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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.

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).

Abbreviations used in *The Cord* can be found inside the back cover. The Franciscan sources used should be noted in the first reference in a mss.

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Editorial

In this issue of *The Cord* we present three articles which started as presentations for the American Historical Association conference in 1997. They were part of a session on "Themes and Directions in Franciscan History." For this reason, they may seem to have a more academic quality than many articles that *The Cord* offers. The decision to publish these in *The Cord* is motivated by the desire to preserve for posterity some very valuable insights into how history and our view of it color and affect the way we live and value our way of living today. I invite our readers to give the articles the energy and attention they merit and try to see how the historical perspectives they offer apply to us in our own times.

Philip Sheldrake, in his fine book on *Spirituality and History*, reflects on the challenge that the idea of history holds for us in a post-modern world:

The contemporary weariness with history has deep roots in society at large. Firstly, rapid social changes, and the decline of traditional communities, have broken most people's living bonds with the past and with tradition. Secondly, there appears to be a positive desire to break free from history, which is perceived as a conservative force, in order to create a more rational society. We need to work out our future, untrammelled by the tiresome burden of a historical consciousness. These sentiments are reflected in parts of the Christian community as much as in wider society. However, an orientation towards the present and the future demands a sense of the past. Without a consciousness of the past we cannot have a sense of time—'there is no future without history.' An account of the past, as we have seen, is essential to the life of any culture. Stories are fundamental because without storytelling we put ourselves out of contact with the basic realities in our world. In other words, it is only through stories that we can situate and understand our existence in time. To be human is to be part of a story and to be Christian is to recognize a story within a story.¹

Perhaps, then, to be Franciscan is to be part of a story within a story within a story. The concentric circles within which we live and move and have our being shape us and provide the context for a meaningful and joyous life.

Endnote

¹Philip Sheldrake, SJ, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method*, revised edition (London: SPCK, 1995), 37.

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Introduction

Sean Kinsella

The following four papers were prepared for the One-hundred Eleventh Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association held January 2-5, 1997, in New York City. The session for which they were prepared, "Themes and Directions in Franciscan History," was a joint session of the AHA with the American Society of Church History and the Medieval Academy of America. The session approached the study of the history of the Franciscan movement from three different but complementary perspectives. Each paper took as its subject a different aspect of the Franciscan movement.

Ingrid Peterson's paper, "The Contemporary Dichotomy between Ministry and Prayer and the Medieval Categories of 'Active' and 'Contemplative,'" considers the tension inherent in the Franciscan charism between active and contemplative vocations and the continuing struggle to resolve that tension in light of the example of both Francis and Clare. Michael Blastic's paper, "From Preacher to Miracle Worker: History and Hagiography in Anthony of Padua," explores the evolving interpretations of the life and work of Anthony of Padua in the face of changing historical circumstances encountered by the Franciscan Order in the fourteenth century. Sean Kinsella's paper, "The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal and Franciscan History," examines a contemporary Franciscan reform movement whose ideal—to live the Franciscan vocation as Francis lived and taught it—raises the difficult problem of defining a contemporary identity on the basis of a historically distant, and contextually very different, past.

These three papers concern themselves with the historical factors which have shaped and influenced their particular subjects. Each in turn indicates as well the continuing role of an ongoing historical self-awareness in the development of Franciscan history. How has the Franciscan movement's dialogue with its own historical past continued to shape the Franciscan present and future?

Finally, Dominic Monti comments on all three presentations and adds some relevant observations of his own about "Themes and Directions in Franciscan History."

The Contemporary Dichotomy between Ministry and Prayer and the Medieval Categories of "Active" and "Contemplative"

Ingrid Peterson, OSF

After teaching about the Franciscan tradition for nearly a year to the novices in the Third Order's Common Franciscan Novitiate, I asked them what questions still remained. One of the struggles they named involved the dichotomy between action and contemplation. We seem to wrestle with this issue today as though there were an opposition between ministry and prayer. Perhaps our culture leads us to think competitively. Francis, however, approached life with a more holistic view. His expansive vision of Christ and the Church in his world superseded the medieval mind's penchant for classification and order. After his initial discernment about whether he should live as a hermit or as an itinerant preacher, Francis took up a life that we would call active, yet he made seven long "Lents," or extended periods of contemplation. Our tendency to separate reality into categories creates an ongoing tension that Francis did not face. His intent was to harmonize the monastic tradition of prayer and service in the midst of his society.

As I continue to think about the split between action and contemplation as an issue today and try to diffuse it as a problem of contemporary spiritual life, I begin to wonder about the origins of this dichotomy. Certainly, in the Middle Ages there was much discussion of the active and contemplative lifestyles and the newly emerging "mixed" life of the laity. This article begins a brief exploration of how these terms which describe the juridical categories of religious life have been transmitted through the centuries. It suggests that the corporate realities of both an active and contemplative lifestyle may have been appropriated to describe these same spiritual and secular aspects of our individual lives. Consequently, we may be heirs of a perception of the religious life in which its public and private dimensions seem bifurcated and pitted against one another, making it difficult to see a balance of action and contemplation as essential aspects of every religious call. Francis saw an imprint of the divine in

the world in which he lived and in its people. All activity and all time was sacred, not only the time set apart for prayer alone.

Perceptions of the Dichotomy between Action and Contemplation

When Francis and his brothers debated “whether they should live among the people or seek refuge in solitude,” they appear to have established a dichotomy between action and contemplation.¹ What Francis and his followers discerned was the direction for their spiritual energies in response to the needs of the Church and to the signs of their times. They chose to live as little and dispossessed, following the example of Jesus who lived and died for others. Jesus lived among the people, but he also sought refuge in solitude; this became the way of Francis and his brothers.

One time when Francis was uncertain about his own decision, he sent two brothers to ask Sylvester, his saintly brother, and Clare to pray with him and to send back their insights. Both of them sent word that it was God’s will that Francis go out to preach, and so Francis, “without delaying for an instant, set off on the road.”² Francis’s Rule for Hermitages put the question to rest, for after describing his prescriptions for solitaries, he concludes by pointing out the necessity of changing roles between the mothers who follow the life of Martha and the sons who follow the life of Mary.³ Although solitude was so important to Francis that he drew up a Rule to guarantee it, he does not establish a preference for the role of Martha over Mary. Quiet time for reflection is supported both by those who make it possible and by those who use it to pray. For Francis, the apostolic life of the gospel is not alien to his ideal of solitude.⁴

Our age appears to view the aspect of our lives which is contemplative as threatened by that which is active. Julie McCole, OSF, reflects on Luke’s story of Martha and Mary (Lk. 10:38-42) as a religious question of our times.⁵ By considering Luke’s story in the context of John’s account of the raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-44) and the anointing at Bethany (Jn. 12:1-11), she finds a holistic approach to the gospel life. She interprets the Martha-Mary story as one demonstrating the importance of being in relationships that demand mutual listening and sharing. McCole suggests that what Jesus asked of Martha was to set aside time both to give and to receive love.

A Following of Christ Based on Relationships

As Martha and Mary each demonstrated a different response to their love of Jesus, the example of Francis incited a broad variety of responses. In a recent article, Raoul Manselli asks what attracted the laity of the thirteenth century to Francis and his brotherhood.⁶ He suggests that it was the consistency

between their words and example, their inner and infectious joy, and their devotion to the birth and death of Christ and to the Body of Christ in the Eucharist. Manselli finds Francis’s frequent use of terms such as “I command” and “I admonish” indicative of a person who governed by personal relationships instead of legalisms or juridical categories.⁷ Considering Francis’s difficulties as his fraternity became a religious order, Manselli questions if Francis ever intended to prescribe a third way of life as a canonical order for the laity.⁸

In addressing how the laity who wished to remain in the world and were perhaps married identified with the religious experience of Francis in the early thirteenth century, Manselli points out the contrast between Francis’s indifference to juridical-formal institutions and their importance to his society. Manselli contends that Francis’s personal conversion was not an effort to claim the juridical state of a penitent. Rather, it was others who later assigned him to this ecclesial category. In his Testament Francis calls attention to his reversal of values, not his shift in ecclesial standing. Only later Bishop Guido convinced Francis to accept some kind of juridical arrangement for his followers.⁹ Théophile Desbonnets argues that Francis’s Testament designates Bernard of Quintavalle and life at the Porticuncula as his two models of organization.¹⁰

Manselli cites Jacques de Vitry’s hesitation to assign Francis and his followers to an institutional category. He calls them what they called themselves—lesser brothers and sisters—which is not a juridical category. Manselli urges us to understand this primitive Franciscan community as a fraternity influencing the crowds with songs and hymns in the public square. This is quite different from the preaching of the ancient Order of Penitents.¹¹ When Francis in his Testament declares that he lingered a little and left the world, he describes a religious choice rather than a juridical one. Manselli insists it is this form of gospel life that Pope Innocent III approved. Earlier, Desbonnets traced a similar theme showing how the institutionalization of Francis’s intuition was a gradual development.

Manselli reads in the title of Francis’s Letter to All the Faithful, addressing those who do penance, a refusal to designate a group. He desires to extend his spirit non-exclusively. The attractiveness of Francis led others to follow the gospel and the Christian life. Manselli sees Francis’s counsels directed to those who wish to be converted, to live a full Christian life according to the disciplines of the Church, but not as a distinct new entity.¹²

Manselli’s final argument is that groups such as the Third Order could have formed spontaneously in the latter half of the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth century around the churches of the friars. These faithful, who until then had been left to their popular piety, would come seeking ways to raise the tone of their religious life and deepen their participation in the life of the Church—all this under guidance of the Franciscans, whom they felt were

close to them, quick to understand their needs, and ready to listen to what they had to say. What is more, their father was Francis of Assisi, by now a saint and *alter Christus*.¹³

According to Manselli, that this movement stirred a sense of renewal among the faithful is one of Francis's greatest merits. Furthermore, Manselli argues that what was needed in the medieval Church was not a Third Order, but the Christian life. Only after Francis and his primitive followers responded to the needs of the faithful, did they develop their own institutional character.

If reform and conversion, not legalisms, were the impetus of the early Franciscan movement, then apostolic activity was not separated as a category distinct from contemplation. For conversion involves the entire being, not the person at work or at prayer. Francis educated his brothers to live in places of liminality, not in the monastic structure. In the *Sacrum Commercium*, Lady Poverty asks the brothers "show me your oratory, chapter room and cloister; your refectory, your kitchen, your dormitory and stable; show me your fine chairs, your polished tables, your great houses" (SC 6:59).¹⁴ Desbonnets points out that all of these places suggest a spirituality of the cloister, one that is not dependent on the world outside.¹⁵ In contrast, Francis's followers lead Lady Poverty up the hill to show her that their cloister was the same world available to the poor and rich. The scene illustrates that there is only one world of both apostolic activity and contemplation.

Women's Categories: Lay or Religious; Active or Contemplative

If the world and the cloister were one for Francis's friars, what then of the lay men and women who were caught by his spirit of reform? Late medieval ecclesial culture had only two categories for women, which came to be called the doctrine of the two m's: matrimony or monastery: *aut maritum* or *aut murum*.¹⁶ However, the inspirations for their lives and the stories of these women do not fit neatly into these two categories. Such a refusal to fit into ecclesial categories is evident in the history and development of the medieval women who chose to be neither wives and mothers nor cloistered nuns, but instead chose a position between the security of the cloister and the protection of the new burghers. This included early Franciscan women, such as Angela of Foligno (1248-1309). These women chose to respond with direct service to the physical and spiritual needs of society and frequently lived together as independent communities of penitential "lay" women.¹⁷ Their lives outside the canonically sanctioned enclosure were defined by the oppositions of lay and religious.

Throughout ecclesiastical history, only women who were enclosed and took solemn vows were recognized by the Church as "religious." Church leg-

islation regarding women's religious organizations gradually adapted to the changing necessity and reality. It was only with the constitution, *Conditae a Christo*, of Pope Leo XIII (December 8, 1900), that the simple vows of active women living in common were acknowledged as sufficient to constitute the religious state.¹⁸ The evolution of what was considered a lay state into today's active religious was affected by the social needs of the urban working class in Europe and North America and their increased demand for education and health care. These "lay" women are the forebears of active Church women, and medieval "religious" are precursors of enclosed women who today we identify as contemplative. Our present bifurcation of the concept of "action" and "contemplation" in our personal lives may stem in part from the juridical separation of these two ways of life.

Three Orders

The tendency to think in terms of categories also evolved from the establishment of religious movements with three branches or orders. A first order was for clerics; a second order for religious—that is, enclosed women; and a third order for the laity. The enclosure—separation from the world and infrequent contact with outsiders—has always been a part of monastic life for both monks and nuns. A long tradition of cloistering women religious stemmed from the reforms of Gregory the Great in the sixth century.¹⁹ There was insistence on strict cloister for all women's communities associated with the Cistercians. The directive, *Periculoso*, promulgated in 1298 by Boniface VIII, was the first decree of universal enclosure that was gender specific for women.²⁰ Such codifications were applied to Clare and the Poor Ladies of San Damiano.

In his recent comprehensive survey of research on early religious women, Craig Harline remarks that current studies on the development and importance of active and contemplative women point out 1) that an "active" spirituality or apostolate among women religious occurred during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 2) that this spirituality was characteristic of modern religious sensibility, and 3) that the Council of Trent successfully opposed an active apostolate for women, insisting that they conform to approved forms of life.²¹ Harline proceeds to examine the conditions in the Low Countries and treats the emergence and endurance of both active and enclosed women in that area, asking whether their growth and tenacity, despite opposition from Rome, is characteristic of the early religious spirit. He recommends that the two versions of the religious life should be considered "not so much as competitors, but as alternatives or complements of one another—... many contemporaries saw it in the same way."²² Both cloistered and active female religious life continued to co-exist in the Low Countries after Trent. Harline

recommends attempting to see in both active and contemplative states the same broad perspective and appeal. At the same time he cautions against distorting the past by favoring the active life for utilitarian reasons.

Social historian Jane Tibbets Schulenberg discloses a similar situation in the ecclesiastical motivations of the Carolingian and late eleventh and twelfth-century reformers. In the early period, at the time of Caesarius of Arles, enclosure protected the chastity of nuns from barbarian invaders, helping them develop autonomy and spiritual independence under the authority of the abbess. However, enclosure shifted from being a means to provide a protective environment that encouraged the religious life, to being a means to remedy the external activities and "wanderings" of female religious. Schulenberg argues that "at its root this restrictive policy seems to have been based on the clerical reformers' fear of female sexuality and their pervasive distrust of women."²³ Enclosure appears to have been enforced as an internal safeguard, protecting women from the fragile nature of their sex. Schulenberg imputes the rationale to be the desire to control woman's sexuality through isolation, rather than a safeguard for her autonomy or an encouragement of her spirituality.

The choice between a strict or more flexible cloister disappeared as the policy of strict claustration was uniformly applied to all women religious. With ecclesial reforms, the cloister came to be the only approved way for women to be canonically recognized as "religious." This legislation was made by men who neither consulted the enclosed women, nor experienced themselves the confines of the strict enclosure. Schulenberg concludes that the policy of cloister reflects a distrust of women and female sexuality and indicates a low esteem for women in religion.²⁴ Paradoxically, at the same time, virginity was highly valued by medieval churchmen.²⁵ Despite opposition from Church authorities, however, both contemplative and active styles of religious life perdured.

