 20). It is a theme to which she returned in her last extant letter written shortly before her death, when she again referred to Agnes as "espoused to the Lamb" (4LAg 8) and "chaste bride of the Most High King" (4LAg 17), revealing once more how enamored her own heart had become of this divine spouse, "Whose beauty all the blessed hosts of heaven unceasingly admire, Whose affection excites, Whose contemplation refreshes, Whose kindness fulfills, Whose delight replenishes" (4LAg 10-12). Clare goes on and on; she can never say enough just because there is always more to be said. It is our promise of fullness as well.

But none of this is empty romanticism for Clare. For forty years she gave concrete expression to her desire, not only to live with Jesus, but also to live as Jesus did. As spouse she would share in the hardship of her "Lord" and count it all as nothing. So at the end of her life she could say: "After I once came to know the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ through his servant Francis, no pain has been bothersome, no penance too severe, no weakness has been hard" (CL 44). Those are the words of a lover who had come to know her beloved in bridal union. The oneness she experienced so fully is offered to each of us. The question is: do we really want it, want it badly enough to embrace the whole reality of Jesus' living, laboring, suffering, and dying?

Going on to the next of Clare's ways of relating to Jesus, we may ask how did she "mother" Jesus and how can we? The answer is essentially the same—by consenting to enflesh him in our own lives and laboring to bring him to birth in the lives of others. Like every mother, we must give of ourselves, our very being, discounting the pain for joy that Christ comes anew into our world.

We do this every time we incarnate him in the dailiness of our own lives, every time we choose the will of the Father over our own self-will, dying to self to live more fully in Him.

This mothering of Jesus Clare quite naturally associates with devotion to the Virgin Mary, so she encourages Agnes to "cling to his most sweet Mother who gave birth to a Son whom the heavens could not contain and yet she carried Him in the enclosure of her holy womb and held him on her virginal lap" (3LAg 18, 19). Agnes, too, "by following in Mary's footprints, especially those of poverty and humility, can without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in [her] chaste and virginal body" (3LAg 25). What she seems to be encouraging is far more than the piety of good intention; this is as real as the imitation that translates gospel values into personal circumstances. In this way we continue the incarnation, allowing Jesus to be born in the only way he can come into the world of our time and place.

But Clare's spirituality was never individualistic; it was always realized in a communitarian context. We see this especially in terms of her mothering of Jesus, which found rich expression in her relationship with the sisters at San Damiano. It led her to nurture Jesus in her caring for the physical and spiritual needs of her growing community. Once when there was only one small loaf of bread to provide dinner for fifty sisters, her powerful blessing multiplied it to ensure that everyone would receive a generous portion (Proc 6:16). At another time, through her intercession, an empty jug was found to be filled with the finest oil, much to the astonishment of the brother who was to have replenished it (Proc 1:15). Most of all it was her own undaunted faith and trust in God's provident care that fed and encouraged her sisters' perseverance. They saw how she lived, they observed how she prayed, and they wanted for themselves the "more" that she obviously experienced (Proc 1:7; 2:9).

Conceiving, giving birth, nourishing—these are the rewarding if arduous aspects of motherhood. Letting go, giving back the life given to us, is still more demanding. Clare's maternal life and prayer included all of these. From the eighteen-year-old who hurried down Assisi's hills eager to join Francis and who gave birth to a new way of living for women, she grew into the abbess who daily laid down her life for her sisters at San Damiano. We have only an oblique hint of the cost of such maternity when she admonishes anyone elected to the office of abbess to "reflect on the kind of burden she has undertaken" (RCl 4:8).

For Clare, being abbess was less a matter of honor and more an opportunity to live out Jesus' role as Suffering Servant. It seems no accident that washing the feet of her sisters became one of the repeated maternal rituals at San Damiano (Proc 10:11). This was no mere ceremonial. These feet really needed washing—sometimes because the sisters who served outside had wandered the

dusty streets of Assisi seeking alms to sustain the community, at other times because the sisters had just come in from working in San Damiano's muddy cloister garden. I am touched by the simple account of how one of the serving sisters, returning from a begging tour, accidentally kicked Clare in the face as her abbess bent over to wash and then kiss her feet (Proc 2:3). Clare simply went on with her motherly service, undoubtedly the kindest response she could have given to the embarrassed sister.

The sisters also revealed how Clare took special care of the sick sisters making certain that they were clean and comfortable (Proc 1:12) and how she would go through the dormitory to be sure that the sisters had enough warm covering (Proc 2:3). Her motherly heart saw all such small services as labors of love.

These were a few of the daily ways in which Clare mothered Jesus in concrete service to her sisters. They expressed her willingness to die to herself and to live for others. These experiences prepared her for her willingness to lay down her life when a horde of Saracen soldiers attacked the monastery. The sisters were understandably terrified, but Clare reassured them: "Do not be afraid, because I am a hostage for you so you will not suffer any harm" (Proc 9:2). Clare met the invaders at the door and they fled before the power of her prayer.

Though our own mothering of Jesus might lack the high drama of Clare's defense against the Saracens or the miracles of food multiplication, it can be just as real. Whenever we give of ourselves to nourish the lives of others, whenever we respond to real human need, we consent to mothering the Jesus identified with each of our brothers and sisters.

This brings us to the last of the ways in which Clare described her relationship to Jesus—that of being "sister." In her repeated use of "spouse and mother and sister of my Lord Jesus Christ" (1LAg 12), Clare gives a prominent place to "sister," perhaps because the quality of sisterliness dominated her relationships both in early family experience and later within the community of the Poor Ladies. Clare's closeness to her own blood sisters is amply attested to by the fact that both followed her into the community. Even her mother later on became one of Clare's sisters. We also find evidence of this close bonding within her family in a touching letter written by her sister Agnes to "her venerable mother and the woman beloved in Christ beyond all others, to the Lady Clare . . ." and which goes on to speak of Agnes's "great distress and immense sadness . . . because I have been physically separated from you and my other sisters with whom I had hoped to live and die in this world" (Letter of Agnes to Clare 1, 2).

What does it mean to be a sister? Clare realized that it meant a life-long relationship based on having the same parents. The bond between sisters (or

brothers) was mutual and implied equality in the relationship. It also included genuine affection that issued in a real care for each other. Consequently, being sister to Jesus implied the same characteristics—belonging to the family of God, having a share in the one divine life, being united in a mutual love that sees every other person as equally sister or brother to Jesus.

Just as Clare's maternal relationship to Jesus found concrete expression in her loving service to her sisters at San Damiano, so too her being "sister to Jesus" sustained her as "sister and mother" (BCl 6) during the forty years she served as abbess. Unlike the powerful matriarchs who ruled many medieval monasteries, Clare remained one of the sisters, sharing with them the common life of "church, dormitory, refectory, infirmary and clothing," even accusing herself in chapter of her faults and negligences (RCl 4:13, 16). This emphasis on the common life for all was unheard of in Clare's time and for one in her position. Rather than claiming the status of noble lady or the privileges of office, she gloried in the title of "sister," living the common life as do sisters in a family.

As one of the sisters Clare delighted in doing her share of the common work, preferring for herself "those tasks which were more degrading" (Proc 2:1). It was a labor of sisterly love that she continued to the very end of her days even when ill and confined to bed, contributing by her careful needlework to the charity of the community (Proc 6: 14).

Since the abbess at San Damiano was one of them, the sisters in their turn could be so "familiar" with her that they could "speak and act with her as ladies do with their servant. For this is the way it must be: the Abbess should be the servant of all the sisters" (RCl 10:4, 5). Though most of us have little difficulty embracing the concept of service, being treated as a servant might be more than we would bargain for.

The motivation for all this was the genuine mutual love of the sisters. In the summary statement of her Testament she reminds them to love "one another with the charity of Christ" and to show "the love you have in your hearts . . . outwardly in your deeds" (59). It was what she did with all the tenderness of a sensitive heart. Not only did she minister to them in illness and sometimes cure their affliction, but she even seems to have known instinctively when someone was troubled or depressed "as is natural," and "she called her in secret and consoled her with tears" (Proc 10:5).

This sisterly kindness of their abbess was not lost on the community. Following the injunction of the Rule, each was encouraged to "manifest her needs to the other" (8:16). To make this possible, they were also allowed to speak to each other, the absolute silence of many monastic rules made subservient to the greater good of familial charity. Because they were sisters, they prayed for each other (RCl 9:8) and were encouraged to share what they had received

from families or friends (RCl 8:10). They looked out for each other and had recourse to the abbess "at any hour, as they [saw] fit, both for themselves and their sisters" (TestCl 66).

The community at San Damiano radiated love and joy despite the austerity of the life. The prayer-filled union of the abbess and of the sisters bore the practical, everyday fruits of unity in heart and mind. It was a sisterly love difficult to fake, especially in the confined space of San Damiano, validating their life of prayer. Only the reality of being sister to Jesus could have motivated this kind of caring in the day-to-day life of the enclosure. It is the same kind of sisterly love that we are invited to show to each sister or brother of ours in the family of God.


Clare Ellen, OSC

At the heart of Clare's relationship to Jesus as spouse, mother, and sister, was the realization that in relating to others, especially within the community at San Damiano, she was truly responding to Jesus, so complete is his identification with us. In the same way, when she gave herself to Christ-centered prayer, she was also giving of herself to others. Because the love of Jesus and the love of others are really one love, Clare's life and prayer came together. This simple unity of lived experience was at the heart of her Trinitarian prayer.

In summary, Clare's prayer transformed her life; her life authenticated her prayer. In the end, they became one. Both began with God's initiative; both returned in fullest measure that love which had first been given. Trinitarian contemplation formed Clare into a "see-er," whose keenness of vision found God everywhere, always. The God she discovered was both One and Three, a community of Persons. It was a Trinitarian theology she lived all the days of her life. Now God must teach us how we can do the same.

Endnotes

[1]See "Praying with Clare of Assisi," *The Cord*, 47.4 (July-August, 1997), 185-193.

[2]References to Clare's writings and the early biographical sources are from *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. Regis Armstrong, OFMCap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993).

A Reflection on Clare of Assisi

Kevin Lynch, OFM

When what we are to be
comes to light
We shall be like God,
for we shall see God as God is.
(1John 3:2)

Introduction

Recent studies occasioned by the celebration of the eight-hundredth anniversary of Clare of Assisi's birth shed new light on her struggle to be faithful to the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ in her life. In the words of Regis Armstrong:

> On closer examination, Clare emerges more clearly as one who accepted the charism of Francis, expressed it in her unique feminine way, and, at a period of medieval history in which the role of women was also undergoing change, shattered many of the traditional religious stereotypes.[1]

This reflection looks at her struggle—especially with family and Church hierarchy—to be faithful to her initial inspiration and examines some of the characteristics of her spirituality.

Clare's life is well known to readers of *The Cord*. Her family was part of the *maiores*, or nobility of Assisi; women were a strong influence in her home life; she shared her food and her dowry with the poor; her departure from her parents' home was upsetting to the class structure of the times. Clare persevered in a lifelong journey that remained a light, though often hidden under a bushel,[2] for Franciscans of future generations.

The Struggle on the Journey

Once Clare left her family home, her personal conversion became irreversible and in its authenticity had its moments of insecurity and social consequences. First of all the brothers, whom she joined at the Portiuncula on the evening of Palm Sunday, 1212, were themselves suspect,[3] and now they had received a woman from the upper class. The immediate crisis was resolved by having Clare stay in a well-established Benedictine monastery of nuns at San Paolo delle Abbadese in Bastia. However she came there not to be part of the upper class nuns, but as a servant, a *minora*, which was unacceptable to her family. Neither the nuns nor Bishop Guido of Assisi was "anxious to oppose a family as powerful as the descendants of Offreduccio."[4]

Francis himself was not present at that time. Clare, having moved on her own the heavy doors at home, took up the struggle to pursue her conversion among the lesser ones. She went through a period of some confusion as she left the Benedictine monastery to live at San Angelo di Panzo, "a monastery of Beguine recluses,"[5] where her sister Catherine (later Agnes) joined her. It was here that Clare made "contact with the new forms of religious life which other women than herself were also striving to realize at that time."[6] It was here also that her prayers stopped the "twelve armed men" from physically removing her sister Agnes. Shortly after, with assistance from Francis, she and a few sisters settled permanently at San Damiano. A clearer form of life was emerging for both Clare and Francis.

In an endnote Bartoli, quoting M. Sensi, summarizes the situation as follows:

> The vocation of Clare of Assisi developed out of two antithetical currents, when Benedictine monasticism and the urban, penitential movement of reclusion were already in existence. The movement of *Poor ladies* guided by Clare transcended even as it synthesized these two movements: that is, traditional monasticism and the new style of religious life.[7]

This new form of life found its home at San Damiano, the birthplace of Francis's own vision to repair the Church. According to Armstrong in his study of Thomas of Celano, the official biographer of Francis, San Damiano remained vital to the Franciscan mandate to rebuild the Church. "What is so striking, however, is Thomas's view that Clare and the Poor Ladies fulfilled the mandate in symbolic ways that deepened the work of Francis and brought it to a more profound level."[8]

This mandate to rebuild the Church was to be a lifelong struggle for Clare and focused mainly on her determination to live without anything of her own.

Sine proprio was the expression of her time. Bartoli paradoxically calls it "the privilege of living without privileges."[9] Clare lived through the creative tension between institutional security and a community of love. She and Francis, along with their first followers, were determined to live without anything of their own, either individually or corporately, despite efforts by Church authorities to the contrary.

In an attempt to put some order into the various movements of renewal in the Church of the time, the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 decreed that there were to be no new religious orders. Francis already had verbal approval from Pope Innocent III in 1209 for his rule or form of life. For the women at San Damiano, however, the situation beccame problematic after 1215. They were required to accept the Rule of St. Benedict which implied a more established form of life. In 1216 Clare successfully appealed to Innocent for the privilege of poverty—a total dependence on Providence for the sisters' livelihood along with the insecurity of the lower class. By this time the sisters were working "with their own hands," probably in the cloth industry, as a way of being identified with "those who were working out a new spirituality and seeking to encourage a new attitude to work within the Church."[10]

During these struggles Cardinal Hugolino (later to become Pope Gregory IX), as Cardinal Protector of the Poor Ladies of San Damiano and with the mandate of Pope Honorius III (1216-1227), wrote a special rule for them "to safeguard what he understood to be Clare's best interests."[11] As Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) he attempted to persuade the sisters to abandon the privilege of poverty. Further, according to the *Legend of Saint Clare*, when he offered to absolve Clare from her vow she said: "Holy Father, I will never in any way wish to be absolved from the following of Christ."[12] The pope eventually reconfirmed Clare's privilege of poverty in 1228.

In the meantime Francis had died (1226), and the friars were not as firm in their support of Clare or in their living without anything of their own.[13] They became very clerical under the Minister General Haymo of Faversham (1240-1244) and began to accept papal privileges when Crescentius was Minister General (1244-1247). In 1247 John of Parma was elected Minister and became "a breath of new hopefulness"[14] for Clare. A new pope, Innocent IV (1243-1254), gave the sisters another rule in 1247. However, it too "failed to grasp the fact that radical poverty was the essential foundation of Clare's life and charism,"[15] and it was never enforced.

Clare's Rule

Eventually, after a long struggle to have the privilege of no privileges and with many years of experience in living the enclosure,[16] Clare decided to write

her own rule, the first woman to do so. It was approved by Innocent IV on August 9, 1253, two days before Clare's death. Her struggle was summarized by Philip Endean, general editor of *The Way Supplement*: "Like many other prophetic women in the Church, Clare had to cope with the incomprehension of hierarchs and to live with juridical rulings which suppressed rather than fostered her charism."[17]

At this point, a note from Bartoli is in order. He quotes a recent study in Italian by G. Gennaro: "This group . . . had lived for years without feeling the need for a rule: the *formula vitae* which Francis had given them . . . placed the Gospel and Francis's own care for them right at the heart of the venture at San Damiano."[18] Thaddée Matura intimates that Clare's concern by this time was to assure that her form of life endure and she was diplomatic enough to know that using Francis's inspiration would serve her well.[19] She was original in her use of the juridical language of previous rules and freer than Francis in her interpretations.[20] Clare's spirit was unique for her era.

Margaret Carney illustrates well how Clare characteristically used the language of love in her rule. When Hugolino legislated how a candidate was to enter religion, he always spoke in the third person, whereas Clare used the personal pronoun saying: "Let the tenor of *our life* be thoroughly explained to her." Carney comments: "The simple addition of 'our' to 'life' betrays a world of meaning, a love for the form of life so faithfully treasured and advanced. With one small stroke of the quill it separates Clare's perceptions from Hugolino's far more dramatically than the enclosure walls could ever separate outer perceptions from inner realities."[21]

As well as being more personal, Clare was also more democratic in her legislation than were previous efforts to regulate her life. Frances Teresa Downing points out that

> there is a document from 1238 concerning the sale of some land which has the signatures of the entire community on it. It is an important document to us because it indicates that, even though officially sailing under Benedict and Hugolino's flags, Clare practiced what she taught, and that major as well as minor decisions at San Damiano were reached by way of consultation involving all the sisters.[22]

Other examples of this spirit in the Rule include the acceptance of novices (chap.2), approval of taking on a debt and the election of the abbess (chap.4) (for which latter Clare did not seek confirmation from any higher authority other than to say she must "first profess our form of poverty"), and the daily work of all the sisters (chap.7).

Clare's view of authority was insightful as well. In chapter ten of the Rule the sisters are "to obey their abbess in all things they have promised the Lord

to observe and which are not *against their soul and our profession*" (RCl 10:3; emphasis mine). Conscience was to be respected. In the writings of Clare, the abbess's position was more often called servant or mother than abbess—a title that had been imposed on Clare in keeping with the efforts to institutionalize this new movement.[23] She was to be attentive to the sisters "as a mother is to her daughters," and the sisters "are to obey her not so much because of her office as because of her love" (TestCl 62, 63). The abbess acts "with the sisters" (RCl 2-12). This was a clear movement away from the more matriarchal/patriarchal monastic tradition.

Finally, Clare's sense of the value of each voice in the community is highlighted in chapter six of the Rule, "the chapter which holds the heart of the experience of Clare and her companions."[24] Quoting Francis, Clare says that a sister is not to depart from this way of life "by reason of the teaching of anyone." The sister has her own voice in this "most holy life and poverty." The whole of chapter six and the two subsequent chapters break away from legal language. In Armstrong's words: "Clare inserts in [these] three chapters the heart of the 'life and poverty' of Jesus Christ that is the cornerstone of the Order. This section of the Rule possesses a dramatically different autobiographical tone than [sic.] occurs again in the *Testament*. This particular chapter [six] comes directly from Clare and forms the heart of the Rule, thus providing a principal font for the new form of life in the Church."[25]

Some Characteristics of Clare's Spirituality

Clare's charism, or at least some of the characteristics of her spirituality, are being rediscovered through recent literature as an integral part of the Franciscan tradition. Besides the strong sense of personal worth and social change to which Clare and Francis witness, her Rule or form of life already give a flavor of what she brought to the tradition. In the words of Downing: "Traditionally her Rule is considered to be a faithful reflection of what actually happened at San Damiano, following the usual Franciscan approach of acting first and thinking later."[26] It is noteworthy that the late Eric Doyle makes a related point when describing Franciscan spirituality in *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*: "St. Francis of Assisi did not found a school of spirituality, nor is there a systematic Franciscan spirituality."[27] Clare is like Francis "who coined the phrase 'an understanding of faith': that is, a faith which, out of a life process, generates original reflection on the truth contemplated, yet without becoming a systematic theology."[28] The best that can be offered are some characteristics of Clare's way of life which can be described as (1) relational, (2) prayerful, and (3) personal.

1) Relational: Clare's was a relational spirituality. Her God was personal and less distant than Francis's.[29] As she wrote to Agnes of Prague in all four letters, her union was a nuptial one with Christ, the poor one (TestCl 56) revealed in the crib (TestCl 35, 45, 46) and on the cross (TestCl 45). God is a "Father of mercies," as was said in 2Cor. 1:3 (TestCl 2, 58; BCl 12). The Spirit gives joy and enlightenment (TestCl 11; 4LAg 7), is spouse (RCl 6:3), before all else is to be desired "with His holy manner of working" (RCl 10:9). Matura summarizes these sentiments well:

> One could say Francis's spirituality is "traditional," closer to its biblical and liturgical roots, more theocentric, more objective; Clare's is "modern," in touch with the spiritual mood of her day, marked by St. Bernard and his movement.[30]

2) Prayerful: Clare's life of prayer was intense, but difficult to describe. Armstrong speaks of her prayer as that of a woman passionately in love with Christ. "She offers," he writes, "very few intellectual or practical formulas for making progress in the life of prayer. It is almost as if Clare consciously wanted to teach her sisters that prayer was simply a matter of falling in love, a process that defies plans, methods, or well-defined approaches."[31] There is one hint in her second letter to Agnes of Prague. In it Clare's "own deep bond with Christ breathes through."[32] Clare wrote: "Gaze upon him, consider him, contemplate him as you desire to imitate him" (2LAg 20). In this gazing, "She herself became prayer as it were: the total response to God's longing for us."[33]

By looking this way at Christ, who mirrors the God who is poured out on the cross, we become mirrors for others who in turn will be mirrors "for those living in the world" (TestCl 19-21).[34] This reflection is one of joy and light in which we "gain, with very little effort, the prize of eternal happiness (cf. Phil. 3:14)" (TestCl 23). Matura calls it a prayer style that represents "a spirituality of pleasure."[35]

3) Personal: After Francis's death, Clare had a dream or vision of him, as witnessed at the canonization process, which involved a mirror as well.[36] It was a dream reported in the language of the time and touches "one of the most intimate and personal aspects of Clare's personality."[37] It is a language of feeling and desire. In the dream Clare saw herself coming to Francis up a stairs, carrying a bowl of hot water and a towel. When she reached 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 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.[38]

Bartoli puts this vision in its cultural context and concludes: "The totally human love of Clare for Francis, which this dream places so well in high relief, characterizes to a great degree her love of God."[39]

I cite the above to illustrate how Clare's spirituality is highly personal. She has a strong sense of the dignity of the person as a reflection of the divine image. E. van den Goorbergh concludes that for Clare a person is truly human when "she radiates Christ's love to others."[40] Such radiance is what gives dignity to persons—ourselves and others. Clare puts it this way to her soul-friend, Agnes:

> Indeed, it is now clear that the soul of a faithful person, the most worthy of all creatures because of the grace of God, is greater than heaven itself, since the heavens and the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator and the faithful soul is His dwelling place and throne, and this only through the charity that the wicked lack (3LAg, 21-22).

Clare has a profound sense of God's abiding presence. More like Julian of Norwich and "unlike many other mystics, Clare was not moved by fear and despair. Nowhere is there evidence to suggest she ever felt abandoned by God who called her by name."[41]

Clare's sense of the other is so strong that she respects all. Despite her struggles with the Church's hierarchy, she wrote in her Testament that she expected them "out of the love of the God Who was placed poor in the crib, lived poor in the world, and remained naked on the cross" (TestCl 45) to look after her sisters. Her sense of herself gave her "the liberty necessary to gain perspective on the limits of the Church's authority as well as her own. This perspective enabled her to remain hopeful and humble."[42]

Conclusion

Clare of Assisi was a hopeful and humble woman who, in her lifelong process of conversion to live without anything of her own, began a new form of life for other sisters and brothers that was to be mirrored in society. Her character, transformed by gazing at the Christ naked in the crib and on the cross, was relational, prayerful, and personal. To this day she inspires courage for the journey of God's pilgrim people living beyond the walls of San Damiano.

Endnotes

[1]Regis J. Armstrong, ed. and trans., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 10. Translations and dates are Armstrong's, unless otherwise noted. Marco Bartoli's work *Clare of Assisi*, trans. Sr. Frances Teresa [Downing] (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1993) and Margaret Carney's *The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and Her Form of Life* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993) are two such typical and recent studies.

[2]See Margaret Carney, "Franciscan Women and the Theological Enterprise," in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. Kenan B. Osborne (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1994), 333. Carney analyses how this light does not always shine. She writes: "When we look at the beginnings of the theological developments with the Franciscan school we can see, then, that women had no hope of formally participating in the work of articulating a new way of looking at these fields through the Franciscan lens. . . . Women who entered into the various forms of Franciscan life . . . could not participate in the apostolic work of formal evangelizing because this was increasingly limited to ordained clerics in the wake of the Lateran Council and the culmination of the Gregorian reform."

[3]Bartoli, 42.

[4]Bartoli, 51.

[5]*Early Documents*, 12.

[6]Bartoli, 55.

[7]Bartoli, n.20, 213.

[8]Regis J. Armstrong, "Clare of Assisi, the Poor Ladies, and the Ecclesial Mission in the *First Life* of Thomas of Celano," *Greyfriars Review* 5 (1991): 424.

[9]Bartoli, 53-75.

[10]Bartoli, 60.

[11]Margaret E. Guider, "Going Forward on the Path of Prudent Happiness: Perspectives on Liberty and Obedience," *The Way Supplement*, 80 (1994): 34.

[12]*Early Documents*, 205.

[13]Carney, 187.

[14]Carney, 196.

[15]Guider, 35.

[16]Parallel to Clare's struggle for the privilege of poverty is that of the form of her enclosure or cloister. In her time it was customary for women in religion to be cloistered. Clare's choice in this matter is ambivalent. See Bartoli, 92; Carney, 213; Pat Howes, "Solitude," *The Way Supplement*, 80 (1994): 61- 69.

[17]Philip Endean, "Editorial," *The Way Supplement*, 80 (1994): 5.

[18]Bartoli, n.24, 214.

[19]In Marie-France Becker, Jean-François Godet, and Thaddée Matura, *Claire d'Assise Ecrits: Introduction, Texte Latin, Traduction, Notes et Index* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 30.

[20]Carney, 77; *Ecrits*, 42.

[21]Carney, 168-169.

[22]Frances Teresa Downing, OSC, "A Globe of Mirrors," *The Way Supplement*, 80 (1994): 9.

[23]Bartoli, 70.

[24]Bartoli, 6.

[25]*Early Documents*, n. 34, 68-69.

[26]Downing, 9.

[27]Eric Doyle, "Franciscan Spirituality, Franciscans," in *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Gordon S. Wakefield (London, SCM Press, 1983), 159.

[28]Bartoli, 117.

[29]*Ecrits*, 64.

[30]*Ecrits*, 29; translation mine.

[31]*Early Documents*, 15.

[32]Edith van den Goorbergh, "Clare's Prayer as a Spiritual Journey," *The Way Supplement* 80 (1994): 52.

[33]van den Goorbergh, 51.

[34]Bartoli points out that mirror "is a key word in the spirituality and culture of men[sic.] of the Middle Ages. In his systematic study on the theme of the mirror, H. Graber indicates more than 250 works in whose title the word 'mirror' appears (or its popular equivalent)." See Bartoli, "Historical Analysis and Psychoanalytic Interpretations of a Vision of Clare of Assisi," trans. Madonna Balestrieri, *Greyfriars Review* 6 (1992): 208.

[35]*Ecrits*, 58.

[36]Bartoli, "Historical Analysis," 190.

[37]Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, 142.

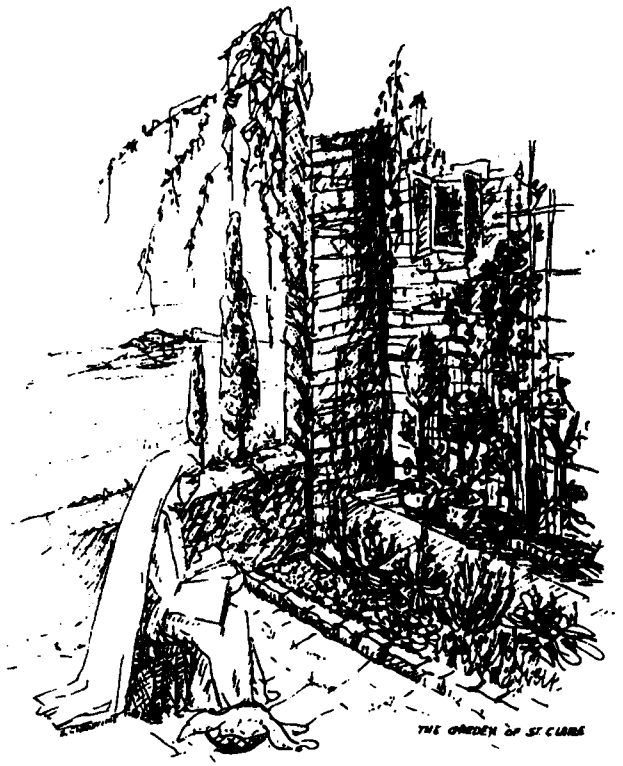
[38]*Early Documents*, 144.

[39]Bartoli, "Historical Analysis," 209.

[40]van den Goorbergh, 59.

[41]Guider, 37.

[42]Guider, 38.



Christine Therese Schneider, SSJ-TOSF

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Clare of Assisi and Conscientious Objection[1]

Beth Lynn, OSC

The topic for this paper came from a friars' retreat that I was preaching on Clare. During a conference, one of the older friars raised his hand and announced: "I don't like Clare." I waited and he added: "Why didn't she just obey the Pope?" I responded: "Good question."

In this paper I will present evidence of the relationship between Clare of Assisi and Pope Gregory IX, showing how Clare was a foremother of what is perhaps the highest form of religious obedience, namely conscientious objection.[2] In accord with the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on Religious Freedom," an individual with appropriate reflection and prayer must follow the dictates of conscience, even if these conflict with the teachings of the Church.

Background

In the thirteenth century, Clare and Francis of Assisi, together with their companions, inaugurated a new form of religious life for men and women in the Church. The Gospel came alive for them as it met the needs and questions of their time. The late tenth to the early thirteenth century was a period of great change in western Europe.[3] Such periods of shift allow for the restructuring of society and give the underclass an opportunity to emerge into new roles of responsibility.

Francis came to his role of spiritual leadership from the newly emerging merchant class. He was not a cleric and never received priestly ordination. He did receive the diaconate, apparently for the purpose of preaching according to the norms of Lateran IV.

Clare was a woman of the noble class who audaciously pursued her desire for a new type of community for women. She did not follow any of the former models, but took elements from the monastic tradition as well as the emerging

lay feminine movement often referred to as the Beguines.[4] These she combined with her own unique vision. Thus Clare created an alternative to the prevailing models for women which were being encouraged by the reforming hierarchy working for a restoration of religious life.