Harline suggests that women in both active and contemplative houses found their lifestyles liberating and cautions against glibly concluding that one way of life offered more opportunities than another.²⁶ Consider the freedom of Clare of Assisi whose dogged determination won for herself and all the Poor Ladies who followed her a new way of living. Women in contemplative communities were often as independent in shaping their lives as the active women who resisted the enclosure. Harline concludes that as long as the contemplative way of life persisted side by side with the active way, women had choices. Neither of these ways should be favored by modern scholarship: "It seems thus far that in both the early medieval and early modern periods, some women preferred to enter one form, some the other."²⁷ Nonetheless, while cloistered houses were a source of comfort for the townspeople and patrons who supported them, it is important not to characterize women such as Clare as exclusively enclosed. This image should be complemented with portraits of her

caring for needy community members and responding to the hopeless at the door of San Damiano.²⁸ Such a balance of prayer and activity describes the Franciscan way of contemplation.

Contemporary Adaptations of Public Categories to Personal Spirituality

Thus, in the middle ages and beyond, both contemplative and active lifestyles stood side by side. Each was a unique and divine call institutionalized by the Church. Juridical categories were a later reality. So it is today with the lay associate movement in religious congregations. Our times are much like those of Francis and Clare. Lay persons with whom we live and work are attracted to our way of gospel life. There are lay associates of both contemplative and active communities. Both traditions are important to the institutional Church. Both traditions are essential in our personal spirituality. Yet today the phenomenon of lay associates has not been juridically institutionalized.

With continued scholarship, perhaps we will understand that we have inherited a dichotomized perception of religious life in both its public and private dimensions. If we can see that historically both contemplative and active groups have an essential place in the Church, then we can draw the same conclusions about our personal spiritual lives. It is as fruitless to attempt to assess which is more valuable as it is to measure our effectiveness by weighing the time we spend in prayer in proportion to that which we spend in ministry. Both are essential to our spiritual lives and the only way we can be persons of the gospel is to do what Jesus did, taking time occasionally from our active lives to go away to the hill country of our local geography. Our moments of contemplation help us realize again and again how we are loved by God. This experience, in turn, moves us to love others through our apostolic ministries and in all our relationships. This is the good news that Francis taught, first by example and, when necessary, by word.

Modern followers of Francis are challenged to rediscover their charism in the stories of the early brothers and sisters who were inspired to live the gospel according to his vision. The stories of those who were penitents under the guidance of Francis help to illustrate the specific charism of the contemporary Third Order. Penance always involves turning from brokenness to wholeness. Turning in a new direction is what Francis did in his encounter with the leper. When he took on a new way of being a spiritual person, that which was bitter became sweet, and he claimed a new social identity as one of the *minores*, the lesser brothers. To turn from a life organized around our own desires and to belong instead to God is one fruit of prayer, penance, and contemplation. Other fruits are evident in our relationships with God, with each

other, and with the strangers in our midst, as they were for Francis. As brothers and sisters of penance, perhaps we do a disservice to our tradition to examine our lives in terms of action and contemplation. Perhaps, measuring the consistency between our words and actions would bring us closer to interpreting for ourselves Francis's understanding of the evangelical call.

Endnotes

¹Cel 35, and LM 4:2 both report how Francis, together with his brothers, engaged in this discernment.

²Cf. Martino Conti, OFM, "Hermitage and Evangelization in the Life of Francis," trans. Nancy Celaschi, OSF, in *Franciscan Solitude*, ed. André Cirino, OFM, and Joseph Raischl (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1995), 125.

³See the critical text of the "Rule for Hermitages" and commentaries edited by Cirino and Raischl in *Franciscan Solitude* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1995), 141-208. This anthology also contains valuable essays on the eremitical life from an historical and contemporary perspective.

⁴Cf. Conti, 121-27.

⁵Julie McCole, "A Meditation of Wholeness," *Human Development*, 17.4 (1996), 38-42. See also Giles Constable's examination of medieval interpretations of Mary and Martha in *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Constable considers them allegorical types, representing the active and contemplative life, but shows how the legends developed around each sister came to be more important than these roles.

⁶Raoul Manselli, "Francis of Assisi and Lay People Living in the World: Beginning of the Third Order?" *Greyfriars Review*, 11.1 (1997): 41-48.

⁷Manselli, 46.

⁸See Robert M. Stewart, "De Illius qui facient penitentiam," *the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* (Rome: Istituto dei Cappuccini, 1991) for the most reliable full-length interpretation of the third order and a discussion in Chapter 3 of Francis as the "founder" of the "Third Order."

⁹Manselli, 42.

¹⁰Théophile Desbonnets, *From Intuition to Institution: the Franciscans*, trans. Paul Duggan and Jerry du Charme (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 134.

¹¹Manselli, 43. Cf. the thorough historical examination of penitential practices and their relation to the Church today by Joseph F. Favazza, *The Order of Penitents: Historical Roots and Pastoral Future* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

¹²Manselli, 46.

¹³Manselli, 47.

¹⁴From *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies, English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. Marion A. Habig, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 1591.

¹⁵Desbonnets suggests Lady Poverty is describing a typical Cistercian abbey, for example, Fontenay or Senanque, 139.

¹⁶A. E. Friedberg, as quoted by Raffaele Pazzelli, TOR, in *The Franciscan Sisters: Outlines of History and Spirituality*, trans. Aidan Mullaney, TOR (Steubenville: Franciscan University Press, 1993), 41.

¹⁷Angela of Foligno, sometimes considered the most remarkable woman in the Franciscan mystical tradition, was married with children before she became a tertiary in Foligno. There she described her mystical experiences, developed a group of followers to whom she gave spiritual

Instructions, and ministered to the needs of the lepers in the manner of Marie of Oignes, the Beguines, and countless holy women of the middle ages.

¹⁸R. Lemoine, as quoted in Pazzelli, 149.

¹⁹Cf. Carol Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988).

²⁰Jane Tibbets Schulenberg, "Strict Active Enclosure and Its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (ca. 500-1100)," in John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank, OSCO, *Distant Echoes: Medieval Religious Women* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 52. Cf. also Elizabeth Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and its Commentators* (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1997) which details precedents for *Periculoso* and provides a more recent examination of late medieval attitudes toward nuns and their male counterparts.

²¹Craig Harline, "Actives and Contemplatives: The Female Religious of the Low Countries Before and After Trent," *The Catholic Historical Review*, 81.4 (October 1995): 542. Harline's first note presents a brief review of bibliographic material on the subject of the active and contemplative life styles.

²²Harline, 563.

²³Schulenberg, 79.

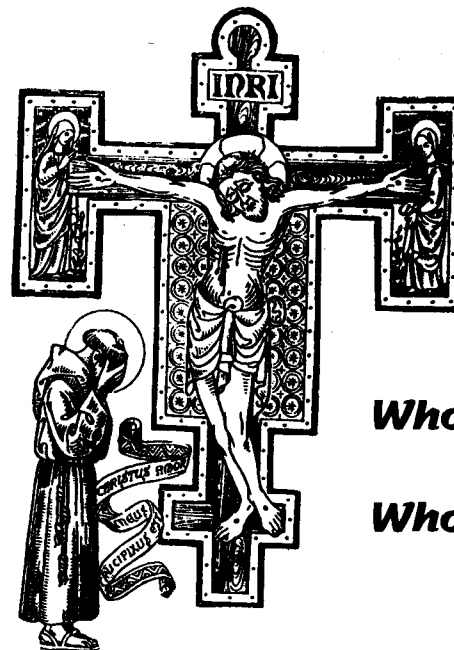
²⁴Schulenberg, 79.

²⁵Cf. Caroline Walker Bynum's writings, especially *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body* (New York: Zone Books, 1992) and Penny Schine Gold's *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1985) are just two of many recent authors who have explored this dichotomy.

²⁶Harline, 565.

²⁷Harline, 567.

²⁸Marie Beha, OSC, "Clare's Charism," *The Cord*, 46.4 (1996): 188.



Who are you?

Who am I?

From Preacher to Miracle Worker: History and Hagiography in the Thirteenth-Century Legends of Anthony of Padua

Michael Blastic, OFM Conv.

Background

Subsequent to the Fourth Lateran Council, as the Franciscan Order began to grow beyond the borders of Italy, Cardinal Hugolino became closely involved with the development and expansion taking place. The *Vita prima* of Thomas of Celano describes a very positive and dynamic interaction of Francis of Assisi with Hugolino beginning in the year 1217 when they met in Bologna.¹ The early sources suggest that Hugolino was keenly interested in the shape of the Franciscan Rule which was a concern especially after Francis returned from the Holy Land in 1220. Hugolino was present at the chapter(s) dedicated to the revision of the Rule. Celano portrays this relationship in idyllic and very peaceful terms, never hinting at what later would become a point of controversy as to the value of Hugolino's involvement, especially in the history recounted by the more rigorous elements of the Order.² It was this same Hugolino, now Pope Gregory IX, who in July of 1228 presided at the canonization of Francis in Assisi and laid the cornerstone for what would become the burial church of Francis.

Gregory's interest in Francis of Assisi, however, went far beyond the well-being of the Order of Friars Minor. Francis was for Gregory an answer to the problems of the Church in terms of both its struggle against heresy and the revitalization and renewal of the preaching ministry of the Church, a major concern of the hierarchy as evidenced by the canons of the Fourth Lateran Council. The "functional" value of Francis for the politics of Gregory is evident in his bull of canonization, *Mira circa nos*, with which Gregory announced to the Church and to world at large the fact of Francis's holiness.³

In *Mira circa nos*, Gregory celebrated the life of Francis and defined his holiness in terms of the renewal of the Church. Gregory presented Francis as

one whose life of preaching both revitalized the faith of believers and confounded the errors of heretics. Gregory uses the natural imagery of vineyard and vegetation and of light to describe the impact which Francis had on the Church. Comparing Francis to Samson, who slew Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, and to the obscure judge Samgar, who accomplished a similar feat with the shard of a plow, Gregory placed Francis among those whose lives were dedicated to preaching against the heretics. And, curiously, while he does name Francis as the founder of the Friars Minor and does mention his life of humility and poverty, Gregory does not describe Francis or the fraternity he founded in terms of brotherhood or minority; nor does he underline the importance of being an example or suggest that the actual living of the life of the Gospel defined the life of Francis.

Reading only *Mira circa nos*, one would find it difficult to recognize the popular figure of the Poverello, the simple poor man from Assisi, the Bible of the Poor, the author of the Canticle of Brother Sun. Gregory was not especially interested in these aspects of Francis's life, choosing to emphasize what, at least from his perspective, was the most important contribution Francis made—that of being an effective preacher against heresy and a defender of orthodoxy.

It would be unfair to expect Gregory to synthesize the Franciscan charism in the bull of canonization, as Franciscans themselves have been struggling to do this even up to the present. But, one can understand that the bull would point to what for Gregory was important about Francis. Thus the bull does suggest that Gregory was very focused on what he perceived to be the value of the Franciscan Order to the Church. This focused, functional interest continued to emerge in the subsequent decisions taken and in other bulls issued by Gregory to and for the Order, all of which favored the development of the Order's pastoral assistance to the Church in terms of preaching and sacramental ministry. His bull *Quo elongati*, issued on September 28, 1230, offered the first papal interpretation of the Rule, one which Gregory felt that he himself was particularly suited to offer because, as he claimed in the bull itself, "he knew the mind of Francis." Based on his personal knowledge and understanding of the mind of Francis, he set aside the Testament of Francis, which raised questions about the very possibility of interpreting the Rule, and proceeded to set the Order on the course of what could be described as moderate security, fostering those conditions within the institutional structures of the Order which would favor the progress of preachers and needed confessors.

Gregory IX and Anthony of Padua

While it is not clear when Gregory first met or came to know of the career of Anthony of Padua, it was in the summer of 1230 that Anthony came to the

Papal Curia as a member of the delegation sent by the Order's general chapter of 1230 to request a papal interpretation of the Rule. This delegation included the general minister John Parenti, Haymo of Faversham, Leo of Perego, Gerard of Modena, Peter of Brescia, and Gerard Rossegnal. These were men of learning and noted preachers, some of whom would take part in the preaching of the "Alleluia" in 1233.⁴ It was probably while in Rome at this time that Anthony preached before the Curia and received from Gregory the title, "Ark of the Covenant." Up to that point Anthony's career in the Order and in the Church exemplified the lifestyle favored by the norms articulated in *Quo elongati*. It is thus not surprising that Gregory would take a special interest in subsequent developments in the life and death of Anthony of Padua. In fact, the description of Francis's holiness in *Mira circa nos* aptly describes the life and holiness of Anthony of Padua—one could simply substitute the name of Anthony for that of Francis in the text of the bull and, without any significant changes, read an accurate description of Anthony's career and holiness.

Anthony died in June of 1231 in Padua and was canonized by Gregory IX on Pentecost Sunday 1232 in Spoleto. This was the same day, May 30, that the general chapter of the Friars Minor elected Brother Elias to succeed John Parenti as general minister. (Many of the later criticisms of the administration of Elias are connected to the direction taken by Gregory IX in *Quo elongati* and subsequent papal privileges). Thus, the canonization of Anthony—which took place within a year of his death—proceeded at an even a faster pace than that of Francis. Given the fact that a chapter of the friars was in session at the time, it is likely that Gregory wished to provide in Anthony a model for the friars themselves as they deliberated about their own future.

Prior to Anthony's canonization, Gregory wrote to the people of Padua who had requested Anthony's canonization and initiated the formal process. He informed them that the canonization indeed would take place. Given the fact that the Paduans sided with Gregory in his struggle against the emperor and the emperor's representative Ezzelino da Romano who terrorized northern Italy, the canonization of Anthony rewarded their fidelity to the papacy. In his bull *Litteras quas* of June 1, 1232, Gregory responded to the Paduan request by announcing the canonization of Anthony in order to "confound the depravity of heretics and to strengthen the catholic faith."⁵ The bull promulgating the actual canonization of Anthony, *Cum dicat Dominus*, dated June 23, 1232, develops identical themes. In fact, the terms which Gregory uses to describe the holiness of Anthony are terms similar to those used by him when he announced the canonization of Francis—Anthony is a renewer of the Church and a defender against heretics. Gregory is very clear about what makes Anthony a saint:

To manifest the power of his strength and to effect our salvation, God honors even on earth, the faithful he always honors in heaven, by working signs and wonders in their memory through which he confounds the wickedness of the heretics and he confirms the catholic faith. Setting aside the torpor of their minds the faithful are excited to do good works, and the heretics, having removed the burning blindness of their minds, are advanced from the false to the true way. Even so Jews and pagans, having recognized the true light, run to Christ, who is the light, the truth and the life. . . . Blessed Anthony is of this number, of holy memory, of the Order of Friars Minor, who while living in this world shined with the brightness of his merits, and now in heaven is resplendent in the many miracles which give a sure indication of his holiness.⁶

Gregory goes on to explain that two things are necessary for sainthood—"the virtue of good behavior and the truth of miracles." Having verified the miracles Anthony worked after his death, Gregory himself gives witness to the virtue of Anthony's life, claiming that "having one time Ourselves experienced both the holiness of his life and the admirable manner of his living, having lived with Us praiseworthily for some time," he could attest to Anthony's virtue.

While the bull does not provide much concrete detail concerning his lifestyle, Anthony is fitted into the program of religious renewal directed by the Holy See under Gregory's leadership. This religious renewal depended on the work of peace-making, anti-heretical preaching, the reform of the behavior of clerics, and the struggle against usury. All of this was to be addressed by means of evangelical preaching. Hence, in defining Anthony's holiness, Gregory suggests that Anthony's life and activities were clearly within the divine plan to confound heretics and confirm the catholic faith by effecting the reform of the faithful. He called them to the renewal of their religious obligations, returned heretics to the right way of Catholic faith, and called Jews and pagans to the light of Christ.

This is the identity and meaning of St. Anthony of Padua for Gregory IX. Outside of a single mention of Anthony's membership in the Order of Friars Minor, nothing else contained in the bull of canonization describes him as a Franciscan—no significant mention of poverty, brotherhood, or minority. Anthony is not held up as a model or example for the imitation of the laity, but is clearly held up as a model clerical reformer. Anthony's holiness is clerical and anti-heretical. Based on what Gregory tells us about him in *Cum dicat Dominus*, he is not even easily identifiable as a friar minor if one assumes that more than preaching is necessary to make the friar minor.

Gregory's view of Anthony can be seen reflected in the *Legenda Assidua*, the first legend or *vita*, written shortly after the celebration of the feast of St. Anthony on June 13, 1232.⁷ While the author has not been identified, the text was most probably produced in Padua by a friar minor.⁸ It focuses ultimately on the life of Anthony as a preacher who finally dies in 1231 from exhaustion as a result of his daily and innovative Lenten cycle of preaching and confessions in Padua. The text shows no interest in Anthony's relation to Francis, failing to mention the appearance of Francis in Arles while Anthony preached on the cross, which appearance was recognized by a Friar Monaldo (1Cel 47). The legend makes no mention of the letter written to Anthony by Francis in 1223/4 which allowed Anthony to teach theology as long as it did not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion necessary to Franciscan living.

The forty-seven chapters of the text are "Padua-centric." Chapters one to ten treat of Anthony before his arrival in Padua in the fall of 1230; chapters eleven to twenty-nine chronicle the renewal effected by his preaching in Padua and his death, burial, and canonization; chapters thirty to forty-seven list the fifty-three miracles worked at his tomb (probably the dossier of miracles sent to Gregory as part of the process of canonization). The text describes no miracles which Anthony worked in the course of his life.⁹ It calls Anthony, "brother," a term inserting him into the Franciscan brotherhood; it describes his presence at general and provincial chapters; it states as a matter of fact that he completed his term as provincial minister at the general chapter of 1230, being granted then the permission of the general minister to "preach everywhere" (Anthony chooses Padua); and it speaks of his express desire to be buried in the friars' church of St. Mary in Padua.

While the text states that he was commissioned to be the lector of theology for the friars, probably at Bologna, it lacks any focus on the values associated with Francis of Assisi, such as minority and poverty, or an indication of the centrality of fraternal life. The author's sole purpose seems to be to demonstrate Anthony's obedience to God's will in devoting his life to preaching, especially in Padua.

According to the *Assidua*, Anthony shared with Francis a desire for martyrdom, though this is not stated explicitly. Having already lived as a Canon Regular for some eleven years, and having dedicated himself to the study of the *sacra pagina*, the text describes his movement to the Order of Friars Minor as motivated explicitly by his desire for martyrdom. It was the presence of the relics of the Protomartyrs of the Franciscan Order in Coimbra which suggested the possibility to Anthony of achieving his desire. As the text suggests: "At that same time, not far from the city of Coimbra, some Friars Minor lived

in a place that was called Saint Anthony. Although they were not learned men, they taught the substance of the Scriptures with their actions" (*Assidua* V:3; p. 6). Anthony approached them with his plan:

Dearest brothers, with a willing spirit I would put on the habit of your order if you were to promise to send me, as soon as I join, to the land of the Saracens so that I too might merit with the holy martyrs to receive a share in the crown (*Assidua*, V:3; p. 7).

The legend describes no conversion to minority or poverty, no embrace of a leper. It simply recounts Anthony's intention to fulfill with as much experience as possible his desire to be martyred for Christ. The friars on their part do not hesitate, and the next day he is clothed with the Franciscan habit, changes his name to Anthony, and with permission sets out on the voyage to the land of the Saracens. But this desire of Anthony is not what God intended for him.

Sickness, a sign that God "opposed his projects" (*Assidua*, VI:3; p. 8), compelled him to return home to Coimbra; but in attempting this return he was blown off course and landed in Messina. Contacting the friars there, he traveled with them to the 1221 General Chapter in Assisi, was accepted by Friar Gratian into the province of Romagna, and eventually arrived at the hermitage of Monte Paolo. He lived there as a contemplative hermit for about a year, successfully concealing his great learning, his knowledge of Scripture, and his ability to preach. Anthony's true vocation only emerged at Forli, during the celebration of ordinations, when he was compelled under obedience to preach to the assembly made up of Franciscans and Dominicans. Not expecting much, the assembly was astounded:

At last, because of the loud insistence of all those present, he began to speak with simplicity. But when that writing reed of the Holy Spirit (I am referring to Anthony's tongue) began to speak of many topics prudently, in quite a clear manner and using few words, the friars, struck by wonder and admiration, listened to the orator attentively and unanimously. Indeed, the unexpected depth of his words increased their astonishment; but to no lesser degree, the spirit with which he spoke and his fervent charity edified them. Filled with holy consolation, they all respected the virtue of humility, accompanied by the gift of knowledge, that was manifest in the servant of God. (*Assidua*, VII:7-9; pp. 11-12).

In that moment Anthony had discovered his vocation, that of preaching *ad populum* and confounding heretics in the process. The office of preaching was "imposed" on him by the minister, and he went "about cities and castles,

villages and countrysides" sowing the seed of life. He moved from place to place. At Rimini he converted the heretic Bononillo. In 1230 he preached before Gregory IX in Rome. Finally, in the fall of 1231, he arrived in Padua. After the exhausting Lenten preaching cycle, as mentioned above, he retired to Camposampiero to a cell constructed in a nut tree to recover his strength and devote himself to prayer. Foretelling his death, he desired to return to Padua and died en route. It was only after his burial in the church of St. Mary in Padua that an outpouring of miracles began. Even here though, healing happened only for those who confessed their sins and repented (*Assidua*, XXVI:22).

Not one miracle of Anthony is recorded by the author until that point. Anthony is presented here as a real man. He is an example and his life can be imitated by other friars. In fact, the life of Anthony is to be emulated by the friars because what he accomplished was the effect of his obedience to God's will, not his own. A typical hagiographical topos, that of a saint's struggle with the demons, is used by the author of the *Assidua* to underline the divine nature of Anthony's evangelical preaching mission. Resting one night at the beginning of his final lent, "the devil dared to squeeze violently the throat of the servant of God and, thus exerting pressure on him, tried to choke him" (*Assidua* XII:3-5; p.16). Invoking the glorious Virgin and making the sign of the cross, Anthony put the devil to flight. Opening his eyes, his cell was made bright by a heavenly light: "We are certain beyond doubt that the light descended into the cell by divine power and that the dweller in darkness departed confused, not being able to support its rays." Thus, divine assistance preserved the preaching mission of Anthony. God assisted the ministry of preaching. Even the post-death miracles of Anthony prolong the preaching mission of his life as they are generally connected to the repentance and/or return to the sacraments by the beneficiary of the miracle.

Later *Vitae*

Subsequent *vitae* of Anthony, both Julian of Speyer's *Vita secunda*,¹⁰ written between 1235 and 1239 and the *Dialogus*,¹¹ written around 1246 and attributed to Thomas of Pavia, continue to follow the pattern established by the *Assidua* in recording only post-death miracles. Speyer does however mention the letter written by Francis to Anthony, as well as the vision of Francis at Arles while Anthony preached. It is only with the appearance of the *Benignitas*¹² however, written by the Franciscan John Peckham around 1280, that miracles during the life of Anthony are recorded.¹³

The *Benignitas* repeats the story of Anthony's life and fills in the large gap which the *Assidua* leaves between 1223-1230. It describes his preaching in

Toulouse and other places in France and describes how the cult of Anthony spread beyond Padua to France and even to the Church of John Lateran, though contrary to the wishes of Boniface VIII.¹⁴ Peckham too does not seem interested in connecting Anthony with Francis in any particular way. He highlights the evangelical preaching ministry of Anthony, presenting him as a model for the true friar minor. He exhorts the Order to praise God for such outstanding examples:

The first of these, that most blessed herald of Christ, exceptional and unique, St. Francis, confessor of Christ, what the blessed apostle Peter was for the universal Church Francis was for you the founder, guide and pastor. The second, that is this most blessed father Anthony, what the blessed Paul was for the Church, Anthony was for you the preacher, the educator, the doctor; both of them are most brilliant and illuminating (*Benignitas*, XXII:7-8; pp. 576-578).¹⁵

This exemplary status of Anthony is further highlighted by Peckham with the introduction of miracles worked during Anthony's life. Perhaps the best-known of these is the miracle of the heretic converted by the reverence of a mule toward the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. For Peckham, the in-life miracles outnumber the post-death miracles. In a sense, the miracles thus walk backwards in time—from the tomb back into Anthony's life. From now on the in-life miracles of Anthony will continue to grow.¹⁶

John Peckham makes a very subtle point concerning the in-life miracles of Anthony—while they grow in number, almost all those recorded are connected to Anthony as preacher or to Anthony's actual preaching. Anthony's preaching and his miracles are one and the same thing. Peckham asks rhetorically:

What heart . . . no matter how stone-like or hardened, adamant and iron willed, would not be turned to laments of repentance, who having first heard of the harsh, bitter and terrible pains of hell (Anthony, singular herald of Christ succeeded in depicting this before the eyes of listeners), then hearing words so sweet and mellifluous on the joys of heaven, limpidly described by him: the truth that with the fervor and efficaciousness of the spirit flowed from that truth-filled mouth full of God? Who, having observed on a daily basis the exceptional miracles worked by him, would not be rapidly induced to do good, by the saint who was guided in everything by the grace of God? (*Benignitas*, XVI:18).¹⁷

Again, the focus is put on Anthony as popular preacher. His preaching is now confirmed by miracles connected to his action of preaching. This pro-

vides an example for the friars, in a very difficult moment of their history given the ongoing resentment of the secular clergy from one side and the resistance to precisely this understanding of Franciscan life by a group of friars within the Order, the Spirituals.

Conclusions

This brief excursus into the early hagiographical tradition of Anthony suggests the importance of this tradition for Franciscan history. Clearly, Anthony offers a model of Franciscan life different from, though not opposed to, that of Francis of Assisi. As a member of the first Franciscan generation, Anthony witnesses to the strong and fast paced expansion of the order.

Raoul Manselli asked rhetorically in a paper given in 1982 whether there was really anything very Franciscan about Anthony of Padua to begin with.¹⁸ Basing his study on the *Sermones*, he found very little in them which would identify the author as a Franciscan, except in the fact that the *Sermones* suggest that what is needed in the Church and in the world is a significant reform of morals and a revitalized practice of Christian living. Manselli suggested that the *Sermones* provided the answer to why Anthony joined the Order—it was a movement which responded to his diagnosis of the ills facing the Church. However, the Antonian hagiographical tradition suggests that this was not actually the case. Anthony entered the order to become a martyr, only to discover that God's real intention for him was to become a popular preacher. The Franciscan Order was the place within which he discovered his true vocation and accomplished God's will. But this was done by Anthony in a way very different and almost disconnected from Francis of Assisi.

The hagiographical tradition presents Anthony as a complementary figure to Francis. Stefano Brufani, at an Antonian Study Congress held in Padua in 1995, suggested the possibility of a "plural paternity in the Order, not reducible only to the founder" (p. 99). He suggests the following distinction:

I hold, if I am not mistaken, that the term "Franciscanism" does not express anything else but the Francis of his writings and his historical experience, as one also can glean this from the legends. All the rest, the fraternity which evolves into the Order, the progressive clericalization, the development of the legends, finds a better collocation in the history of "minorite-ism," of which Francis was part, even undoubtedly the most significant part. In this context it is possible to speak of a polygenism in the development of minorite-ism. Thus the usual parameter of historiographical judgement, more or less explicit, of betrayal/fidelity to franciscanism in the history of the order, would no longer make historiographical sense. The object of the investiga-

tion should attend to the reality of minorite-ism in its historical development, as diverse adaptations in different times and contexts, none of which is totally reducible to Francis, nor to the primitive Umbrian-Assisian fraternity.¹⁹

The hagiographical tradition of *Il Santo*, as he is known in Italy, teaches us much more about Anthony than the popular image of the miracle worker or finder of lost objects suggests. Anthony witnesses to a kind of Franciscanism different from that lived in the Umbrian valley in the early years and significantly different from that lived by the Spirituals in the Marches of Italy in the late thirteenth century.

André Vauchez suggests that the Franciscan lifestyle exemplified by Anthony of Padua should not be seen as a successive stage to that of Francis, but must be seen as a parallel contemporary with that of Francis:

On the one hand there is Francis the lay founder, a man inspired by God, disconcerting and charismatic, who lived a deeply original religious experience to the depths. On the other hand, there is Anthony, the learned friar, a man of culture, who passes from the canons regular to the friars Minor in an apostolic spirit, but who distinguishes himself above all through his activity of preaching and through his zeal for the salvation of souls.²⁰

Thus, the contrast between the fraternity as it existed prior to 1230 and as it existed after 1230 should not be seen as an opposition between those who remained faithful to the spirit of Francis and all the others, including Anthony, who betrayed it. What the Anthony legends suggest, rather, are different approaches to living and proclaim the Gospel by friars minor in the one Franciscan Order. There were those who intended to proclaim the Gospel *verbo et exemplo* with the practice of a pastoral ministry without a clear and definite "ecclesial" structure. These friars dwelled in hermitages removed from urban centers and preached the Gospel in the context of casual encounters through manual labor shared with the laity. There was another group too, the majority of them clerics, who believed that the evangelical message could reach its maximum efficiency within the arena of ecclesiastical institutions and through a pastoral activity of systematic preaching which by its very nature excluded a life of wandering and a precarious existence.

From whatever perspective one looks at the Antonian hagiographical tradition, it demonstrates at least that Bonaventure is definitely not the second founder of the Franciscan Order. That role, without its polemic overtones, would be more apt and fitting for Anthony of Padua. The thirteenth-century tradition surrounding Anthony of Padua is a valuable, indeed essential, docu-

mentary source for a comprehensive witness of the Franciscan *forma vitae*. The figure of Anthony suggests that there were different models of Franciscan life, operative at the same time in different parts of the Order. To exclude Anthony from the foundational experience of Franciscanism is to have only a very limited picture of the way things were.

Endnotes

¹Consult 1 Celano 99-101.

²For a thorough discussion of the image of Hugolino in the early sources consult Edith Pásztor, "St. Francis, Cardinal Hugolino, and 'The Franciscan Question,'" *Greyfriars Review* 1:1 (1987): 1-29.

³For the text of the Bull of Canonization and a detailed and insightful commentary, consult Regis Armstrong, "Mira circa nos: Gregory IX's View of the Saint, Francis of Assisi," *Greyfriars Review* 4:1 (1990): 75-100.

⁴Consult Augustine Thompson, *Revival Preachers and Politics in Thirteenth-Century Italy: The Great Devotion of 1233* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 136-156 for Anthony of Padua and environs.

⁵"Nos, etsi Romana Ecclesia in tam sanctonegotio non sic subito, sed cum gravitate, et maturitate plurima confueverit procedere hactenus," *Litteras quas*, Gregory IX, June 1, 1232, *Bullarium Franciscanum Romanorum Pontificum*, Vol. I, (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1983): 79a.

⁶"Ut enim suae virtutis potentiam mirabiliter manifestet, et nostrae salutis causam misericorditer operetur; fideles suos, quos semper coronat in Coelo, frequenter etiam honorat in seculo, ad eorum memorias signa faciens, et prodigia, per quae pravitas confundatur haeretica, et Fides Catholica confirmetur; Fideles mentis torpore discusso ad boni operis excitentur instantiam; haeretici, depulsa, in qua jacent, caecitatis caligine, ab invia reducuntur ad viam; et Judaei, atque Pagani vero lumine cognito currant ad Christum lucem, viam, veritatem, et vitam. ... De quorum numero sanctae memoriae *Beatus Antonius* de Ordine Fratrum Minorum, qui olim degens in seculo magnis pollebat meritis, nunc vivens in Coelo multis coruscet miraculis, ut ejus sanctitas certis indicis comprobetur." Gregory IX, *Cum dicat Dominus*, June 23, 1232, *Bullarium Franciscanum*, Vol. I, 80a.