Francis experienced his conversion in 1206 and, with a small group of companions, received verbal approbation for his form of life from Pope Innocent III in 1210. Clare left her family home in 1212, received the habit and tonsure from Francis and the brothers at the Portiuncula, and took up community life at San Damiano, a chapel outside the walls of Assisi belonging to Bishop Guido II, the ordinary of Assisi.[5]

Role of the Bishop of Assisi

Bishop Guido had been appointed to the see of Assisi by Innocent III in 1204. The year before, Assisi had been placed under interdict by the pope for choosing as its first podesta, Girardo di Giliberto, an excommunicant.[6] Guido was, as we would say today, "tough on crime," the chief crime being disturbing the order of Christendom, politically or ideologically (which were often mixed together). If Guido was a friend of Innocent III, he was frequently censored by Innocent's successor, Honorius III, for his bellicose, litigious behaviors and in particular for "his insatiable appetite for new income and revenues."[7]

Guido was friendly to Francis from the beginning. It was Guido who tried the case of Pietro Bernardone against his son.[8] When Francis gave all his possessions, including his clothing, back to his father, Guido clothed Francis in his own mantle. Francis confided in Guido and looked to him for advice and support. This was effective for the early Franciscans both in Assisi and in their affairs in Rome. This is attested to in many of the earliest documents.[9]

Specialists suggest that Guido must have been in collaboration with Francis and Clare to effect her escape from her family home. Early testimonies make much of the Palm Sunday liturgy of 1212 at the cathedral of San Rufino when the bishop left the sanctuary to give Clare a palm, a possible signal that "this was to be the night."[10]

To escape alone from her family home on the piazza San Rufino and most especially to get through the locked and guarded gates of the city to arrive at the Portiuncula three kilometers down the hill, required help. Guido was likely a co-conspirator in this instance.

After receiving Clare into the order, Francis sent her to the Benedictine Monastery of San Paula della Abbedesse four kilometers west of the city.[11] She was received there as a servant. Having already given away her own dowry and half of her sister Beatrice's, there was no way that Clare could have been received as a nun, even if she had wanted it. San Paulo had a standing army and great possessions. When her Uncle Monaldo and his brother knights came

and tried to take her back to the family home, she withstood them by claiming the right of sanctuary. Without Bishop Guido's support, Clare would have been considered a fugitive and her reception by Francis a canonically irregular situation.

It was Guido who, from the extensive holdings of the bishopric of Assisi, provided a refuge for Clare and her sister, Agnes. The church of San Damiano became the home of the first community of the Poor Ladies, and they became known as Damianites.

The Role of Innocent III

Of importance to our topic is the timing of the Fourth Lateran Council called by Innocent III in 1215.[12] The Council brought together more than four hundred bishops and eight hundred abbots and priors for the purpose of "regaining the Holy Land and the reform of the whole Church." Much of the legislation from this Council directly affected the Franciscan movement. Among the decrees promulgated from the Council was one which prohibited the founding of any new religious orders "lest too great diversity lead to grave confusion in the Church of God" (Canon 13). Any new groups would be required to accept one of the existing rules—Benedictine or Augustinian. It was at the Second Council of Lyons (1274) that Canon Thirteen was actually put into effect. All religious groups which had not received approbation by that time were suppressed.

As Clare began her Franciscan project at San Damiano in 1212, she had a short form of life given to her by Francis. Clare tells us this in both her Rule and her Testament. In 1216 she was given the "privilege of poverty" by Innocent III. This allowed the community to live without lands or dowries or any form of stable income. The Damianites would not be on the road with the Friars, but they would live as "strangers and pilgrims"[13] in their monasteries, dependent on God and the generosity of their neighbors. Their life would be one of prayer wedded to poverty, an ever fruitful marriage in the history of spirituality. At the same time Clare accepted the title of abbess, which to that point she had successfully resisted. This may have been a trade off for the "privilege of poverty" and on-going support by Pope Innocent, who died in 1216 and was succeeded by Honorius III.

The Character of Hugolino, Gregory IX

The community had been living together for five years when Cardinal Hugolino came on the scene in 1217 as envoy to Lombardy and Tuscany, which included the Umbrian Valley. At that point Guido's influence diminished.

Cardinal Hugolino dei Conti di Segni, the future Pope Gregory IX, was born in Anagni in 1170, the nephew of Innocent III. (There was a popular saying in the thirteenth century: "God gave us popes and the devil gave them sisters.") He was educated at Paris and Bologna. Honorius III, successor to Innocent, appointed Hugolino as cardinal bishop of Ostia and Velletri. It was after the Franciscan Chapter of 1217 that Francis met Cardinal Hugolino for the first time in Florence. As Francis was on his way to France, the Cardinal warned him that there was grumbling in the Curia against the brotherhood. He demanded that Francis remain in Italy where he could be accountable for the Order. Thus began an informal relationship with Hugolino as "friend of the Order." When Francis returned from the East in 1219, he was greatly disturbed by the changes enacted by the vicars he himself had appointed to lead the Order in his absence. Francis appealed to Honorius III to have Cardinal Hugolino officially named Cardinal Protector of the Order. This meant that Cardinal Hugolino was also Cardinal Protector of the Poor Ladies of San Damiano.[14]

Hugolino became Pope Gregory IX in 1227 and led the Church until 1241. He canonized Francis of Assisi on July 16, 1228, and he commissioned Brother Thomas of Celano to compose the official biography of Francis. He also sponsored the building of the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi.

Salimbene de Adam, a Franciscan chronicler, tells us that when Gregory heard of the murder of the bishop of Mantua, he wept, for "he [Gregory] was a most compassionate man."[15] Other witnesses indicate that he was easily moved to tears. He was also a composer of music. In his legislation for the Sisters of San Damiano, he directs that the Sisters shall sing the Office. Clare writes that they shall "recite it after the manner of the Friars Minor."

In 1227, Gregory issued the first of what was to be a series of excommunications of Emperor Frederick II. The ensuing years saw Gregory and Frederick in continuous conflict. Salimbene tells of a proverb attributed to Jacopo Torrello: "L'asen da per la pare: botta da, botta receve," that is, "the ass kicks through the wall when he is fractious; he gives a kick, and he receives one." According to Salimbene, "The common people thought this a very profound saying, because they took it to be about the Pope and the Emperor . . . who were continually at odds with one another."[16]

Gregory inaugurated the process of the Ecclesial Inquisition in 1233. Through this institution, members of heterodox movements were apprehended and interrogated and then handed over to the secular authorities for punishment. "In 1231 Pope Gregory had set death by fire as punishment for Cathars in the papal states."[17] At the same time he commissioned Raymond of Penafort, his personal secretary, to collect and systematize legislation in the form of the Code of Canon Law called the Decretals which remained in effect until 1917.

Pope Gregory was frequently involved with the affairs of the Friars Minor. A precedent was set for this in 1230 with Gregory's interpretation of the Friars' Rule in the bull "Quo Elongati." He presided over the General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor in 1239. At the instigation of Haymo of Faversham and the Franciscans from Paris, Gregory asked the Minister General, Elias di Bonbarone, to resign from office, and when he refused, the Pope deposed him.

Hugolino and the Poor Ladies

In 1217 Pope Honorius wrote to Hugolino in response to a letter of the Cardinal. From the Pope's response we can infer that Hugolino had informed the Pope that he, Hugolino, had met with new communities of women involved in the poverty movement. These women "desire to . . . make homes for themselves in which they may live not possessing anything under heaven except these homes and oratories to be constructed for them."[18] Hugolino asked that as papal legate he might receive these foundations in the name of the Church of Rome to protect them from interfering bishops or patrons. In this letter we see Hugolino with a perspective similar to Jacques de Vitry, who was an avid admirer of Marie d'Oignies in France, the Beguines of the Brabant, and the poverty movement in Italy. However, the following year Hugolino seemed to have changed his position.[19] He imposed upon the Damianites his constitutions based on the Rule of Benedict. Hugolino thus attempted to insure uniform norms for the various groups. In particular he linked the women's religious movement with perpetual enclosure. When he became Pope in 1228 he also urged that the communities receive dowries sufficient for their support.

Mario Sensi, a contemporary Italian historian, interprets Hugolino's imposition of his constitutions as an effort to by-pass the legislation of Lateran IV requiring new communities to follow an existing rule (Augustinian or Benedictine).[20] As a matter of fact, however, the sisters were given the Benedictine Rule with Hugolino's constitutions.[21]

In Sensi's view, the most pertinent documents to understand the women's religious movement at this time are: a Letter of Jacques de Vitry, 1216, the Legend of Clare, written two years after her death in 1255, and the Legend of the Three Companions, cir. 1247.[22] Missing from his list are the writings of Clare of Assisi, the most important figure in the history of the Damianites and a significant contributor to thirteenth-century religious life. Her corpus includes four letters to Agnes of Prague, 1234-1253, a Testament, 1247, her Form of Life, 1253, and a Blessing.

The thirteenth-century biographer of Hugolino writes: "He [Hugolino] founded new orders of brothers of penance and enclosed women, and he led

them to the heights."[23] Sensi, following on this interpretation, writes: "This monastic network was commonly referred to as the Order of San Damiano (later the Order of St. Clare.) It should have gone by the name of Hugolino or Gregory IX, who was its organizer."[24]

Clare: A Different View

Let us hear, on the other hand, what Clare says about the foundation. Her Rule begins: "The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters that Blessed Francis established is this. . . ." In this Rule she writes of Francis eleven times; in her Testament she names Francis seventeen times; in her letters she cites him twice. Never in any of her extant writings does Clare use the name of Hugolino or Gregory.

We know that Clare did have interactions with Hugolino, both as Cardinal and later Pope.[25] Following the letter of August 27, 1218, from Pope Honorius to Hugolino, the Cardinal gave the Damianites a body of constitutions based on the Rule of Benedict. Hugolino begins his constitutions: "Every true Religion and approved institute of life endures by certain rules and requirements, and by certain disciplinary laws." He proceeds to give the Sisters his rules. The way Hugolino and Clare introduce their respective documents gives some understanding of the contrast between Clare's approach and that of Hugolino.

Clare, writing her own Rule later, will introduce it thus: "The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters that 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."[26] She never uses the word "rule." Rather, she describes a spiritually fertile environment in which she, "the little plant of Francis" as she calls herself, and her sisters may flourish.

Among the evidence of the personal relationship between Clare and Hugolino is this passage from the Legend of Clare.

> Lord Pope Gregory had marvelous faith in her prayer. . . . When some new difficulties arose (both as bishop and later as pope) he would request assistance of that virgin by means of a letter. . . (CL 27).

Two of these letters survive. The first is tentatively dated 1220 and follows on a visit to San Damiano where Hugolino celebrated Holy Week:

> . . . just as an overwhelming sorrow ensued when the Lord was taken away from the disciples and nailed to the gallows of the Cross, so I remain desolate by your absence from me. For that glorious joy, with which I discussed the Body of Christ with you while celebrating Easter with you and the other servants of Christ has forsaken me. . . . I entrust my soul and commend my spirit to you, just as Jesus on the Cross commended His spirit to the Father, so that on the day of judgment you may answer for me, if you have not been concerned for and intent on my salvation.[27]

In this letter, Hugolino addresses Clare as "My very dear sister in Christ and mother of my salvation, the servant of Christ, Lady Clare." The second letter, in 1228, was written shortly after Hugolino's election to the papacy and before his visit to Assisi to preside at the canonization of Francis. It is addressed to "my beloved daughter, the Abbess, and to the community of Enclosed Nuns of San Damiano in Assisi. . . ."

This second letter has a different tone from the first. It is as if the pope is attempting to assuage Clare's ire. He writes:

> We certainly hope and have confidence that, if you pay careful and diligent attention, those things which now seem bitter will become wholesome and sweet for you, what is hard will become soft and what is rough will become smooth, so that you will exult, if you merit to suffer these things for Christ Who endured for us the passion of an infamous death.[28]

In relation to these words of Gregory, one might associate a quotation of Clare, uttered on her deathbed: "After I once came to know the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ through his servant Francis, no pain has been bothersome, no penance too severe, no weakness, dearly beloved brother, has been hard" (CL 44). Clare found no difficulty or burden in following her gospel vocation, believing as did Francis that this was revealed to her by God.[29] In her experience there was nothing "hard," "bitter," or "rough" in the life to which she was called. One imagines, however, the difficulty of holding fast to her vocation in spite of the Pope's imposition of what he felt the sisters should be about.

In the sworn testimony of three of the sisters who lived with Clare, they recount how Pope Gregory could never make Clare consent to receiving property (Proc 1:13; 2:22; 3:14). In the Legend we read that the Pope attempted to persuade her and personally offered her property, saying: "If you fear for your vow, We absolve you from it." Clare responds: "Holy Father, I will never in any way wish to be absolved from the following of Christ" (CL 14).

On September 17, 1228, Gregory IX renewed the "Privilege of Poverty" granted originally by Innocent III: "Therefore, we confirm with our apostolic authority, as you requested, your proposal of most high poverty, granting you by the authority of [these] present that no one can compel you to receive possessions."

The following incident recounted in the Legend probably took place in 1230 in relation to the bull, "Quo Elongati," which among other precepts

forbade the friars to go to the convents of the nuns to preach.

> Once when Lord Pope Gregory forbade any brother to go to the monasteries of the Ladies without permission, the pious mother, sorrowing that sisters would more rarely have the food of sacred teaching, sighed: "Let him [Gregory] now take away from us all the brothers, since he has taken away those who provide us with the food that is vital" (CL, 37).

Clare sent the questers away and went on a hunger strike until Gregory remitted his prohibition.

Clare's struggles continued. She was concerned for the freedom of her sister monasteries. In particular, we note her words of advice to Agnes of Prague who had begun a community similar to San Damiano in her home city of Prague. In 1235 Clare wrote to Agnes:

> Follow the counsel of our venerable father, our Brother Elias, the Minister General,[30] that you may walk more securely in the way of the commands of the Lord. Prize it beyond the advice of the others and cherish it as dearer to you than any gift. If anyone would tell you something else or suggest something that would hinder your perfection or seem contrary to your divine vocation, even though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel (2LAg 17).

Clare was referring to Pope Gregory, who in 1235 was insisting that Agnes retain the revenue from property to subsidize the monastery.

Between 1234 and 1238, there were sixteen bulls from Gregory IX to the petitioner, Agnes of Prague. On April 18, 1238, Agnes was granted the privilege of renouncing the revenue from the hospital which she had founded and to be free of such possessions. In quick response, Agnes wrote to the Pope asking to adopt for her community the same legislation as San Damiano, which observed a legal collage of the teachings and prescriptions of Francis,[31] plus the Privilege of Poverty granted by Innocent III and renewed by Gregory. The Pope replied to Agnes on May 11, 1238, refusing her request. He cited as his chief reason the disturbance that this would cause other Poor Ladies who were still living under the Benedictine Rule of 1218.[32]

Finally, in 1252, Clare's own Rule was approved, first by Raynaldo, the Cardinal Protector, and then, in 1253, by Innocent IV, just before Clare's death. Raynaldo, nephew of Gregory IX, succeeded Innocent in 1254, becoming Pope Alexander IV. In 1259 he granted the Nuns of Pansa permission to take the Rule of Clare. It is supposed that the same permission was granted to the monastery in Prague.

Conclusion

In his third admonition Francis writes: "But if the prelate should command something contrary to his conscience, although [the subject] does not obey him, still he should not abandon him."[33] Obedience for Francis was an essential element of his charism of poverty leading to union with the Absolute. "He has not renounced all for God's sake who retains the purse of his own will." The third admonition concludes: "Whoever chooses to endure persecution rather than be separated from his brothers truly remains in perfect obedience, for he lays down his life [for his friends]." The refusal to distance oneself from situations of conflicting perspectives is the beginning of the journey toward wholeness. One moves toward the center of Reality where everything is essentially One. Francis intuited and modelled this. Clare lived it in her relationship with Gregory IX. Clare had one view of her religious call; Gregory had another. Clare was faithful to her charism, but never severed the relationship with Gregory. Their differing views continued. Clare's fidelity bore fruit in a religious family that is still growing after eight hundred years.

Endnotes

[1]This is an edited version of a paper delivered at the Conference on the History of Religious Women at Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee, June 18-21, 1995. Its original title is "Women and the Hierarchy in the Middle Ages."

[2]For further clarification on the "self" and the "individual" in the twelfth century, see Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual: 1050-1200* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972) and "Individualism in Twelfth-Century Religion: Some Further Reflection," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31.2 (April, 1980). See also Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

[3]For a short but excellent treatment of the pivotal shift from Antiquity to the Middle Ages see André Vauchez, *The Spirituality of the Medieval West* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1993).

[4]For a development of this theme see Ingrid J. Peterson, OSF, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993).

[5]Michael Robson, "Assisi, Guido II and Saint Francis," *Laurentianum*, 1-2 (1993), 109-138.

[6]A. Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1981), 174.

[7]Robson, 125.

[8]Fortini, 27.

[9]*Anonymus Peruginus*, ed. Lorenzo DiFonzo, *Miscellanea Franciscana* 72 (1972), 117-483. "Legenda trium Sociorum: Edition critique, ed. T. Desbonnets, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 64 (1974), 38-144. *Scripta Leonis et Angeli sociorum S. Francisci* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). Thomas of Celano, "Vita Secunda S. Francisci," *Analecta Franciscana*, X (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventura, 1926-1941), 12. Bonaventura of Bagnoregio, "Legenda major S. Francisci," *Analecta Franciscana* X (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1926-1941), 2:4.

[10]Francesco Pennacchi, *Legenda Sanctae Clara Virginis* (Assisi, 1910).

[11]Z. Lazzeri, "De processu canonizzazione di S. Chiara d' Assisi," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* XIII (1920).

[12]H. J. Schroeder, OP, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils* (New York: Herder Book Co., 1937), 236-296.

[13]Clare of Assisi, *Claire d'Assise: Ecrits*, ed. and trans. Marie-France Becker, Jean-Francois Godet, Thaddée Matura (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1985).

[14]For an excellent treatment of the earliest sources on Francis and Cardinal Hugolino see Edith Pásztor, "St. Francis, Cardinal Hugolino and 'The Franciscan Question,'" *Greyfriars Review* (Sept., 1987), 26-27.

[15]Salimbene de Adam, *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam*, trans. Joseph L. Baird, Guiseppe Baglivi and John Robert Kane (Binghamton, NY: University Center, 1986).

[16]Salimbene, 158.

[17]John T. Noonan, Jr. "The Canonists, Cathars, and St. Augustine," *Contraception, A History of Its Treatment by Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 211-244.

[18]*Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. R. J. Armstrong, OFM Cap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993), 87.

[19]R. Manselli, "La chiesa e il francescanesimo femminile," *Movimento religioso femminile e francescanesimo nel secolo XIII* (Assisi: Societa Internazionale di Studi Francescani, 1980), 248.

[20]M. Sensi, "Incarcerate e Recluse in Umbria nei Secoli XIII e XIV: Un Bixxocaggio Centro-Italiano," *Il Movimento religioso femminile in Umbria nei secoli XII-XIV* (Regione dell' Umbria: "La Nuova Italia" Editrice, 1984), 324.

[21]This so impressed historians that when the Bollandists began in the sixteenth c. to collect and edit the legends of the saints in their massive work, *Acta Sanctorum*, they refer to Clare of Assisi as a Benedictine.

[22]Sensi, 320.

[23]L. A. Muatori, "Vitae pontificum romanorum. Vita Gregorii IX papae," *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, III/I, 575-87.

[24]Sensi, 326.

[25]For another perspective dealing with these same sources see Patricia Ranft, "An Overturned Victory: Clare of Assisi and the Thirteenth Century Church," *Journal of Medieval History*, 17 (1991), 23-134. See also Sigismund Verhij, "Personal Awareness of Vocation and Ecclesiastical Authority as Exemplified in St. Clare of Assisi," *Greyfriars Review* (April, 1989).

[26]The vow formula was in use during the latter part of the twelfth century. The Roman Curia imposed it upon all new religious orders during the pontificate of Pope Innocent III.

[27]Armstrong, 101.

[28]Armstrong, 103.

[29]Optatus Van Asseldonk, OFM Cap., "'Sorores Minores': Una nuova importazione del problema," *Collectanea Francescana* 62 (1992), 595-634.

[30]Michael Cusato, OFM, "Elias and Clare: An Enigmatic Relationship," *Clare of Assisi: Investigations*, Clare Centenary Series, 7 (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993), 95-115.

[31]Margaret Carney, OSF, *The First Franciscan Woman* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993), 70.

[32]Armstrong, 373.

[33]K. Esser, OFM, ed. *Opuscula Santi Patris Francisci Assiensis* (Grottaferrata: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1978).

Always be lovers of your souls and those of your sisters. And may you always be eager to observe what you have promised the Lord.

(Blessing of Clare 14)

Book Review

McKelvie, Roberta Agnes, OSF. *Retrieving a Living Tradition; Angelina of Montegiove: Franciscan, Tertiary, Beguine*. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997.

Roberta McKelvie's *Retrieving a Living Tradition; Angelina of Montegiove: Franciscan, Tertiary, Beguine* is a tightly argued presentation of the life and legacy of Angelina of Montegiove (1347-1435), a woman whose way of gospel life continues to influence Franciscans today. Roberta McKelvie's work is admirable in reconstructing a credible narrative from meager shards of historical evidence. Her approach is made clear at the outset: recognize the distortions and inaccuracies about Angelina in the existing sources, situate her in the context of the Italian beguine movement, and extend the story to include the development of her tradition. The title of the book names the three arenas of Angelina's story: the Franciscan, tertiary, and beguine movements.

McKelvie identifies the means she uses to overcome the interpretive problems found in deficient source texts about Angelina, the overshadowing history of the Friars Minor, the effect of the tension between the Spirituals and Conventuals over poverty, and the relation of the friars to the women in the penitential movement. As a tertiary, Angelina was embroiled in controversies with the friars over questions of governance and visitation. McKelvie sets out to demonstrate in Angelina's story evidence of a balance between the "loving care and solicitude" promised by Francis to women and their actual oppression by men.

The introductory interpretation of the tensions between Angelina's hagiography and history outlines the central issues of McKelvie's book. Chapter One describes characteristics of early Franciscan history, worthwhile reading for its own merits. Chapter Two interprets Angelina's early biographies (conveniently provided in an appendix). Chapter Three shows the influence of the Observant tradition on Angelina between 1395-1435. Chapter Four examines how Angelina's influence extends to Poland during this period. Chapter Five presents new research identifying the Regular Houses of the Observance. Chapter Six situates Angelina and her followers in the history of the Bernardine sisters, and Chapter Seven assesses the historical and theological implications of Angelina's story for her time and for ours.

Although the historical evidence about Angelina is sparse—McKelvie calls her an erased figure—her significance rests in the way her tradition has endured to the present time. For many readers of *The Cord*, McKelvie's conclu-

sions in Chapter Seven may seem to be the most interesting and relevant as we experience a contemporary evolution of the tertiary movement. Without getting into issues of feminist historical theology, the leadership of religious women in a post-Vatican II Church is undeniable. While Angelina's role in her time may not be known to us, her legacy and commitment is described by McKelvie as part of a living tradition of Third Order women. Attention to Angelina's past provides a significant historical model to empower individuals.

Besides learning about Angelina and through her the beginnings of the communities of tertiaries that evolved into present day congregations of women, even a casual reader is enlightened about current approaches to feminist historical scholarship. McKelvie meticulously plots her moves and articulates every step in the method of interpreting and reconstructing women's history. While McKelvie's self-conscious attention to her approach to history and theology will delight some readers, it may actually discourage others. Never is the process of the book more important than its content, however. In this case the process is an essential part of understanding Angelina's history and, McKelvie argues, our own. Why has the women's side of Franciscan history been so overlooked? McKelvie tries to help us understand how history has been constructed and now recently reconstructed. In accomplishing its stated goal as given in the title, *Retrieving a Living Tradition*, McKelvie's book takes a big step for the entire Franciscan family.

In addition to overcoming the difficulties of retrieving history from unreliable or limited sources, other scholarly heroics were demanded from McKelvie to tell Angelina's story: first, to dispel the confusion about her identity as Angelina of Marsciano and to distinguish her from the great Franciscan mystic, Angela of Foligno (1248-1309); then to dispel the frequent attribution that she "founded the enclosed third order life" or the certainty that she was married and widowed. McKelvie had to provide a wealth of background in order to tell Angelina's story: identify Angelina as a bizzoche, an Italian beguine woman; explain the political position of King Ladislaus, the king of Naples; give the origin of the convent of Sant'Anna where Angelina's remains are buried; recount the Franciscan tension over poverty represented by Paul Trinci and the Franciscan Observant movement; review canonical legislation regarding the tertiaries, their rights, and attempts at jurisdiction by friars minor or male third order groups; and trace the Church's perennial conflation of women religious and enclosure. Each of Angelina's ancient biographies serves to elucidate these entangled questions.

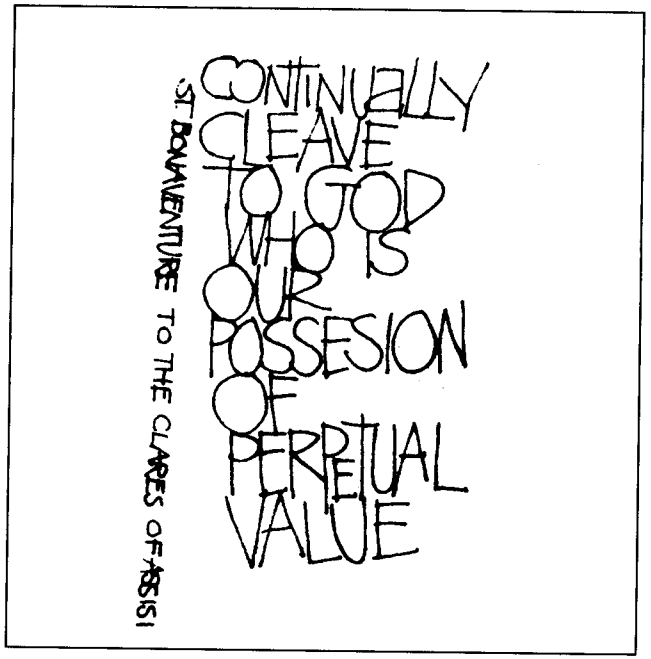
In the concluding chapter, McKelvie recapitulates the difficulties in proposing the old combined active-contemplative life as a model for religious life today. Angelina's life opens a newer symbol based on the choice of virginity and the common life as a fulfillment of her baptismal commitment. While her

refusal to marry was perceived as a rejection of patriarchy, which brought her condemnation as a heretic, it was her opportunity to join with others in living the gospel life.

Angelina courageously faced the restrictions of her society and culture to promote diverse expressions of religious living that were not dependent upon male authority. Angelina's story presents a new Franciscan vision directed toward sisterhood and brotherhood. Finally, Angelina can be viewed in the way that contemporary religious see themselves today—persons charged with the renewal of religious life by returning to the impetus of their founders. McKelvie argues that these components are the roots of Angelina's transformation and our own.

This book will be of special interest to Franciscan tertiaries, especially vowed Third Order members belonging to religious congregations. Yet, not to recommend it for a wider audience is to overlook the inclusive thrust of Angelina's life. She worked to overcome barriers in living the religious life. For this reason those who are in relationship with tertiaries, especially enclosed women and First Order men, will also be inspired by her renewal efforts. Angelina was not inhibited by Church, political, or societal categories. She did what was hers to do.

Ingrid Peterson, OSF



IN MEMORIAM

GEDEON GÁL, OFM
1915-1998

(Father Gedeon Gál, OFM, a member of Holy Name Province, died on May 25, in Ringwood, NJ. A world-renowned medieval researcher, he had worked at The Franciscan Institute for thirty-five years. His biographical profile appears in *The Cord*, Jan./Feb., 1998, pp. 34-35, together with a summary of his most recent work on "The Chronicle of Nicolaus Minorita," cf. pp. 18-25. Here follows a short reflection delivered at his funeral by his co-worker, Rega Wood.)

Father Gedeon was a surprising person, a paradoxical man. On one never-to-be-forgotten day, he told me to read both George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara* and Adolphe Tanquerey's *Manual of Dogmatic Theology*.

He criticized his chosen authors relentlessly, so that you could easily get the impression that he didn't think much of Ockham and company. Often enough he confided that Aquinas was the greater theologian. But he also thought that many of Ockham's criticisms of Aquinas were justified. And just ask his opinion of most modern authors; then you'd hear what real disapproval sounded like—words like 'obscure,' 'shallow,' and 'charlatan' were common.

Gedeon could never be persuaded that editorial work was much more than careful secretarial drudgery. Yet his were the highest standards in the world. In the twenty-three years we worked together, I only once got a transcription back with just the words, "good job," and that was less than a month ago.

Concentrating on works of theology which were out of date, Gedeon saw his as a second-rate occupation, even when the works were by some of the world's greatest minds. Yet for forty years, he attracted first-rate collaborators, from his early days at Quaracchi (Cesare Cenci) and the Franciscan Institute (Stephen Brown) to the last year of his life, when he worked with Allan Wolter, David Flood, and Jennifer Ottman. To all of his collaborators, he was supremely generous—offering his time, his ideas, and often enough works in progress, to be finished and published without mentioning his name. Yet Gedeon seldom understood much about people's lives apart from work. And he never managed patience—which may be why he achieved so much.

Gedeon preferred obedience to conflict. But his favorite strategy was the inspired side-step. That's probably how we should regard his passing. His doctor ordered him to live and told him that his own stubbornness was the problem. Raising no objections, Gedeon simply redoubled his prayers to Sister Death, and she heard him.

A humble person, Gedeon managed to work people pretty hard, often without noticing how much they did for him. How did he get away with it? Because he himself was never pretentious. He never boasted, asserted himself, or tried to exercise power.

He had a horror of accumulating material possessions. From the time he left home as a child of eleven, he always saw himself as a pilgrim and a wayfarer. The generosity he inspired in so many kind people—secretaries, librarians, and administrators, as well as scholars—came because he was so utterly unworldly in most practical matters, never really at home except reading medieval manuscripts.

Francis would have been proud of him; he enriched the lives of all who were kind to him.

28 May 1998, Rega Wood

About Our Contributors

Marie Beha, OSC, is a member of the Poor Clare community in Greenville, South Carolina. She contributes regularly to *The Cord*, as well as to a number of other religious periodicals. She also serves on the editorial board of *The Cord*.

Clare Ellen, OSC, whose art work appears in this issue, is a Poor Clare of the monastery of Christ the King in Delray Beach, Florida.

Frances Teresa Downing, OSC, is a member of the Poor Clare community in Arundel, West Sussex, England. She is the author of *Living the Incarnation: Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi* (Franciscan Press, 1996) and *This Living Mirror: Reflections on Clare of Assisi* (Orbis, 1995). She is a regular contributor to *The Way* and to *The Cord*.

Beth Lynn, OSC, is a member of the Monastery of St. Clare in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is a graduate of the Franciscan Institute and has contributed papers at the Medieval Conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Kevin Lynch, OFM, is a member of Christ the King Province in Western Cananda. He works with a team at a Franciscan retreat center in Lumsden, Saskatchewan. Together they are developing an ecumenical project with the Anglicans and Lutherans for retreats. He served as provincial minister for ten years.

Ingrid Peterson, OSF, a Franciscan Sister of Rochester, Minnesota, serves on the staff of the Franciscan Sabbaticals Program at Tau Center in Winona, Minnesota. She is the author of *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Franciscan Press, 1993) and editor of *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman: Clarefest Selected Papers* (Franciscan Institute Publications, 1996).

Christine Therese Schneider, SSJ TOSF, is an artist and a member of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis. Though retired, she still enjoys creating art in Frazier, Michigan, where she works in Studio Assisi.

Molly Lim Yeo Tee, FMM, a Franciscan Missionary of Mary, did her Franciscan studies at the Franciscan Study Centre in Canterbury England. She is presently stationed at Maris Stella Convent in Singapore.

Rega Wood, was a researcher at The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, from 1976-1996. During that time she collaborated in producing the Ockham edition, the Wodeham edition, and the Scotus edition. She is now at Yale University.

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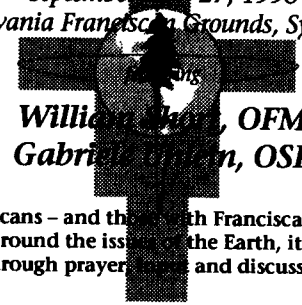

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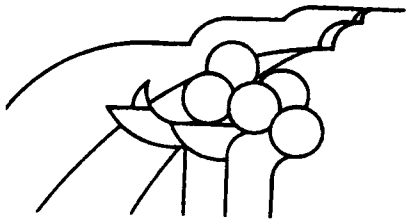

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Sunday, August 9-Saturday, August 22
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Saturday, September 26-Sunday, September 27
Earth Conference, '98. Sylvania, OH. See ad p. 211.

Saturday, September 26
The Rebirth of a Charism. St. Francis Academy, San Antonio, TX. See ad p. 208.

Saturday, October 10
The Rebirth of a Charism. Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee. See ad p. 208.

Friday, October 30-Sunday, November 1
The Book of Revelation: Its Message for the Millenium. A workshop with Jude Winkler, OFM Conv. The Tau Center, Winona. See ad p. 210.

Saturday, November 14
The Rebirth of a Charism. St. Joseph Church, Columbia, SC. See ad p. 208.

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo
BenBern	Blessing for Brother Bernard
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy
1EpCust	First Letter to the Custodians
2EpCust	Second 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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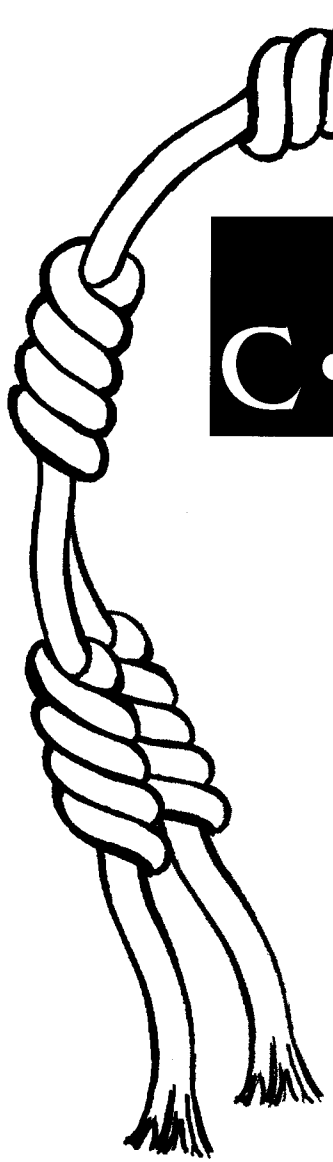

T • H • E C • O • R • D

Volume 48, No. 5 *September/October 1998*

THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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Editor: Elise Saggau, OSF

Editorial Assistant: Mary C. Gurley, OSF
Poetry Editor: Frances Ann Thom, 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). (2Cel 5:8).
   (RegNB 23:2). (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.

ADVERTISING: Ads should be sent to the editor at the above address. Cost: full page, $50.00; half page, $25.00. Ad deadline: first day of the month preceding month of publication (e.g., April 1 for the May/June issue).

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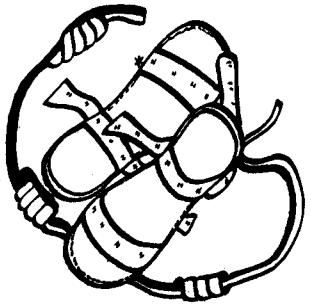

Editorial

Just a year ago, violent earthquakes rumbled through central Italy, destroying lives, homes, property, and architechtural treasures. The Franciscan world was shocked to hear of the damage done to cherished buildings and shrines—and even of deaths occurring at these very places. A great deal of soul-searching followed this event—reflection on the nature of our true treasures as well as on our continuing mission to "rebuild the Church."

Now Assisi and its environs slowly rebuilds, aided by caring persons from around the world. The scars of this disaster, however, are permanently embedded in its streets, in its walls, and in its hearts. They will remain as part of an ongoing story.

And we, too, continue our rebuilding, looking to images from the past to inspire us, looking at our own wounds and scars and flaws to remind us of our frailty and vulnerability. At the same time we are profoundly aware of the vast network of care that keeps all of us together and moving forward and of all the opportunities that lie before us just because we're still here!

This issue of *The Cord* reflects particularly on Francis of Assisi as a continuing source of this inspiration for us who claim to be his followers. In our daily life, in our personal struggles, in our zeal for service, in our love for one another in the Church and in the world, we hear his command to do what is ours to do as he did what was his.

I have done what was mine to do.
May Christ teach you what is yours.
(Legenda Maior, 14:3)

The Cord, 48.5 (1998)

The Dangerous Memory of Francis

Ilia Delio, OSF

(This homily was given at a Transitus service at Washington Theological Union, Washington, DC, on October 3, 1997.)

A Call to Crisis

My brothers and sisters in Christ, may the Lord give you peace! It is my privilege to celebrate with you this evening the feast of the Transitus, the passing of St. Francis from earthly to eternal life. This celebration belongs uniquely to Franciscans; indeed, those outside the tradition are rather nonplussed as to the meaning of this event. Recently, for example, someone asked me: "What is this Franciscan transition thing? Is this for people in mid-life crisis?" I responded, "Of course not!" Then I proceeded to explain its meaning. But perhaps I was too quick in my response. Perhaps the reason we gather this evening is not only to remember Francis's death, but because we *are* in a crisis, not a crisis of age but of relationship—relationship to our brothers and sisters, to our Church, and to our world. We live in the midst of a modern crisis, one marked by apathy and indifference. Yet, this crisis is overshadowed by the comfort of wealth and material possessions; things act as buffers between our lives and the suffering of the world around us, and perhaps even within us.

Because we live in a contemporary bourgeois society, it is sometimes difficult to grasp the importance of a figure like Francis of Assisi as an influential force in our lives. Indeed, simple lives are usually the most difficult to understand, and Francis can be counted among the sublimely simple. Yet, the fact that we have come to celebrate the death and new life of this saint of Assisi indicates that there is something of his life that speaks to us; there is something of his simplicity that we desire to grasp.

In an age where religious life has fallen into a rather generic cast, the name of Francis connotes a distinct image of one who strove zealously to follow the poor and humble Christ. The fabric of Francis's simple life was woven by the threads of poverty, humility, and love. While the tradition has consistently placed an emphasis on Franciscan poverty, it has done so almost to the exclusion of Franciscan love. This has not only led to conflicts among Franciscans, but has dissipated what is most unique to Francis, that is, his expression of radical love. We find that in our world today, and particularly in our society where the spirit of capitalism prevails, pursuing a life of radical poverty is difficult. As noble as our efforts may be, we are continuously thwarted in this path by our various successes. While Franciscan poverty is both material and spiritual, material poverty corresponds to spiritual poverty and is a sign of radical dependency. In a culture that blesses individualism, autonomy, and self-sufficiency, pursuing a life of radical dependency seems not only contradictory but absurd.

For Francis, however, radical dependency means relational dependency. It is striving to attain one's authentic human existence by being in relation to someone other than one's self; that is, by being in relationship to God and to one's neighbor. Although Francis was not a trained theologian and bequeathed few writings, it is striking that in his writings he rarely speaks of poverty. Indeed, in his "Salutation of the Virtues" he places wisdom not poverty as the principal virtue (SalVirt 1). In those places where he does speak of poverty, he places poverty in relationship to Jesus Christ and to fraternal love.

The significance of poverty for Francis is integrally related to love and must be considered within the context of love.[1] Poverty opens one up to God and to one's neighbor; that is, it opens one up to love. The question of poverty, therefore, is not how much do I have to give up, but how much do I love, and what prevents me from loving? Since poverty and love form two poles of Francis's vision, let us shift the emphasis from poverty to love. Then we can grasp the authentic spirit of Francis as one not only relevant for us today but one that can transform our lives and the world around us.

Dangerous Memory

It is well known that in the Middle Ages Francis was regarded as an *alter Christus*, a second Christ. He was identified in this way not only because of his Christ-like attitude but also because, at the end of his life, he was so conformed to the Crucified Christ that he even *looked* like Christ and bore the wounds of the Crucified in his flesh. Political theologians today speak of the dangerous memory of the passion and death of Jesus as a way of arousing us from the lull of apathy and indifference to the suffering of our world.[2] I think in a similar way we can speak of the dangerous memory of Francis as one who loved to such a degree that he awoke the world around him to the reality of divine love made visible in the suffering of Jesus Crucified. Francis's love was

dangerous because it was a particularity of love, a scandal of compassionate love that impelled him to let go of his egocentric self and to cling to God. Francis sought nothing other than to love Christ to such an extent that he was willing to undergo martyrdom in imitation of Christ. His desire for martyrdom, Bonaventure writes, was fulfilled not by physical death but by the wounds of divine wisdom ploughed into his flesh (LM 13: 10).

To recognize the scandal of compassionate love in the life of Francis is to identify his relationship to Jesus Crucified. Although scholars today indicate that the object of Francis's devotion was the Father and not the Son, Francis recognized that the Father and Son share an intimate relationship of love. In order to be united to the Father, one must be united to the Son. In his Letter to the Faithful he writes that the Word of God descended from on high to take on our fragile human nature (2EpFid 4). Francis, keenly aware of the fragility of human nature due to sin, recognized the overflowing love of God in the poverty and humility of Jesus Christ. The incarnation signified to him that God, the Supreme Good, is by nature poor and humble. Nowhere is this more evident than in his writings on the Eucharist where, for example, he exclaims: "Look at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before him" (EpOrd 28-29).

For Francis, the poverty and humility of God, the compassionate love of God, is revealed in the passion and death of Jesus on the cross and in the Eucharist. It is not surprising that he favored chapter 13 of John's gospel where Jesus exemplifies compassionate love, taking the role of the servant and humbly lowering himself to cleanse the feet of his disciples. This act prefigured the passion in which Jesus' total self-giving became the ultimate act of humble compassionate love.

Bonaventure's Perception

Bonaventure had a keen perception of Francis's life, and he understood that love motivated Francis's conformity to Christ. He states that compassionate love impressed Francis so deeply that it formed a seal on his heart. Francis's love of the Crucified was so great that he weakened his eyes by tears of compassion[3] when he considered the suffering of Christ on the cross. It is rather startling to read Bonaventure's sermon on Francis in which, praising the Stigmata as the signs of perfect love, he exhorts all those who belong to Christ to bear these signs.[4] Bonaventure indicates that the true Christian, like Francis, must acquire the spirit of the burning love of Christ, and this love must be made visible in the flesh.

For Bonaventure, the cross is the *mysterium* of love, the overflowing love God manifested in the world. The piercing of the human heart of Christ is

the opening to humankind of the depth of divine love embodied in the love of the Son of God. It is love which joins the lover to the beloved and which alone can make a soul rise above itself and turn more deeply toward another. Bonaventure perceived that the compassionate love of God revealed in Jesus Crucified shaped Francis in such a way that he was transformed both interiorly and exteriorly. In his sermon on Francis he writes:

> 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 in him. This is what happened to St. Francis.[5]

Indeed, Francis was joined to Christ through the bond of compassionate love to such an extent that he acquired the form of the Crucified. He became cruciform in love.

The key to Francis's life is not only that he loved with a particularity of love but that he expressed love in his entire being. His love was scandalous because it impelled him to radical extremes—to embrace lepers, to preach among Muslims, to tame wild animals, to fast and pray for forty days. Just as Christ thirsted for the salvation of all humanity, so too Francis, in union with Christ, thirsted for the unity of humanity and creation in God; for through the eyes of compassionate love he came to realize that all creatures, whether great or small, are united in the one love of God. The fire of compassionate love that characterized his life, therefore, did not separate him from the world but rather impelled him to turn more fully toward his neighbor and to the world of creation.

Bonaventure writes that through the cross Francis was raised from death to new life, and this life, kindled by compassionate love, drew him "upward to God, outward to his neighbor, below to the world of creation, and returned him to a state of original innocence" (LM 8: 1). As Francis grew in divine love in union with Christ Crucified, he became more centered in the world, reaching out to others, like Christ, in humility and poverty. The highest stage of love, Bonaventure indicates, does not withdraw one from the world but rather transforms one into a servant who descends below oneself to serve in humility.[6] Humility is not a virtuous attitude but an act. It is first of all an act of the Father by which he gives of himself to humanity in the incarnation of the Son. The humility of the person is the total gift of him or her self to God in response to that first act of divine love. The exemplary love of Francis signifies to Bonaventure that only the poor and humble can share in the humble love of God.

The Transformative Nature of Love

Through compassionate love Francis became authentically human because in giving of himself completely to God and to others he was restored in the true image of God. We see, in the light of Francis, that the human person is shaped by love. Joseph Kentenich states that we become what we love, and the way we love influences the world around us—we can increase one's happiness or deepen one's sorrow.[7] Francis became what he loved, and the world around him was transformed in that love. To a world in conflict he brought harmony, and to the distress of the suffering he brought peace. Thomas of Celano writes: "Indeed, he was always occupied with Jesus; Jesus he bore in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in the rest of his members" (1Cel 115b).

What are we always occupied with? What is the object of our love? As we gather on this feast of the Transitus we are challenged by the life of Francis to awake from a private comfortable world to a world of suffering and sorrow, a world in desperate need of authentic Christian love. We are caught up in the whirlwind of a high-tech society hoping to make the world a better place; yet, the spiral of violence within us and around us does not subside. We strive for peace and happiness but these are transient and fluctuate from day to day. The simplicity of Francis's life, his death to new life through compassionate crucified love, should strike a chord in the hearts of each of us. As followers of Francis, we are called to a particularity of love, a scandal of compassionate love, a love that discovers God in the midst of suffering and reaches out to embrace the other in a way that touches and heals. We are called to unite with God in the midst of a suffering world. This means to be joined with Christ on the cross in such a way that our whole being, interior and exterior, spirit and body, becomes cruciform in love. Compassionate love is to be expressed in the very fabric of our lives.

The path of the burning love of the Crucified, Bonaventure writes, is the path to peace. This path leads to the unity of humanity in God so that all may be one. Yet, the path of the Crucified is a difficult one, for it means being willing to risk all, to give all to the other, in the name of love. It means to become poor and dispossessed. It means to join with Christ on the cross. Francis held no claims for himself but rather allowed the love of God to direct him in his path, a path that led him to experience suffering and death and new life in union with Christ.

What Is Ours to Do

We are given the opportunity each day to follow this path from death to new life; indeed, the freedom to choose the way of the cross is ours. The life of

Francis shows us that radical love rests on radical freedom. In a world that thrives on intellectual knowledge rather than authentic love we need to ask: what is the knowledge that forms our lives—is it the wisdom of books or the wisdom of the cross? Compassionate love, the love of the Crucified, is poverty and humility in action; it lies at the base of a healing world. Are we willing to embrace the scandal of the cross, the scandal of compassionate love? In a world that cries out from the pain of human suffering this is a question that we, especially as Franciscans, must answer.

Endnotes

[1]See for example the first chapter of the *Regula non Bullata* where Francis begins with the injunction to live *sine proprio*, followed by the injunction to follow the footprints of Jesus Christ. In the ninth chapter, he begins with the poverty and humility of Jesus Christ and subsequently links it to fraternal love. A similar connection between the poverty of Christ and love can be found in Francis's second *Letter to the Faithful* 4-13.

[2]Johannes Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: toward a practical fundamental theology*, trans. David Smith (New York: Seabury, 1980), 109-18.

[3]Bonaventure, *Sermon* 1 on St. Francis in *The Disciple and the Master: St. Bonaventure's Sermons on St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Eric Doyle (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 69.

[4]Bonaventure, *Sermon* 2, 84.

[5]Bonaventure, *Sermon 2*, 92.

[6]See, for example, Bonaventure's *De triplici via* 2, 8, 11 (VIII, 9-10).

[7]See Ann W. Astell, Introduction to *Divine Representations: Postmodernism and Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1994), 8.

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FRANKIE

Patrick Conlan, OFM

(This is a true story. Only the century, the country, and some names have been changed.)

I want to tell you about my old friend Frankie, a real character. I was with him when he was preaching and I try to live by the example that he gave me. I knew his parents. His mother was French, a lady if ever there was one. We called her Donna. Her husband Pete met her in Paris when he was there buying material. Not that we ever called him Pete to his face. He was Mister McBernard to us ordinary folk. He had a wicked temper and demanded respect. He owned a string of shops. You could smell the money off him.

They often talk about Frankie's birth. Pete was doing a deal in Paris when Donna went into labor. First there was an airline strike. Then he heard of another bargain. It was a week before he got home. Donna had had the baby baptized John after his grandfather, as we usually do around here. Pete flew in and drove straight to Upwood. While he was glad to have a son, the name John was too plain. A McBernard should have a bit of class. How about Francis? Sounded nice, and he had been in France when the boy was born. So John became Francis, or Frankie to his friends.

Donna was a prayerful person who went to Mass daily and made sure that the family prayed together, particularly the rosary. Like his brothers, Francis went to Upwood junior high school. Teachers said that he was a good pupil, shy but responsive. He finished his education at the Brothers of Charity. Pete made sure that he helped in a shop when he was free.

I can't remember when he began strumming the guitar. A good musician, he led us in great sessions at the rear of Mac's house. On the rare occasion when Pete was generous with money, Frankie would organize a party. Not that he ever drank too much. He could laugh at a joke, but would never offend anyone. When we were going home at night and singing loudly, he would

make sure that we kept quiet in residential areas. While he would chat up girls as good as the next, he would get annoyed if we whistled or shouted after them.

Frankie seemed resigned to becoming a draper, but decided to do something worthwhile before settling down. There was a dreadful famine in Mexico that year. Able to drive a truck, he volunteered to go as a relief worker. Then, you may remember, his truck was hijacked and he was held for ransom. Pete was furious that his son was in captivity for nearly a year. Nobody ever found out how much Pete paid to get him back. Frankie returned moody and sick but Donna nursed him back to health. Tender loving care and good food over six months did the trick. He came out partying with us again, but he was not quite the same.

Frankie decided to head off again—this time to the Balkans. Pete made sure that he was properly equipped with a four-wheel-drive, a good tent, and plenty of food. We all went to say good-bye to him. He was back within a week! He met a doctor and a nurse who had planned to go but were without a vehicle; he decided that their need was greater than his. Pete was furious, but Donna managed to make peace between the pair of them.

Unsure of the meaning of life and still brooding over his time as a hostage, Frankie began taking long walks through the woods on his own. It was his way of getting in touch with God, for the hands of the Creator were evident in the beauty all around. He often ended up at the chapel just outside town at Dovea. Hardly anybody went there after the city council had leveled the nearby slums. We could not understand him. He talked about hearing a voice in a dream asking him about whom he should follow in life. You know what happens to people who hear voices! And Pete was not happy at the number of occasions when his son was missing from the shops.

I remember Frankie telling me about an encounter with a man of the roads, a repulsive creature dressed in rags whom you could smell a mile away. With buck teeth, tangled hair, and dirty beard, he walked with a limp. Frankie's first instinct was to move away, but then he got the grace to shake hands. They sat down and talked of the goodness of God, the stranger telling of wonderful things that God had done for him. Frankie was impressed; but when he turned to thank the man, he had vanished! Had it been an angel?

Then came the second voice. The figure on the crucifix in the chapel at Dovea came alive and told him to repair the church, which was falling into ruins. At least that was what Frankie said, and it must be right judging by what happened. Always impulsive, Frankie went home, took a couple hundred dollars from the safe and brought it to Patsy, the parish secretary, to cover the cost of painting Dovea chapel! Pete blew a fuse when he heard what had happened! He stormed down to Dovea, demanded his money back, and took Frankie by the scruff of the neck to the pastor's house. There was a scene in front of

Father Philip's door. Pete demanded his rights and the return of his property. Frankie talked about the instructions that he had received from God. The priest was in a quandary. Suddenly Frankie took off his clothes, gave them back to Pete, and announced that, from now on, God alone would be his father. For once Pete was stuck for words. Father Philip brought Frankie into the house, rummaged through stuff that had come in for the Vincent de Paul, and gave him some old jeans and a couple of sweaters. Frankie was thrilled; he moved into a shed behind Dovea chapel and began to clean it on his own.

People were kind and gave him food. His life of prayer was changing him. While he did not seek company, his simplicity and honesty were attracting attention. When he was in need he would go back to Upwood and beg. Father Philip lent him an old breviary so that he could pray with the voice of the Church. There was an interview with Bishop James. It seems that Frankie got permission to become a hermit. His evident sincerity overcame any difficulties. About the only thing that he got from his old home was his bible, already worn with frequent use.

It took six months to get Dovea chapel in order. Frankie then moved to Saint Pat's just outside the town before turning his attention to the little shrine of Our Lady at the Blue Grotto, where he built a hut to protect himself from the winter rain. He called it his spot for being with God, later his spot for being one with God. We saw little of him in town except when he begged for food. He would come around on the few days when Mass was said at the Blue Grotto.

Suddenly there was another change! Frankie came into town and started preaching! Nothing complicated, mind you, just short phrases like "God's peace be with you; rejoice and be glad because God loves you; be happy; be good." They say that this happened after he heard the priest, on the feast of Saint Matthias, reading the Gospel about the Lord sending his disciples out to preach, carrying neither silver nor gold for their journey,

This turn of events produced strange results. Bernie Brady, a bit of a spoiled brat, son of our congressman and with a good future in front of him, brought Frankie home for a meal one evening and watched him pray that night. He was so impressed that he joined Frankie at the Blue Grotto. Then Peter Purcell, owner of our local store, gave up his business and went with them as well. Finally that simpleton who always had a foolish grin on his face, Giles Gavin, wandered off to the Grotto. Not only that, but Frankie took him on a preaching trip for a couple of months.

Others joined Frankie at the Blue Grotto. He insisted that they live in the group for a while, then go out and preach in pairs before returning to the Grotto for prayer and experience together. Father Silvester Slattery joined them. You would have thought that a man of his age and experience would have more sense. His arrival meant that they had Mass each day.

Bishop James got anxious and brought Frankie in for a chat. He made it clear that he did not want religious oddballs on his patch. Our boy's simplicity disarmed the bishop. He now had twelve companions, just like Christ. They would not harm anyone as they spread the Christian message of love, peace, and joy. How could that be wrong? The Creator's hand was visible in every corner of the world. Why be dull and dreary when our faith should make us as imaginative, incisive, and influential as Christ? Yes, we should be like Christ, who would lead us back to our loving kind Father. OK, he had a crowd of followers, but what harm were they doing? He checked them out individually. Organization was not his thing. Yes, he would put a few ideas down on paper.

Frankie went to Silvester, who knew Church procedures and could pound out a document on an old typewriter. This was in the days before computers. Frankie went back to his well-thumbed bible. Basically his followers would live the Gospel. He picked some relevant texts. They would go out to preach two by two without silver or gold. Christ was the way, the truth, and the life. If we want to be perfect, we must sell everything and give it to the poor. We must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ. We should love one another as God loved us. Whoever eats Christ's body and drinks His blood, will have life in Him. He who perseveres to the end will be saved.

The document was presented to Bishop James, who decided to send the problem up the ladder. He told Frankie that he should go to Rome. The bishop paid for the tickets. Good Pope John was a friendly person but well protected by officials. Frankie had a letter of introduction to cardinal somebody or other, who had not the slightest interest in bringing this madman to see the pope. By chance, it was his turn to have breakfast at the papal table. Pope John talked of a strange dream that he had had during the night. A storm had blown up, lifting the dome of Saint Peter's Basilica and destroying it. A man came and saved the building by holding it together. As the pope described the stranger, the cardinal realized that he was talking about Frankie! The Pope, when told, insisted that Frankie come to breakfast the next morning. Lo and behold, he *was* the man from the dream! They talked long and hard about the state of the Church, the need for creative preaching of the Gospel, and the witness value of a simple way of life. Yes, living the Gospel was just the thing for the twentieth century. Pope John told Frankie to keep up the good work. Legal approval would take years, so get on with the life of prayer, witness, and preaching.

Frankie arrived back at his spot full of joy and energy. Others had joined them. They were formed by living with the community until they absorbed its values. There was plenty of activity as the companions went out preaching. They did not shout from soap-boxes. Their way was to chat with people wherever they gathered, be it in shops, coffee-bars, or the like. Some told Frankie that they would love to be with him but they had family or business duties

which tied them down. They got the same advice as his companions: live the Gospel as you try to follow Christ to the Father.

Then there was Clare Scanlon. Her parents had a mansion with six hundred acres, did not mix with ordinary people, and were adverse to self-made upstarts like Pete McBernard. Clare, with her long blond hair and gleeful giggle, had bumped into the old Frankie at parties. She and her mother were prayerful people, often at Mass during the week. One Sunday she vanished from home and remained in hiding for the best part of a month. In fact she had joined Frankie. They talked about her future. There were plenty of nurses and teachers but few people like her who had experienced the deeper levels of prayer. She was committed to prayer, seeking close union with God. Frankie cut her lovely hair and gave her a poor habit as a sign of her new life. She could not live with the men at the Grotto, so she moved into a house attached to the chapel at Dovea. Others joined Clare, including her sister Agnes and eventually even her mother and another sister. Without radio or television to distract them, they prayed before the Blessed Sacrament for hours on end. And just as people came to Frankie for advice about their lives, so they also went to Clare to unload their burdens and ask for prayers.

Some companions of Frankie said that they needed bigger houses. Frankie was totally opposed to this, just as he was to cars. Thumb, walk or use public transport, he would say. Then you meet people and can chat with them. Large buildings become impersonal places, with inmates removed from real life and callers afraid to enter. Small is friendly, he would say. Your house should be a home where you welcome visitors for a chat as Jesus and Mary would have done. He also had a thing about money. You had to handle it in this day and age. But he would blow his top at the mention of banks or interest. Keep it simple. Remember the poor Christ.

Even though more people wanted to meet him, Frankie would vanish for weeks on end. He needed to be alone with God, drinking in the energy of divine love while pouring out his cares and thanks. I knew some of the places where he went. There was a lonely island on Lake Tama and the thick woods above Eagle Glen. His prayer was not just silent words but shouts and tears, action and movement. Even in public he would occasionally pull his coat over his head and hide symbolically to be with God.

Then there was Spring Mountain, not far from the Devil's Bit. The lower slopes were wooded, but it was rocky near the top. It became Frankie's favorite place for prayer. He agreed to take it over and preserve its quiet and peace. I often accompanied him up the slopes. We stayed in caves near the top. He would go over a small ridge and order me to stay away, like Christ told the apostles in Gethsemani.

Yes, I had eventually joined him. We had grown up together in Upwood until our paths drifted apart. I became a reporter. My editor insisted that I

keep an eye on Frankie. We got good copy with plenty of human interest. There was that dog near Gurt, for example. I covered that story. Wolfhounds are gentle creatures but this one would snarl and run at people. Parents would not let kids play in the nearby woods. Frankie was preaching there, went over to the animal, and chatted with it. Apparently it told him that it was starving. The locals agreed to feed it. Problem solved. Except, how did Frankie speak to the dog?

Then there was the time that the people in Rath would not listen to him. Some famous television presenter or other was coming to open the local supermarket. They told Frankie that he was for the birds. All right, he said, and began to talk of the kindness of God in creating such a wonderful world. Then some crows gathered, gave up their cawing, and seemed to listen. A flock of swallows landed, followed by a few robins, then magpies. Even the local eagle joined in without upsetting the others. The man from the television joined the locals in admiration. He even wanted Frankie to appear on his show! Nothing doing. My friend was too simple to mix with those whose vision was so concentrated on the ways of the world that they were unable to see the Creator's hand around them, particularly in people.

Incidents like that persuaded me to give up the rat race and run after Frankie. He had that sort of influence on people. Love and affirmation filled your heart when he looked at you. He never criticized others but tried to bring out the best in them. He would say just the right word to heal or change the injured.

Good Pope John got his Vatican Council under way and invited Frankie as an observer. It was a classic example of how to win friends and influence people. Frankie spent nearly every evening chatting with bishops or theological experts. He stressed the need to return to Gospel values and his ideas appeared in several of the documents. He also learned, for example, the true nature of liturgy. His followers already recited the Divine Office as a personal prayer. Now they would pray in the name of the Church, praising God and getting fresh inspiration. His companions gathered each day to commemorate Christ's redemptive death and to celebrate their unity through the Eucharist.

Frankie practiced and taught a great respect for priests because they brought the Body and Blood of Christ onto the altar at Mass. During the Vatican Council he realized that properly motivated priests could do much more. They could radiate Christ through words and actions, particularly by sincerity in faith. They could guide others as they tried to follow Christ on the way back to the Father. A priest has to be another Christ who will inspire the faithful by leadership, energy, insight, and wisdom. But even a bad priest is still capable of bringing Christ among us in the Eucharist and must be respected as such.

Since Christ had lived in the Holy Land, Frankie decided that before returning to the Grotto he should walk where Christ had walked and pray where

Christ had prayed. He visited Bethlehem, saw the ruins of the temple, meditated at the Holy Sepulcher, and walked by the Sea of Galilee. He was disturbed by the tension between Jew and Arab. It was an obscenity that people fought over such holy ground. He got the Arab mayor of Jerusalem to meet the Israeli minister for the interior and persuaded them to agree on a new Palestinian housing scheme. This did not make the headlines, but it showed that Frankie really was a man of peace. He was thrilled by his visit and would have stayed longer but for demands for him back at the Blue Grotto.