⁷*Life of St. Anthony "Assidua" by a Contemporary Franciscan*, trans. Bernard Przewozny (Padua: Edizioni Messaggero, 1992). All English texts cited are from this edition. The critical edition of the text can be found in *Vita Prima di S. Antonio, o "Assidua" (c.1232)*, Introduction, critical text, and notes by Vergilio Gamboso (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 1981); henceforth, "*Assidua*."

⁸Haymo of Faversham is a possible author as his knowledge of Anthony and his presence in Padua during this period are recognized. Consult Gamboso, "*Assidua*," pp. 21-33.

⁹The collection of miracles attached to the *Assidua* recount miracles attributed to the intercession of Anthony after his death with one exception. The author records the healing of a young girl with paralyzed legs who was carried by her father to Anthony who blessed her. After returning home the girl was able to walk. *Assidua* 31, VIII: 36-40; pp. 55-56.

¹⁰Critical edition by Vergilio Gamboso, *Giuliano da Spira: Officio Ritmico e Vita secunda* (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 1985).

¹¹Critical edition by Vergilio (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 1986).

¹²Gamboso, *Vita del "Dialogus" e "Benignitas"*.

¹³This and subsequent paragraphs summarize the work of the following scholars: Jacques Dalarun, "Miracolo e miracoli nell'agiografia Antoniana," *Il Santo* 36:1-2 (1996): 203-239; Claudio Leonardi, "L'Antonio delle biografie," *Il Santo* 36:1-2 (1996): 31-43. These and other papers were presented at the Congress, "Vite e vita di Antonio di Padova," at the Centro Studi Antoniani,

University of Padova, May 29-June 1, 1995. The proceedings of this congress are published in *Il Santo* 36:1-2 (1996).

¹⁴The first post-death miracle recounted by the *Benignitas* is the story surrounding Anthony's image in the mosaics at the Lateran which Boniface tried unsuccessfully to remove. See *Benignitas*, 23, I:1-7, pp. 579-583. Gamboso discusses the fragmentary nature of the text and later additions in his introduction to the critical edition, pp. 251-268.

¹⁵"Quorum primus, beatissimus Christi signifer, singularis et unicus, eiusdem confessor Franciscus, quemadmodum beatus Petrus apostolus universali Ecclesie, sic tibi iste extitit fundator, conductor et pastor. Alter vero, scilicet beatissimus hic pater Anthonius, quemadmodum beatus Paulus eidem Ecclesie, sic iste tibi extitit predicator, informator et doctor: preclarissimi et insignes."

¹⁶The later legend, the *Rigaldina*, written around 1295-1300, dedicates over one half of the text to miracles worked by Anthony in life. Note however, that there are fewer miracles in the *Benignitas* and the *Rigaldina* than in Bonaventure's *Legenda maior*. This presents an interesting contrast to the hagiographical tradition of Francis, as the Francis tradition grows in post-mortem miracles, the Anthony tradition grows in miracles worked during his lifetime. For the *Rigaldina*, consult the critical edition by Vergilio Gamboso, *Vite "Raymundina" e "Rigaldina"*, (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 1992).

¹⁷"Cuius, queso, cor sic lapideum, adeo inflexibile, adamantinum et ferreum, audiendo tam dura tamque terribilia de penis inferni, quas videbatur, Christi prece insignis, Anthonius, fere ad oculum demonstrare, ac etiam intelligendo sic dulcia sicque melliflua de gaudiis paradisi, que nitebatur ad liquidum explanare, ab ore illo veridico et Deo pleno cum tanto fervore spiritus efficaciter emanare: ad penitentiam lamenta non fuisset penitus emollitum? Insuper, ita insolita cernendo cotidie miracula fieri, dirigente ipsum in omnibus gratia Ihesu Christi, non fuisset ad omne bonum peragendum quam celeriter immutatum?"

¹⁸Raoul Manselli, "The Franciscan Consciousness of St. Anthony of Padua," *Greyfriars Review* 9:1 (1995): 61-97. This is the English translation of his paper "La coscienza minoritica di Antonio di Padova di fronte all'Europa del suo tempo," *Il Santo* 22 (1982): 29-35.

¹⁹Stefano Brufani, "Agiografia Antoniana e Francescana," *Il Santo* 36:1-2 (1996): 89-107, here 99: "Ritengo, se non mi sbaglio, che il termine francescanesimo non possa esprimere altro che il Francesco dei suoi scritti e della sua esperienza storica, come si riesce anche a intravedere nelle leggende; tutto il resto, la fraternità che si evolve in Ordine, la progressiva clericalizzazione, lo sviluppo delle leggende, trova una migliore collocazione nella storia del minoritismo, di cui Francesco fu parte, supporre indubbiamente significativa. In questo contesto è possibile parlare di un poligenesi dello sviluppo del minoritismo. Così lo stesso parametro di giudizio storiografico, più o meno esplicito, di tradimento/fedeltà al francescanesimo nella storia dell'Ordine, non avrebbe storiograficamente più senso; l'oggetto dell'indagine dovrebbe riguardare il minoritismo nel suo sviluppo storico, come diverso adattamento a tempi e contesti differenti, non riducibili né a Francesco, né alla prima fraternità umbro-assisana."

²⁰André Vauchez, "Conclusioni," *Il Santo* 36:1-2 (1996): 373-379, here 376: "Non si tratta dunque di due tappe successive ma di due correnti parallele: da una parte Francesco il fondatore laico, uomo ispirato da Dio, sconcertante, carismatico, che vive a fondo un'esperienza religiosa profonda ed originale; dall'altra parte Antonio il frate dotto, colto, che passa dai canonici regolari ai frati Minori in uno spirito apostolico, ma che si distingue soprattutto per la sua attività di predicatore e per il suo zelo per la salute delle anime."

It pleases me that you teach sacred theology to the brothers, as long as . . . you do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion with study of this kind.

(Francis's Letter to Anthony)

The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal and Franciscan History

Sean Kinsella

The rule and life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of their own, and in chastity. *The Later Rule*¹

But as the Lord has granted me to speak and 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. *The Testament*²

Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me. *John 14:21*³

One of the more intriguing articles to appear in *The Cord* in recent years was M. Sheila Mortonson's essay on a new Franciscan reform group which called itself the Association or Pious Union of the Friars Minor of the Renewal.⁴

The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal are a recent phenomenon in the Franciscan movement. Beginning in the late twentieth century in Sicily, they have grown and spread from their original foundation with remarkable swiftness until they are now a global community. In their origins the Friars of the Renewal are descended from the Capuchin branch of the Franciscan Order, but in their self-defined refounding, the Friars of the Renewal look back to Francis of Assisi and to the first days of the Franciscan Order in the early thirteenth century. The historical foundation of the Order is seen as the authentic foundation of their own renewal. The Friars of the Renewal are engaged in an active exploration of their historical past. This exploration is articulated through a re-examination and re-definition of their place in the historical present. The context of the latter is consistently understood in light of the former. This interplay, or exchange, between a historical past and the on-

going interpretation of that past, provides an interesting perspective into the impact that a self-conscious, self-defining historical identity has on a contemporary religious community. The dialogue between past and present raises two important questions. First, in the development of Franciscan history, how have reform groups, like those of the Renewal, engaged the past? And, second, how has the Franciscan movement's relationship with its own historical past continued to shape the Franciscan present and future?

In a certain sense it is a strong and evocative testimony to the continuing impact and influence of the vision and example of Francis of Assisi that his sons and brothers have not, since his death, ceased to fight with the world, with the Church, and, most passionately, with each other, over the true, authentic, and faithful manner in which to follow his teaching and witness.

It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to find another religious order in the Church which has been so consistently disobedient in the name of obedience, or to find in another order the ease with which the Franciscans, so headlong in their pursuit of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, embrace extremity and abuse. To an outside observer it can seem both foolish and ironic that the Franciscan Order, defined so certainly by its charism, should be constantly suffering spasms of schism and dissension in an apparently vain attempt to bring the Order to a state where it is already understood to be. If, as it has been said of the Carthusians, "*Cartusia num quam reformata, quoniam nunquam deformata*" ("Never having been deformed, the Carthusians never had to reform"), it can analogously, although antithetically, be said of the Franciscans that they have never been formed because they are always being reformed!

Sadly, such constant tension and conflict has never been resolved in any comprehensive or unifying way. To this day, to paraphrase Gerard Manley Hopkins, the constant struggle toward mending only results in further rending.⁵ Nonetheless, if the history of the Franciscan Order continues to be written through the examples of feet which declare that because they are not hands they are not members of the body, then it is precisely there where that history must also be read and understood (cf. Cor. 12:15).

In 1972, in a Capuchin convent in Monreale, Sicily, six friars (one is relieved, although also a bit surprised, to find it was not twelve!) became the latest in a long line of reform movements within the Franciscan Order. These six friars asked for a special dispensation to leave the Franciscan Order so that they might follow more closely the rule and life of St. Francis of Assisi.

In their petition to the Sacred Congregation for Religious in Rome, these friars set forth their reasons for wishing to leave the formal structure of the Capuchins: (1) to return to their roots; (2) "to follow to the letter the Rule;" (3) to "rediscover Francis;" (4) to "reestablish the primitive form of life instituted by St. Francis;" and (5) to "attempt to remove the accretions which had accumulated over the centuries in the long Franciscan tradition."⁶

In looking over these five points, one might well be reading the formal request that Peter of Macerata and Angelo of Clarenò presented to Pope Celestine V in the autumn of 1294, or any of a series of *rotula*, agenda, and letters that the Observants presented to the Roman Curia throughout the fifteenth century. The Friars of the Renewal might wish to "attempt to remove the accretions which had accumulated over the centuries in the long Franciscan tradition," but, in truth, that very wish is a perfect example of the accumulation of accretions which is, as much as anything else, the Franciscan tradition! One need only recall the words of Blessed Giles of Assisi when he was shown the great basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, which had been constructed under the direction of Brother Elias immediately following the death of St. Francis:

When Brother Giles once came to Assisi, the friars took him round their new home, showing him the splendid buildings which they had put up, and apparently taking great pride in them. But when Brother Giles had carefully looked at them all, he said to the brethren: "You know, brethren, there's only one thing you're short of now, and that's wives!" The brothers were deeply shocked at this; so Brother Giles said to them: "My brothers, you know well enough that it is just as illegal for you to give up Poverty as to give up Chastity. After throwing Poverty overboard it is easy enough to throw Chastity as well."⁷

The constant cry of Franciscan reformers, "Back to the beginning," has been heard from the very beginning, and it has been ringing in the ears of *Mater Ecclesia* ever since. In his words on the occasion of the official confirmation of the Constitutions of the Friars of the Renewal in 1977, the Bishop of Monreale merely echoed the fervent wishes of the centuries themselves—that if the Friars observed their Constitutions, together with the Rule and the Testament, "this observance would be to the greater glory of God and to the good of the Church."⁸

Despite breaking from the Capuchins, the Friars of the Renewal clearly reveal their Capuchin roots in a number of ways: in their observance of the Testament of St. Francis along with his Rule; in their strict interpretation of the Rule with regard to both money and possessions; in their poverty of dress and of housing; in their strongly contemplative vocation; and in their personal appearance, which Mortonson describes as bearded, barefoot, and striking.⁹

Just as striking, however, is the strong influence of an older, deeper presence—that of the Franciscan Spirituals of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Franciscan Spirituals were a subtle but strong influence on the original Capuchin reform of the early sixteenth century, and much of this character is clearly present in the Friars of the Renewal. The clearest illustration of this influence is the habit.

In the history of the Franciscan Order, the habit has long been a source of contention and bitter controversy, both within the Order and in its external relations with the larger Church. In his book *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order*, Duncan Nimmo identified "the distinctive habit" as "the primeval symbol of Franciscan zealotry."¹⁰ It would be difficult to imagine a more significant statement of Franciscan reform, or one more symbolically loaded, than the habit. Mortonson describes the habit of the Friars of the Renewal, as prescribed in their Constitutions. It is "of the coarsest kind of woven material, ash gray in color, and having a small hood attached."¹¹ The immediate influence is, of course, the Capuchins. Originally called the Friars of the Eremitical Life, in 1532 they adopted their nickname, *Cappuccini* ("little hoods") as their official title.¹² In Mortonson's short description of the habit of the Friars of the Renewal, however, an older and less orthodox influence is also evident. Angelo of Clarenò, a noted Franciscan Spiritual of the thirteenth century, in the *Historia sentem tribulationum ordinis minorum*, described the origin and meaning of the habit in this way:

Blessed Francis was led by Christ and he wanted the exterior of his habit to be without any doubt cruciform. . . . He taught that the fabric was to be a cheap material. The color was to be neutral like the color of ashes . . . to make one think of the dead body of Christ. In thickness the habit was to be just heavy enough to keep the body warm. . . . The basic form of the habit was to be that of the cross. Its crude simplicity was to speak out against worldly frills and ornamentation. The friar minor was to appear crucified and dead to all worldliness. The habit was to be a mere covering for the body, a bare necessity as is fitting for a lover of poverty.¹³

The position of the Friars of the Renewal regarding the wearing of either sandals or a mantle (they are allowed, but only under certain circumstances), reminds one that the earliest Capuchins wore neither, but very soon into their reform they adopted the use of both. Indeed, Mario of Mercato Saraceno, a Capuchin writing in the late sixteenth century, in acknowledging the wearing of sandals and mantles, felt he must apologize for the practice.¹⁴

The Friars of the Renewal follow very closely the earliest Capuchin precepts for the strictest literal observance of the Rule and the Testament of St. Francis. They will not own property (RegB 6:1); they are to live on alms and what food they can grow themselves (Test 20-22); they have no means of transportation ("Neither may they ride horses," RegNB 15:2); their housing is not their own ("Let the brothers beware that they by no means receive churches or poor dwellings or anything which is built for them," Test 24); they are "prohibited absolutely the possession of goods and the use of money"¹⁵ (RegB 5:3,

6:1); they perform varied acts of service, but the form of that service is always simple, humble, and involves no remuneration or management of money¹⁶ (RegNB 7:1-2, 7); they have only a simple and austere appointed chapel, very much an attribute of early Capuchin houses;¹⁷ and they will not accept money for Masses, a defining characteristic of the sixteenth-century Capuchin reform. The prayer life of the Friars of the Renewal recalls the emphasis on prayer and contemplation which animated the original Capuchin movement. What Mortonson describes as the "essentially contemplative"¹⁸ life of the Friars of the Renewal is very much in the Capuchin tradition.

It is interesting to note that as one compares the present day Friars of the Renewal to the Capuchin reformers of the sixteenth century, one moves in a curiously circular and backward motion. The Friars of the Renewal, for example, sleep fully clothed in their habits on a plank bed.¹⁹ This practice is directly inspired by the Capuchin Constitutions of 1536, which declared that "the beds of the friars must recall the rude Cross on which Christ was laid, and the bare earth which was frequently the bed of St. Francis. The friars, therefore . . . shall sleep fully clothed on bare boards."²⁰ With the Friars of the Renewal, then, one is witnessing a twentieth-century appropriation of a sixteenth-century interpretation of a mythic thirteenth-century tradition (the bare earth was frequently the bed of St. Francis).