Frankie came home to find that his Order had grown even more. He had followers in most parts of the States. They would soon cross the Atlantic Ocean and also penetrate beyond the Iron Curtain. Organization was never his thing, but he sent out word that they would all gather at the Grotto next Pentecost. The Spirit would inspire them about the future. The followers came from north and south, east and west. The weather was good and they were able to live in borrowed tents. You could feel the atmosphere of joy and happiness, whether it was at the morning Eucharist or in the evening singing around camp fires. Here was a happy people of faith, finding fulfillment by growing into that love which is God. A people of peace, they could never do violence to others.

They were also a confused people. It was the first time that many of them had met Frankie in person; many had known him only through his followers. They loved him and were dedicated to his way of life. But they needed something more concrete than an exhortation to live the Gospel. Frankie faced reality. As his people returned to their various towns and countries, Frankie headed for the caves at Spring Mountain. With him went Silvester—with typewriter—and Aidan Ahern. Aidan had been involved with prayer groups and knew the Scriptures from cover to cover.

The trio prayed while drafting a way of life for their companions. Frankie would present his ideas, Silvester would shape them, and Aidan would come up with relevant quotations from the bible. They produced a spiritual document which began by proclaiming that their life was to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Frankie and his followers would promise obedience to the Pope. Trying to be perfect, they were invited to sell everything and give it to the poor so that they might have treasure in heaven. No one who put a hand to the plow and looked back was fit for the kingdom of heaven. Whoever would lose life for Christ's sake would save it in eternal life. Whoever would eat Christ's flesh and drink his blood would have eternal life. Others should be treated as we would like them to treat us, loving one another sincerely in deed and truth, not just in word or speech. We should see ourselves as temples of the Spirit. We should love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. Since idleness is the enemy of the soul, we must have a spirit of work. Going like lambs among

wolves, we should preach by our deeds. On entering a house, we should say: Peace be with this family. The Rule ended with a praise and thanksgiving.

Frankie also drafted a rule for lay people who wished to follow him while living their normal way of life. Again they were to observe the Gospel. They should dress simply, avoiding expensive clothes. Not going with every whim, they should regularize their style of living. Prayer, particularly the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation, must be their priority. They should be people of peace who did not criticize others but tried to build them up by encouragement. Meeting regularly to pray, they should let the Spirit flow into them, discuss their way of life, and leave with fresh courage and renewed faith for the weeks to come.

The Rule was sent to Rome, but the authorities said it was not specific enough and lacked legal form. It contained the Gospel and the example of Christ, Frankie replied. Christ did not live in the twentieth century and would have had different norms if he had, said Rome. No, he would have left the way open for the Spirit to guide us, said Frankie. You can't live off the spirit, and religious life needs regulations, said Rome. No, it doesn't, since we are created in the image of God and are capable of doing good, said Frankie. We are also sinners, and so on and so on. . . . The argument drifted back and forth. Frankie lost patience and returned to Spring Mountain with Silvester. Aidan was left at the Grotto to pray for sinners. A short precise rule was produced without delay, sent to Rome, and officially approved. The companions were now a recognized religious order. Clare eventually wrote a rule for her branch of the order as well.

Frankie began to lose weight, occasionally spat blood, and frequently prayed on his own. I sensed that he was more often in the next world than this one. His words were just as effective when he moved among people. He never talked for long, but gave a few phrases to think about. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Make us instruments of your peace. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. It is in giving that we receive. It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Frankie was creative. Afraid to destroy a flower by picking it, he would spend an hour praising God for its beauty. One Christmas he got this idea for a real live crib and asked for the use of a field near Dovea. We built a lean-to with branches and straw. Some one borrowed an ass and a cow. Others dressed up as Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds. School choirs came and sang with that noise and energy typical of children. Frankie carried a doll in the image of Jesus and reverently placed it in the crib. He proclaimed the Gospel and preached of God's love for us. Because the human race had lost its way, God had been born on earth for our sakes. Some said they saw the child Jesus move in the crib. It certainly had a great effect on all those who were present.

Another miracle happened one September. I know it well since I was on Spring Mountain that day. Frankie went to pray on his own as usual. There was a sound like thunder and a glow lasting several minutes. We ran to Frankie and found him kneeling immobile with hands extended. Blood was dripping from the palms of those hands! We later discovered that there were similar marks on his feet and side! He told us that he had been praying for the grace to feel in his heart the love for people that Christ felt on the cross, and to feel in his body the pains that Christ suffered. All of a sudden Christ appeared under the guise of an angel and imprinted the marks of the passion on Frankie's body.

Frankie's health got worse. His breathing was labored and he found it difficult to walk any distance. He stayed with Clare at Dovea for a long time while she tried to nurse him back to health. Still full of joy and happiness, he wrote a poem which he asked me to set to music. It went something like this:

Let us sing Your praises and honor You,
Lord of all brilliance, Lord of all power.
For no human being, made by Your hands,
is fit or entitled to call on Your name.

Sing for the Lord with great words of praise
for all that He made, the great and the small.
Let His love shine upon us like big Brother Sun,
who makes us so happy by his warmth and light.

Sing for the Lord, Whose imagination and wonder,
gave us Sister Moon with millions of stars.
Sing for the Lord, Who brings all kinds of weather,
through our Brother the Wind, so powerful and strong.

Sing for the Lord. Who poured out Sister Water,
refreshing and cooling, so vital to life.
Sing for the Lord, inventor of Fire,
the Brother who brings light, giving us power.

Sing for the Lord, Who lets flowers glow in color
through deep Sister Soil, the source of our food.

Sing for the Lord, because people forgive
or suffer in patience because of His love;
And for that same love, live in peace here.
They will be rewarded in heaven out there.

Frankie left Dovea for the Blue Grotto. Driven in an old car, he visited some of the local towns. It was a poor imitation of his earlier journeys. People

still wanted to hear him and see the wounds on his hands, feet, and side. He kept these covered, but would rasp out a few words with short harsh gasps. Love God. Be peaceful. Keep the faith. Do not despair. Live in the light. Be happy, not sad. Persevere to the end. It was tragic to see such a wonderful person brought low by ill-health, It was obvious that death was near. He added a couple of verses to his poem:

Sing for the Lord for Sister Physical Death.
No one can ever escape from her grasp.
Wretched are those who die in hatred and sin;
delighted those who drift away in your love.
Spiritual death will never ever conquer them.

Sing out loudly for the Lord.
Thank Him for life and for love.
Serve Him who told you what is what!

Frankie made his way back to the Grotto, his spot for being one with God. The people of Upwood brought him to the local hospital, but to no avail. His lungs were too far gone. Frankie was placed in a wheelchair and brought back to his beloved Blue Grotto. He called down God's blessing on the place of his birth. On the evening of October 3, he felt that his time was near. He wanted us to place him naked on the ground like Christ on the Cross. We took off his habit and laid him down. The sun was setting. He asked me to sing his song. As I got toward the end, he breathed his last with a smile on his face. He was only forty-four. Then another strange thing happened. Birds gathered on the trees and sang their song. We could not feel sorrowful. Frankie had given us so much and had now gone to his real home. He had taught us the reality of love. We knew that he was a saint.

Bishop James arrived in haste. He took charge of the arrangements. He knew where the body should be buried. There would not be enough room for the funeral at the Blue Grotto. It would be held in Upwood. It must be a national event. I smiled to myself, just as Frankie would have done at the thought of all this fuss. He had tried to live the Gospel and to follow a Christ who had had a very simple funeral. I suppose they will eventually build a huge tomb over him, like the basilica of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

Yes, he had joined Jesus and the Father in heaven. In time he will become Saint Francis. I know that all this is true, for I was one of his few close companions.

The Cord, 48.5 (1998)

A Leper Named Cancer

Robert M. Stewart, OFM

A number of the friars had stopped by my room to visit since I had just got home from my weeks away for radiation treatments. As one of the friars left my room, he looked back over his shoulder, smiled and said, "Hey, you're a survivor now." His words were meant to encourage me; but deep within me I could not accept the term *survivor*. Though the wound from the excision of tumor and muscle had not healed well, the doctors reassured me that "the margins were clean"; though the severe burn from the radiation treatments made both sitting and walking painful, they explained that most of the side-effects were temporary and the radiation was a necessary precaution. Perhaps they had gotten all the cancer; perhaps these treatments would prevent metastasis. But I was no survivor. That word did not fit my experience. Throughout this ordeal, each time I heard someone refer to me as a survivor I cringed internally. It represented a minimalist approach, a "getting through" the physical crisis. It rang hollow.

To my ears, *survivor* sounded like applause for having endured great physical and psychological pain. But it did not suggest that I had changed. In my heart, I sensed the other person's need to encourage me in the face of an uncertain prognosis. But it did not convey that they had understood my experience. Deep within me I could not accept the term "survivor" because it denied or omitted what for me was the essential aspect of this experience, the spiritual dimension. I knew that my own experience was something "beyond surviving." Though the journey involved suffering and letting go, I had nonetheless been "beneficiary." Though it was a time of both physical and psychological pain, it had also been a time of grace. But how to express the happenings of my heart over these past few months?

Being a Franciscan, I had in those weeks often returned to the story of Francis of Assisi—the young man who sought to become a knight and then to serve his Lord, the merchant's son who avoided lepers only to be led among them by the Lord, the poor man who loved Lady Poverty and called all creatures "brother" or "sister," the faithful follower who bore Christ's wounds and peacefully welcomed Sister Death. During my time abed, I thought about Francis during his year in prison at Perugia. I wondered if Francis's physical and psychological pain had not facilitated his own passionate search for God and eventual identification with Christ crucified. After receiving the diagnosis of high-grade cancer, I pondered Francis's time of severe illness toward the end of his life and the meaning of his expression "Sister Death."

At night when I could not sleep because of excruciating pain, I would gaze upon the cross, vaguely visible in the soft moonlight-cast shadows, and feel drawn to the crucified One. Amidst my confusion and hope, a familiar phrase presented itself, words from Karl Rahner, SJ, which I had hung over my desk shortly after his death: "I look at Jesus on the cross and know that I am spared nothing. I place myself (I hope) in his death and so hope that this shared death is the dawn of blessed mystery." Slowly, for the first time on an experiential level, I began to enter the mystery of suffering as Francis's way of intimacy with his Beloved. In my prayer, I ached to know the Lord and to embrace the cross. Something was radically different; something of my inner life had changed. All of my activities, concerns, and projects became less urgent, relatively unimportant. The cancer within me had touched my soul. And so I knew that I was no "survivor"; my experience was beyond surviving. But initially I could not name it. As I groped to express my experience, I could only say what it was not. Then one morning an image presented itself to me: I had come to know "Brother Cancer"!

Why had it taken so long for me to name the experience? Perhaps because I am no Francis! Perhaps because I had denied or refused to accept my brother for who he was. Oh, I could talk openly about my diagnosis of cancer; I was calm and confident going into surgery. But while I had acknowledged the presence of a malignant tumor in my body, initially I could not fully accept or begin to comprehend the diagnosis. Only in more recent weeks have I recognized this cancer as "brother." And this brother of mine is not unlike a younger sibling whose arrival can invite resentment, even denial; with whom a relationship of love is forged through shared struggle and suffering; who is excluded at times for fear or doubt; but who precisely through entering my life, affecting how I understand myself and make meaning in my world, is my "brother."

So, moving beyond denial to tolerance, eventually I could even admit some positive aspects about this cancer within me. I felt surrounded by people's concern and prayer. I could articulate how my suffering had helped me to pray. But the relationship with this "brother" remained very superficial; I had acknowledged but could not welcome this cancer. Things were still on *my* schedule. At the time of surgery I planned to return to teaching the following week. Two or three days after the operation, with the doctor suggesting that I would have to take off at least a month, I finally conceded that I might have to miss the first week of classes. But things were about to change; the journey took turns that I had not imagined.

The path, whose end is not yet in sight, has been long and formidable. I had noticed a lump in my thigh a full year before. With concern but not alarm, I scheduled a physical. The doctor suggested that it was probably just a calcification around a contusion in the muscle. He told me not to worry about it, but to return if it started to grow. So I continued my active life and did not worry. In the spring, I thought it might be growing; by the beginning of summer I was sure that it had increased in size. Thus, I returned to the doctor. There followed a needle biopsy and an MRI of the thigh. The biopsy indicated malignancy, but a low-grade malignancy, so the doctor recommended surgery but no radiation.

The following week the surgeon excised the tumor and a sizable amount of surrounding muscle. But given the biopsy report, my lack of pain prior to the operation, and my general health, I expected things to go well and the recovery to be swift. In fact, just prior to entering the hospital I had written to a friend: "I expect to be able to walk home on Saturday (not all the way, but to the car), and that the analysis will not indicate any significant cancer."

So I was in control. I still expected to resume full-time teaching two weeks later. Then came the call from the surgeon, one week after surgery, to talk with me about the pathology report. He explained that extensive analysis had not borne out what the biopsy had suggested but rather revealed a very aggressive, high-grade form of cancer. He mentioned that he would now recommend radiation therapy, but suggested that we talk at length about the pathology report and follow-up treatment during my office visit scheduled three days later.

As I hung up the phone some tears rolled down my face. I had not been prepared to hear the diagnosis of "high-grade cancer." No longer was I in control. I wiped my tears as I tried to digest what I had heard. I had difficulty accepting it; I could not possibly *welcome* this cancer. Briefly, I felt a bit numbed. Some small part of me wondered if there had been a mistake. But the larger part of me knew that I had to accept and to deal with cancer. That oft repeated, tongue-in-cheek remark to my students, "your *head* is your main muscle," echoed within me. I firmly believe that our vision in large part controls our responses. I refocused my vision. I prayed. Surprisingly perhaps, I did not find myself praying that the cancer be healed. Rather, the prayer which welled up within me was that I might deal well with whatever happened and that I might find God in and through the experience. I tried to make my own the prayer of Francis: "Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God, grant us in our misery the grace to do for You alone what we know You want us to do, and always to desire what pleases you" (EpOrd 50).

Several days later, when I met with the doctor for removal of the thirty staples in my leg, we discussed his recommendation of radiation therapy. Initially I hesitated, but after some study and discussion I became convinced that the recommended course of treatment was appropriate if not necessary. Studies indicated that my particular type of sarcoma was best treated by a combination of surgical excision followed by radiation.

I met with the radiation oncologist a month after my surgery. In that first meeting he explained to me that this type of sarcoma would generally recur or metastasize within three to six months. Thus, even though the margins around the tumor had been "clean," they planned an aggressive regimen of radiation as a precaution. Brother Cancer's presence, like an uninvited intrusion, provoked resentment. Over those next few weeks he would speak with a strong voice; he would invite me to look at things which were, in the words of Francis, "very bitter to me."

I was led to a room fitted with highly sophisticated equipment, a room set aside expressly for the "setup" of treatment prior to beginning radiation therapy. I had felt comfortable being scantily clad or even naked before my male physician. However, lying on the setup table, partially naked before the three men and five women, I felt painfully awkward and embarrassed. As I lay on the table, being pushed, turned, and marked, I wondered about the pain of women who all too often have this experience at the hands of men. As I stared at the X-ray, computer and laser equipment, I wondered about people who had no access to this type of treatment. As I tried to lie still despite the pain, I wondered about the people who suffered alone or without faith. Through my awkwardness, embarrassment, and pain, Brother Cancer invited me to learn compassion.

I received my hospital ID card with a number. I and all the other patients presented our card at the front desk each morning before proceeding to the appropriate clinic. I had often entered hospitals, had spent twelve weeks in a hospital clinical-pastoral education program. But before, I had entered to visit, to minister, to offer support. Now I entered amidst hundreds of cancer patients as one of the afflicted. We walked, limped, or wheeled ourselves in; we came in need of healing. Each one of us had cancer, had a disease which rav-

ished our body. I marveled at how freely we spoke. Though strangers, we could discuss our cancer: the extent, treatment, prognosis, as well as our pain, difficulties, fears, and hopes. Here I experienced a solidarity with the suffering that I had not previously known. As I walked into the Cancer Institute each morning I became the leper. I did not enter as healer or minister. I did not go to these people, but walked among them. Though our histories and experiences varied, we all shared something. The people whom I had seen as strangers, Brother Cancer introduced to me as brother or sister. Perhaps for the first time, perhaps because a leper, I began to identify with the experience that Francis recounted in his Testament: "the Lord led me among them and . . . that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body" (Test 2-3).

As my radiation treatments progressed, I became very tired. The cumulative effect overpowered my body. The last three weeks I suffered significant side effects: tiredness to the point of exhaustion, a severe burn, a daily feeling of nausea, and a persistent though intermittent fever. Further, I developed such a painful sensitivity on the top of my head that I thought I had contracted shingles. As I went from clinic to lab, filling out forms and waiting to be seen, as I traveled to and from the hospital, made trips to the pharmacy, searched for loose clothing and bland foods, as I responded countless times to the question "How are you?" Brother Cancer invited me to see with my heart. While my initial post-operative pain had drawn me to prayer and an identification with Christ, the nausea and especially the headache prevented me from praying. Now I experienced little consolation in my pain; it became an obstacle even along my spiritual journey. I wondered in new ways about the pain that others were carrying within them. I grieved for those who felt alone in their struggles, who faced cancer without friends, without faith, without hope.

Besides the side-effects, the radiation also affected the healing process. There remained a lot of swelling in the upper thigh at the place of the excision and circulation problems because of the blood vessels which had been removed—problems exacerbated by the radiation. The doctors restricted my activity, hoping that the wound would heal. But the next two months brought no decrease in the swelling. After having drained fluid six times from the cavity created by the original excision of muscle, the surgeons decided that a debridement would be the best approach to enable healing of the wound site. I had some hesitancy about the suggested surgery since they admitted immediately that I would not heal as quickly given the damage done to the tissues in the leg by the massive doses of radiation which I had received. Thus I sought counsel from an oncologist who had been recommended to me. He concurred with their judgment and so I entered the hospital mid-January for a second surgery.

While originally I had expected to teach in the fall semester, I then had to extend my medical leave even through the spring term. The inactivity had been difficult; the prospect of a more prolonged period of immobility presented another unexpected cross. Gently and gradually, without my conscious attention to our direction, Brother Cancer had brought me from the road I had intended and I found us traveling along a very different path. I could but wonder about the length of the journey and what other unexpected events or complications might be waiting along the way. Throughout the journey, Brother Cancer had been a quiet but pervasive presence, a strong and persistent companion. As I suffered debilitating side-effects, as I watched my body being transformed from its athletic form, Brother Cancer softly echoed a refrain from one of Francis's Admonitions: "What one is before God, that one is and nothing more" (Adm 19:2).

The days, weeks, months became a time of grace calling me to reflect on what is essential, on the gift of life, on the presence of God in my life, especially in and through people who love me, and on the gift of faith. I wondered about Francis in prison at Perugia, longing for a return to his home, to his family and friends; Francis who later in his life, because he knew God's blessing in his own infirmity, could pray: "Praise be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace, for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned" (CantSol 10-11).

I have walked with Brother Cancer and he has taught me much. Initially, I could not fully acknowledge his presence. I wanted, perhaps I needed, to devote all my energies to my ministry. Later, I was not always a ready listener, at times just too tired or busy with distractions. But Brother Cancer, both patient and persistent, commanded attention. He helped me to see more clearly; increased my desire to live more intensely; invited me to know my Lord more intimately. As I wonder now about the future, one concern looms large. Will I live always with the wisdom and intensity that accompanied me as I walked with Brother Cancer? Uncertain but hopeful, I pray with Clare:

> What you hold, may you always hold.
> What you do, may you always do and never abandon.
> But with swift pace, light step, and unswerving feet,
> so that even your steps stir up no dust,
> go forward securely, joyfully, and swiftly,
> on the path of prudent happiness,
> believing nothing, agreeing with nothing
> which would dissuade you from this resolution
> or which would place a stumbling block for you on the way,

so that you may offer your vows to the Most High
in the pursuit of that perfection
to which the Spirit of the Lord has called you (2LAg 11-14).

Cancer arrived as a most unwelcome intruder. But as "that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness," he became "brother." The journey is not yet over. My future remains uncertain. I walk now with Brother Cancer in hope. Most immediately, I hope that my return to tasks and activities can be without significant pain or limitation. Less immediately but more pervasively, I hope that I return to health, that Brother Cancer has visited with me but not lingered to introduce me to Sister Death. More profoundly, I hope that I have truly *welcomed* Brother Cancer. I hope that I have journeyed honestly and openly with my companion so that I might peacefully welcome Sister Death when I am called. And most profoundly, I pray that I might now more fully live in Christ, walk with all my sisters and brothers, and as Francis bid his followers before he died, "know what is mine to do" and so give praise to God.

The Cord, 48.5 (1998)

The Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis

Response to the Lineamenta in light of the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops[1]

Giles Schinelli, TOR and Michael Higgins, TOR

Prologue

In preparation for the year 2000, the Church in the Americas engaged in a Special Synod in November-December, 1997. The synodal theme—*Encounter with the Living Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion and Solidarity*—was the focus of the Lineamenta preparatory working paper.[2] This document invites reflective and substantive response. As contemporary followers of Francis and Clare who understand ourselves as living the evangelical life in the spirit of ongoing conversion[3], we are prompted to offer the following:

Elements of the Charism

Francis of Assisi's personal encounter with a poor leper and his later recollection of the transformative power of that experience (1Cel 17; 2Cel 5:9; Test) point to a significant religious insight, namely, that the living Christ is at the center of all things and that personal encounter with this living Christ is an invitation to spiritual growth or conversion. For more than eight hundred years the lives of Franciscan men and women have been profoundly influenced by this faith-insight of the Poverello.

We Third Order Regular Franciscans, always struggling in faith to face the Christ incarnate in our sisters and brothers and in the experiences of our contemporary world, identify with the call to ongoing conversion as expressed in the Lineamenta. From experience we know both the good that results when individuals and communities walk the path of conversion as well as the obstacles which sometimes hinder openness to the "Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (RegB 10:8).

Areas of Concern

Conversion is always expressed in tangible initiatives. For this reason, we Franciscans pledge ourselves to the following:

1. *Renewed commitment to respectful and ongoing dialogue at all levels of the Church's life.* Such a commitment understands that dialogue requires certain disciplines and skills[4] and that often differences need to be explored (in the context of human solidarity) over a significant period of time. Such a commitment likewise recognizes that "lack of willingness and ability to enter into dialogue is a greater long-term threat to unity in the Church than are disagreements and dissenting voices."[5]

2. *Promotion, on the local level, of ecumenical initiatives and activities with both Christian and non-Christian groups.* From Francis's example of personal interaction with the Sultan (1Cel 57; LM 10:7-8) and his later instructions (RegNB 17), various orientations emerge which serve to guide such activity. The witness of presence, a willingness to live together in solidarity and explore common solutions for mutual problems, and the pursuit of quality interpersonal relationships are avenues of conversion which ecumenical activity opens for us.

3. *Involvement and insertion in society and culture.* The conviction for this involvement is grounded in a Franciscan theology of the Incarnation which focuses on the primacy of Christ and understands society and culture as areas which reveal God's activity.[6] New areas of research and development, particularly the emerging technologies, sometimes reveal quite the opposite focus. These areas call for an intelligent and persuasive Franciscan presence to guide their development so that they can best be utilized for the common good and for the enhancement of world-wide human dignity.

4. *Insistence on all that fosters the promotion of human life.* Fundamental to this promotion is the belief of Clare of Assisi which she discovered in contemplative prayer before the crucified and taught to others, namely, that all of creation mirrors Christ and therefore is deserving of reverence and respect (4LAg). In our day, we find this especially significant for the discussion of the role of women in our Church. It likewise serves as a catalyst for our ongoing commitment to work for peace, for the poor, and for the rejection of violence in all its forms.[7]

Conclusion

We are encouraged that the Lineamenta for the Synod of the Americas underscored the importance of conversion for true renewal. We gratefully share our personal and communal experience of the charism of ongoing conversion and appreciate this opportunity to indicate areas where we believe conversion is still needed.

Endnotes

[1]This response was written under the auspices of and approved by the Franciscan Federation National Board.

[2]The text of the Lineamenta can be found in *Origins*, 26.10 (August 15, 1996): 145-164. The synod took place in Rome from November 16-December 12, 1997.

[3]*TOR Rule* I:2. It is heartening to us that the Church is highlighting a charism that we have discovered to be at the foundation of our way of gospel-centered life.

[4]Cf. Encyclical Letter of Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam, 58ff.*

[5]Cf. Talk by Archbishop Anthony Pilla, "Virtues for the Journey to the Year 2000," *Origins*, 26. 19 (October 24, 1996): 297.

[6]This is emphasized in no uncertain terms by St. Francis in the *First letter to the Faithful* when he asserts that men and women are children of God "whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers [and sisters], and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1EpFid 7). Relationship with God predisposes one to recognize her or his own worth and dignity and empowers one to reach out to others in love and respect. He goes so far as to state that women and men alike are to be "mothers of Christ," to "carry Him in our heart and mind," and to "give birth to him" through a holy manner of life and work (1EpFid 10). In a world which is sorely in need of the presence of Christ this is indeed a tremendous challenge and opportunity.

[7]Cf. "Response to the Lineamenta for the Special Synod on Religious Life" and "Three Foci of Franciscans International."

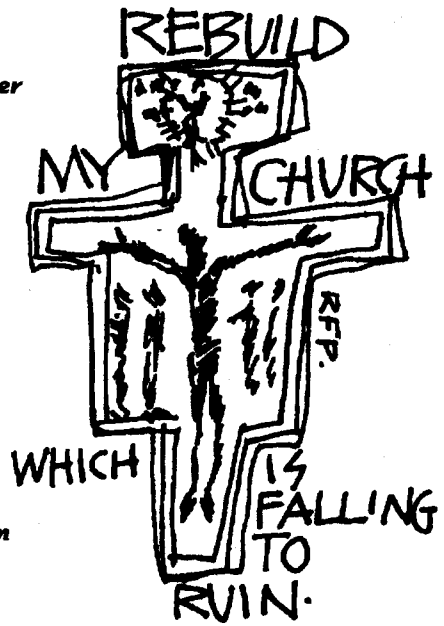
Where there is charity and wisdom,
there is neither fear nor ignorance.

Where there is patience and humility,
there is neither anger nor disturbance.
(Francis of Assisi, Admonition 27)

REVERIE BEFORE THE CRUCIFIX AT THE BASILICA OF SANTA CHIARA

Icons with outstretched arms
speak to you, Francis,
and you play with stones,
hefting them one upon the other
to form walls and things.

Icons speak to you
of building
and you scan the roofs
of falling churches
in search of voice.



Pawell

Icons of the figured Christ
with friendly crowd around him
speak imperatives:
"Build my Church!"
and the stones dance
and the roofs rise
and the moon over the Umbrian hills
lights up the darkness
with evening flame
and shining.

Marianne Hieb, RSM

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A Pilgrim's Reflection

Dennis Wilson, OFM

In September and October of 1996 I had the privilege of traveling with thirty women and men on a guided educational pilgrimage. These were not totally new places to me. I had toured them before. But this was a pilgrimage that was to lead through the places where the founders of the Franciscan movement had lived, ministered, prayed, and died. Francis of Assisi, Clare of Assisi, Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, Thomas of Celano, Bernard of Quintavalle were but a few of the early figures which the pilgrims studied. Books and lectures in hand, we trekked where they once had walked. Pilgrims from many different cultures, we shared one desire—to touch a moment of past time and make it real.

Leaving the towering skyline of New York City and landing in Rome, one experiences a clear sense of difference. You see it in the structure and design of buildings, the accommodations, the less than accommodating bathrooms, the schedule of meals, and the choices to be had or not had. Not maples and oaks, but wind-swept cypress and olive trees line highways and shade homes. This was not "Kansas any more."

From the beginning of the pilgrimage we were warned that there would be differences and that, rather than work our way around them, we should enter into them, experience them. So naps after *pronzo*, *cappuccino* after a late *cena* at a corner bar on the edge of the piazza. Rise to bread, water, and barley coffee for breakfast. Small moving vehicles for transportation. Medieval-garbed religious scurrying everywhere. Dark olive-colored skin complexions. Hills and mountains everywhere from the Rieti Valley northward.

And there lies my first impression of Francis. If in fact he did travel from Rome to Assisi several times and if in fact he sought out the mountainsides for prayer and silence, then this man was part billygoat. The Rieti Valley is north

of Rome near the geographical center of Italy. Surrounded by mountains, Francis sought out Poggio Bustone in 1209 as a place to pray. He may have been accompanied by Giles and other early companions seeking the caves and cracks of the mountainsides for shelter. Greccio too towers over the valley. Even to this day the modern conveniences of transport and stairs do not preclude a winded climb to the top. The Sinai of Franciscan lore and landscape is captured at Fonte Colombo, where Francis developed the Franciscan Rule of Life. Little chance of diversion on this peak. And finally there is LaForesta, where some claim Francis began the the Canticle of Brother Sun.

Coming from the hillside town of Assisi, Francis was trained to descend and ascend. Experiencing his native topography affected my appreciation of his lofty aspirations and deep depressions depicted in the writings of Bonaventure and Celano. Environment affects the spirit and the fruits of the spirit. Francis and Clare are no exception. The two figures could be a study in its effects upon the soul.

Francis was an adventurous international traveler who moved from the privacy of Lago Trasimeno to the solitude of the mountain tops of the Carceri and LaVerna. Clare on the other hand would only walk down the hillside of Assisi to find a home in a low-lying place—San Damiano. Her short travels had few detours. While she is memorialized up the hill at the Basilica of Santa Chiara, it is in the valley compound of San Damiano that she remained from 1212 until her death in 1253. This place would mark the common ground shared by Clare and Francis.

It was here that Francis was rooted in his calling and ministry. It is this place that Celano lauds as a holy place in which the exercise of the virtues was paramount (1Cel 8:18-20).[1] But it is Bonaventure who recalls:

> [Francis] walked beside the church of San Damiano which was threatening to collapse because of extreme age. Inspired by the Spirit he went inside to pray. Prostrate before the image of the Crucified, he was filled with no little consolation as he prayed. While his tear-filled eyes were gazing at the Lord's cross, he heard with his bodily ears a voice coming from the cross, telling him three times: "Francis, go and repair my house which, as you see, is falling completely into ruin" (LM 2:1).[2]

It was here in this rubble that Francis would respond to the message, narrowly at first, by reconstructing the chapel. Later he would widen his understanding and stretch the meaning of the message. He would invite scores of members to join God's dream. But he would not be stationary. Clare on the other hand would not budge.

The same crucifix that inspired Francis would be treasured by Clare. Did it speak to her? Did it move her? Did it hold her fast? Nothing in the writings

or in the legends so suggests. What is known is that when her remains were transferred to the Basilica that would entomb her, the Crucifix of San Damiano was transferred there as well. The Cross which spoke was a familiar object to both Francis and Clare. It tooled Francis's calling and was a companion to Clare.

It was in a side chapel of Santa Chiara that I spent significant amounts of time, perhaps finding refuge in the crowds as one does in the crowded streets of New York City. Rather than go up the mountain to the solitude of the Carceri, I found here a middle ground between mountain tops and valleys. Here I read, prayed, watched, and tried to figure out the imports of the day's lectures, sights, sounds, and tastes. Settling my tired body on the hard wood seats, I was most a pilgrim, dealing with the differences and finding some common ground.

In spite of the hustle and bustle of crowds coming and going and the occasional "Shssh" of the custodians, I experienced here a holy space. I was amused by tourists who passed by the illuminated crucifix in favor of the museum which features Clare's clothing in glass enclosures. Hearing the tinkle of the entrance bell and receiving a prayer card from a heavily veiled Poor Clare Sister was an extraordinary grace for some. My preference was to sit and watch and listen.

As I began my meditation on the crucifix, I wanted to steal this twelfth-century icon and carry it back to San Damiano. Maybe it would not be so foreign to me if it were housed again down the road in the valley. Maybe the lighting there would allow me a closer look into the face or catch a whisper from its lips. Maybe there, in a smaller setting, intimacy and mystery would mingle. But the twentieth-century setting said as much as the icon itself. It was public, not hidden. It suffered the abuse of traffic and needed security. It was less a chapel of prayer than a museum. While candles burn upon the altar over which the figure is suspended, the flashes of forbidden cameras light the face of the Crucified. Centuries of differences clash in the remote side room.

This Johannine icon of the Christ in glory floats upon the instrument of death. Not alone, nor abandoned, his cross is crowded with forlorn followers as well as interested bystanders and possibly patrons of the day. Some characters are recognizable. Others are not. And no viewer is blocked from entering the scene. The black border is not finished at the foot of the cross and provides an opening for today's viewer to enter into the past event. The artist invites us not to be bound by time. The seashells are a symbol of eternity.[3] Angels gather with the people. The images are meant to say: "No today nor then. Timeless." From a pilgrimage schedule that promised to take us to all known Franciscan places within a short period of time, this icon offered rest. The pressures of group schedules, at least for a moment could set like the sun.

Contemplating the icon, one is struck by the body of Christ and in particular the eyes, which are large, out of proportion with the body. This is the wide-eyed vision of one who has seen more than others. With his head literally bent forward, he captures our eye as if to say without words: "Who sees me, sees the Father" (John 14:9). The serene look is captured in the position of the body. Though nailed to the cross, he seems nearly oblivious to the physical pain. The artist is capturing Jesus in several moments in time.

A rooster near the left leg of Jesus marks the moment of the betrayal by his friend and follower. Blood flows from the nail holes marking the moment of the crucifixion. The blood flows onto smaller figures, marking yet another moment in time—the salvation of others. Their wounds are being healed; a new time has begun. This is the best of twelfth century motion picture technology.

The garb is stylized, both of Jesus and of those who attend the cross then and later. It is descriptive of their place in the Kingdom, the place of no time. The figures are often bold and sized as to their attentiveness or inactivity in the movement of the Passion event. Each viewer can identify with a figure beyond Jesus. Each can identify his or her own movement within the artist's conception. Each is portrayed in the story.

Both Francis and Clare were caught up in the drama portrayed in this icon. While a picture of the icon can now be readily bought or even quickly stolen by an illegal flash camera, it is only by visiting the icon time after time that one enters into the drama. This I believe both saints did. I think it is captured in some of the writings that remain to us. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., suggests that "The Prayer Before the Crucifix" was a response to the voice Francis heard from this cross while it hung in the small chapel of San Damiano.[4] The petition is to a "Glorious God," as this Johannine image of the crucifixion portrays. The prayer asks for the virtues needed to carry out God's "true command." This could be the petition of the unseasoned seeker that Francis was during his early conversion.

While there is no other explicit reference to this particular cross in the remaining writings of Francis, there are images that could be associated with it. If one were to contemplate the San Damiano cross over time, the following words could surface: merciful, gentle, delectable, sweet, light, innocent, pure, grace, glory, incomprehensible, unfathomable, worthy of praise, exalted on high, sublime, most high, lovable, and even desirable. These words describe the effect of this drama upon the viewer. All are found in the close of Chapter 23 of the Earlier Rule. My point is that what one allows into one's environment and allows to touch one's memory and heart does have an effect on one's person. Francis need not have been before this particular cross to have written the Rule; but, he was profoundly affected by his experience of this icon, as was Clare. It transformed him.

There is an immediacy and intimacy in Clare's writings that is all her own. The small, stable enclosure and her extensive illness allowed her to companion this cross in a way different from Francis. In a letter to Agnes of Prague she may be telling of the effects of this same drama of the San Damiano cross on her own life:

> Gaze upon [Him]
> consider [Him]
> contemplate [Him]
> as you desire to imitate [Him].
> If you suffer with Him, you will reign with Him.
> [If you] weep [with Him], you shall rejoice with Him;
> [If you] die with Him on the cross of tribulation,
> you shall possess heavenly mansions in the splendor of the saints
> and, in the Book of Life your name shall be called glorious among men (2LAg 20-22).[5]

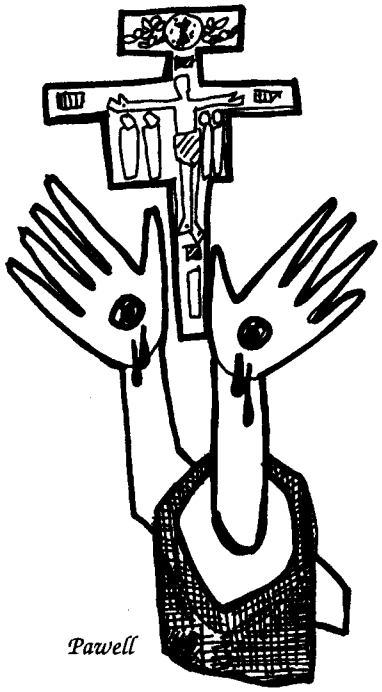
This is the prayer of the experienced teacher who leads her pupil to enter into the drama portrayed in the cross, a cross that not only depicts suffering, but that promises glory and splendor and life with the saints—weeping on the one hand and rejoicing on the other. All this is portrayed within the drama of the icon.

The activity of this icon within Clare's soul seems evident in her Third Letter to Agnes: "Place your mind before the mirror of eternity (3LAg 12)." Is the mirror image a reflection of this cross? Probably. This is suggested in the Fourth Letter to Blessed Agnes: ". . . that Mirror, suspended on the wood of the Cross" (4LAg 24). Most likely, it is the imagery of one who has long contemplated the icon, one who entered the inviting broken borders of the suspended mirror and found her own contemporary language to teach another the delights of the soul. She carefully reflects to Agnes the images the icon has marked on her own soul—images of brilliance, sweetness, beauty, preciousness, greatness. These words characterize her soul's contemplation of the cross and they are the same words used to encourage her companion in faith (3LAg 12-16).

As there were borders to cross to come physically to the Franciscan homeland, there were emotional and spiritual borders to cross as a pilgrim. Differences did not disappear nor were they totally accommodated. As a pilgrim one does not become a native. One fondly remembers home on the one hand and yet desires something else on the other. Caught in the time warp of the pilgrim, one allows oneself to be caught between times, suspended as it were to see oneself in a new light. One is projected backward and forward in a rhythm not of one's own making. That is the power of icons. They create their own

environment and have their own effect, true to the drama they capture. They weave together the drama of the protagonist and the drama of the viewer.

I was mesmerized by the San Damiano cross. It has been housed in several locations during its 800 years of hospitality. It has been a public image of art and a private relic of devotion. It existed before the founders of the Franciscan movement and inspired its progression for both founders and followers. No matter its settings, it continues to tell its stories for those who stop and consider, allowing it to enter one's environment. Then it has power to do again what it has done before.



Pawell

I am now back into my familiar routines, living in one of the largest business centers known in human history. The towering twelfth-century icon housed in a foreign culture still transforms my space, however, invites me in and teaches me. This experience led me to a new place in a setting I had visited before. I desired to touch a moment in time and make it real. My pilgrimage to early Franciscan roots was in fact a privileged timeless moment. The common ground I share with the two early founders was made real and mine by the old cross.

Endnotes

[1]Marion A. Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 243-246.

[2]*Bonaventure*, trans. Ewert Cousins (New York, Paulist Press, 1978), 191.

[3]Marc Picard, OFM Cap., *The Icon of the Christ of San Damiano* (Casa Editrice Francescana, Assisi, 1989).

[4]Regis Armstrong, OFM, Cap., *Francis and Clare, The Complete Works* (Paulist Press, New York, 1982), 103. (References to Francis's writings are from this edition.)

[5]References to Clare's writings are from Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (Paulist Press, New York, 1988).

The Cord, 48.5 (1998)

Contemplation and Compassion

Margaret Kubanze, LSOSF

Biblical Background of Contemplation and Compassion

Before reading this article, one needs to be aware that an assumption has been made. It is presumed that the reader has some knowledge of the Biblical background of the terms "contemplation and compassion." This is necessary because these two terms are going to be considered as religious experiences that take place within the context of our human condition. Our faith tells us that the Bible provides the basis for our religious experiences. This is because our relationship with God connects us back to the beginnings of our salvation history whose experiences are found in the Old Testament. It anchors us in the Christ event that is presented in the New Testament. Finally, it continues to the end of time in our own personal stories, hence the need to keep in mind the biblical foundations of these terms. Contemplation and compassion can be viewed in different ways according to different spiritualities. This article aims at proposing a paradigm for contemplation and compassion according to the Franciscan tradition. It will further illustrate how this paradigm speaks to an African culture. The illustration will be limited to the Franciscan experience of the Little Sisters of St. Francis, an indigenous African congregation in East Africa.

Contemplation and Compassion in the Franciscan Tradition

Participating in the life of God within the context of our human condition is at the heart of the Franciscan tradition of contemplation and compassion.

The Franciscan sees this human experience as being centered in the Incarnation and the life and death of Jesus on the cross. Francis is overwhelmed by God's coming into our world to share himself with all creation through Jesus. Later, theologians like Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus articulate Francis's central point of contemplation by showing that Christ, as the eternal *Form* and *Logos*, is the center of all created reality. In him we return to the Father and experience union with the Trinity. This theology is explained by Ewert Cousins[1] and by Seamus Mulholland[2], both authors drawing the conclusion that Francis's attitude toward all created things was a positive one. He sees all things as God created them; they are all good. As such, humans are capable of experiencing God in their own bodies and in creation. Furthermore, Christ's life is an experience of the human condition. He experiences limitation, tribulation, rejection, vulnerability, and above all mortality in his death on the cross.

Jesus's death on the cross is a culmination of the limitations of his human condition. Because of what he says and does, he cannot avoid the anger and hatred of the religious and political leaders of the people. Just as every human person cannot escape death, so also Christ cannot escape it, and in this he is most like humans. For Francis then, to suffer tribulation, rejection, limitation, weakness, and even death, is an experience of God, for that is when we are most like Christ.

Based on this background, the Franciscan tradition of contemplation and compassion is seen as one rooted in the experience of our human condition. Using various Franciscan sources, this article will proceed to cite a number of examples to show that we do experience God in the context of our humanness such as in our human desires, relationships, and exemplarity. For the Franciscans, the contemplative/compassionate stance is characterized by a number of elements. This section will examine three of them: the human body and the universe as loci for contemplation, contemplation as occurring in the context of relationship, and contemplation as a compassionate and commissioning experience.

The Human Body and the Universe as Loci for Contemplation

The experience of God in our bodies and through the universe is a tradition that could be attributed to the theology articulated by Bonaventure. As noted by Mary Gurley in "Bodily Knowing and the Theology of Bonaventure" Epping claims that Bonaventure is "the most complete embodiment of the spirit of the Franciscan school."[3] In the same article, Gurley points to Bonaventure as a possible starting point for what is known as "bodily knowing," a term that could be analogous to contemplation as the experience of the human condition. If one accepts the belief that knowledge is a way of experiencing God, then Gurley is right to say that "[it] is with Bonaventure that one might fruitfully begin the search for a model of knowing that would include bodily knowing."[4] Gurley is right, because in the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure takes pains to show that our bodies are the loci for the experience of union with God.

Even though our desires are often thought of as being perverted, Bonaventure sees them as capable of uniting us to God. At the beginning of *Itinerarium*, he shows that only a person of desires can embark upon the journey of being present to God (Itin prol, 3). He makes reference to Daniel as the man of desires after whose example the believer should be disposed to divine contemplation. It is touching to note that the reference he makes is in the context of a very earthly desire by Daniel who prays that the Lord would spare the city that is being threatened by enemies. This is a desire that is in no way connected to anything divine, yet Bonaventure chooses this incident as an example to drive home his point, namely that our desires can unite us to God. Bonaventure therefore encourages the seeker to offer groans of prayer because in prayer one pours out one's desires to God (Itin prol, 4). Regarding the same idea about human desires, Brother Giles indicates its importance in becoming what we want to be. In one of his sayings, Giles tells us that contemplation does not always consist in achieving what we want to be. Rather God looks at our desires and accomplishes in us that which we fail to do. This is a wonderful breakthrough in spirituality—that God would look at a human desire and effect from it some way of experiencing God.

Bonaventure then goes on to emphasize that we can contemplate God through what he calls contuition. This is the process of experiencing God outside ourselves and in his creatures through our five senses that are like windows of the body. When we internalize those things that are outside of us, and when they become part of us, that knowledge connects us to our common center, Christ, who takes us back to the Father (Itin 1:2; 2:3, 6, 11, 12). Similarly we can contemplate God within us through the faculties of the mind: memory, intellect, and will. The knowledge acquired in this way leads us to "eternity," "the understanding of the truth," and "the highest good," all of which are experiences of the divine (Itin 3:1-4).

Regarding contemplation as an experience of God in the universe, Bonaventure's attitude toward creation is clear. He gives us reason to believe that contemplation occurs in our world because, he says, creation—the universe—bears the marks of God. When we encounter them, we are united to God. To understand how he comes to this conclusion, we have to know about his theology of creation. Bonaventure borrows quite a bit from neo-Platonism by which he sees all created reality as being patterned to the likeness of Christ. This conclusion comes from his understanding of Christ as the *Form* or *Exem-*

plar par excellence. The forms of all created things exist in the mind of God and Jesus, as the Incarnate Son, is the Form after which all other forms are patterned. Hence creation bears the vestiges of God, and encountering them is experiencing the divine Being that they exemplify (Itin 1:2). Thus Bonaventure can depict Francis as one who savors the goodness of God in each and every creature (Itin 9:1). By using the sense of taste he shows Francis to be united with God just as through this sense a person is in close contact with the object. Contemplation of nature can also be regarded as a realization that creation is a result of God's self-diffusive nature and therefore a sharing in God's selfless love. In this regard Bonaventure sees creation as "no more than a center or point in revelation to the immensity of the divine goodness" (Itin 6:2). Thus, in creation one can experience this immense goodness that is God.

Contemplation in the Context of Relationship

Accepting that God can be experienced in our body leads to the acceptance that we can encounter him in the ordinariness of life. This eliminates the dichotomizing attitude between God and the human experience. For example, Bonaventure sees relationships as connectors to God. This is because he regards the Trinity as the purity of goodness, an act of pure love. It is a love that exists in the context of relationship between the three Persons. Thus the human experience of relationship is a sharing in the divine relationship because we share in the Trinity's self-diffusive love.

The Legend of the Three Companions reinforces Bonaventure's belief in the importance of relationship for the contemplative. It emphasizes contemplation not as an isolated personal experience, but one that occurs within the context of companionship. Thus the whole text carries a strong sense of fraternity which is the springboard for the brothers' itinerant preaching and exemplarity (L3S 3:36, 54, 57). In his earlier *Rule*, Francis cautions his brothers to go about their ministry in good relationship with strangers, with each other, with non-believers, and with other people. They are to be unassuming before others by taking the position of minors. This relationship keeps them in touch with Christ who did not cling to his position as God in the Incarnation (RegNB 11, 14, 16). In her *Testament*, Clare speaks strongly about how the Poor Ladies are to maintain a caring relationship with one another. This relationship ought to reflect the love God has for us, treating us as concrete and particular individuals who have different needs. Thus the sisters are to love one another with the charity of Christ, and the sister in charge is to be attentive to her sisters and "to take care especially to provide for them according to the needs of each one. . ." (TestCl 59, 61, 64).

Contemplation as a Compassionate and Commissioning Experience

In the *Legend of Clare* Clare's experience of contemplation is depicted as a movement from within to without. It is a call to go out of oneself to reach out to the other, a contemplative experience of mission and compassion. We see this as Clare reaches out to the sick sisters, and the people who come to her for healing (CL 33-35).

This movement from within to without is also found in Francis. In the *Itinerarium* Bonaventure tells us that in his encounter with the leper, Francis remembers his resolution to become perfect and is determined to overcome his aversion for lepers. He reaches out to kiss the leper and after doing so, he experiences a remarkable sweetness (Itin 1:5). When Francis hears the gospel sending the disciples to go and preach, his heart is touched. Immediately he puts his heart's desire into action, thus repeating that pattern of the movement from within to without. Then he decides "to live for all men rather that for himself," for he feels called to win souls for Christ (Itin 4:2). Here we see an experience of contemplation in action.

When Francis comes face to face with the lepers and sees the reality of their condition, he is filled with horror. Yet he is moved with compassion for them as he immerses himself in their sufferings. Learning from this experience Francis is capable of entering compassionately into the sufferings of Christ when he sees him on the cross in San Damiano; as he knows the lepers, so he knows Christ (Itin 1:5-6). This becomes a pattern of Francis's experience of contemplation and compassion throughout his life. He enters into people's sufferings and responds compassionately toward them (Itin 8:5). It is within this pattern of the experience of his contemplative compassion that Francis receives the stigmata. Bonaventure tells us that "[by] the ardor of his Seraphic desires, he was being born aloft into God; and by his sweet compassion he was being transformed into him who chose to be crucified (LM 13:3). The process of his on going transformation that occurs because of his compassionate contemplation is climaxed in the event of the stigmata. Bonaventure wants to stress that this is not an extraordinary grace given to Francis. It is, rather, the seal of what has been taking place in his body throughout his life. Thus Francis becomes a rule and model for a life of contemplation and compassion. After him all peoples of all cultures can have access to God, for without reproducing the actual life of Francis, they can respond to God's grace in their own way. Thus it becomes possible to construct a theology of contemplation and compassion for today that is applicable to Franciscans—even those in Africa. This will be demonstrated as the article turns to the Little Sisters of St. Francis based in East Africa.

The Franciscan Tradition of Contemplation and Compassion Applied to the African Experience of the Little Sisters of St. Francis

When one speaks of the African experience of God, one is acutely aware that there is no such thing as a common experience in Africa. This is because there are as many differences as there are nations on the continent and there are as many cultures as there are ethnic groups in a given nation. Here I will draw examples from the Baganda, an ethnic group among thirty of Uganda's diverse cultures. Before the dawn of Christianity in Uganda, the Baganda did not have a dichotomized relationship with their God and gods as did Christianity where one related to God in prayer and then invited God to preside over one's activities. On the contrary, they related to God—Katonda the creator and the other gods who were his intermediaries—as the very fiber of their existence and experiences. They talked to and with God in the very conversations they held with each other. They had a sharp awareness of the fact that things went right or wrong because of the way they treated their fellow human beings and creation as a whole, for creation was sacred. They believed strongly in the influence on their lives of their dead ancestors, as these were in that state that connected them to the divine.

Because of this relational spirituality among the Baganda, they never developed a systematized method of prayer. The offering of sacrifices was a ritual carried out as the need for the individual, family, or group arose. Many cultures in and outside Uganda could also identify with this kind of relationship between God and the people. Based on such a relationship, it is not far fetched to conclude that before the coming of Christianity, the African experience of God was contemplative, perhaps much like that found in the experience of the people of God in the Old Testament. Today when one thinks of how the Franciscan tradition of contemplation and compassion can impact our world, I think of the call of the Little Sisters of St. Francis to bring their Franciscan heritage into play with their own African cultures and the problems Africa is facing. The Little Sisters must find a relevant brand of Franciscan theology that will speak to the situation in Africa.

The theology of contemplation and compassion that makes meaning today for the Little Sisters of St. Francis has to be based on the Incarnation of Jesus. Inculturation of the Franciscan experience into the African culture is the approach needed for the Franciscan experience in Africa. Thus the Incarnation is the most fitting paradigm because it is the best example of inculturation that has ever occurred. Using the Incarnational paradigm, the Little Sisters can become exemplars of how to build relationships and bring about healing between different ethnic groups in their respective countries. Their exemplarity can be based on the Franciscan experience lived out by Clare. She believed and taught her sisters that they were called to be exemplars and mirrors of God's life to one another and to other people (TestCl 19-21, 70).

Already living in a congregation of more than forty ethnic groups, the Little Sisters show that they can support one another in bearing the difficulties that arise from their cultural differences. If like Francis and Clare, they can rejoice in their infirmities by embracing the human limitations found in each one's ethnic group, they shall exemplify the life of the Incarnation. Living with people of different mentalities and customs can be hell, but the bitter can turn into sweetness if the sisters can embrace what they perceive as leprosy in others. Francis tells us to glory in these infirmities, for they are ours; they originate from our human condition. If the Incarnation sanctified our humanity, then these human limitations are each sister's source of sanctification. Such an endeavor, to bear one another's burdens, is bound to be life-giving, a life that ought to spill over to those around them. In this way the Little Sisters can be a great influence in bringing about unity among Africa's diverse cultures.

Unity is what Africa needs today; there must be a paradigm for it. The differences that exist between various ethnic groups within a country and between individual countries must cease to be dividers. Such differences should be viewed positively as being complementary to one another and a source of solidarity. The Incarnational model as a way of being in the world can bear fruits of unity, peace, and development. In the brief history provided at the beginning of the *Constitutions of the Little Sisters*, there is the recognition that the sisters are a community of penitents. They state that as penitents they "live a gospel lifestyle in which members support each other in their effort to expose themselves to the love of God."[5] According to this understanding of themselves, The Little Sisters are being challenged to become pioneers of the struggle for "Peace Union and Charity,[6] not only for themselves, but also for all the people that they can influence. The importance of exemplarity as a contemplative experience is documented in the *Life of Brother Giles*. Giles explains that the good performed by another person, when appreciated, brings about more grace (Life of Giles 31). Therefore, giving good example is one way of communicating God's life, for it is the goodness of God that is exemplified.

By living together peaceably in spite of their cultural differences, the Little Sisters will witness to the dying that is involved in embracing the inconveniences, limitations, weaknesses, and vulnerability that are part and parcel of their human condition. Bonaventure makes it clear at the end of the *Itinerarium* that one has to die and become a new person in order to see God. It is by participating in "the heat of [Christ's] burning passion" that the Little Sisters will be enkindled with the fire of God's love, for "whoever loves this death can see God" (Itin 7:6). Such a witness is bound in some way to bring about the

cohesion so much needed in Africa. One can conclude that the Little Sisters' projected experience is the experience of the Franciscan evangelical life, a life of contemplation and compassion. It is a life that brings us out of ourselves and connects us to other people, and in doing so leads to union with God. A life lived in this way forms the basis for a Franciscan theology of contemplation and compassion.

Conclusion

Certainly the challenge faced by the Little Sisters of St. Francis can be embraced by other African Franciscans scattered throughout the continent. It is imperative that they all become exemplars of the real experience of God's love to their brothers and sisters. In a continent where the overall sense of loyalty and charity is to the tribe and clan, there is need for a kind of yeast that rises beyond those frontiers. In the new frontiers, the African needs to embrace members of ethnic groups and countries other than his or her own. If the African Franciscans live the Incarnational life sincerely, their voice will be loud enough to be heard and followed by their country-men and women.

Endnotes

[1]Ewert Cousins, "Bonaventure's Christology: A Resource for the Third Millennium," in *That Others May Know and Love: Essays in Honor of Zachary Hayes, OFM, Franciscan, Educator, Scholar*. Ed. Michael Cusato and Edward Coughlin. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 1997), 211-235.

[2]Seamus Mulholland, "Duns Scotus and Teilhard De Chardin—The Cosmic Christ: Two Visions, One Voice," *The Cord*, 44:9 (Sept. 1994): 236.

[3]Mary C. Gurley, OSF, "Bodily Knowing and the Theology of Bonaventure," *The Cord*, 47:5 (Sep-Oct, 1997), 218, note 6.

[4]Gurley, 223.

[5]*Constitutions of the Little Sisters of St. Francis*, Chapter xi.

[6]A few weeks before their Mother Foundress died, away from them, she wrote the Little Sisters a letter in which she urged them to live in "Peace, Union, and Charity."

Where there is poverty with joy,
there is neither covetousness nor avarice.

Where there is inner peace and meditation,
there is neither anxiousness nor dissipation.

Where there is mercy and discernment,
there is neither excess nor hardness of heart.

(Francis of Assisi, Admonition 27)

About our Contributors

Patrick Conlan, OFM, joined the Irish Franciscans in 1958 and has taught general and Irish Franciscan history to those in formation since 1969. Author of fifteen books and many articles, he became assistant director of the Irish Franciscan Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in 1996, serving in the areas of spiritual direction and retreats.

Ilia Delio, OSF, is a member of the Franciscan Servants of the Holy Child Jesus, North Plainfield, New Jersey. She is presently at Washington Theological Union, Washington, DC, serving as an assistant professor of ecclesial history and Franciscan studies and as Director of the Franciscan Center. She is author of *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1998).

Marianne Hieb, RSM, a Sister of Mercy, is director of the Wellness Spirituality Program at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center in Camden, New Jersey.

Michael Higgins, TOR, a member of the Sacred Heart Province, is director of novices at the TOR inter-provincialate novitiate in Loretto, Pennsylvania. He is also doing doctoral studies at the Antonianum in Rome.

Margaret Kubanze, LSOSF, is a Little Sister of St. Francis from Uganda in East Africa. She is currently pursuing Masters studies at The Franciscan Institute and will return to Kenya in 1999 to serve her congregation in formation ministry.

Robert F. Pawell, OFM, is a friar of the Sacred Heart Province. While working in New Orleans, he co-founded Project Lazarus, a residence for persons with AIDS and developed retreats for those affected by HIV/AIDS. A self-trained artist, he now serves out of Chicago, employing poetry and the arts in the Ministry of the Word.

Giles Schinelli, TOR, is a member of the Immaculate Conception Province and was Provincial Minister from 1986-1994. He was President of the Franciscan Federation from 1994-1995. He is presently pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Robert Stewart, OFM, a friar of the Holy Name Province, teaches in the theology department of St. Bonaventure University and at The Franciscan Institute. He is author of *"De illis qui faciunt penitentiam": Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* (Roma: Istituto Storico Dei Capuccini, 1991).

Dennis Wilson, OFM, is a member of the Holy Name Province and serves as provincial treasurer in New York City.

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Come let us together wake up the Jesus in us as we prepare to celebrate a blessed and merry Christmas. December 11-13, 1998 Friday, 7:00 PM - Sunday noon.
Joseph Markalonis, TOR. Cost: $100.00 Deposit: $25.00 Register by December 2. 1998.

CELEBRATING FRANCISCAN WOMEN

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Margaret Carney, OSF. Cost: $100.00 Deposit: $25.00 Register by February 16, 1999.

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Bernie Tickerhoof, TOR, and J. Lora Dambroski, OSF.
Cost: $120.00 Deposit: $25.00 Register by March 21, 1999.

DIRECTED RETREAT April 18-24, 1999 7:00 PM - Noon

J. Lora Dambroski, OSF, and Vinnie Fortunato, OFM Cap.
Cost: $250.00 Deposit: $50.00 Register by April 10, 1999.

For further information, please contact:

Mimi DiGregory
Franciscan Spirit and Life Center
3605 McRoberts Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234
412-881-9207

Franciscan Spirit and Life Center

New from THE FRANCISCAN FEDERATION

The Rebirth of a Charism

A Program of Enrichment on the Form of Life of the Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular

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Zachary Hayes, OFM

Components of the nine-to-five day are:

- Consideration of the core religious experience at the heart of what is "on paper" in the TOR Rule.
- Creative reflection on the spirituality of the "penitent" and its 13th century revitalization in Francis and Clare
- Opportunity to appreciate the events, documents, and persons as witnesses to the Rebirth of the Charism.
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- Reading today's headlines in the light of the Third Order Regular Rule.
- Faith-sharing conversation around the unresolved issues of living the values of poverty, conversion, contemplation, and minority which define our Form of Life.
- Prayers and Reflections from the TOR Rule.
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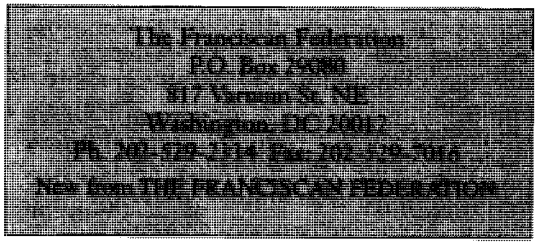
1998 Program dates:

September 26, 1998 — St. Francis Academy, San Antonio, TX
October 10, 1998 — Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, WI
November 14, 1998 — St. Joseph Church, Columbia, SC.
December 5, 1998 — Center of Renewal, Stella Niagara, NY
February 27, 1999 — St. Odilia Parish, Los Angeles, CA
March 20, 1999 — Tau Center, Winona, MN

More in 1999.

For a detailed brochure, please contact:



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Franciscan Spiritual Center

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1998 Program Offerings

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Presenter: Michael Higgins, TOR. Register by October 9. $225 ($50 deposit) (Commuter: $175)

Praying with Handel's *Messiah* - December 4-6
This weekend includes presentations on the scriptures which Handel used, opportunity for quiet reflection, prayer, and time for listening to excerpts from the *Messiah*.
Presenter: Jo Ann Flora, SND. Register by November 20. $140 ($30 deposit)

Great Expectations: On Being Advent Keepers - December 11-13
Beyond our wildest dreams, God yearns for us and longs to fulfill our desires. Advent, the time of hope and expectation, invites us to focus on our deepest longings, knowing that they are taken seriously by God.
Presenter: Anne Amati, OSF. Register by November 27. $140 ($30 deposit)

New Year's Eve Overnight - December 31-January 1
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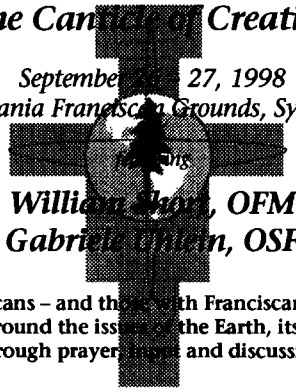

William [illegible], OFM
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For further information contact: Rosine Sobczak, OSF at 419-885-3211, ext. 220; e-mail: rsobczak@lourdes.edu

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with

Margaret Carney, OSF

Saturday, September 26, 1998
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

St. Anthony Shrine
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Contact: Violet Grennan, OSF
or Margretta Flanagan, OSF

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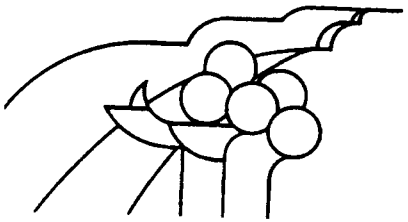

For more information contact:
Tom Speier, ofm; Marilyn Joyce, osf
St. Francis Extension
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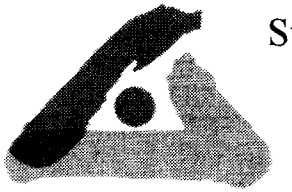

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Peace Pole Ritual
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Sunday Eucharist

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ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT
COMING EVENTS 1998

Saturday, September 26

Finding Christ's Footprints: The Search of Francis of Assisi. Margaret Carney, OSF. 10 am-3 pm. At St. Anthony Shrine, 100 Arch St., Boston Ma 02107-2278. Contact Violet Grennan, OSF, or Margretta Flanagan, OSF, ph. 617-524-6440.