Similarly, to look at the rigorous and intensive prayer life of the Friars of the Renewal, one moves easily from their Divine Office which, as Mortonson observes, is nearly always sung,²¹ back to the earliest account of the primitive Franciscan fraternity described by Thomas of Celano in his *First Life of St. Francis*: "Kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit, they chanted the *Pater Noster*, not only at the appointed hours, but at all hours, with suppliant and melodious voice. . . ." (1Cel 47).²² And if one cannot trace the Rosary back to Francis of Assisi and his early brothers, one can certainly see the connection between their Marian devotion and the Friars of the Renewal saying the Rosary as St. Francis most certainly would have done had the Blessed Virgin given the Rosary to him and not to St. Dominic!

In short, one finds in successive generations of reform movements in the Franciscan Order precisely the same desire to return to the earliest days, to "reestablish the primitive form of life," in order to be most fully in accord with—and, again, one cannot help but hear the repeated refrain of the Franciscan Spirituals—the Rule and the Testament as Francis intended.²³ And yet, the manner in which that intention can be expressed is necessarily filtered through the centuries of tradition which stand between Francis and the present. It is no more possible to "remove the accretions" surrounding Francis than it is to recreate the Christian Church and Christian experience of the first century. There are simply too many ideas, images, and interpretations between a difficult present and an imagined past.

One is reminded of the advice which the devil Screwtape offered his nephew and protégé Wormwood in C. S. Lewis's charming and insightful work *The Screwtape Letters*. It is important, Screwtape wrote, to cultivate the Christian's fondness for the "historical" Jesus because it invariably led to such dissension and disagreement over the living of the "authentic" Christian life that it prevented the living of an actual Christian life:

You will find that a good many Christian-political writers think that Christianity began going wrong, and departing from the doctrine of its Founder, at a very early stage. Now this idea must be used by us to encourage once again the conception of a "historical Jesus" to be found by clearing away later "accretions and perversions" and then to be contrasted with the whole Christian tradition. In the last generation we promoted the construction of such a "historical Jesus" on liberal and humanitarian lines; we are now putting forward a new "historical Jesus" on Marxian, catastrophic, and revolutionary lines. The advantages of these constructions, which we intend to change every thirty years or so, are manifold. In the first place they all tend to direct man's devotion to something which does not exist, for each "historical Jesus" is unhistorical. The documents say what they say and cannot be added to; each new "historical Jesus" therefore has to be got out of them by suppression at one point and exaggeration at another, and by that sort of guessing (*brilliant* is the adjective we teach humans to apply to it) on which no one would risk ten shillings in ordinary life.²⁴

The continuing struggle of the Franciscan Order to situate itself as a religious community within the Church while remaining true to the charism of its founder suggests a similar problem. It is easy to approach the problem as a natural tension between, as Theophile Desbonnets expressed it, intuition and institution, or between vision and utility, or between dream and reality. The real struggle and the real danger, however, lies between the living of the actual life and the desire to live an imaginary one. There is no perfect, pristine, primitive way of life that Francis and the first friars once knew and which is now waiting, out of time and unspoiled by time, to be rediscovered by a select few friars who have chosen to live the "real" Franciscan life and be the "true" Franciscan Order.

Mortonson describes the Friars of the Renewal as searching for the establishment of a "Franciscan Utopia, where it is possible to observe the Gospel to the letter, 'without gloss,' as St. Francis envisioned,"²⁵ but this desire is necessarily a vain and illusory one. There is no "Franciscan Utopia"; and as inspired and impassioned as the many Franciscan reform movements of the past seven hundred years have been in their search for and proclamation of it, this utopia will not be found in this life or on this earth. If, as Christians, we await a

heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10), then, as Franciscans, we must await a heavenly "Assisi" where, finally, it will be truly and fully possible to live the Rule and the Testament without gloss as Francis intended.

Endnotes

¹Francis of Assisi, *The Later Rule*, 1:1; in Regis J. Armstrong and Ignatius C. Brady, trans., *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 137.

²Francis of Assisi, *The Testament*, 39; in Armstrong and Brady, 156.

³It is interesting to note in this context what Francis wrote in the Testament about fidelity to his example and teachings: "And whoever shall have observed these things, may he be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father and on earth with the blessing of His beloved Son with the most Holy Spirit the Paraclete and with all the powers of heaven and all the saints. And I, little brother Francis, your servant, inasmuch as I can, confirm for you this most holy blessing both within and without" (verses 40-41; in Armstrong and Brady, 156).

⁴Sheila Mortonson, "Rediscover the Little Poor Man of Assisi," *The Cord* 37 (1987), 90-95.

⁵Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Binsey Poplars," *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W. H. Gardner and N.H. MacKenzie, 4th edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 78-79.

⁶Mortonson, 90.

⁷Bartholomew of Pisa, *Liber de Conformitate*, in *A New Fioretti: A Collection of Early Stories about Saint Francis of Assisi*, trans. John H. Moorman; cf. also *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. Marion A. Habig, 4th revised edition (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 1843. Hereafter, *Omnibus*.

⁸Mortonson, 91.

⁹Mortonson, 91.

¹⁰Duncan Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Medieval Franciscan Order* (Rome: Capuchin Historical Institute, 1987), 644.

¹¹Mortonson, 91.

¹²William J. Short, *The Franciscans* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press/A Michael Glazier Book, 1989), 70.

¹³Angelo of Clareno, *Historia septem tribulationum ordinis minorum*, in *A History of the Seven Tribulations of the Order of Friars Minor*, trans. George Marcil, Section 8, Seventh Tribulation, Number III, page 3 (unpublished manuscript, n.d.).

¹⁴Thaddeus MacVicar, *The Franciscan Spirituals and the Capuchin Reform* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1986), 84.

¹⁵Mortonson, 92.

¹⁶Mortonson, 93.

¹⁷MacVicar, 89.

¹⁸Mortonson, 92.

¹⁹Mortonson, 91-92.

²⁰MacVicar, 84, n. 8.

²¹Mortonson, 93.

²²In *Omnibus*, 268.

²³MacVicar, 29.

²⁴Letter XXIII; in C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 116-117.

²⁵Mortonson, 95.

Themes and Directions in Franciscan History: Comments

Dominic Monti, OFM.

Franciscan history offers an account of an important medieval religious and social movement—one which is not simply a dusty museum piece, but a vital and ever-changing phenomenon. Presently one out of every five men and women professing religious vows in the Catholic Church is a Franciscan of one kind or another. But exactly how many different kinds of Franciscans there are in the world is one of those things known only to God. Any attempt to describe the many stripes and varieties of the Franciscan creature is both bewildering for the uninitiated and frustrating for the expert. The fact that there are so many different kinds of Franciscans in the world is due in large part to the profound disagreements over the centuries among men and women who claim to follow the charism of the Poverello of Assisi. The papers presented in this issue witness to this fact. What exactly is the Franciscan "ideal"?

The Franciscan family tree is still budding forth new offshoots today. Sean Kinsella's paper devotes itself to one of these—the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. It is perhaps paradoxical that the brothers of the peace-loving Francis have had the most acrimonious internal history of any religious order in the Church. Now once again, in just the last few decades, after a century of mergers and growing uniformity and consensus among the Friars Minor, the profound transformations affecting the Church in the wake of the Second Vatican Council have unleashed new splinter movements. Some friars have withdrawn from the existing orders of Franciscan men to found new communities, precisely in the name of safeguarding old values which they have seen as threatened. Kinsella has attempted to illumine the mentality of one of these new offshoots. His paper shows how a present-day group has attempted to explore "the historical foundations of the Franciscan Order" and re-appropriate the charism of their founder "in their place in the historical present"; but in this effort they have re-opened some of the unresolvable tensions of a long prior history.

First of all, let me say that my appetite was whetted by the title of Kinsella's paper, but the entree which was served did not quite satisfy it. I had initially hoped to gain some insight into an American congregation with a very similar name based right here in New York—the Community of Franciscans for the Renewal. Instead I learned about an Italian community—not that I am ever disappointed in being served an Italian meal! I would like to inquire if Kinsella or anyone else knows of any link, either direct or indirect, in terms of ideals and structure, between the group he has described and the New York congregation? We do know, of course, that the founders of the latter group, led by the noted preacher and writer, Fr. Benedict Joseph Groeschel, were also former Capuchin friars. Perhaps such questions will have to remain unanswered for the time being because the sources of these new congregations have not yet been widely disseminated in the larger Franciscan world.

Kinsella has ably shown that, although their stated program was “to re-establish the primitive form of life instituted by St. Francis” and in the process “to remove the accretions which had accumulated over the centuries in the long Franciscan tradition,” the Friars of the Renewal are still captives to that tradition. In fact, Kinsella's paper illustrates well that these reformers' vision of what the “primitive form of life” should entail was in fact shaped largely by the Spirituals' and early Capuchins' reconstruction of it.

I might give one other example, not mentioned in the paper. The description of the Friars of the Renewal in the article cited by Kinsella also mentions that these Italian reformers reject all modes of transportation, basing themselves on Francis's prescription in the Rule that “the brothers may not ride horses” (RegB 3). But was Francis here really rejecting *all* modes of transportation or one mode—horses—that in his day was a sign of affluence and privileged social status? In any event, Francis also adds a common sense proviso to this prohibition—“unless they are compelled by sickness or great necessity.” It was because friars later in the thirteenth century attempted to evade this prescription entirely or to restrict it through pharisaic nit-picking, that reform movements were to insist on the absolute prohibition against riding in any vehicles. This is just one more instance that what we are witnessing with the Friars of the Renewal is in fact “a twentieth-century appropriation of a sixteenth-century interpretation of a mythic thirteenth-century tradition.”

Although I am in profound agreement with Kinsella's conclusion that “there is no Franciscan Utopia,” in the sense that it is impossible for present-day Franciscans to attain some ideal reconstruction of a mythic Franciscan Eden, I must also disagree with what seems to be the assumption in his concluding sentence: “perhaps Franciscans must await a heavenly Assisi where it will be truly and fully possible to live the Rule and the Testament without gloss as Francis intended.” It seems to me that Kinsella himself is unconsciously ac-

cepting here another one of the Spirituals' interpretations: that when Francis urged the friars to interpret the Rule “without gloss” he was calling for the Rule to be followed *ad litteram* (“to the letter”). However, as Duncan Nimmo has convincingly demonstrated, in a study which Kinsella cites in another context, this identification was a creation of the Spiritual reformers at the end of the thirteenth century.¹ In fact, recent studies have shown that Francis emphasized a life “in the Spirit,” not according to a fixed pattern.² Granted, a life in the Spirit of the Lord Jesus continually calls friars to separate themselves from the wealth and power of “the world,” identifying with the world's “lesser ones,” but the way that this is lived out must be a creative response of each generation to its own world, not to a thirteenth-century one.

Kinsella addresses the perennial desire of Franciscan reformers to look to the historical foundations of the Franciscan Order as the authentic basis of contemporary reform. But precisely what is the “original spirit” of the Franciscan Order? How is this determined? In what has become a classic article, “Twisted Roots, Muddled Charism,” Colin Garvey poignantly phrased the difficulty twentieth-century Franciscans faced when urged by the Second Vatican Council to return to the “original charism” of their founder as the criterion of present-day Franciscan renewal.³ Are the authentic roots of the Franciscan Order found in the life-style of the primitive movement from 1209 to about 1220, or do they also include the community of the following decade, increasingly moving into the mainstream pastoral ministry of the Church and more and more structured according to the patterns of existing religious communities? Michael Blastic's presentation argues that the formative years of the Franciscan movement must be seen as encompassing more than the figure of Francis himself. The dimension symbolized in the hagiographic tradition by Anthony of Padua must be brought in as complementary, providing “a model of Franciscan life different from—though not opposed to—that of Francis of Assisi.”

The figure of Anthony has been neglected in much modern research, at least by English-language scholars—a curious anomaly. Francis, the Poverello, “simple and ignorant,” was rediscovered by intellectuals and artists in the nineteenth century and has ever since stayed “at the top of the list” of favored topics of religious scholarship. Anthony, the learned preacher, on the other hand, still largely remains the object of popular “blue-collar” devotion, *il Santo* who works miracles and finds lost articles, Franciscan fund-raiser par excellence. Yet if one goes to older Franciscan churches in Italy, one often sees the figure of Anthony represented in the same dimensions as Francis, almost as if he were the co-founder of the Order. This tells us something about the way that thirteenth-century friars viewed their origins. We academic historians need to look at Anthony as well.

Michael Blastic has nicely situated Anthony of Lisbon, a man drawn into the Friars Minor as a result of the geographical expansion of the brotherhood outside Italy following the chapter of 1217. Anthony typifies the increasing number of friars who became caught up in the "pastoral revolution" envisioned by Paris theologians and championed by Innocent III in the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council. Many church reformers increasingly viewed the Franciscans as the God-sent apostolic men who would engage in the pastoral ministries emphasized by the Council: doctrinal preaching and the care of souls through the hearing of confessions. One of these reformers was Innocent's nephew, Cardinal Hugolino dei Segni, Cardinal Protector of Francis's evangelical movement, and after 1227, Pope Gregory IX.

Gregory's predilections for the evangelical movement begun by Francis and Clare are certainly evident. Dominic Guzman, the founder of the Order of Preachers, died in 1221. He had worked in close cooperation with the Papal Court to realize the aims of the Lateran Council, and his Order certainly was a powerful force within the Church. Yet Gregory did not canonize Dominic until 1234. In the meantime, two Franciscans—Francis himself and Anthony of Padua, had died (1226 and 1231, respectively); Gregory canonized both of them virtually immediately (1228 and 1232, respectively). Certainly, Gregory was Francis's friend, and it was understandable that he moved quickly to validate in the eyes of the wider Church the founder of this radical, if increasingly domesticated, grass-roots religious movement. But why Anthony's rapid canonization? Was it not intended as a message to Francis's brothers as well as to the wider Church? In the wake of the issuance of *Quo Elongati*, Gregory wished to validate another model of being a Franciscan besides Francis himself, a model that Gregory believed was actually more providential for the Church at large. Blastic rightly emphasizes Gregory's bulls of canonization, *Mira circa Nos* and *Cum Dicit Dominus*. They clearly illustrate that Gregory saw Francis's and Anthony's life and activities within God's saving plan of raising up effective preachers against the heresies threatening the Church.

One difficulty with Anthony is that we know very little of what he thought about Franciscan ideals. Both the Pope and his early hagiographers were concerned about his public ministry in the larger Church. We have only hints and guesses about how Anthony would look at the later controversies surrounding Franciscan life-style, prayer, and poverty. Blastic's paper therefore does not go into this topic. We do know that Anthony initially seems to have rejected his educated background, joining the friars to become a martyr among the infidels, and then devoting himself largely to an eremitical life. He moved into a life of public preaching and teaching because he was called to do so by his superiors in the Church and in the Order.

And we can also say that Gregory's bull *Quo elongati*, issued at the request of Anthony among others, although providing a flexible understanding of sev-

eral prescriptions of the Rule, still attempts to preserve primitive ideals, such as the renunciation of ownership and the use of money by the community. Gregory and Anthony no doubt knew that a good deal of the success of the Friars Minor as apostolic preachers rested on their unique status as men who identified their place in society as being among the "lesser ones." These values they wished to maintain as much as they could, while still including the moderate security needed for a life of study and full-time pastoral work. Franciscans, for centuries afterwards, would argue about how to balance these concerns, but rightly or wrongly, the vast majority were committed to the Church's pastoral ministry in a more structured institutional setting. For this Anthony set the pattern.