Saturday, September 26

The Rebirth of a Charism. St. Francis Academy, San Antonio, TX. See ad p. 263.

Saturday, September 26-Sunday, September 27

Earth Conference, '98. Contact: Rosine Sobczak, OSF, Lourdes College, 6832 Convent Blve., Sylvania, OH 43560; ph. 419-885-3211 x 220.

Saturday, October 10

The Rebirth of a Charism. Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee. See ad p. 263.

Sunday, October 25

Franciscans International Mid-Atlantic Chapter, Second Annual Gathering; 11:00 am - 4:00 pm. Alvernia College, Reading, PA. See ad p. 269.

Friday, October 30-Sunday, November 1

The Book of Revelation: Its Message for the Millenium. A workshop with Jude Winkler, OFM Conv. The Tau Center, Winona. Contact: Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993; fax: 507-453-0910.

Saturday, November 14

The Rebirth of a Charism. St. Joseph Church, Columbia, SC. See ad p. 263 .

Friday, December 11-Sunday, December 13

Christmas with Francis: Greccio Revisited. Joseph Markalonis, TOR. Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, Pittsburgh, PA. See ad p. 262.

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo
BenBern	Blessing for Brother Bernard
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy
1EpCust	First Letter to the Custodians
2EpCust	Second 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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St. Bonaventure, New York 14778

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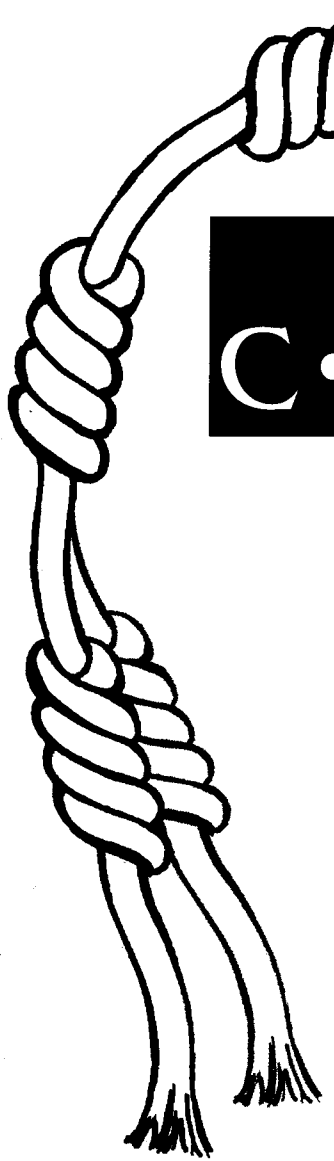
A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



THE CORD

Volume 48, No. 6 *November/December 1998*

THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

Publisher: Anthony M. Carrozzo, OFM
Editor: Elise Saggau, OSF

Editorial Assistant: Mary C. Gurley, OSF
Poetry Editor: Frances Ann Thom, OSF
Promotion: Thomas Blow, OFM
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NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS: Address all manuscripts to Editor, *The Cord*, The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778.

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). (2Cel 5:8).
   (RegNB 23:2). (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.

ADVERTISING: Ads should be sent to the editor at the above address. Cost: full page, $50.00; half page, $25.00. Ad deadline: first day of the month preceding month of publication (e.g., April 1 for the May/June issue).

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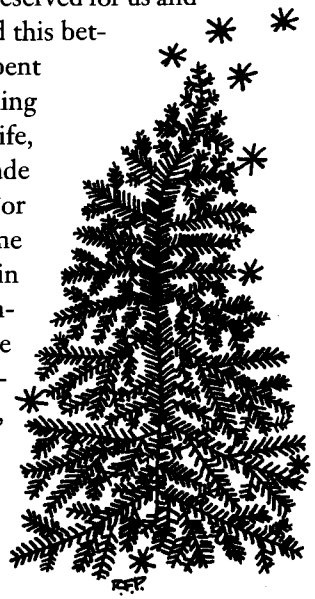
Editorial

The seasons of the Church year call us to "re-member" the stories that give meaning to our lives. As we allow our memories to dwell on the amazing things that God has done for us in Jesus Christ, our hearts are melted by the profoundly touching images that our tradition has preserved for us and passes on in word and ritual. No one understood this better than Francis of Assisi, who, in his natural bent towards "play," drew from the dramatic story-telling of the Church energy and delight. In his own life, the stories of the gospels came alive and were made present in highly charged dramatic action. For Francis, word and deed were as one. To know the story was to become a participant in it—to live it in such a way that its power became irresistible to others. Christmas was particularly dear to Francis. He wept at the very thought of God's complete surrender to the human situation as a helpless infant, totally dependent, totally *in need*, and at the thought of a mother so poor as Mary. Today the world is full of such mothers and such children. Today the Christian and Franciscan gift is still alive. May our own memories be the source of compassion, as we take our place in the story for our own times.



Pawell, ofm

As the year draws to a close, the staff of *The Cord* and of The Franciscan Institute offer you a special word of thanks for supporting the work of sending the Franciscan story to all parts of the world. We are particularly grateful to all those who submit articles for publication. We encourage more of you to reflect "outloud," so to speak, on the meaning of the Franciscan tradition for our times and for our various cultures.

We also ask you to consider sending a gift subscription of *The Cord* to a Franciscan congregation or fraternity that cannot afford it for themselves. There are many such congregations across the English-speaking world. If you would like to offer such a gift, please send the subscription cost of $20.00 to us, together with the name and address of the congregation, fraternity, or person you wish to support. If you want us to select a congregation, we can also do that and send the subscription in your name. Peace and all good!

A Church in Ruins

Eric Doyle, OFM

[This article is a transcription of a talk originally given in the mid-80s and preserved in tape form at The Franciscan Insitute, St. Bonaventure, NY.]

What I want to do is to try to place St. Francis in the scene of reformer in the history of the Church to understand the precise meaning of those words—"A Church in Ruins." For this, let us return to the New Testament. And there we find it recorded that, on the night before our Lord died, he prayed for all who would believe in him through the word of the disciples. He says: "I pray not only for you, but also for all those who are to find faith in me through your word." Now, those words of our Lord recorded by the Apostle John, have their first application in the first three centuries of the Church's history, when, long before the Constantinian peace, those who believed in Christ went everyday in mortal fear of being called in and asked if they were Christians. If they avowed it or said something in a positive sense, they were asked to deny it and offer incense to the statue of the name of the emperor, and then they went free. But if they didn't, they were either thrown to hostile lions in the Roman Amphitheater or their bodies were tarred and set on fire to light up Roman orgies. It was for their faith that our Lord prayed on the night before he died.

And then there came the peace associated with the Emperor Constantine, when Church and State blended and were devoted to the same cause and end. Things seemed fine until, swinging from Byzantium to the West, the Church faced what has been called the Dark Ages, when the Goths and Ostragoths and Visigoths and Huns came teeming over the Rhine and the Danube into middle and southern Europe and laid waste the *Pax Romana* and the concord that the Empire had placed upon the ancient world. After the fall of the Empire, of course, the Church was the inner dynamic of the restoration of civilization. But during this time the bishops and the papacy descended to a degree of degradation that has never been known since. Popes fought with one another and indeed tore out one another's tongues, vying for the office of the sacred service of the unity of Christendom.

And then there came, after the Dark Ages, a great pope, Gregory VII. He managed to impose a reform of inestimable significance on the Church. It blossomed in a way that nobody could have believed possible who'd lived a hundred years before him. And it went on developing until the time of Innocent III, the pope who approved the Rule of St. Francis. Innocent III had the greatest power that any pope has ever had. He came the closest to being Lord of the world. Who would have believed that just a hundred years later the papacy would fall into the thralldom of the French. Settled at Avignon, the papal court was controlled by French influence. For a whole century only French cardinals were elected to the papal office.

And then Catherine of Siena went to the Pope, Gregory XI, and warned him, telling him to come back to Rome, which he did in the early 1370s. Having returned, however, he died. Then an Italian was elected, but within a year the Cardinals refused to accept this election and there were two popes—one at Avignon and the other in Rome. Christ prayed for the faith of the people of that time, when the very sign of unity was in fact itself divided . This goes on right until the end of the fourteenth century. There are two claimants to this most holy and sacred office of unity. And then, to the eternal shame of the Franciscan Order, a Franciscan stepped into the fray and told the other two "popes": "Step down, let me be Pope." And they said no. And so, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, we end, God help us, with three popes. And these were appointing bishops and abbots; and, as no doubt many of you know, one abbot or one superior in any monastery is more than enough!

By the middle of the fifteenth century, the problem was solved and the Church sped on its way to 1517 when Martin Luther posted his theses and the Church was divided in the West. This led to an ever greater fractioning of the body of Christ. He had prayed for faith, whether the faith of St. Thomas More, who gave his life for the primacy of the Roman See, or the faith of Sirs Ridley and Latimer, those blessed martyrs at Oxford, or the faith of Cranmer himself, who put his hand into the flames and died at Oxford for the truth of the holy gospel as he saw it.

And then we came to the Enlightenment when people said that at last human beings had come of age and we didn't really need religion. It had been all right for people less intelligent than ourselves, but now we had arrived at a high point of human development and religion was destined to die. As we got into the nineteenth century, this belief became more and more the case in people's minds. Human beings seemed to be on the verge of absolute perfectibility. Finally, we came to our own century and have now hit a period of agnosticism. Christ prayed for *our* faith on the night before he died, that we would not lose faith in him who is the Lord of all history, the victor over that death which is the last and the most insidious of all our enemies.

In the context of this continual change and renewal, I believe that we need to place this poor little man, St. Francis of Assisi, for he was a reformer long, long before the sixteenth century. He was an evangelical long, long before those splendid people of the late sixteenth century who longed to return to the purity of the teaching of the gospel. You see, he was indeed a medieval man. He belonged to the thirteenth century; he flourished in the thirteenth century. But he saw in the thirteenth century the need to go back to the only conformity that the Church itself must comply with, namely, the teaching of the holy Gospel. And without a word of criticism, without ever making any remarks about the papacy or the bishops of the thirteenth century, he himself brought the Christ of the gospels right into the heart of the medieval world. As Chesterton so beautifully describes it: "It was as if after a long dark night not unvisited by stars, he stood there on a hill and around him was a burst of birds singing and behind him was the break of day."

There was to be now a new presence of the gospel of Christ. For a thousand years, since the Council of Nicaea, the Church had emphasized all that separates Christ from us because the Church was afraid of Arius. Arius had said that our Lord was some kind of hybrid really, neither God nor man but something in between. God had fashioned him before fashioning the world and had sent him into our midst as a messenger. The Council of Nicaea had thundered against this doctrine and said no, this can't be right. The Eternal One has become one of us. Ephesus and Constantinople repeated it and the Council of Chalcedon clarified it. But once you emphasize our Lord's divinity with an imbalance, then you must emphasize all the things that separate him from us. And so you have those magnificent views of our Lord in the apses of the cathedrals, in his utter majesty, standing looking down at you with the holy gospel, alpha and omega written on it, resting upon his knee. And as he gazes at you, you think: "Oh dear, what on earth have I got in common with this?" How is it possible to think that this was the Lord who walked the earth?

And suddenly you see this poor, ragged little man who never went to school, who never learned any philosophy, who never learned any theology, suddenly, from what he had grasped in the holy scriptures, bringing Christ right out of the apses to walk in the midst of medieval society again. In his own members, in his own very life, people saw again the man who had been born in a stable, who had been kept warm by the hot breath of an ox and an ass, the little boy who had learned the trade of a carpenter and got enormous hands and splinters doing it, the little boy who had learned to sing the songs that we sing and knew about David and Solomon, his ancestors in the Old Testament. In Francis people recognized the young man who went out into the heat of the Palestinian sun to tell everyone that God's name was "Abba"; who spoke of this immortal and nameless God in terms of familiarity that had never before been heard in the history of the Jewish people; whose heart was broken when he

found a sorrowing widowed mother standing beside the coffin of her only son being taken to its burial; who visited Martha and Mary across the Jordan in Bethany and who wept when he heard that his friend Lazarus was dead; who grieved over the city of Jerusalem and said that he would gather it to himself in the way that a hen gathers its chicks.

In Francis people perceived the one who, on the night before he died, took some bread and quite simply said: "This is my body. This is my blood," and who then went out into the Garden of Gethsemene and crawled around in circles of despair because he was petrified of what would happen to him the next day; who was battered into the wood of the cross and died slowly of bleeding to death and asphyxiation and called out those terrible words: *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani:* My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And his question was never answered. It has gone echoing down the eons of time until today, as his cross casts its shadow over the Church, over the Church's every success, and over the world's every effort to better the lot of humanity. The cross casts its shadow mysteriously, incomprehensibly, as it will to the end of time.

This was the Christ that St. Francis brought back. The one who had shared the lot of what it is to be like us in history, to be born and to have a memory, to live into the future towards the death that is inexorable. It was in the representation of the life of our Lord (and that's what it is, a representation, almost a living exegesis) that St. Francis saw the renewal of the Church taking place. This renewal wasn't any theory; it didn't necessarily aim first at changing anything. Rather, it sought to bring back the figure of this man who was God's own presence in human history, in whom God himself had learned what it means to have a memory lighted by experience, what it means to look towards a future and tremble before it and then go finally to death.

That's what Francis brought back, and he brought it back so graphically that he himself was the first affected by it. That is the heart of his conversion. A conversion is not simply a moral process where somebody says: "Well, you know, I've been rather bad and now I'm going to try and be good." Christianity and the gospel do not consist in moralizing; they consists in a total shift of meaning. Everything now takes on a fresh meaning through a relationship. Therefore, conversion in St. Francis first of all meant that he had discovered a relationship with someone. It was a metanoia of the mind and the heart and the soul and the psyche and the body. It was a complete and utter transformation of a lonely man into a relationship whereby he was then able, slowly, to allow the loneliness to be transformed into aloneness. There is the glorious meaning of his celibacy. Through a relationship with the unseen one, Christ our Lord, he was able to arrive at that point of self-possession where he could tolerate what it means to be alone in this world and at the same time in relationship with others.

And that's his reform. It wasn't a question of saying the papacy must be overthrown or the papacy was in sin—that would be Luther's reform (and nobody is allowed to judge Martin Luther). It wasn't going around the churches of Tuscany preaching against the excesses of Alexander VI, the Borgia pope—that would be Savanarolla, who was eventually burned to death. It wasn't even the medieval reformers who left the Church and said: "Oh no, this contains nothing of the gospel," and created something outside it. It was none of that.

Rather, it was from inside the Church. The only real, true evangelical reform is about a relationship with the central figure of the New Testament. This relationship was consolidated for St. Francis when he experienced that he was loved by God without condition, that he had a brother who had been given without qualification, without any condition, without asking the world or humanity to do anything. This brother had been given out of the utterly gratuitous infinite love of the eternal God solely because God loves the cosmos, which in Greek is the sum total of created reality. And that's what St. Francis grasped and what makes him so serious.

I have never, never seen St. Francis smile, not even in my dreams or when I close my eyes and I try to think what he looked like or when I read Celano's beautiful word picture or see Cimabue's paintings or the Subiaco Francis or even Francis's bones, of which I saw pictures when they opened his tomb in 1978. I have never seen him smile, at least not at me. I don't know whether that says something about me or whether it says something about St. Francis or whether I feel that I'm far from what he stood for. Nevertheless, I wish to make the point that I think there is a seriousness about him, a seriousness that sometimes the romantic picture tends to forget. There is a deadly serious side to this man when it comes to his relationship with our Lord and what conversion and reform mean for him.

Thomas of Celano says of him that when he was at prayer, he so fixed his attention on what he was saying to God, "*totus non tam orans quam oratio factus*" (2Cel 95), that he was not so much praying as having become himself a prayer, "*oratio factus.*" Now this, I believe, is the development of his relationship with Jesus Christ; he loved our Lord unspeakably. We know from a recently discovered version of a sermon of St. Bonaventure that St. Francis used to say that he considered anyone his brother who loved the crucified Lord. This is the whole of the ecumenical movement in a sentence. Francis drove a coach and four through all our disciplines and our laws and our ways of putting barriers between one another. He considered anyone his brother who loved the crucified Jesus. He proved that by dialoguing with the Sultan at Damietta. He went into the camp of the Muslims and there he dialogued with Malik al-Kamil about Christianity and Islam. The prophet Muhammad speaks with very great reverence of Jesus Christ in the Koran. He didn't think he was the Son of God, but nevertheless he traced him in the line of Abraham and the prophets of Israel.

But maybe St. Francis knew that Islam did to that degree respect our Lord and saw this as the basis of a dialogue.

"*Non tam orans quam oratio factus.*" Prayer. It is impossible to speak of this renewal and reform in St. Francis unless we know him as a man related to Christ, as a man of prayer. Now, prayer requires us to know that God is the Holy One. In Chapter 23 of the Rule of 1221, St. Francis speaks of God as ineffable, incomprehensible, everlasting, all holy, blessed, eternal, three-in-one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to whom is honor and glory for ever and ever. He had a sense of the utter "otherness" of God, a sense of the utter mystery of God as *mysterium tremendum*. Remember in the *Dies Ire*, "*Rex tremendae majestatis, qui salvandos salvas gratis, salva me, fons pietatis*—King of terrible majesty, who by your own most holy will save those whom you choose, save me also, source of holiness." St. Francis had an indescribable sense that God is not a chum, he's not somebody just simply there alongside everything else—he is "terrible mystery."

At the same time he is of course alluring, terribly alluring, attractive. His holiness means that there is utter integrity between who he is and what he wills. And it is God's will that *we* be like that—like God, so that what appears in our eyes and comes from our lips is the same as is found in our head and our heart. That is holiness and integrity. And therefore pure integrity, pure being (which is what God is) is alluring—very, very attractive. It is the source of all that sense of unease in all of us, that sense of restlessness, that sense of looking for something. We can't identify it properly, but it's there. It's almost as if an answer was given and then the questions came. There are only questions first of all because there was an answer, and the answer is the Word. Throughout the life of St. Francis, in all his writings and in all the sources, one finds this dual aspect of Francis's understanding of God, the tension between the God of all holiness and the God of indescribable attractiveness.

I think St. Francis would have loved Kenneth Grahame's classic, *The Wind in the Willows*. In Chapter 7 of this children's book, the Mole and the Rat go up the river looking for the baby Otter. Rowing along the river they come to a small island. They moor the boat, get onto the island and then, moving towards its center, they see the vision of Pan with the hooked nose and the kindly eyes and the shaggy limbs. The pipe has just fallen away from the parted lips and he is beginning to smile; and there, nesting between his hooves, the round, tiny, childish, pudgy form of the baby Otter. Mole, who had learned something about the river by this time, turns to Rat, who was extremely clever and competent and very bossy, and says to him: "'Rat, are you afraid?' Rat says: 'Afraid? Afraid! Of *Him*? Oh, never, never! And yet—and yet—Oh, Mole, I am afraid!' And then the two animals, crouching to the earth, bowed their heads and did worship."[1]

There you have pure, contemplative prayer—nothing taken for granted and at the same time absolute security; absolute security in God and yet nothing taken for granted. Oh, yes, I am afraid and I am not afraid. And that runs through the life of St. Francis as a kind of theme, a theme which, as it developed in him, brought him to the point of total self acceptance. This, I think, is probably the most difficult thing in the world to do—to accept oneself totally. Most of us, when we look inside, rummage around in the bag of our existence and find it singularly unattractive. We think there's not too much in this, that it's worth nothing. There's never a more ungracious thing we can do than that; for he has loved us first, and that is what we learn in the process of contemplative prayer. That is being with God because he's God, not asking for anything or saying anything but being with him because he's God. And you slowly learn: "You know, you're loved first dearest. It has nothing to do with what you do, and in any case what you do really is quite irrelevant. It flows from my love in the first place." And slowly that is brought home to the inner self, the conscious part of our existence grasping that it is accepted without qualification. That is what eventually is heard.

That is what I'm certain St. Francis of Assisi heard on Mount LaVerna. St. Francis was a bit odd, you know, psychologically. Frankly, I think he was a manic-depressive. He used to go into the most awful fits of depression and then pull himself out of it. Just before he went up to Mount LaVerna, he suddenly thought he was damned, an awful sense of emptiness. Then he pulled out of it and went off to LaVerna and there had that extraordinary experience where what in fact was already true inwardly became true outwardly—the marks of the stigmata were put on his body. What he grasped was the truth of total self-acceptance, because, in fact, he recognized that he was accepted by God. There, in that experience of identity with the suffering Christ, he totally and utterly accepted himself.

Once, when he and Pacificus went into a church, Pacificus fell asleep because St. Francis was so long at prayer. While asleep Pacificus had a vision. He saw heaven opened and there in heaven a throne that was empty. He asked whose throne this might be and the reply was given: "It was the throne of Lucifer who fell through pride and it is now reserved for the Blessed Francis because of his utter humility." And coming out of the dream he said to St. Francis: "What do you think of yourself?" St. Francis said: "I am the greatest sinner in the world." And Pacificus said, "Oh dear. There are robbers and thieves and murderers. How can you say this?" And Francis replied: "Pacificus, there is not in this world the greatest sinner who, if he had received the graces that I have had, would not be ten thousand times better." You see, Francis used the superlative, "the greatest sinner," in the sense of unique; he was the only one. You know how somebody who loves someone might say, "My dearest Mary." But see, you don't mean that you are the thirty-sixth Mary starting

with "Dear Mary" then "More Dear Mary" and "Dearer Dearer Mary" and then eventually "Dearest Mary." No, it doesn't mean that, does it? It's the use of the superlative that means unique. And so he used it of himself. He judged himself, not by anyone else, but by a relationship with Christ. And in that judgment he condemned himself, but nevertheless heard from God the total acceptance of himself which in fact was manifested finally on Mount LaVerna.

Now, if there is ever to be a reform, the Church will never, ever reform itself again by division. Never! The Church has learned from its experience. On that Monday, July 16, 1054, when Cardinal Humbertus a Silva Candida threw down the bull of excommunication on the high altar of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and said to Caerularius the Patriarch: "Take it or leave it," the Patriarch said: "We will leave it. And you will leave too, and you will get safe conduct to the walls of Constantinople and from there on, dearest, you're on your own." And so the cardinal came back to Rome and there was the great and terrible division of East and West. Then on October 31, All Hallow's Eve, 1517, Martin Luther posted his theses; and in 1538, in England, the Church was divided again. After that there was a gradual splintering and splintering and splintering until we now have something like three hundred and sixty versions of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This has served only to divide people one from another as the mission of the Church has gone on from Europe.

Never again will the Church be reformed by division. It can only be reformed by integration. And the reform which is integration starts at the depths of the individual believer. That's what I believe St. Francis stands for. And if the medieval world and the world of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries could have heard the message that was in this man, perhaps there would never have been the splintering that we've seen happen. So much of what Martin Luther said was right, there's no doubt about that. At least two-thirds of Luther's doctrine is now accepted by the Roman Catholic Church; two-thirds of Luther's outlook is really our own. But in the end the Church was divided. Now I don't say Luther is alone responsible; Catholics were responsible as well, as Paul VI said at the opening of the Second Vatican Council. He begged forgiveness, indeed, for the part that the Roman Catholic Communion had played in the division of the Body of Christ.

But in the end, the sixteenth century renewal was a failure because it divided the Church. Whoever was responsible, it divided the Church. St. Francis seems to rise above all the divisions that are sectarian. There are Franciscans in the Catholic Church, there are Franciscans in the Anglican communion, there are Franciscans among Lutherans, there are Franciscan movements of renewal all over the world. The Order is itself dedicated, according to the principles and ideals of St. Francis, to the goal of Christian unity. Francis cuts through all the fluff and all the icing and all that seems to be simply superficial

and goes to the heart of the matter—and that is to love our Lord, to love the risen Savior.

Is that not the case when you think of it? Everything that we believe as Catholics comes from the doctrine of the Resurrection, whether it's about Our Lady, the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception, whether it's about the primacy of the Pope, or whether it's about the seven Sacraments. It is all derived from the doctrine of the Resurrection. Everybody in the Christian Church believes the doctrine of the Resurrection. And as a corollary, they believe in the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If they don't, then they don't follow the gospel. They might be very holy and good and saved and more saved than we are, but they cannot have the name "Gospel Christian." A gospel Christian holds the triune God and the Resurrection.

Why aren't we defined by that? Why is it that when we are identified as people who follow the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, somebody gives us a tag that has nothing to do with the gospel? Isn't it true? Roman Catholics used to be defined as those who go to Mass on Sundays and take fish on Fridays. The Anglicans are in union with the Archbishop of Canterbury and rather odd. They are three sorts of different groups: high, low, and middle. Lutherans—oh, well, you know, Martin Luther didn't like Rome, called the pope the "Whore of Babylon." And the Methodists—they don't like drink; and the Presbyterians—they don't like dancing; and the Baptists—they're all rather grim. Why is it nobody ever says of us: "Oh, yes, they're the people who believe in the Resurrection? Oh yes, they're the people who believe in hope." Nobody ever says that about us. Why?

There's something not right. I myself am absolutely convinced that until the followers of the gospel of Christ are identified by the doctrine of the Resurrection and the doctrine of the Holy Community of God, which is the Trinity, we will get absolutely nowhere with Christian unity; and we will we get absolutely nowhere in our plans for the future of the world. Now this man Francis had the doctrine of the most Holy Trinity and the doctrine of the risen Savior, the Incarnate Lord, at the center of every single thing he did. And isn't it strange that he speaks precisely because of that? Francis was a Catholic; you can never pretend he was anything else. Yet, he can speak to the Anglicans; the Muslims know about him; the Hindus know about him; the Buddhists know about him—everybody seems to know about him. And yet they may know nothing about the gospel and they may know nothing about the Church.

What they grasp is that in this man's life, holiness proved to be the source of the most authentic humanity there is. Holiness makes a person utterly and entirely human—from above, not by our efforts, but by divine grace. And his life was striving to follow in the footsteps of somebody else, which is what he did; he never wanted to be original. He never, ever wanted to be a founder or have his named blessed, and he must be sitting in heaven scratching his head

now thinking: "What are they doing this for, talking about me?" Yet his following in Christ's footsteps produced absolute originality. His slavish imitation of the doctrine of the gospel produced utter and absolute originality, so much so that it speaks outside the confines of the Catholic Church, indeed, of Christianity, to other religions and to all humanity.

And that's what I think renewal and reform is all about. That's what I think being a Church in ruins is about. And I learned it from him; I've said nothing that is mine. I've learned it from St. Francis. It is not necessary to be divided from our brethren to renew the Church. That's what he says to the sixteenth century, to all the Catholics and to the Protestants as well—you *do not* have to divide the Church or be separated from one another to renew the Church. Indeed, it is against the will of Christ. And he says it to our time—it is not necessary for you to look askance at the people who believe something other than you do, or the people who haven't the same mental or cultural outlook as you've got. You don't have to be divided from them, for there is something deep down underneath it all that unites everybody. It's called the grace of fundamental brotherhood/-sisterhood. He considered everyone his brother who loved the Lord Jesus, the Crucified Christ.

If that could be made the principle of the Ecumenical Movement, then I fancy we would be able to dispense with many commissions and many hours of discussion and many papers delivered and published. Not that they are irrelevant, but they would be unimportant. Francis loved our Lord to such a degree that wherever he found others who loved the Lord, he rejoiced and loved them; for isn't it natural that when you love someone, you wish that everybody else should love this person as well? For love has no ending. And that is most of all like the love of God. John Duns Scotus says that God first of all loves himself, and then he loves himself in others, and this love is most ordered, a love that has no selfishness. God so loves himself that he would like the rest of us to love him as he loves himself. That is how he shares what he is. Scotus, you know, apart from being Scottish, was a very learned Franciscan; but everything he said he got from somewhere in the writings of St. Francis of Assisi.

So you see, conversion in the end is inseparable from growth in holiness. And holiness is none other than a process of trying to reach integrity. And integrity is the splendid union of what is interior and exterior. What appears in our words and what is in our minds, what comes from our eyes and what is in our hearts, are one. And that kind of integrity is the source of peace, and peace is the tranquillity of order, as St. Augustine says. And where there is peace there is always loveliness and beauty, and beauty is the splendor of order. And where there is loveliness and beauty there is always excellence. And that in the end is God's eternity.

And I believe that the grace of the Lord Jesus which St. Francis saw throughout the length and breadth of creation and which he appropriated so

beautifully in his own life is in the end the only real means of reformation and renewal for the Church in any age. The Church in our time has gone through a metamorphosis. It is now in the throes of a little bit of joy and a little bit of sadness. It is suffering and it is growing and it is looking towards the future. Would to God that what St. Francis stood for, namely the brotherhood/sisterhood revealed in Christ Jesus, were the inner dynamic of everything that we're doing and everything we want to do. Were it so, then I think the sufferings would decrease considerably and peace would enter into the holy Church; and peace in the holy Church would be the greatest possible gift that we who believe could give to the human race at this moment.

Endnote

[1]Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1966), 117-8.

"On [Christmas] day Francis wanted the poor and the hungry to be filled by the rich, and more than the usual amount of grain and hay given to the oxen and asses. 'If I could speak to the emperor, I would ask that a general law be made that all who can should scatter corn and grain along the roads so that the birds might have an abundance of food on the day of such great solemnity, especially our sisters the larks.' He would recall, not without tears, what great want surrounded the poor Virgin on that day."

(2 Cel 200)

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"The Canticle of Brother Sun" A Theology of Creation

Sylvia Marie Gamberoni, OSF

Throughout history, wide ranging approaches to and definitions of revelation have developed. The purpose and intent of this presentation is to focus on one aspect of revelation, namely, the experience of God in creation. An attempt will be made to concretize this theology by means of Francis's hymn of creation, "The Canticle of Brother Sun."