Finally, Ingrid Peterson's paper gives us a good deal of insight into the motivations and way of life of the numerous women and men of the "Third Order" Franciscan penitential tradition. This whole area, especially the identity and activity of medieval women penitents, is presently undergoing a tremendously needed re-examination. Indeed, one of the other sessions of this convention is devoted to "Female Voices in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italian Religious Literature." It features papers on two Franciscan penitents: Rose of Viterbo and Battista de Varano. Peterson's paper makes clear that the lines dividing Second and Third Order women were not as sharp as we might have thought. Attraction to an eremitical life-style did not imply that a woman would necessarily choose a life "in the cloister" as a Poor Clare. This option also existed in the Third Order tradition itself.

Peterson, in fact, opens up a re-consideration of the active-contemplative dichotomy that has permeated so much of Franciscan life over the past several centuries. The truly stimulating collection of essays, *Franciscan Solitude*, to which her paper alludes, probes the wealth of the contemplative tradition that has always marked the Franciscan movement in its most vital periods. The famous "discernment scene," in which Francis and his brothers debated "whether they should live among the people or seek refuge in solitude," did not result in an either/or decision. They did not choose an apostolic life to the exclusion of a contemplative one. As we learn from reading further in the biography, Francis and many early friars alternated times of almost total immersion among the people with periods of withdrawal to hermitages. The passage in the earlier Rule, where Francis addresses all his brothers, "those who preach, those who pray, those who work" (RegNB 17), clearly refers to the fact that some friars devoted their energies primarily to preaching, others spent most of their time in the hermitages, and others worked at a trade among ordinary laborers. Where a friar went depended very much on his own gifts and the call of obedience, and what a friar did at one stage of life might be very different from another. The roles of Martha and Mary were not opposed, but complementary, both in the Order at large and in the life of the individual.

Such an unstructured way of life did not last very long. As time went on, both the Friars Minor and the Poor Clares became more fixed in their communal identities of pastoral ministers and cloistered sisters. Those Franciscan men and women who desired flexibility to fashion a "mixed" active-contemplative life often chose to join the Third Order, within which they still had the freedom to construct more personalized life-structures, whether as individuals or in small communities.

These tensions are still with Franciscans today. In a very professionalized world—especially in our American culture—how do men and women belonging to congregations engaged in a wide variety of demanding jobs in various settings preserve the space necessary to cultivate "the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all other things must contribute" (RegB 5)? The demise of the quasi-monastic schedules, which once characterized American religious life, and the fact that many religious are now employed in work situations which do not allow the freedom to construct a schedule responsive to the needs of a truly spiritual life, make this issue all the more pressing. In many ways, the women and men in the later medieval and early modern period had a much easier time than we to integrate these complementary dimensions of Franciscan life.

The papers that have been presented make it clear that themes and directions in Franciscan history have been and remain remarkably consistent—almost perennial—throughout that history, as men and women attempt to live out the radical Gospel ideals of the little, poor man of Assisi.

Endnotes

¹*Reform and Division in the Medieval Franciscan Order* (Rome: Capuchin Historical Institute, 1987), 103-108.

²For example, Optatus von Asseldonk, "The Spirit of the Lord and its Holy Activity in the Writings of Francis," *Greyfriars Review* 5 (1991): 105-158.

³*The Cord* 34 (1984): 68-83.

*And whoever shall have observed these [things], may they be
filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father and
on earth with the blessing of His beloved Son with the most
Holy Spirit the Paraclete and with all the
powers of heaven and all the saints.*

(Test 40)

The Cord, 49.1 (1999)

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.

Michael Blastic, OFM Conv., is a friar of the St. Bonaventure Province, Chicago. He is currently teaching at St. Bonaventure University, serves as Dean of the School of Franciscan Studies, The Franciscan Institute, and edits the scholarly annual, *Franciscan Studies*. A popular lecturer, he has research interests in the early origins of the Franciscan Order as well as in the implications of the Franciscan tradition for contemporary issues of justice, peace, and the environment.

Sean Kinsella received his B.A. in History from Cornell University in 1990 and his M.A. in Franciscan Studies at The Franciscan Institute in 1992. He is presently a candidate for the S.T.L. at the International Marian Research Institute, the American branch of the Roman Pontifical Theological Faculty Marianum. He resides in El Macero, California. Sean organized the session for the American Historical Association which produced the papers presented in this issue of *The Cord*.

Dominic Monti, OFM, is a member of Holy Name Province, New York. He received his doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1979, after which he joined the faculty at Washington Theological Union, where he is professor of Ecclesiastical History and chair of the Franciscan Center. He specializes in medieval Church history. Among his publications is a translation of *St. Bonaventure's Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order* (Franciscan Institute Publications, 1994).

Ingrid Peterson, OSF, a Franciscan Sister of Rochester, Minnesota, serves on the staff of the Franciscan Sabbaticals Program at Tau Center in Winona, Minnesota, and on the summer faculty of The Franciscan Institute. A specialist in the mystics, she earned her doctorate at the University of Iowa. She is the author of *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993) and editor of *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman: Clarefest Selected Papers* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1996).

Sunday Morning in Perugia

Men take an early passeggiata
Sunday morning in the piazza
next to the fountain near the Duomo.

Behind bronze doors the Duomo's priest
leads wives who pray for husbands outside
who read their newspapers lit by sunrises
falling equally on the unseen beggar
chanting, "Buona Domenica."

Earlier this morning, as I offered mass in
neighboring Assisi, lifted Christ's Body
routinely in the pre-dawn dark, I saw only
the white wafer and not how Divinity
began as bread begun as light
in fields below the Duomo.

Like those who walk this piazza
waiting for their wives, men who
read instead of see, I looked too close
too high above the plain.

Murray Bodo, OFM

Robert G. Cunniff

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\$16.00 311+xviii pages paper, 1998
ISBN 1-57659-001-1

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The *Tractatus* takes all of Ockham's views and explains them as related to or as consequences of two principles—the Principle of Divine Omnipotence and the Principle of Parsimony. The translator's Introduction offers some helpful hints for reading and explains and illustrates the relationship between the two Principles. A glossary of technical terms and a bibliography are included. Footnotes reference English translations of Ockham's works where such exist.

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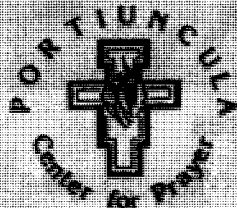
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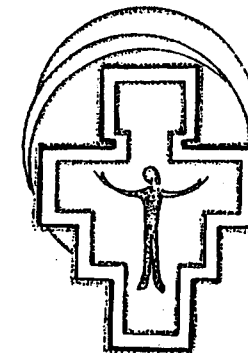
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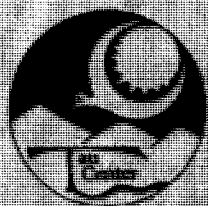
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Content: Contemporary reflection on the Gospel passages that most influenced Francis and Clare; the Rule of Francis and the Synoptic Gospels; Scripture in Francis's Admonitions; the Psalms today, invitation to pray; the influence of John's Gospel on Francis's spirituality with a special reflection on the San Damiano crucifix; the significance of Francis's "Office of the Passion."

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New from THE FRANCISCAN FEDERATION

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Zachary Hayes, OFM

Components of the nine-to-five day are:

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1998-99 Program dates:

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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THIRD ORDER REGULAR
OF THE SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF THE UNITED STATES

34th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

AUGUST 17-20, 1999

HYATT REGENCY COLUMBUS
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THEME:

The Universe: Discovering the Heart of God

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Ilia Delio OSF: author, Franciscan theologian and Assistant Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Franciscan Studies at Washington Theological Union, Washington, D.C.

William Stoeger S.J.: Staff Astronomer—Vatican Observatory, Tucson, and Adjunct Associate Professor of Astronomy, University of Arizona, Tucson.

Other Conference Breakout Sessions will be held on:
The implications of Franciscan Spirituality, the Canticle of Creation,
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August 17: 7:00 p.m. Opens with a Welcoming Social.
(Orientation Sessions and pre-meetings will be held the afternoon of August 17.)

August 20: Noon Conference ends

Planning is already underway for the Franciscan Federation Jubilee
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Watch our Website for more information as well: <http://www.franfed.org>



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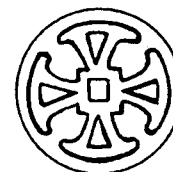
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November 5-13, 1999

with
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This retreat has been designed to do just this. One day is dedicated to each of the eight sections of *The Soul's Journey*. Prayer and Eucharistic celebrations enhance the content of the reflections.

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For detailed information contact::

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both hunger and
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Franciscan Food Pilgrimages can be combined easily with other destinations in California. For more information contact Keith Warner OFM at 121 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco CA 94102; phone 415.241.2620.



On the Franciscan Circuit Coming Events, 1999

Monday, January 18 - Friday, January 22

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

Third Order Rule History. Roberta McKelvie, OSF. \$200. At Franciscan Handmaids of Mary (see above).

Sunday, January 31 - Friday, February 5

Franciscan Gathering XIX. Maka Ina, Mother Earth: Black Elk and Francis. With Marie Therese Archambault, OSF, and Wayne Hellman, OFMConv. At Franciscan Center, 3010 Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603; ph. 813-229-2695; fax: 813-228-0748. Contact: Jo Marie Strevia, OSF.

Monday, February 1 and Monday, February 8

Psycho-Sexual Development. Violet Grennan, OSF. \$100. At Franciscan Handmaids of Mary (see above).

Friday, February 26 - Sunday, February 28

Celebrating Franciscan Women. Margaret Carney, OSF. \$100. At Franciscan Spirit and Life Center. (See ad p. 43.)

Saturday, February 27

Rebirth of a Charism. At St. Odilia Parish, Los Angeles, CA. (See ad p. 46.)

Friday, March 5 - Saturday, March 6

Meeting the Millennium: Franciscan Spirituality in the 21st Century. Gabriele Uhlein, OSF. Sixth annual central New York Franciscan Experience. At The Franciscan Center, 2500 Grant Blvd., Syracuse, NY 13208; ph. 315-425-0103; fax 315-425-0610. Contact: Marion Kukukawa, OSF.

Saturday, March 20

Rebirth of a Charism. At Tau Center, Winona, MN. (See ad p. 46.)

Thursday, April 1 - Sunday, April 4

Celebrating the Triduum. J. Lora Dambroski, OSF and Bernie Ticerhoof, TOR. At Franciscan Spirit and Life Center. (See ad p. 43.)

Thursday, April 15 - Monday, April 19

Franciscan Challenge. Bob Hutnacher, OFM, Ilia Delio, OSF, Mark Balma. Tau Center. (See ad p. 44.)

Sunday, April 18 - Saturday, April 24

Directed Retreat. J. Lora Dambroski, OSF, and Vinnie Fortunato, OFM Cap. At Franciscan Spirit and Life Center. (See ad p. 43.)

Writings of Saint Francis

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

Writings of Saint Clare

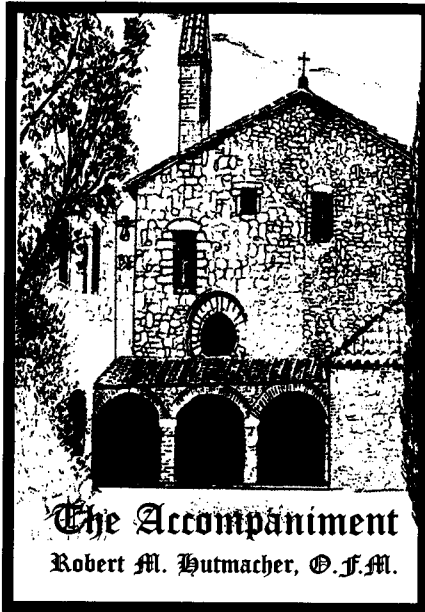
1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCI	Rule of Clare
TestCI	Testament of Clare
BCI	Blessing of Clare

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

Clare and Francis

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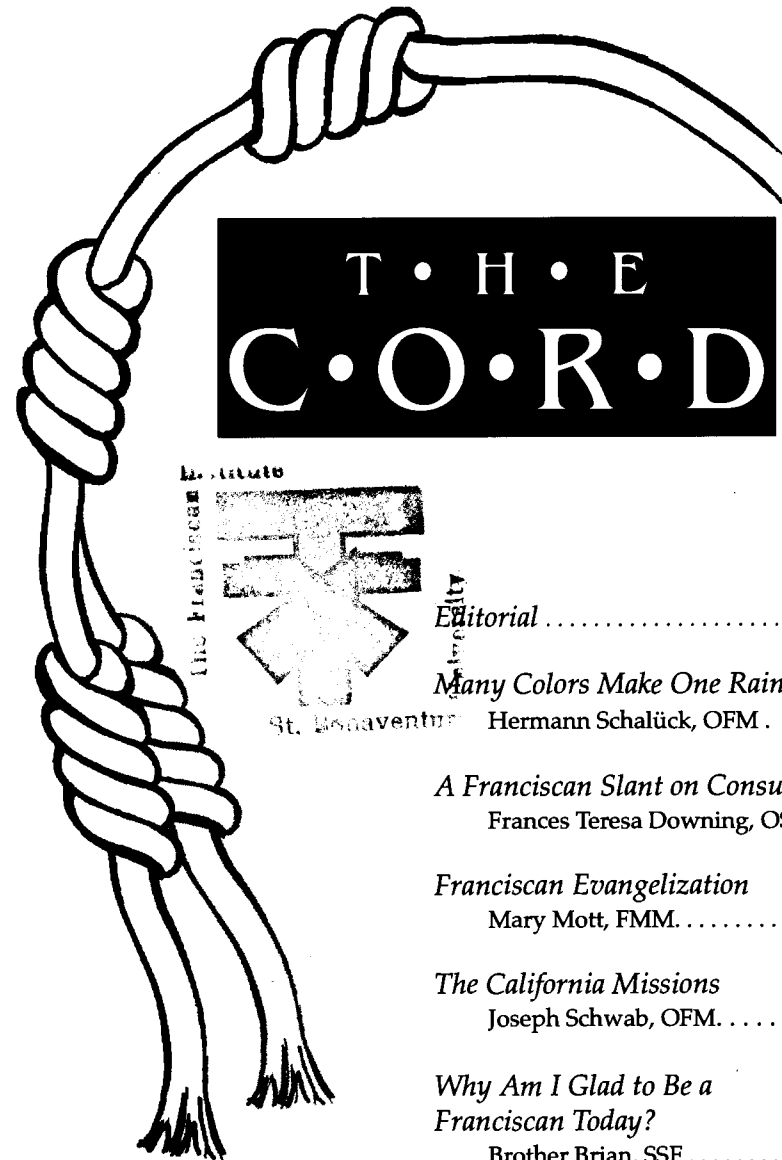
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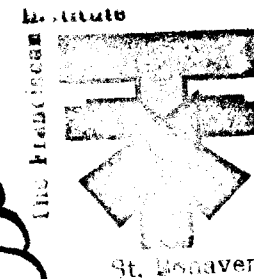
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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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1. MSS should be submitted on disk or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced.
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
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, 49.2 (1999)

Editorial

Why do we do it? There are, no doubt, moments when we each ask ourself this question—why do we follow this way of life? In the Franciscan tradition, the answer to this question might be more difficult than in a way of life that enjoys clearer parameters, a more focussed or explicit sense of purpose. To live the Gospel, as our Rule bids us, does not really narrow down the field much. Our reflection on our way of life sometimes gives us a sense of ambiguity. Many of us struggle for a clearer sense of our common purpose.

The mission of a group or organization is the reason for its being—why it got organized in the first place. A strong sense of mission carries members through the necessary ups and downs of the organization's history, gives them a sense of identity from generation to generation. The "why" of our existence helps us affirm our value in and to the larger world.