It is by our graced openness to creation that we come into relationship with other creatures and with our God. The converse of this is also true. William Reiser offers the image of Adam in hiding as indication that "fear has disordered creation."[1] This seems a highly relevant image in an age characterized by multiple layers of alienation—one individual from another; social, religious, and political groups from each other; the individual from the group; and, perhaps most tragically of all, the individual from her/himself. Reiser maintains, however, that "being uncovered and totally open to God's view . . . is the basic condition of our creaturehood"[2] no matter how far we have moved away from our reality. At our best, then, at our graced and open best, we experience the relational dimension of revelation in our human experience of creation.

The question might now be raised of what the probability is of our graced and open selves ever actually experiencing the Transcendent in creation. We may derive insight from considering Francis's lucid and transforming awareness of God manifested in creation. A close examination of Francis's view of creation—combining as it does both the unitive and the relational dimensions—will help to concretize the theological issues of revelation as experiences of creation.

The 1982 revision of the Rule for Third Order Regular Franciscans draws on Francis's own words to express the heart of his belief about creation:

> The brothers and sisters are to praise the Lord, the King of heaven and earth, (cf. Mt. 11:25) with all his creatures and to give him thanks because, by his own holy will and through his only Son with the Holy Spirit, he has created all things spiritual and material and made us in his own image and likeness (Rule 3:10; cf. RegNB 23:1 and CantSol 3).[3]

The commentary notes that for Francis "the created world is the expression of God's goodness and the theater of his redemptive love for us."[4] The sentence quoted from the Rule contains a wealth of insight into Francis's humble stance before creation. Of particular relevance is the use of the preposition "with" in the phrase "to praise the Lord . . . with all his creatures." Francis saw himself as intimately linked with the whole world of created entities, animate and inanimate. This horizontal, non-hierarchical relationship with creatures constitutes Francis's fraternal understanding of creation.

His link with creation provided Francis with a unique vision of the basic condition of a graced and open nature. Thomas of Celano notes that Francis

> called all creatures brother, and in a most extraordinary manner, a manner never experienced by others, he discerned the hidden things of nature with his sensitive heart, as one who had already escaped into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God (1Cel 81).[5]

This fraternal link is also the key to a unitive vision that sees all created realities connected with each other and with God. This is not to say that Francis's view was pantheistic. "God would reveal Himself through things without being identical with them,"[6] a distinction Francis clearly grasped. The issue is not identification of God with created realities, but rather the stance Francis brought to creation. For Francis "the universe forms a whole, a unity, a marvelous arrangement that is not hierarchically erected but is determined by fellowship."[7] This vision of the "basic unity of reality" left Francis with "a sense of wonder and mystery."[8]

Nowhere in Francis's writings is his unitive vision and "sense of wonder and mystery" more beautifully expressed than in the hymn composed toward the end of his life, "The Canticle of Brother Sun." As we approach this work, it is essential to keep before us an idea not explicitly mentioned in the poem, yet nevertheless central to a complete understanding of it. "Fundamental to understanding Francis's creation theology is the notion that the Incarnation somehow involved the sanctification of nature."[9] Francis's unitive vision, in fact, makes no sense apart from his belief in the centrality of Christ. Eric Doyle goes so far as to claim that, though Francis was not a theologian, he was "responsible . . . for a theological doctrine of the Son of God which, since the time of Duns Scotus, has been a distinguishing feature of Franciscan theology."[10] Doyle sees the doctrine of the primacy of Christ as the "logical outcome of Francis's totally Christocentric mysticism."[11] The fact that the Canticle makes no explicit reference to Christ does not negate this premise. In fact, in its absolute reliance on fraternal linkage, it does not need to refer to the mystery of Christ since "it is entirely penetrated by that mystery."[12]

The context of Francis's life at the moment of his composing this piece is well known. Having received the stigmata the year before (1224) and being in a generally weakened condition because of a chronic eye disease that had plagued him for years, Francis was also suffering from deep depression. He feared that the Order was evolving in a way that betrayed his ideal of the "poor, wandering mendicants."[13] In this depressed and weakened condition, he felt that even God had abandoned him, and he began to fear for his eternal salvation. In this state Francis experienced some kind of vision, a mystical experience in which he found assurance that he would enter the kingdom of God (cf. LP 43). It was the very next morning, according to tradition, that Francis composed what Murray Bodo calls "the swan song of one of the greatest troubadours of the Middle Ages," a song expressing the reality that "you find [God] when He finds you loving the world He has created and redeemed."[14]

The Canticle, written originally in the Umbrian dialect and comprising the first notable contribution to Italian literature, is generally thought to have been composed in three parts.[15] Whether or not that is accurate, a consideration of the poem seems to fall naturally into three focus areas with the first one, stanzas 1-9, comprising the major portion of the poem. The first two stanzas (inspired by Rev. 4:11) provide an introduction and dedication. The next seven offer three pairs of elements with alternate titles of "brother" and "sister." The poem's very first words, "Most High," occur four times in the poem (1, 2, 4, 11). The upward movement "completely oriented to the transcendent" (1, 2) is followed, in stanzas 3-7, "by a horizontal movement of openness to brotherly communion with all creatures."[16] The progression to this horizontal is, however, in a descending movement from the male image of Most High Lord to the female image of Sister/Mother Earth. Francis leaves, momentarily, the "Most High" with an awareness of the radical limits of humanity ("No mortal lips . . ." [2]). "Henceforth [Francis's] way toward the Most High will, paradoxically, be a way that leads from heaven to earth."[17]

In stanza 3 the phrase, "through all that you have made," introduces the concept of the role of mediation played by creation, a mediation impossible apart from Francis's profound fraternal relationship to all creatures. It is appropriate that the first element mentioned (3, 4) should be the sun since Francis "thought the sun the loveliest of God's creatures and most worthy of comparison with him" (SP 119). Doyle finds Francis's attitude representative of that of

the early Christians who believed the sun to be "created and endowed with a beauty which reveals something of the indescribable loveliness of its maker."[18] Taking the elements to their symbolic heights, Leclerc sees the sun in the Canticle as an archetypal image, "a symbolic language for an experience which is inseparably cosmic, interior, and religious, since it puts the soul in communion with the world, the self, and God."[19]

The moon and stars (5) are illuminations of the night, in contrast to the sun which is of the day. The moon, in particular, uniquely symbolizes human life in its continual fluctuations of growth and decline. The cycle of humanity's faces, which we daily encounter, "all share in differing degrees the radiance of Another, but always less than that Original, as the moon carries, but in a subdued way, the brilliant light of the sun."[20] This shining by reflected light has the power to bring us home to ourselves in true humility. With Francis's vision of radical creaturehood, we see ourselves dependent on the Most High. The stanza on the moon also introduces the adjective "precious," a remarkable usage here since, as Leclerc notes, the adjective is used elsewhere in Francis's writing solely in reference to the Eucharist or to places where the Eucharist is reserved.[21] Its use here and in stanza 7 is an indicator of Francis's attitude of reverence toward all of creation.

It is appropriate that stanzas 6 and 7 be considered together in view of the fact that "in poetic and religious meditation on the cosmic elements, wind and water are often closely associated."[22] Scripture provides numerous examples of this (cf. Gen. 1:2; Ex. 14:21-22). Wind and water, in Francis's usage, also provide contrasting images of action on the part of wind and pure being (with no verb of action) for water. Wind here is the "Creator's fellow-worker, the one who 'cherishes,' that is, supports, strengthens, and invigorates other creatures."[23] Doyle further sees wind, which is "formless yet capable of entering into the finest crevice of any being" as "a symbol of God's grace."[24] Water, in our Christian tradition, is powerful with imagery of new life and finds its place in many of our rites and blessings. Here water is described with the second use of "precious," providing a sacred image connoting "an inward openness to the sacred,"[25] and an atmosphere of pure and lovely stillness.

Stanza 8 introduces an image of particular majesty in Brother Fire. Francis possessed an extraordinary devotion to fire,[26] a devotion explained by "his recognition of it as a symbol of God."[27] The Church expresses also this recognition in, for example, its use of a sanctuary lamp in places where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved and in the central place of the new fire at the Easter Vigil. Leclerc sees both the external and interior symbolism of fire as something which touches persons interiorly and provides also an image of God, of "life-giving and creative power."[28]

The journey from heaven to earth is completed in stanza 9. Earth is both Sister and Mother, linked inextricably to our creaturehood as the work of God

and generative once she is created. "The Earth Mother is the origin and paradigm of all parturition, physical, intellectual, and spiritual. And in one or another of these senses we are all mothers."[29] It is appropriate that the earth should be chosen to end the seven-stanza rendering of the elements. Francis's celebration of Mother Earth effects a "reconciliation of the supernatural, the natural, and the human."[30]

In this sense the poem leads naturally into the stanzas on pardon and peace (10, 11) regardless of the presence or absence of an objective historical event occasioning them. "The Canticle shows itself to be the song of a man who is fully reconciled and at peace in his relations with others and with himself, even in 'sickness and trial.'"[31] The unitive dynamic of revelation is operative throughout this "charter of peace."[32] Francis is at one with all creation, a oneness that elevates his mind and heart, that unites his very self with the creative, life-giving God present in all of creation.

It follows logically that a person so reconciled could welcome Sister Death (12) as she approached. Francis's total openness—Adam out of hiding—enabled him freely to embrace death in an attitude completely opposed to one of sinful obstinacy (13). Sin, according to Leclerc, consists of "the closing in of the conscious self upon itself and its individuality. . . . A man who thus cuts himself off from Being is spiritually dead."[33] Francis's vision of creation and his total reliance on the Creator led him to "praise," "bless," and "give . . . thanks" (14). In this final stanza, we can hear a kind of sending forth for all of us who need to find ways of incorporating Francis's vision of creation into our ongoing efforts to discover God in our world.

Conclusion

Through our human experience of creation, we come to an awareness of God's self-communication. Our Judeo-Christian heritage is filled with natural imagery proclaiming the wonder of a self-revealing God. The Spirit of God enables us to enter into relationship with the world of creatures in a bond of kinship that is radical and complete. Francis's exquisite poem, "The Canticle of Brother Sun," is a particularly striking representation of the relational view of creation leading to union with the Creator. The theology of creation—and Francis's unique vision of it—leaves us with an abiding hope in a world "charged with the grandeur of God," a world where "there lives the dearest freshness deep down things," a world over which the Spirit of God "broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings."[34]

Endnotes

[1]William E. Reiser, *Drawn to the Divine: A Spirituality of Revelation* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987), 18.

[2]Reiser, 17.

[3]References to the Rule are from *The Rule and Life of The Brothers and Sisters of The Third Order Regular of St. Francis*, with commentary by Margaret Carney, OSF and Thaddeus Horgan, SA (Franciscan Federation, 1982). References to the writings of Francis are from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis Armstrong, OFMCap. and Ignatius Brady, OFM (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

[4]*Rule and Life*, p. 25.

[5]References to the early biographical sources are from *St. Francis of Assisi: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. Marion Habiger (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983).

[6]*Build With Living Stones: A Program of Study on the Franciscan Missionary Charism*, Correspondence Course on Franciscan Missionary Charism, 1989, 12/6.

[7]*Build With Living Stones*, 12/6.

[8]Cf. Eric Doyle, OFM, *St. Francis and The Song of Brotherhood* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981), 5.

[9]Timothy Vining, TOR, "A Theology of Creation Based on the Life of Francis of Assisi," *The Cord*, 40 (April, 1990): 102.

[10]Doyle, 60.

[11]Doyle, 60.

[12]Eloi Leclerc, OFM, *The Canticle of Creatures, Symbols of Union: An Analysis of St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 35.

[13]Murray Bodo, OFM, *The Way of St. Francis* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985), 146.

[14]Bodo, 144-45.

[15]According to traditional belief, stanzas 1-9 were written soon after the mystical vision; stanzas 10-11 were written to help settle a dispute between the bishop and the mayor of Assisi; stanzas 12-14 were written as Francis saw death actually approaching. According to Habig some question this assumption regarding sequence of composition. The "Mirror of Perfection" and "Legend of the Three Companions," which record the three-part composition, may be legends. Also, no record has been found in Assisi's archives of a quarrel between Bishop Guido and the mayor. Cf. Marion A. Habig, "Francis of Assisi: Writer, Supplement to the Omnibus of Sources on St. Francis," in *Omnibus*, 1920.

[16]Leclerc, 30.

[17]Leclerc, 30.

[18]Doyle, 72.

[19]Doyle, 71.

[20]Doyle, 82.

[21]Leclerc, 76.

[22]Leclerc, 91. (Francis writes of "Wind and Air," perhaps not recognizing wind as air in motion.)

[23]Leclerc, 95.

[24]Doyle, 97.

[25]Leclerc, 106.

[26]Because of this great devotion, Francis once refused to help put out a fire that was burning his cell on Mount La Verna, a stance that helps to explain the following caution: "It must be remembered that modern rational thinking will never be able to fully understand the behaviour of Francis" (*Build With Living Stones*, 12/4).

[27]Doyle, 109.

[28]Leclerc, 115, 127.

[29]Doyle, 121.

[30]Leclerc, 158.

[31]Leclerc, 171.

[32]Doyle, 138.

[33]Leclerc, 181.

[34]Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie, 4th ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 66.

Contributors

Michael Blastic, OFMConv., is a friar of the St. Bonaventure Province, Chicago. He formerly taught at Washington Theological Union and is currently at St. Bonaventure University in western New York, teaching and serving as Dean of the School of Franciscan Studies, The Franciscan Institute. He edits the scholarly annual, *Franciscan Studies*.

Donald DeMarco, of Kitchener, Ontario, is married and has five children. He earned his doctorate at St. John's University in New York and has been engaged in educational ministry since 1966, most recently teaching at St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta. He has published many books and articles and lectured extensively in the United States and Canada.

Eric Doyle, OFM, (d. 1984) became a friar of the English province in 1954. He taught at the Franciscan House of Studies in Canterbury and at St. Bonaventure University in New York. He is the author of *St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood*, (Seabury Press, New York, 1981; reprinted, The Franciscan Institute, 1997).

Frank Drollinger, SFO, is a member of Queen of Heaven Fraternity, Ozone Park, NY, and the father of three children. A Franciscan for fourteen years, he has served twice as Fraternity Minister. He currently edits the newsletter for the Tau Cross Region on Long Island. Formerly in the insurance business, he is now a freelance writer and lives with his wife, Carol Ann, in Woodhaven, NY.

Sylvia Gamberoni, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of the Third Franciscan Order of Syracuse, New York. She is a certified chaplain with the National Association of Catholic Chaplains and has served in pastoral ministry for five years at St. Joseph Hospital in Syracuse. Presently she is completing a term of service as a council member for her congregation.

Séamus Mulholland, OFM, a friar of the English province, is a regular contributor to *The Cord*. He is Chaplain to the University and Visiting Lecturer in Theology and Franciscan Studies at the Franciscan Study Centre, University of Kent. He is also engaged in teaching and research work on aspects of Medieval Franciscanism at the School of Medieval Studies, University of London.

Robert F. Pawell, OFM, is a friar of the Sacred Heart Province. He co-founded Project Lazarus, a residence in New Orleans for persons with AIDS, and developed retreats for those affected by HIV/AIDS. A self-trained artist, he now serves out of Chicago, employing poetry and the arts in the Ministry of the Word.

Allan B. Wolter, OFM, is a member of the St. Barbara Province and well-known for his study of the works of John Duns Scotus. He is currently the Joseph Doino Visiting Professor at The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University.

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Francis of Assisi: Harbinger of a New Medieval Radicalism

Séamus Mulholland, OFM

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Introduction

There is perhaps no other saint in Christendom who is as popular or as much loved as Francis of Assisi. Most people at least know the "bare bones" of his story: that he was rich, he gave it all away, became poor. Most people know that like some medieval Dr. Dolittle he spoke to the animals and called the trees, stones, sun, moon, and stars his brothers and sisters. One wonders whether this is enough to justify the attraction that he has for so many people. Though many centuries have passed since Francis's death, he continues to exercise a powerful fascination over and attraction for millions. And these are not just Christians of every denomination, but also men and women who would claim to have no faith whatever and whose culture radically differs from our own.

What then is the attraction of Francis of Assisi? How is it to be explained? How does a little man from thirteenth-century Italy who seems to have been rather unattractive physically gain the admiration of so many people for so long?

Medieval historians, specialists, and experts would tend perhaps to approach Francis as a footnote in medieval history, whether it be social or ecclesiastical. They might try to determine his place and importance within the context of the massively shifting upheavals of the thirteenth century, that time of great development and liberal humanism in arts, music, and poetry. I, however, must approach Francis of Assisi as one who found him attractive enough and his ideals and vision challenging enough to change my lifestyle completely. Before joining the Franciscan Order I was a nightclub bouncer and a bodyguard. I risked everything for what many today would consider a worthless venture, and even while in that venture, have been the butt and point of other

people's accusations of hypocrisy, compromise, and betrayal. Yet myself and thousands like me follow St. Francis of Assisi as our constant and guiding inspiration for living a life today based on the experiences and vision of a thirteenth-century itinerant, mendicant preacher who turned medieval society and Christendom on its head.

Francis of Assisi: Who Was He?

It has always been the case throughout the history of the Franciscan Order, that while many despise the friars (for example, Chaucer has a few harsh words to say about them since he was fined five shillings in the fourteenth century for beating a friar up), Francis has always been deemed "untouchable" and beyond reproach. Yet, who was this little man? He was not especially learned. He did not have an extraordinary education. His handwriting (as we know from manuscripts available to us) was barely legible. His head was filled with all sorts of romantic notions of the "sacred call of knighthood," but he soon learned the brutality and the horror of war. Francis fought for Assisi against Perugia in 1202 at the battle of Collestrada, when Assisi lost the flower of its youth. He was imprisoned for nearly eighteen months before being ransomed by his father.

But this experience of the horror of war did not deter him from setting out for battle once again in 1205, this time to fight against Apulia. But he never got there. Near Spoleto he turned back along the way he had come; something had happened to him which medieval hagiographers would call a "revelation." We do not know what happened, but we do know that up until that moment he had been a rather fastidious young man, fussy about the company he kept, and that he was the leader of a group of youths in Assisi who spent most of their time partying. He despised, hated, and feared the lepers who lived on the dark edges of his bright world. He found the poor who lived in the Assisian "shanty towns" a people to be ignored; after all, in the city archives they did not exist.

And yet, something happened to the young Assisian to change the whole course of his life radically, and with that change the course of the history of Europe. The once headstrong, party youth had a kind of spiritual earthquake, which shook him to the foundations of his being. What he had once despised and feared he now served, ministered to, learned from, defended, honored, and loved.

The Times in Which He Lived

I have titled this paper "Francis of Assisi: Harbinger of a New Medieval Radicalism." By "radicalism" I do not mean that Francis was some kind of

socio-cultural revolutionary or that he exhorted the people of his era to change the face of the world in which they lived. It was already happening and happening fast. Rather, I mean that Francis of Assisi, by his own life as both example and witness (which incidentally he never forced on anyone), called people to return to the root *(radix)* of the truth of their own lives in a world which was developing, growing, and moving fast—culturally, socially, economically, and politically.

The thirteenth century was a period of structural disintegration. Feudalism and the Holy Roman empire were beginning to shatter. A new and critical period was dawning upon Europe (and beyond). The thirteenth century saw the emergence of a new and powerful group, the independent townspeople, the "commune." This group made up a new class in society comprised of tradespeople, craftsmen, and merchants. They were inspired by new ideals and the spirit of democracy. They were a powerfully mobile group, and with a money-based economy threatened the security of land tenure. But quite aside from its spirit of democracy and free enterprise economics, this developing class had new requirements in the areas of ethics, spirituality, and religion.

New states were emerging in Europe. They were taking on new societal and human aspirations, structurally in conflict with the older forms of religious or feudal power-based authoritarianism. The ancient framework of the "City of God" on earth was rent asunder by the titanic clash of the two most powerful upholders of that very structure—the Empire and the Papacy.

Besides the powerful wrangling of Church and State was the development of new forms of economy, trade, and socio-political aspirations as well as cultural and artistic development. With the emergence of a new people, there came a new culture which was ushered in with the development of the *romans*, the language of the new romantic. It was the time of the *cardias*, the courtly love novella, the diffusion of the cycles of Arthur and the Round Table—ideology which sacralized the aspirations of knighthood and chivalry. It was the time of the great heroic epics—the Song of Roland, the Chansons de Gestes. The creative movement flowered. Its poetry, music, and song were at once shocking, challenging, inventive, creative, and dynamically beautiful in the intensity of their sensuality and true eroticism. It was the time of the Troubadours.

Into this ferment Francis was born. Within it he came to maturity. In the truest sense Francis was both a product of and a contradiction to these two worlds. In his romanticism he harkens backs to the age of feudalism and the nobility of knighthood. Between the fading splendor of the Empire and the unstoppable rise of the new European nations, he stood as a bridge. In the decline of Latin, the language of the learned and powerful, and the rise of the vernacular, Francis embodied the "schizophrenia" of his age—the constructive though radical aspirations of someone born of the new commune and the

dreaming chivalry of a sun-golden age now tarnished to a low burnt-orange of autumnal fading. He both personified and linked two eras and reflected all the contrasts of that transitional century.

The Church and the Papacy

But while there was great flux and change within society and culture, the medieval Church itself was not standing still. In 1198 Innocent III ascended the Papal throne and ushered in with his pontificate a period in which the Church reached the zenith of its temporal power and influence. Innocent was undoubtedly one of the most powerful popes, a statesman and consummate politician, a skilled orator and user of persuasion. In the history books Innocent is remembered for his political ruthlessness rather than his pastoral activity. But he did try to bring order to a period of great religious change. He addressed the demands being made by the poverty-reform movements that were the precursors of Francis. Innocent was especially successful in returning the Humiliati to the Church.

A jealous guardian of the Church's rights, however, Innocent was ruthless in the persecution of those he considered to be the Church's enemies—whether from within or without. The sack of the Cathar stronghold of Beziers and the subsequent fall of Carcassone are indicative of what Innocent was capable of when his patience was finally exhausted. They were also indicative of the struggle for peoples' hearts. Yet Innocent never deliberately obstructed any grace moving within the Church. It was he, one of the most powerful men on earth, before whom Francis and his few companions knelt to seek permission for their way of life and from whom they received it.

The medieval Church, still feudal in its structure and mentality, had taken steps toward independence from civil power. Yet it remained deeply secularized. The monastic form of life inaugurated by Benedict had given shape to European society, combining as it did stability of place with a regular pattern of liturgy and work. There was a symbiotic relationship between the monk and the monastery—the monk gave all he owned to the monastery, including his labor, and in return had his spiritual and temporal needs met while subject to the control and authority of the abbot. Yet here too there had been attempts at reform. The great movements of Cluny and Citeaux had offered two interpretive visions of Benedictine life within the context of monastic reform—Cluny with its emphasis on liturgy, art, intellectual and social influence; Citeaux directing itself towards austere living, perpetual silence, subjective piety, and simplicity. But even the monasteries still clung to feudal structures. As a result, they were distant from the people.

The institutional Church, too, was far from the people. Under Innocent III it primarily occupied itself with the struggle to subordinate temporal au-

thority to the spiritual authority of the Church, personified in the person of the Vicar of Christ. The people saw a Church that spoke to them from a great height, a Church they could not hear because it was so far away from the clamorous reality of their own real lives. The Church could not and would not listen to the people because it heard only its own voice clamoring against the shifting sands of the society and the world in which it found itself. Its ears were deafened by the constant brutal battles it found itself having to wage.

Francis at the Crossroads

By birth Francis belonged to this age of uncertainty. He belonged to the new society that was being thrust into the medieval world—the new society made up of craftsmen and merchants, one of whom was his own father. But his idealistic chivalric heart kept him in touch with the old feudal atmosphere—the heroism of the chansons, the striving for perfection through the ideals of knight errancy: courtesy, loyalty, bravery, pity for the weak, and defense of the defenseless.

In forsaking the intensity of opportunity this newly emergent world was offering him, Francis was not making any negative statement of rejection. Its preoccupations were not what was truly in his heart. He had always remained an idealistic romantic, but an idealistic romantic who lived the ideals that had inspired and motivated him. He never lost the deeper values of knighthood, and, while others condemned the Church, he did not. The only judgment that Francis made on the medieval Church was one of love and loyalty. He condemned no one, not even the rich, and to suggest otherwise is to misunderstand and unjustly misinterpret Francis of Assisi's attitude toward poverty. He was as happy in the palace of Guido, Bishop of Assisi, as he was in the shanty towns of the poor.

Francis condemned no one but was in all aspects a *vir Catholicus*, a Catholic man. He was Catholic in faith and Catholic in vision and outlook. His vision was all-embracing, universal. It was not limited to, nor could it be contained within, the confines of a monastery; nor was it maintained by brute force of arms. In the *Sacrum Commercium*, the Lady Poverty asks Francis to show her his friary. Taking her to the top of a mountain he shows her the world and says "This, Lady, is our friary." Francis was no critic of the Church; quite the opposite as his writings attest. He was simply himself. He experienced the truth of the society in which he found himself but lived his life in such a way as to suggest that beyond the dehumanizing lure of money, power, and wealth there was a freedom which existed if only it was searched for.

The age in which he lived was preoccupied with itself. It waged war with itself and with others. It justified violence in the name of whatever God people called upon, whether it was the Father or Allah. At the battle of Damietta in

1218, Francis saw the brutality and horror of war, a vision which must have brought back memories of his earlier involvement in violence. Yet it was through these armed ranks of men willing to butcher for their God that Francis marched toward the camp of the Sultan. It stunned and challenged his contemporaries.

A New Vision

There is a brute simplicity in Francis of Assisi and a single-minded purposefulness in his absolute refusal to allow any deviation from the path upon which he believed God had set him and upon which, through him, others had also been set. When founding his way of life, he did not draw inspiration from earlier forms of religious life as expressed in the rules of Benedict or Augustine, and he resolutely refused to countenance doing so. He ignored the monastic concept of stability, nor would he allow his Order to be confined to houses. In 1223 he gathered all the friars together at Assisi that they might discuss and share their experiences and contribute to the upbuilding of the movement. It was an exercise of the democracy with which Francis had grown up. It had never been heard of that *all* the members of a religious movement should come together to discuss openly and freely issues related to their way of life.

Francis's every instinct was with the ideals of freedom and democracy, openness and receptivity, willingness to listen and to hear. It was challenging in its immediacy and radical in its vision of the future. While Innocent had approved his form of life in 1209, Francis did not need anyone to tell him what his way of life should be. He knew what God had told him, and he would not allow alien patterns to be forced on him regardless of where they came from and the ecclesiastical power behind them. Francis was radical in that he followed his instinct—it was this same instinct which allowed him to follow the gospel, which also allowed him to find a place and a role within the fractured social and religious world of his time and to be a rock within it.

For Francis of Assisi the medieval world did not present him with disappointment or drive him in exasperation to undertake a *fuga mundi*. It did not mean for him to shut himself away behind the high walls of a monastery. Rather, the way of life which was divinely revealed to him was offered gratuitously to the society that surrounded him, and it was offered within that society and not apart from it. To the new powerful townspeople, Francis of Assisi offered the truth of Christian conversion and a living penitential presence.

In the earlier Rule of 1221 and in the later Rule of 1223 and in some of his other writings, Francis makes it clear that, unlike the monks, his friars will live among the poor. They will become part of the social reality in which they find themselves by working for their living. They will pray with the Church and they will preach in the vernacular. And while those around them who are emerg-

ing as the new arbiters of society are victims of their own lust for gain, the friars would display detachment—most particularly from money.

Here is Francis of Assisi's new radicality. Here is his harboring of a new concept, not just of religious life, but of medieval life. In his own life he reflected the longing that was deep within the religious aspiration of his time for a true return to gospel values. These values had characterized the poverty-reform movements which had gone before him, but many of them had fallen into conflict with the Church. Francis differed strongly from them by his non-negotiable refusal to condemn public wrongs, with his message of peace and good for all; and he differed strongly from them also in his submissive attitude and filial obedience to the Church of Rome, its bishops, and its clergy. The writings of Francis are replete with the constant call to the friars to obey the Church.

The movement he inspired was something daring and something new, a new religious movement which was markedly different from any previous monastic institution or the poverty-reform movements that had gone before. While Francis's movement was based on a return to apostolic poverty, there was also the concept of brotherhood/sisterhood and a radical preferential option for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, the outcast, and the lost. For Francis of Assisi there was no tension with this way of being in the medieval world and the medieval Church. The tension rather arose from those who, faced with the radical challenge of the newness and freshness of Francis's way, could not quite meet it.

A New Radicalism

Thus we may say in all truth that Francis of Assisi is a harbinger of a new medieval radicalism. The life and vision he chose and offered to the world and the Church of his time was not one chosen and offered in scorn, contempt, or criticism, nor was it chosen as a rejection of nature as impure. Francis never wished to leave the world nor did he wish his followers to do so. On the contrary he wanted to be immersed in it without being of it.

The major force in western European history has been the rise of the city. While some were condemning the cities as places sunk in vice, corruption, decadence, filth, and all kinds of depraved lust and vanity, others were moving in different directions. Innocent III had founded the hospital of the Holy Spirit in Rome to take in foundling children. A parish priest in Paris was working to rehabilitate prostitutes. At Toulouse the Cathar heresy was raging, and at city fairs usury was wreaking havoc with the people.

The instructions of Francis were clear. He put his followers into cities, not at the centers but rather at the edges. The proto-Franciscan communes lived on the outskirts of the cities where the poor lived. These were strange

and new times and as such they needed strange and innovative solutions to their difficulties. The monasteries sprawled over the countryside and owned much of it. The city spawned new wealth that flowed from the new commune with its trading and crafts. It was here that Francis placed his begging itinerants—among the humble and the deprived (without neglecting the others!).

While Francis of Assisi was a harbinger of a new medieval radicalism, he is also relevant to our own times. Predating the call of the Second Vatican Council by seven hundred years, Francis maintains the paradoxical elements of the Christian Gospel and not only reads the signs of the times but responds to them in the light of a "return to the sources." In this sense we can say that there is a twofold dimension to the new radicalism of Francis of Assisi—it is at once Christian and social.