Participating in the Church's mission underlies the reason for being of any recognized religious order or congregation in the Catholic tradition. So we Franciscans are challenged to assess from time to time our own level of participation in the ecclesial mission and our own faithfulness to the reason for being of the Franciscan way of life in the Church.

The articles in this issue of *The Cord* deal, in a broad sense, with this concept—the "why" of our existence. Discussions about "mission" often move quickly into the arena of ministry. For Franciscans, however, ministry does not adequately answer questions revolving around mission. While many of our congregations were founded explicitly to do certain forms of ministry, incorporation into the Franciscan way of life calls us to a mission broader than the ministries in which we engage. Our authors describe the contribution we Franciscans can and do make in our greater world, not only by our ministries but by how we live the basic values of our way of life.

When we can no longer answer the question, "Why do we do it?" we no longer have a mission.

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

Many Colors Make One Rainbow Franciscan Solidarity in a Global Age

Hermann Schalück, OFM

[This was an address delivered to the Capuchin Plenary Council
in Assisi, on September 16, 1998.]

In the first part of my paper, I would like to refer to some experiences I have had in recent years. Part two is a theological reflection on those experiences. In part three, I make some suggestions about how Franciscan sisters and brothers can fulfill their mission to follow the poor Christ even in the global village of today's world.

See: Experiences of a Common Journey

First, the good news: In the last twenty-five years, the Franciscan Family has grown together ever more strongly and visibly. The different component parts of the one Family have experienced the fact that no single one has or lives the entire charism. Therefore, we are called to complement one another and together build a new house with many dwellings: for men and women, clerics and laity, cloistered contemplatives and contemplatives in the midst of the world. The heritage of Francis and Clare, like a rainbow, must span the entire earth, indeed the whole of creation. It must speak of the God of life, who loves the world and loves the poor. A rainbow is a single reality, but made up of a thousand colors and shades. Studying our sources and challenged by the signs of the times, we have come to know one another better. I am reminded of an image often used in ecumenical theology and spirituality: the different Christian traditions are like the spokes of a wheel. The closer they come to the hub, to the center, to Christ the one Lord, the closer they come to one another. We can apply the same image to the Franciscan Family.

The joint structures of the Franciscan Family in individual countries, linguistic areas and continents, and in Rome too (CFF), and many shared projects, witness to the fact that the single house is no mere utopia. For myself personally, these experiences of a common journey made by the first, second, and third Orders are among the finest and most encouraging of my life. We have become more and more conscious that in Church and world we are part of a greater whole, whose wealth of colors and beauty, whose spiritual and social fruitfulness, we have not yet fully exploited. Above all, when we see the challenges and problems arising out of the structural inequalities and injustices of our world order—the need to liberate the poor, to work for reconciliation and peace, to be involved in ecumenism and dialogue with the other great religions of the world—we see that we still have many stages to go through on our common journey into the future.

I would like to give a few examples to show what lies before us, beginning with one that, for me, is close to home. We OFMs, particularly in the years 1991-1997, have tried, together with all the brothers and sisters with whom we live in a particular spiritual communion, to make a world-wide “culture of solidarity” the theme of a deeper spiritual growth and the leitmotiv of our activity. We have tried to remember that each sister/brother, each fraternity and province, should feel part of one great context, sharing one history, one world, as members of one Family. This is not simply an option for the sake of effective management, or a concession to “centralizing” tendencies. Rather, it has everything to do with the credibility of our gospel life. We cannot live, die, love, work, or suffer for ourselves alone; each can give, but each can also receive.

If we are to fulfill the task the Lord has given us, we need to think and pray in wider contexts than hitherto. The new challenges are one way in which God is speaking to us today. The maxim, “think globally, act globally and locally,” is one that in my experience points the way for global players in the economy and in politics and has done so for many years. It is also important for the inculturation of the Gospel and of our charism for those who want to follow Christ in today's world. It is vital for evangelization, for the credibility of the religious life, including the Franciscan Family, and to provide long-term, lasting motivation for all in the service of peace and justice.

I am constantly finding how necessary a new “culture of solidarity” is, both among ourselves and with others, but also how difficult it is to transmit this. Many brothers and sisters are fully occupied with difficult local and regional problems, e.g., with the presentation or suppression of houses or buildings, even of Provinces and traditions. How much time and energy are left for the “broader horizons” born of a renewed mentality: for solidarity, for sharing of material and personnel resources, for the creation of new traditions, for

new steps in the evangelization of cultures,—e.g. with regard to China—for the establishment and running of new shared centers of formation and studies? Our situation is similar to Lk. 9, 10: we are so busy burying our dead that we have no time (or energy) left to proclaim God's kingdom.

How much shared, creative imagination, how much mutual encouragement in the faith and in Franciscan living would it take to understand the sins of the times, find answers inspired by the Gospel, carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth? Our concerns to maintain the status quo (houses, Provinces, our "own" missions) are of course inevitable, but they are too costly in terms of energy. If we ask ourselves whether we are living poverty in a credible way today, the important thing for me is not how much money we have in our accounts. Much more problematic is the way we cling to obsolete traditions which we consider as an inalienable "property." First, our lack of courage to face the exodus from decrepit structures that no longer bear Spirit and life; or the way we argue from traditions tinged at times with regional or nationalistic overtones; then, our "appropriation" of convictions that hinder us from being a truly international, itinerant, missionary brotherhood—one that does not constantly and verbally glory in the charism of St. Francis and praise his ideal of poverty, but tries to embody it anew in our complicated world, whatever risks this may involve.

In 1996, at a meeting with representatives of all the Conferences to prepare our 1997 General Chapter, I asked some questions that are relevant to us here: "What is the situation regarding the 'new culture of solidarity' between the Provinces/Conferences among themselves, between the Provinces/Conferences with the Order at large, between the Order and the Franciscan Family? What about communication in the Order? Are we as an Order able and willing to set in motion processes of medium and long-term planning (e.g., for the study centers, for a solidarity fund)? It seems to me that at Province level and Order-wide, and at the level of the Franciscan Family, we live too much by improvisation. We are constantly tempted to shrug off this serious lack as a virtue, with the excuse that 'Francis was not a man for plans and structures. He lived by intuition.'"

Here is another example. In 1979, at the peak of the exodus of the boat people from Vietnam, a UN conference on the world refugee problem was taking place in Geneva. I took part in it at the request of Br. John Vaughn, who had just been elected General. Br. John wanted to make our Order more sensitive to questions of justice and peace. At the end of 1979, he wrote a very inspiring document on the refugee question. As usual in our Seraphic tradition, concrete initiatives were left to the Provinces. As far as I could gather, the letter had little impact among us, but it did have another interesting consequence. Sources in Rome, which in this case I consider trustworthy, say that Fr. Arrupe, SJ, then General of the Society of Jesus, was enthusiastic about the

Franciscan letter. It inspired him to found the now world-famous Jesuit Refugee Service. Naturally, this is an excellent result for us too. Yet I wonder why we seem incapable of similarly prophetic action, which would show the vitality of our life, not just in words but in deeds, so necessary today.

Take another example, which at first sight might seem irrelevant to a discussion of world-wide solidarity. It concerns the question of the "mixed" (cleric-lay) character of the so-called First Order, and complementary relationships within the Franciscan family, especially between the so-called first and second Orders. This is not the place to discuss the problem as such. I would just like to say how urgent it is that we reclaim our self-understanding as a "mixed Institute," i.e. as a true community of brothers, and how necessary it is, too, to restate our relations with the Sisters of St. Clare and to accept women as equal partners in the one life-project. Our world-wide spiritual outreach and evangelical fruitfulness do not depend on the strength of our membership, or on the number of our works and projects. They depend on our obedience to the original charism, on our courage to live it consistently today, and ultimately also on the solidarity that all members of the one family show to one another.

Despite all the committed work done by many brothers, I am not so sure how deeply the question of the "Institutum mixtum" has become a common concern. It has been obvious to me how much individual brothers and Provinces are fixated on traditional roles (e.g. parishes, clerical ministries, clericalized formation) and how little they are in solidarity with the search for a renewed identity. Nevertheless, in most of our General Chapters, nearly all the capitulars have given verbal assent to the concerns underlying the "Institutum mixtum" question. Yet, in the practice of the Provinces, in the process of raising the brothers' awareness, in vocations apostolate, in formation, and in the pastoral apostolate in general, the declared will for the renewal of our charism is still too little in evidence. I believe we need a good dose of conversion and real penance.

It is of course difficult in practice to draw the consequences from the fact that we are a community of lesser Brothers and that in our life-project we accept our sisters as equals. Could it be that in reality many brothers do not want to see "de-clericalization" take place, because it would actually make us less privileged and therefore poorer? If finally we were a brotherhood in the gospel sense, we would be closer to the people of God and to the poor, and we would have greater spiritual potential for works of peace and justice. If we delve deep into the origins of Franciscan solidarity—the experience of the poor, crucified Lord and His commandment of love for all people, which is the genuine form of the Franciscan following of Christ—then we are laying the best foundation for lasting solidarity and reconciliation in the world. By doing this, we ourselves become an important sign of it, in this complex world with its many challenges in the areas of justice, peace, and option for the poor.

The real source of strength from which to draw new world-wide solidarity lies within ourselves, namely in the certainty that the Spirit of the Lord is the giver of life and that to follow Christ opens our eyes and hearts to show compassion, love, and mutual help, as we walk alongside our brothers and sisters.

Judge: Some Clarifications and Reflections

We need to clarify some terms constantly used in this paper. First, the word "solidarity" itself. What exactly do we mean by it? I would like to make three distinctions, necessary also for our discussion within the Franciscan Family.

1) Solidarity is often understood as a vague sense of empathy, emotion, and compassion. This feeling can be part of solidarity, but solidarity itself, according to a definition given in *Solicitudo rei socialis*, is much more, namely "the firm and constant resolve to commit oneself to the common good, that is, to the good of all and of each individual, since we are all responsible for one another" (n.38). So solidarity is much more than a feeling. It is the will and the intelligent capacity for organized action in favor of the *bonum commune*, with a readiness for long-term transformations, so that not only the symptoms but also the causes of needy situations can be tackled. Solidarity is being on the side of the weak and excluded. It must reckon with a counter reaction—the pressure to conform. Those who wish to live in solidarity must therefore also be ready for conflicts, which can come from within as well as from without.

2) Are we talking of solidarity "within" or solidarity "outwards"? No social group, such as parties, trades unions, and Christian communities and groups, can work in any meaningful way without a certain measure of inner cohesion, which comes from a shared vision and shared goals. It is important to be collectively strong and mutually to strengthen one another, e.g. in moments of confusion or even of external threat. But this, in my view, is not the highest form of solidarity. This kind of cohesion can lead to the rise of group ideologies and collective egoism. In that case, a form of solidarity would arise which no longer deserved the name, because it would be defensive and would set itself up "against" others. Even in our discussions within the Franciscan Family, we should be clear what exactly we are talking about and what we want. Again I want to stress that we need many more common visions "ad intra" and a declared will to be in solidarity, to help and strengthen one another in our following of Christ. Each should be ready to give and to receive. All should freely enter into the shared vision of a "rainbow" of hope, which stands in the heavens as a risible sign.

3) The true form of solidarity according to the Gospel and the example of Christ is directed "outwards." It follows the example of the self-giving of Jesus (cf. Phil. 2). It does not seek its own well-being, but seeks to increase the possibility of life in the future for all people and for the whole of creation. It

seeks to share, not to possess. Christian solidarity is, like prayer, an act of faith in the living God, who is life and wishes to give life to all. It is extremely important to the relevance of our Franciscan life-project that we should successfully witness, in common solidarity, to the hope that is in us, both "inwards" and "outwards." We do this not simply in words but in convincing deeds of love, reconciliation, and liberation of the poor. Not only looking inwards at our own Family, but above all outwards, with people of other creeds, religions, colors, and cultures.

Finally, a further word about "globalization." We are witnessing the bewildering phenomenon of a network of systems governing information, communication, finance, and production. We need to find a standpoint that neither uncritically glorifies this development nor fearfully shuns the reality of the world. There is a growing sense of global interconnectedness and mutual interdependence. But the number of disadvantaged in the world is not automatically diminishing because of it. The number of Internet users grows daily, but one cannot claim that this is automatically a step towards overcoming illiteracy. Globalization is proceeding apace according to the standards of the market and thereby at the expense of a large part of the population. We must not allow globalization to overtake us like a nameless fate, but should as far as possible use it in the service of life and evangelization.

The Catholic Church and the large international orders are, from the outset, "global players." Our Franciscan Family also is an international network with the ability to implement shared visions and reach common goals. In contrast to the rules of the global marketplace, I do not see that, with us, there is a danger that our thinking and action in the global network would privilege the strong, further weaken the weak, and on the whole foster a leveling down of cultures and traditions. I believe that many local traditions and forms of the spirituality of Francis and Clare that have grown up throughout history must be maintained. Globalization does not threaten them with its leveling tendency because of their own inherent vital force. There is, however, another danger—that we may not see or use the positive possibilities offered by this global inter-connection and that in the name of regional and group interests we close ourselves off from important tasks which no one any longer can do alone and which today can only meaningfully be done together.

To answer the question addressed to the brothers and sisters of St. Francis about the possibility and durability of (inter-) Franciscan solidarity and about the challenges of the "globalized" world requires a firm faith foundation. Ultimately the question is not concerned with some pragmatic strategy. It is addressed, rather, to men and women who can tell us how the Spirit of the Lord and the Spirit's holy operation is at work in the present and future history of our Family, and how this Spirit helps us to see the signs of the times and un-

derstand them rightly. I am convinced that new forms of world-wide Franciscan solidarity in favor of the poor are long overdue. But, if we do manage to find them, they will only endure if they arise from deep wells, namely from the certainty that the Lord is calling us to this, just as he once confronted a hesitant and reluctant Francis with the figure of the leper.

Deep Wells

One last word about those "deeps wells." In recent years I have sometimes heard in my own fraternity the argument that Friars Minor cannot be involved in the struggle for human rights and the liberation of the poor as long as we have wounded and poor brothers in our own ranks. Others said, and still say today, that Francis is first of all about the spirit of devotion and prayer, and not about external "socio-political" goals. And, so it is repeatedly said, we cannot strive for such goals as long as we lack absolute clarity and consensus over methods. I ask myself: was the encounter with the leper only a second step for Francis, less important than praying before the cross? Wasn't it rather the decisive step in the formation of his life-project, i.e. a revelation of the living God? Didn't Francis experience the presence of the living God and the operation of the Spirit with as much intensity in his encounters with the poor as during prayer?

This question about the highest Franciscan priority can only be answered in biblical terms. The commandment is to seek "first" the Kingdom of God. This entails the experience of God as God is revealed to us in Scripture, in prayer, in the sacraments, and in history. But it also includes from the outset, healing the sick, freeing prisoners, seeking peace and justice and greater abundance of life for all. In the words of Francis, the most important thing we have to have is "the Spirit of the Lord and his holy operation" (RegB 10:8).

This, too, is a clear indication of a "holistic" spirituality and ministry of evangelization. We must see the Franciscan commitment to global solidarity as part of Christ's poverty, as a constant encounter with the Lord, an ever-new "mission" in the Spirit of the Lord. But this "holy operation" is anything but "purely internal." It changes the whole of a person, changes the whole world. That is why it is so regrettable that so far we have not managed to overcome completely a "typically spiritualistic temptation." The primacy of the spirit and the world of the spirit—so the argument runs—means that social concerns and the ministry of service are subordinate to true spirituality. Behind such arguments lies a concept of discipleship and spirituality that does not correspond to that of Francis. Neither can it any longer clearly show, in today's complex world, the gospel message of "life in abundance for all." Nor is it convincing to argue that we still need to clarify and define contents and strat-

egies for our international ministry of peace before we start doing something visible and stable together. Contents and strategies are clearly enough defined in our Constitutions and in the documents of the Church. It is time, at last, to make a start.