Here lay his originality and radicalism—he opened up a way of being religious in the world at a time when the Church was at the summit of its temporal power and wealth. In the religio-social movement he founded, there were to be no positions of dominance or precedence. Brotherhood became the central tenet of his movement. This is the key to understanding his impact on the middle ages and on the centuries which followed, for he insists on a new non-negotiable quality of relationship. The spirit of association that characterized the communes is found in Francis of Assisi, but thrown into stark relief against the background of his world is his response to a gospel inspiration.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by offering the following reflection. The cries for justice, tolerance, and peace that clamored from the poor in the world of St. Francis are still being voiced today. We need a new radicalism of brotherhood/sisterhood, both proclaimed and lived, if those cries are to be given ear today. This is why Francis still commands respect and ever will. Franciscan life today is not lived in the thirteenth century but in the post-modern era of the decaying embers of a century that has seen two world wars, the death camps, the detonation of the atomic bomb, the slow, agonizing extinction of thousands of species of animals and plants, and the disruption of the very heavens with the erosion of the ozone layer. In his own time Francis rejected the power of ecclesiastical prelacies, the feudal wars, the butchery and savagery of the Crusades. He did not want abbatial paternalism and stood against all forms of domination.

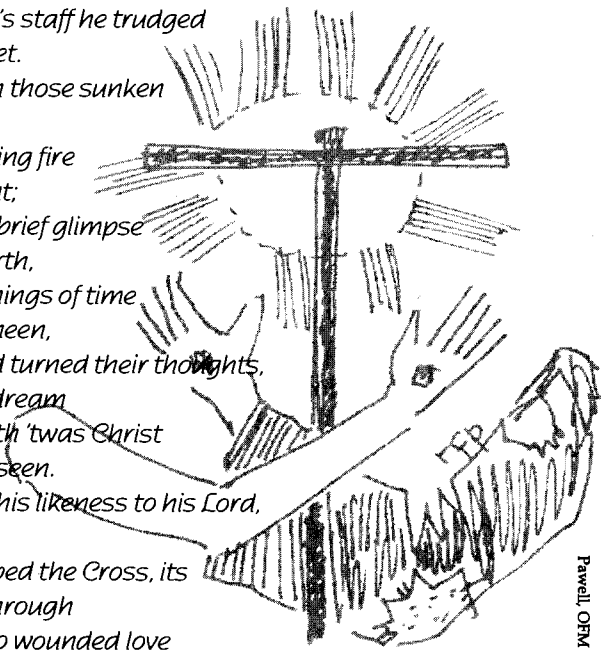
Francis was a man both of his time and beyond his time. We are the products of the post-modern age, and as we move towards the new millennium perhaps we do so full of doubt and fear. Fear makes us wary and uneasy. So too was it in the time of Francis of Assisi. Yet we also stand on the edge of greatness. We do not know if we as a species can achieve the glory that is possible

for us. If Francis of Assisi has anything to teach us as we take these tottering steps towards the year 2000, it must be that every aspiration for justice, peace, tolerance, and integrity in a single-minded devotion to an original inspirational ideal is worth a life.

For those of us who are Christian, it may be following in the footsteps of Christ more closely. For others it may be the discovery of radical forms of life which are equitable and just and which respect the dignity of creation and humanity regardless of race, creed, or culture. Francis judged no one but sought to embrace the truth of the world that confronted him. Perhaps this is the real legacy he has left us—a non-judgmental involvement with the dirt and the mire of this world in all its aspects so that by involving ourselves in the reality of creation we may better perceive and understand the Mystery within it.

Mirror of Christ

How oft o'er Umbrian slopes,
through dusty lanes
with shepherd's staff he trudged
in sandaled feet.
Men peering in those sunken
eyes beheld
The flash of living fire
and felt its heat;
Forgot in that brief glimpse
this bauble earth,
The tinseled things of time
with tawdry sheen,
And God-ward turned their thoughts,
yea, dared to dream
perhaps in truth 'twas Christ
that they had seen.
Why strange this likeness to his Lord,
when he
So tightly clasped the Cross, its
nails pierced through
Frail hands? To wounded love
so close he drew
the soldier's lance found not
one heart, but two.



Pawell, OFM

Allan B. Wolters, OFM

The Cord, 48.6 (1998)

The Courtesy of St. Francis

Donald DeMarco

The term "courtesy" derives from the word "court." A "courteous" person, according to the etymology, behaves in a manner befitting a prince. "Courtly love" is a romanticized version of sexual love in which the woman is greatly idealized and ardently pursued. It originated among the French aristocracy in the late eleventh century, but soon spread into neighboring countries through the poetry and music of itinerant romantics called troubadours. Manuals known as "Courtesy Books" advised aspiring young "courtiers" in etiquette and other aspects of behavior expected at royal or noble courts. They helped to elevate "courtship"—the implementation of courtly love—to a highly refined art.

At the same time, there were certain ambiguities about courtly love, as specific cognates of the word "courtesy" clearly attest. A "courtesan," that is, a woman attached to the court, was a prostitute; but a "curtsy"—the word "courtesy" reduced to two syllables—was an elegant gesture of respect. Courtly love in all its aspects is dramatized in the legends of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. Sir Lancelot's tragic love for Lady Guinevere is the archetypal embodiment of this form of romantic desire. But as in the case of Lancelot and Guinevere, one of the less respectable features of courtly love, given the prevalent Medieval practice of marriage for convenience, is the idealization of adultery.[1]

Francis and the Ideal of Courtly Love

Francis of Assisi was greatly enamored by the ideal of courtly love and the songs of the troubadours. He gave them, however, a Christian interpretation. He took the courtly notion of courtesy and gave it a fresh countenance which glowed with Christian charity.[2] For Francis, courtesy became the respect one was prepared to show in the presence of anyone. He was especially fond of expressing this value to the less fortunate members of society. For Francis, the poor, the sick, and the neglected were his brothers. "Whoever may come to us," he said to his disciples, "whether a friend or a foe, a thief or a robber, let him be kindly received."[3] He knighted all humanity and then, with an almost reckless enthusiasm, began addressing all God's creatures with the honorific

titles of brother and sister. He praised Brother Sun and Sister Moon, Brother Wind and Sister Water. According to the legend, his "little brethren the birds" listened so devoutly to his sermon by the roadside near Bevagna that he chided himself for not having thought of preaching to them before. The special Lady whom this gallant and exuberant troubadour chose to court was Lady Poverty. He pursued his Lady ardently throughout his life and, when he was dying, requested that his body be stripped naked, laid on the bare earth, and sprinkled with ashes as a sign that even in death he had remained faithful to her.

Francis was courteous to all of God's creatures because courtesy, in his view, was the younger sister of charity and an attribute of God—"*La Cortesia e una delle proprieta di Dio.*" "God Himself, of His courtesy, gives His sun and rain to the just and the unjust."[4] Francis would surely have applauded what Hilaire Belloc was later to say about courtesy:

> Of Courtesy, it is much less
> Than courage of heart or holiness,
> Yet in my walks it seems to me
> That the grace of God is Courtesy.[5]

Francis took the straitened notion of courtesy as sung by the troubadours and gave it a breadth that made it co-extensive with the cosmos. He understood that royalty was not limited to aristocracy; it was an essential feature of every created thing. All of creation stood before his eyes as one vast royal court. He had taken the word "court," which in Latin originally referred to something closed (*cors, cortem*—an enclosure for cattle) and opened it up to the far reaches of the universe.

For Francis, courtesy is the glad tribute each pays to each in recognizing the likeness of God in every soul. It is the light of God which confers upon his human subjects a nobility that is radically different from the nobility that members of the court believed they saw in each other. It is not blood, rank, privilege, or even virtue that makes people noble; it is their Creator. Francis restored the source of nobility and the justification for courtesy to God, whose Self is bound by courtesy to all souls who bear God's image.

Commentary

Francis had a rich appreciation for the virtue of courtesy understood in its highest form. Even the small kindnesses and seemingly trivial considerations that are shown to others can lend a greater charm to one's character than the display of great talents and accomplishments. They can provide the gateway to firm and enduring friendships, and they can also provide the world with much needed warmth and wit. During one of his performances, pianist-comedian Victor Borge was handed a note which read: "Lauritz Melchior and Jean Hersholt both at ringside." Borge responded with diplomacy and charm. "I rarely introduce big names from the stage," he said to his audience, "but in this case, since both visitors are old friends and fellow Danish-Americans, I made an exception. I have the privilege of introducing two great Danish artists. I honestly don't know in what order to introduce them," he continued, fearing that he might be discourteous to one or the other, "So I'm sure that Jean Hersholt won't mind if I mention Lauritz Melchior first."[6]

Our contemporary world, however, so impressed as it is by the mere external show of things, has depersonalized courtesy, transforming it into a tool of commerce. Thus, we write courtesy notes, make courtesy visits, present courtesy baskets, pick up courtesy tickets, and switch on courtesy lights. We use courtesy phones, report to courtesy desks, study courtesy maps, receive courtesy titles, and are given the courtesy treatment to insure that we remain satisfied and steady customers. The courtesy industry is alive and well.

Just as a halo does not have far to slip in order to become a noose, courtesy—like any other virtue—does not have far to stray to become a vice. Courtesy can easily be nothing more than a shallow pretense, a vulgar display of hypocrisy. As Shakespeare writes:

> How courtesy would seem to cover sin,
> When what is done is like an hypocrite,
> To which is good in nothing but in sight![7]

Courtesy is a true virtue only when it has a personal depth that accompanies its outward show. One might find genuine courtesy in the most unlikely places, far from either the court of ancient kings or the world of modern commerce:

> Shepherd, I take thy word,
> And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
> Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
> With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry halls
> And courts of princes.[8]

Courtesy is paradoxical, but immensely practical. The courteous person assumes that every man is a gentleman and every woman is a lady, rather than wonder whether they are. It may be naive and gratuitous to make such an assumption, but it is remarkable how many people begin to act as gentlemen and as ladies precisely because they were thought to be worthy of these courteous titles.

The foundation for courtesy is the dignity of the human person. Courtesy is the appropriate response in recognizing the divine royalty in another per-

son. Graciousness, as its etymology indicates, is the release of loveliness, a quality that emanates from the person who is being gracious. Courtesy is the recognition of that quality in the other. In this regard, courtesy is something like love at first sight. It is sensing nobility at first sight and then acting in a manner consistent with that sense.

For Dante, this nobility is luminously evident to the souls in Paradise. In his *Paradiso*, two Dominicans—Dominic and Aquinas—exchange courteous and joyful tributes with two Franciscans—Francis and Bonaventure. Aquinas first praises Francis for his great love for Lady Poverty:

> And unto her he pledged his wedded faith
> In spiritual court and before his father too,
> And loved her more each day that he drew breath.[9]

Bonaventure then extols Dominic as a great champion (paladin) and acknowledges that he as well as his company of saints are very much moved by the words of St. Thomas:

> To emulous praise of that great paladin,
> The modest speech and glowing courtesy
> Of Brother Thomas moved me, and therein
> Moved all this fellowship to join with me.[10]

The courtesy which these saints display toward each other represents the gracious mutuality and harmony that exist between souls in Paradise. Courtesy is of divine origin and is shared by all who share God's Light.[11] The implication is apparent: we begin to experience what heaven must be like when we sense in each other our divine nobility and respond with the proper courtesy.

Endnotes

[1]C. S. Lewis, "Courtly Love," *The Allegory of Love* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

[2]Séamus Mulholland, "St. Francis and the Themes of Medieval Literature," *The Cord* (April, 1994): 117.

[3]*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 6 (New York: Appleton Co., 1909), 227.

[4]*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 6 (New York: Appleton Co., 1909), 227.

[5]Hilaire Belloc, *Courtesy*.

[6]"Eating Out," *The Bedside Book of Laughter* (London: Hazell Watson and Viney Ltd., 1959), 99.

[7]Shakespeare, *Pericles*, i, i, l. 121.

[8]John Milton, *Comus* (1637), l. 321.

[9]Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, "Paradiso," trans. Dorothy Sayers, XI, l. 61.

[10]Dante, XII, l. 143.

[11]Dante, VII, l. 91.

The Cord, 48.6 (1998)

Some Secular Franciscan Themes

Frank Drollinger, SFO

[This is an edited selection of meditations from a series prepared originally for a monthly Fraternity newsletter.]

The Goodness of God.

When we are attached to the things we have acquired and prize because of the exercise of our self-will, the things of God can appear of little value to us. At worst, the magnificent sunset or the grand displays of nature are mere backdrops, the scenery against which we pursue our own interests.

In the beginning, God's goodness was in the garden. That was not enough for us, and after our disobedience this goodness arose in the desert. We may have a nostalgia for Eden, but we find the grace of salvation in the wasteland. Within our oases the earth seems all we need. God's gifts often come in packages that are rather drab when they appear in the settings of earthly abundance. But when we make our hearts a desert in which we find poverty of spirit, only God satisfies us.

Francis had become so receptive to and aware of God's goodness that the less his food was earned the more he was grateful for it, because then it came directly from the hand of God. I think that Francis valued the sun so highly because he recognized his dependence on its pleasure, and it reminded him of God, Whose gifts cannot be purchased or coaxed from Him but which are absolutely free.

If we are self-willed, a gift from God can seem not enough, because we want more, as perhaps the nine lepers did. We cannot see that God comes with the gift. For God does not practice random acts of kindness. He does not make out checks to "cash." He makes them out to you and to me and to every beggar, thief, and saint, with our names right on them; and He signs them. And I believe He jealously waits for them to clear, to see where we have cashed them. I love the way Dante says it:

The root of human virtue seldom bears
Like branches, and the Giver wills it so,
That men may know it is
His gift, not theirs.

(Purgatorio, Canto VII)

Profession

The story of Christmas is one that we try to live all year round, putting into practice its lessons, especially the message of peace and joy which is brought to us by our Savior. It is never out of season. So also with the story of Scrooge, one of the myths of our civilization in the sense that when we refer to it there is instant recognition of what we are thinking about. The part of the Scrooge story that I like best is his conversion. This is a true conversion because it brings a radical change for the good and is accompanied by overwhelming joy and peace and burning charity, and it does not die out over time.

It comes entirely from outside himself. We know that we cannot convert ourselves—conversion is a grace from God. We prepare the way, we make straight His paths, but it is beyond our power to accomplish it. It is the very helplessness of Scrooge and the relentlessness of God's pursuit of him that make this a true conversion. It is occasioned by Jacob Marley's intercession for him. Marley is expiating his own sins in the process. While his heart is totally engaged in assisting his erstwhile partner's conversion, Marley's own actions are inspired and, indeed, permitted by God.

Scrooge's motive for cooperating in his conversion is, in the first instance, fear—fear of the bold intrusion of the supernatural into his tightly-held little world. As the experiences of the conversion progress, he is touched with compassion, both for others and for himself. By finally facing his own death, he comes to a self-love of the type the Gospels enjoin on us.

But there is also the strong likelihood that the experience of his earlier life, with its affections, loves, and privations, plays a great part in his being disposed to receive the grace of conversion. And it is this remembrance of the good parts of his life that began the process of washing away the meanness that had, over the years, encrusted his soul.

Scrooge professed a rule, so to speak, by embracing his conversion and all the elements he would henceforth live by; it was the rule of keeping Christmas. Soon new members of our Fraternity will profess the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. In doing this they will embrace a life of daily conversion. These thoughts about Scrooge are not meant to suggest any parallels between Dickens's character and our brothers and sisters. Rather, it is to point out that daily conversion, which can seem like sheer, boring drudgery, is in fact fraught

with the most piercing and beautiful increases in intimacy with Christ. The timing and frequency of these moments are not of our own choosing. As we rerun Scrooge on our VCR tapes, daily conversion renews and strengthens our own promises made at profession.

May all our brothers and sisters find their hearts' desire in responding generously to the call of Christ, which has been cultivated, nourished, prayed over, and constantly watched by our Holy Father Francis who has poured into our professions some of the revelations of the Divine Mercy that he himself experienced in his own conversion.

Franciscan Saints

Each year in January our Fraternity has a "Franciscan Saints" meeting. Each member picks the name of a saint from a hat. This holy person is then our special companion for the year. The saint is usually Franciscan, sometimes with a name that is hard to pronounce, which adds special delight to the event.

I think of this as our "heaven" meeting—we remember the promises of our Faith, we see some who have succeeded, and we celebrate their goodness and their joy. We're also warmed by their faults. We enjoy their company and their intercession. We listen to their stories. Many are called, but these are chosen.

We see similarities with what we experience in fraternity life, in our own families, in our fellow parishioners. There is a prayer in which St. Francis calls on every saint in heaven to thank God for us, since he deems them more able to express and convey our gratitude than we are. He addresses those who are in the calendar as well as those who are not. He invokes Old Testament figures and other saints, living and dead *and still to come.*

We pick from the same hat the names of our deceased relatives, friends, fellow tertiaries. We ask their intercession and try to follow their example. In celebrating saints we celebrate many of the people in our own lives. And we are encouraged.

Francis also warned us that we can allow a focus on the saints to take the place of the efforts we must make toward our own salvation. We can mistake our devotion to them for a satisfactory spiritual life. St. Francis de Sales makes the same point—we can mistake our pious thoughts and feelings for the real thing, a deep personal love of Christ and His Cross that causes us to be challenged into action by the Gospels.

There is a stirring scene from the life of St. John Vianney in which, in a loud voice from the pulpit and in front of his entire congregation, he orders St. Philomena not to perform any more miracles. On the grounds of the parish church there was a shrine to St. Philomena. Through Vianney's prayers she had been performing miracles among the parishioners. Vianney, who was

very devoted to her, was more devoted to the spiritual welfare of his flock. He saw that popular attention to the miracles was diverting the attention of the people from the need to live the faith in their own lives—something, perhaps, like what happened with the multitudes who were eager to have Christ feed them bread, but would have none of His teaching on the Eucharist.

Let this admonition not interfere with our camaraderie with those holy men and women in heaven who light up our lives. But let us see that the light comes from elsewhere—from Jerusalem where, says Bonaventure, God has established His furnace. The saints all point in that direction. Francis can show us around and teach us how to behave there. And Mary can show us how to get there.

Fraternity Chapter

The early Franciscan friars gathered for their Chapters with a special enthusiasm. As the Order grew, few of them saw the founder regularly. Many had never seen him before. Now, at the Chapter, they might associate in person with Francis of Assisi.

We saw this same sort of excitement when Mother Teresa visited her convents. There was a real holiday atmosphere. One of the Spiritual Assistants of our Fraternity once asked me whether I thought that the sisters' enthusiasm was genuine. I said yes: it was just an elevated version of the way they lived every day. Her visits merely fanned the flames of a truly burning vocation.

One practical evidence of this showed precisely when Mother Teresa was present. While the laity who came to see and hear her were, for the most part, personally focused on her, the sisters related to her more as a community. In the crowd, an observor might have been absorbed in what she was saying and doing. The sisters, however, shared her presence with one another.

This is the difference between attending an inspiring event or admiring the holiness of another person and living a vocation. The Cure of Ars, from the pulpit, forbade the locally-honored saint from performing miracles in his parish. He felt that the wonders accomplished in her name distracted the people from the one important focus they needed—the Presence and Mystery of the Eucharist.

Mother Teresa's Order shows how the early friars might have acted. Chapter was not a spectacle or an administrative update. True, Francis was there; and true, information was received, rules were explained, elections took place, and assignments were made. But there must have been a tangible sense that God's work was being dealt with and that those present were called by name to do this work with the particular community there assembled. And they were called to this by God through Francis.

When I think that Francis is present at every Chapter, including the ones we ourselves celebrate, I look to how I am living my own vocation. As in every other commitment I have, I know that I am in danger of taking my calling for granted. The cooling of a vocation is not obvious; it is often imperceptible.

At the 1995 Chapter of our Province of Saint Mary, Sister Mary Dolor Orowski, made some comments on the nature of our vocation. A few of her points are worth repeating here:

- We need to reinvent the Franciscan way of life in our own lives; to rethink our purpose and our ideals. Our Franciscan way of life is one of continual growth, so it really cannot stay the same. The life within our vocation either changes or withers.
- When we allow God to love us, we are renewed. The Eucharist images Christ within us and is the source of our strength.
- The evil we face is too great for us to deal with. We have chosen to live a commitment. *We need to remember why we became Franciscans.*

Our novice instructions told us that no one follows Francis in isolation. The Chapter is a good way to get back to this truth. Francis was continually going back and starting over. I think we ought to do no less.

Franciscan Service

Charles Dickens, in one of his novels, shows us an English ladies' charitable society that sent red velvet waistcoats to the hot jungles of nineteenth-century Africa to be worn by the village boys. Dickens was satirizing a type of service work that is more concerned with itself than with the true needs of its intended beneficiaries.

Most of us recognize that it is important to serve others. So many people cannot live decent lives without help. But all of us live in a society so complicated that we regularly need assistance from those willing to lend it.

We have, more and more, a service economy, but we seem to become less and less true servants. Some of us choose to give others the help we think they need. Alternatively, some of the "service" we have in our society is really the services of professionals or "resource persons." (When these are not readily available we resort to manuals for Dummies!)

Service workers, who ordinarily choose what they do, are not usually true servants. Servants direct their attention to a master and do his bidding. For Christians, servanthood has a twist, in that we are the Master's friends, not His slaves.

For Franciscans there is another twist—we do not seek out the service; it seeks us out. It grows on the vine within the Order. The Master approaches us

as a beggar, and we become servants through love and loyalty. Franciscans also have another angle—they share the hardships of others; they spend time with those needing help.

We do not live as our own masters, and we do not die as our own masters. What a strange thing it is, then, when we, called to be servants, can want to dictate the terms of our service. Even Francis, whose Order is named after him, could not have his will in all the particulars of how the Order was run. Indeed, he felt that in one of the very essentials—absolute poverty—the leadership was going in the wrong direction.

There is the service that *I* choose, and the service that is offered to me. The Capuchin First Order priest, St. Leopoldo of Mandic, had a burning desire to be a missionary. But his poor health kept him in his friary, where he spent forty years in the same cell, hearing confessions through a small window cut into the wall. Pope John Paul II called this cell St. Leopoldo's mission field.

Service of the Franciscan sort brings us understanding of stewardship, which sounds like such a nice idea but has its difficulties. While stewardship may be appealing in its exercise, it can be a problem for us to let go of our assigned services. It is one thing to say, *These goods or this talent aren't mine; they are entrusted to me; and I use them for the honor and glory of God.* It is another thing to say, *I am no longer the steward for the honor and glory of God. Another will exercise that role now.*

These things may actually seem funny to those who serve our Fraternities. There are precious few who are waiting to replace Ministers, Vice Ministers, Secretaries, Treasurers, Directors of Formation, or Purveyors of Refreshments.

It is not the work itself that attracts, but the One who is served. There are those who serve the poor, or the sick, or anyone who needs help, or some cause or idea. And then there are those who serve the Lord. When we serve some particular group, we can become discouraged or uncharitable. We can burn out or, worse, become fanatic. We can see our work as the *only* important work. But when we serve the Lord, we do His work. The irony is that it may be the same work, but the difference is that the plan we follow is His, and our expectations are not part of our baggage. As passionately as we may desire to assist others in need, we put the outcome in God's hands.

> *"[Francis's] compassion for the Child [Jesus] flooded his heart and made him stammer words of sweetness after the manner of infants. His name was like honey and the honeycomb in Francis's mouth."* (2 Cel 199)

The Cord, 48.6 (1998)

Book Review

Madeline Pecora Nugent, SFO. *Saint Anthony: Words of Fire and Light*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1995. Pp. xxvii, 408.

Nugent presents a vibrant and imaginative account of the life of Anthony of Padua through the eyes of those who knew him. She narrates the life of Anthony by dividing his story into five parts. The prologue begins the narrative with the description of a cardinal's doubt concerning what he believed to be the premature canonization of Anthony, which took place within a year of Anthony's death in May 1232. In part one the author returns to the beginning of Anthony's ministry and follows him from Lisbon to Coimbra, to Morocco, and finally to Forli, where the friars discover his great preaching ability. Part two treats of Anthony's mission to Italy, including his teaching theology to the friars in Bologna and first encounters with heretics. Part three chronicles his mission to France and his engagement of the Cathars. Part four describes his return to Italy, his preaching to the papal curia, his participation at the general chapter of 1230, and his role as a member of the delegation of friars sent by the chapter to request of Gregory IX an interpretation of the Rule. Part five concludes the narrative with his final Lenten preaching in Padua, his move to Camposampiero to complete his Feast Day Sermons, his death at Arcella, and his appearance after death to Thomas Gallus at Vercelli.

Each of the five parts are sub-divided into chapters which locate Anthony in a particular time and place through the eyes of a character recreated from historical and/or hagiographical information. Thus, the story of Francis's appearance at Arles while Anthony preached to the friars gathered in chapter is told through the eyes and mouth of Friar Monaldo. Anthony's involvement in the governance of the Order is told through the eyes of Elias in the tumultuous events of the general chapter of 1230. And the death of Anthony is described through the experience of Brother Roger, who, together with Brother Luke Belludi, was his companion in the final days. Each of these chapters provide an intimate and moving portrait of Anthony as a real person come alive through the feelings and thoughts and encounters of the narrator. The author supplies chapter notes (found at the end of the text) which indicate the resources used to recreate each of the characters and the occasions. A short bibliography concludes the work.

Nugent has done significant research into the historical and hagiographical aspects of Anthony's life and times. She supplements the paucity of information concerning Anthony's interior life and the content of his preaching by

taking the English translations of his Sermons and, expanding on them somewhat, interspersing them throughout the narrative to provide examples of his teaching, as well as of his inner thoughts and feelings. She partially explains her method in the introduction. There she writes: "Biographers during Anthony's time recorded few personal details about their hero. Later writers fleshed out his history, but how accurately? I have had to decide what to include" (xvi).

While the chapter notes provide information on sources, nowhere does Nugent provide information concerning how she arrives at her decisions concerning the "facts" she presents in her reconstructed narrative. She seems to equate rather loosely "history" and "hagiography" and "historical record," without recognizing the limits of these categories. This becomes problematic especially in reconstructing relationships for which there is little historical evidence or detail to begin with, such as the relationship between Anthony and Elias, or even between Anthony and Francis—in both cases she goes well beyond what evidence suggests. While Nugent does admit that "Where details and characters were missing, I have supplied them in an imaginative way and indicated this in the chapter notes" (xvi), she leaves the reader with the impression that everything else is authenticated by the sources when this is not necessarily the case.

This book is clearly the work of a person with a great love of Anthony of Padua. It is written with a clear and engaging style, with the conviction that St. Anthony has a powerful message for our own day. It is a devotional book that must be read on its own terms, as an *imaginative* reconstruction of the life and times of Anthony of Padua and not as a historical reconstruction of his life and times, despite the authors use of "historical" sources.

Michael Blastic, OFMConv.
The Franciscan Institute

"The birthday of the Child Jesus Francis observed with inexpressible eagerness over all other feasts, saying that it was the feast of feasts, on which God, having become a tiny infant, clung to human breasts. . . . When the question arose about eating meat that day, he [said]: . . . 'It is my wish that even the walls should eat meat on such a day, and if they cannot, they should be smeared with meat on the outside.'"

(2 Cel 199)

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Zachary Hayes, OFM

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1998-99 Program dates:

December 5, 1998 — Center of Renewal, Stella Niagara, NY
February 27, 1999 — St. Odilia Parish, Los Angeles, CA
March 20, 1999 — Tau Center, Winona, MN
April 24, 1999 — Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA
May 1, 1999 — Shalom Retreat Center, Dubuque, IA
May 15, 1999 — Marian College, Indianapolis, IN
June 19, 1999 — WTU, Washington, DC
September 25, 1999 — Franciscan Renewal Center, Portland, OR
October 23, 1999 — Franciscan Center, Garfield Heights, OH
November 6, 1999 — Scotus Hall, Millvale, PA

For a detailed brochure, please contact:

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with

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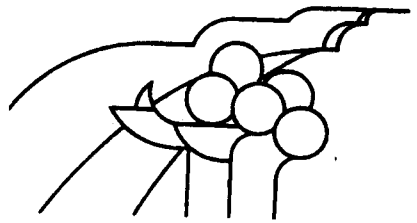

For more information contact:

Tom Speier, ofm; Marilyn Joyce, osf
St. Francis Extension
2014 Springdale Road
Cincinnati, OH 45231
Phone: (513) 825-0674 Fax: (513) 541-9347

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Co-Presenters:

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For further information contact:

[redacted]

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Volume 48
1998

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Index of books reviewed:

Index of subjects:

Poems

Biographical Profile

. . . [Francis] felt that it was discourteous to be in the company of anyone poorer than oneself.

(Kenneth Clark, Civilisation [New York: Harper and Row, 1969], 76)

ON THE FRANCISCAN CIRCUIT COMING EVENTS

Saturday, October 31, 1998

Facing the Christ Incarnate. Rose Margaret Delaney, SFP, and Ann Amati, OSF. 8:30 am - 4:00 pm. At Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, 399 Fruit Hill Ave., North Providence, RI 02911. Contact: Marie Bernadette Wyman, OSF, 49 Jackson Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706, ph. 914-478-3930.

Saturday, November 7, 1998

Facing the Christ Incarnate. Mary Catherine Gurley, OSF, and Kathleen Uhler, OSF. 8:30 am - 4:00 pm. At Franciscan Center, 49 Jackson Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706, ph. 914-478-3930. Contact: Marie Bernadette Wyman, OSF.

Saturday, November 21 - Sunday, November 22, 1998

A History of the Third Order Regular, part 2. Roberta McKelvie, OSF. $100.00. At Franciscan Handmaids of Mary, 444 Woodvale Ave., Staten Island, NY 10309; ph. 718-984-1625. Contact: Rose Margaret Delaney, SFP.

Saturday, December 5, 1998

Rebirth of a Charism. At Stella Niagara, NY. Franciscan Federation. (See ad p. 315.)

Friday, December 11 - Sunday, December 13, 1998

Christmas with Francis: Greccio Revisited. Joseph Markalonis, TOR. At Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, Pittsburgh, PA. Contact: Mimi DiGregory, 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234; ph. 412-881-9207.

Monday, January 18 - Friday, January 22, 1999

Franciscan Evangelical Life. Joseph Chinnici, OFM. $200. At Franciscan Handmaids of Mary, 444 Woodvale Ave., Staten Island, NY 10309; ph. 718-984-1625. Contact: Rose Margaret Delaney, SFP.

Monday, January 25 - Friday, January 29, 1999

Third Order Rule History. Roberta McKelvie, OSF. $200. At Franciscan Handmaids of Mary, 444 Woodvale Ave., Staten Island, NY 10309; ph. 718-984-1625. Contact: Rose Margaret Delaney, SFP.

Sunday, January 31 - Friday, February 5, 1999

Franciscan Gathering XIX. Maka Ina, Mother Earth: Black Elk and Francis. With Marie Therese Archambault, OSF, and Wayne Hellman, OFMConv. At Franciscan Center, Tampa (See ad p. 320.)

Monday, February 1 and Monday, February 8, 1999

Psycho-Sexual Development. Violet Grennan, OSF. $100. At Franciscan Handmaids of Mary, 444 Woodvale Ave., Staten Island, NY 10309; ph. 718-984-1625. Contact: Rose Margaret Delaney, SFP.

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Elise Saggau, OSF Editor — Date: October 7, 1998

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