It was precisely from his spontaneous encounter with the poor that Francis learned what he was to believe and do. For him, the encounter with the poor was not a "second class" priority, needing additional endless clarifications beforehand. He became poor and entered into solidarity with the poor because the Lord "spontaneously" called him to something which, conversely, corresponded to his own inner longing. This encounter was an encounter with God and a new revelation of God's power at work. At the same time it showed him how, through actual experience of discipleship by trial and error, he was to follow the Lord with even greater consistency. Francis learned to believe more deeply, to follow Christ more radically, because he risked something.

Of course, there is always the danger that unenlightened activism will hinder a personal encounter with God. But today there is another danger that is just as great—that we no longer experience how God is revealed in history today and how an encounter with the poor can actually show us how to believe, pray, and follow the Lord. I believe we have enough ideas, words, and lists of priorities. What we lack is the courage to "encounter" the poor Christ in our history, with our lepers, with the lepers of the world.

Act: Time for Action

I have no ready answers as to how we should act in solidarity together in the future. However, for your discussion I would like to suggest some possible goals and projects which the Franciscan Family, working together, could implement in future.

1. Be sisters and brothers with a common vision.

It cannot be the goal of lesser brothers and sisters to compete with the neo-liberal project of globalization. Fundamentally this produces power, money, and markets; but unfortunately not all can participate on an equal footing. Our aim cannot be to contribute to the leveling-down of cultural and religious identities, favoring a mechanism by which a minority acquires more and more power and possibilities for life while the majority is more and more radically excluded. With our ways of being interconnected and our common solidarity with others, we ought to live another model of globalization. We are sisters and brothers who know, respect, and help one another. We also have a common vision of God's Kingdom, of the Church, and of what it means to follow

Christ today. This shared vision should spur us on in the future, more than in the past, to transcend regional and historical particularities in the service of the common good, because the values that bind us together are stronger than any factors that divide us. We must counter the logic of the market-place, of power, with the logic of love, respect, and compassion. The Lord wants mercy, not sacrifice (Mt. 12:7).

2. *Be dinosaurs or butterflies?*

The neo-liberal system of the global society is a project of secular false prophets, promising welfare for all but refusing to recognize that the majority of people thereby lose out on life-chances. Walbert Bühlmann has drawn attention to a book written by a social scientist who speaks of the "mania for dominance," of "mental dinosaurs" in relation to the development of the economy today. Dinosaurs became extinct during the Ice Age, both because of their colossal weight and their minimal intelligence. They simply could not adapt sufficiently to the global atmospheric changes taking place on earth and in the cosmos.

Contrast this with the encouraging example of the butterfly. It develops with a minimum of volume and weight and a maximum of creative, ecologically-gearred intelligence, i.e. ever ready for change!—from egg to caterpillar, from cocoon to colorful butterfly. Thanks to its adaptive ability, the butterfly has proved to be a true artist of life, surviving every change in the biosphere and thereby preserving its identity. The moral of the story—dinosaurs are no model for life and survival or for meaningful service in a globalized world. The true model is the butterfly, with its principles of lightness, flexibility, economy, modesty, and creativity. Which are we?

3. *Restore old buildings or build a new house together?*

Regarding the task of theology today, Jürgen Moltmann has written: "The restoration of old historic buildings is not the sum total of its task. Rather, it is to produce a new architecture for the endangered modern world, in memory of God's Kingdom and in anticipation of the new creation of all things." For our Franciscan mission in today's world, this could mean investing many material, spiritual, and personnel resources, which up till now we have put into the maintenance of our own tradition, in values and projects that could serve as bricks to build the new, common house. We need to go beyond forms of merely useful collaboration on a short-term basis (e.g., retreats, studies, publications) and invest in projects that bear the New Testament signs of God's Kingdom—those concerned with justice, aimed at over-

coming divisions between men and women, slaves and free, "Greeks and Barbarians," caused by human beings, not willed by God. We must foster new forms of living together between human beings of every tribe, race, and culture, and the peaceful encounter with other religious convictions (dialogue). Such ministries should be taken on structurally by the whole Franciscan Family. So, once again the question is: are we restoring our own old buildings or are we building the Kingdom of God?

4. *Understand our poverty as a service to life and to God's Kingdom.*

However, even if we moved softly and lightly through this global world like brightly colored butterflies, the new visions of our world-wide ministry would be impossible without financial resources and without structures, which would perhaps require money in their turn. The radical poverty of our brother Francis was the expression of his option for the living God, but also of his fear of being ruled by false gods, namely money and power. This motivation is still valid today. Many false gods and myths inhabit the global village: money, sex, glamour, consumerism, and social prestige, which challenge the prophetic counter-witness of the *minores*. We cannot have the same standards as those who live by size and power (cf. Lk. 22:26). "Having" cannot be allowed to determine our "being." The time has come for us to abandon many myths and schizophrenic attitudes to be found in our own ranks.

It is a fact that our Provinces, for a variety of reasons, have money in the bank. In southern countries, we usually live far better than the poor. In the "north," we are not always particularly rich, but not necessarily poor like many of the "new poor." The disturbing thing is not that we have material resources. Things have changed decisively since the time of Francis. Today we must even strongly "un-demonize" money. It is, first and foremost, a means of exchange, designed to obtain goods and services that are necessary for life. It would be schizophrenic to act as if we had other parameters for our social life, our work, and our concern for our aged sisters and brothers. We need money, and in most cases we possess it because we work and because many people place their trust in us. But we should use that trust and those material resources in new ways—not first of all for ourselves and to preserve the status quo, for walls, façades, and maintenance, but first and foremost in order to build the Kingdom of God in peace and justice, for the poor. We do this far too little, and therein lies our infidelity to the life-project of Francis.

Most Provinces of the First Order collect some form of offerings. Increasingly they have some system of professional fund-raising to maintain institutions such as schools and universities, to support the "missions" and the aged and sick brothers and sisters. Some Provinces have investments and finance

particular projects from the interest on the capital. Naturally, professional fund-raising requires professional public relations work.

What is reconcilable with the Franciscan life-project of minority? What is incompatible? This is a difficult question. In any case, it is one we have to ask ourselves seriously in this global, consumer, and information society. We are already actors in the money and information market. We have not yet sufficiently attempted to shape these new realities from within according to our Franciscan choices, living our vows not merely in an individual way, but also giving them a "global" significance. We cannot withdraw from the laws of financial markets and insurance schemes. The only way out of the dilemma is if we try to live some fundamental values of our Franciscan spirituality—especially the following of the poor Christ—in the social and political context of a globalized world. Then, discipleship would become the public, visible solidarity of the Franciscan Family with the poor of this world, with people who are robbed of their rights, with "Mother Earth," with the whole of creation deprived of its dignity.

In such a context, our fund-raising becomes "recourse to the Lord's table." While it may be necessary for our own needs, it is done primarily for the sake of our service to the life of the world. Our public relations work would not then be propaganda, but humble, self-critical accountability for our economic situation and projects (missions, development, peace work). In a word, it would support our own life-project as lesser brothers and sisters whereby we give account of the hope that is in us. To the extent that we commit ourselves, visibly and in solidarity with one another, to work for the life of the world—for human rights, the liberation of the poor, the remission of debt in the poor southern hemisphere—to that extent do we make the vital energies of our charism visible in the world. If we are obviously living for others, not for ourselves (collecting money and investments), thereby subjecting ourselves to public debate and criticism, then we can say that Francis and his love for the poor Christ are still alive in us today.

5. *Engage in a continual Passover.*

We need to move continually from a mentality which looks at our ministry solely as service to the community of the visible Church to one which sees Franciscan ministry also as collaborative service to and within the larger human family with the laity. We need to be open to new movements and manifestations of the Spirit as a consequence of our evangelical life. We need a Passover from a preoccupation with exclusively local concerns to a commitment to the global community, a Passover from self-centeredness to true solidarity. This Passover offers us a new identity as one Franciscan Family. We become Franciscan men and women, lay and religious, sent by the Church

into the heart of secular society to proclaim the Reign of God "by living in this world as builders of justice, heralds and craftsmen of peace, overcoming evil by doing good" (*Constitutions OFM, art. 68,2*).

6. *Accomplish projects together.*

At this point I would like to suggest a few projects which could be taken on and accomplished jointly by the whole Franciscan Family, since global questions require global answers which no one can provide alone.

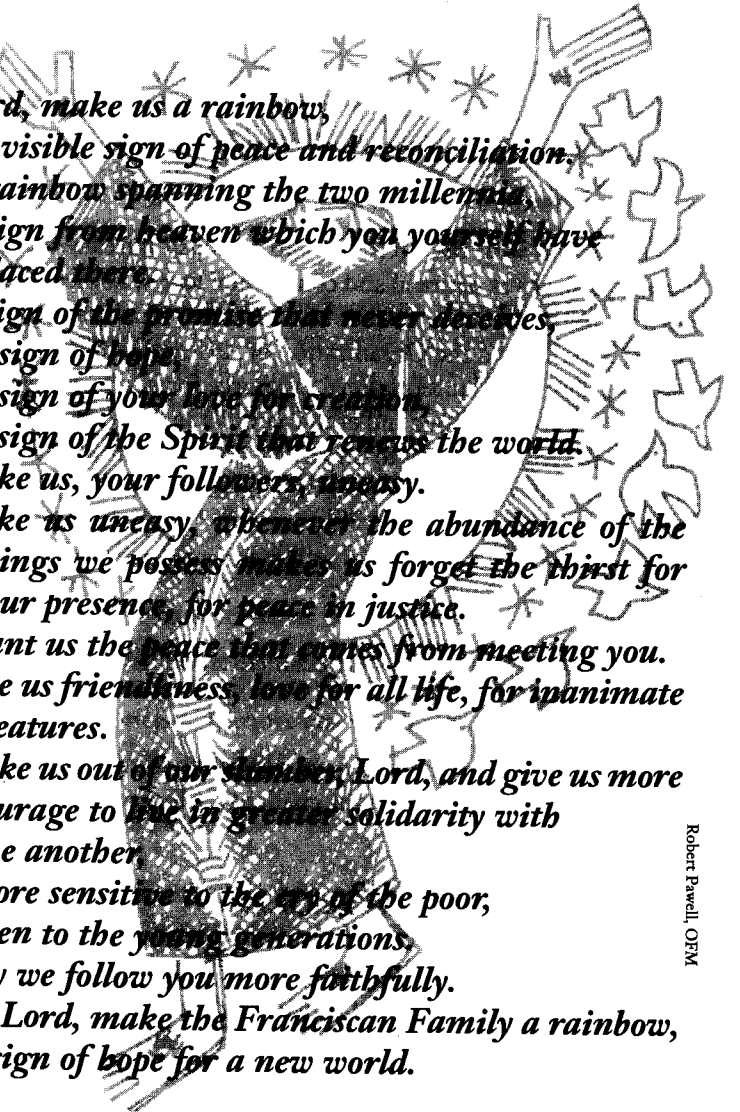
- The most important and urgent project—to reconstitute "Franciscans International." A Franciscan NGO, sustained by everyone in solidarity, would be a credible, audible voice of Francis and Clare in today's world.
- In connection with the NGO-FI—to establish bureaus for human rights questions at national and continental levels, not least with international organizations such as the European Union, MERCOSUR, and the Organization of African States(OAS); to establish a specialized international task force for peace and reconciliation in areas of religious and ethnic conflict (e.g. Northern Ireland, Bosnia, the Middle East); to undertake common initiatives to solve the problem of the external debt of poor countries.
- In parallel with JRS, to set up an international network to combat AIDS.
- To establish joint structures for ecumenical ministry and inter-religious dialogue.
- To create a common university, not just of the so-called First Order. This remains a most important challenge which we can no longer avoid.

In Conclusion

Jon Sobrino has written that solidarity is not primarily about "helping" or giving. True solidarity arises from a new perception of reality, from a new culture of listening to the Spirit. True solidarity is born from contact with the new reality, from transformation by it. Solidarity does not summon the decreasing reserves in order to keep the world and the Church as they are. It is a

prophetic attitude that wishes to create something new, together. (Jon Sobrino: *Solidaridad: Llevarse mutuamente*, in *Misiones Extranjeras*, 157/8, (1997) 71-79). And St. Anthony wrote: "Let words fall silent, and deeds take their place. For words we have in abundance, but deeds are in short supply."

Finally a prayer which I gave to my Sisters and Brothers
at the end of my service in Rome:



*Lord, make us a rainbow,
a visible sign of peace and reconciliation.
A rainbow spanning the two millennia.
A sign from heaven which you yourself have
placed there.
A sign of the promise that never deceives,
a sign of hope,
a sign of your love for creation,
a sign of the Spirit that renews the world.
Make us, your followers, uneasy.
Make us uneasy, whenever the abundance of the
things we possess makes us forget the thirst for
your presence, for peace in justice.
Grant us the peace that comes from meeting you.
Give us friendliness, love for all life, for inanimate
creatures.
Shake us out of our slumber, Lord, and give us more
courage to live in greater solidarity with
one another,
more sensitive to the cry of the poor,
open to the young generations.
May we follow you more faithfully.
Yes, Lord, make the Franciscan Family a rainbow,
a sign of hope for a new world.*

Hermann Schalück, OFM

Robert Powell, OFM

The Cord, 49.2 (1999)

A Franciscan Slant on Consumerism

Frances Teresa Downing, OSC

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When Francis sent his brothers into the forest to gather firewood, he told them never to cut all the branches from the tree because the tree must be left with hope of resurrection. In the same line of thought, Clare said in her Testament that any land beyond what the sisters needed for vegetables should not be worked or sown but allowed to lie fallow and uncultivated. The land and the tree share their life with us to feed us and keep us warm, but we must not demand too great a sacrifice from this generous growth. Instead, we must leave the land and the tree with what we value ourselves—hope of resurrection. It is a sobering thought that because we have ignored this simple advice, our own life on this planet is becoming endangered. By granting hope of resurrection to the land and especially to the trees, we would enable our lives to continue; by greedily denying that hope, the very elements on which our lives depend are seeping away from us. Yet the few, fundamental insights from which this wisdom flows are available to us all.

Care for All of Creation

The basic position of Francis and Clare was quite simple—every living creature is a brother or a sister. The way to this place of insight is taught us by Clare when she tells us:

Study to imitate the ways of holy simplicity, humility, poverty and indeed, the totality of a holy way of life. This is what we were taught by Christ and by our most blessed father Francis from the beginning (TestCl 56).

This advice was not for professional religious only, but the teaching of the Gospel. The Lord taught Francis, he taught Clare, and she teaches us.

As Francis began to experience that life in abundance which Christ came to bring, his concept of brothers and sisters became increasingly inclusive. So Sister Cricket and Brother Worm and many others came into his family, and he realized that every living creature is a unique revelation of God and that it is our privilege to praise God together with them all.

Once when Francis was about to eat with Brother Leo, he was greatly delighted to hear a nightingale singing. So he suggested to his companion that they should also praise God alternately with the bird. While Leo was pleading that he was no singer, Francis lifted up his voice, and phrase by phrase, sang his duet with the nightingale. Thus they continued from Vespers until Lauds.¹

What would Francis say today about the animals and plants being brought to extinction? Yet there was no sentimentality in his thought. He was utterly pragmatic, good at business, and deeply conscious that the world was created for our delight. He said that every vegetable garden should have a "beautiful, small garden" for aromatic herbs and lovely flowers, which would invite us to praise God for, he added, every creature says and proclaims: "God has created me for you, O man" (LP 51). This is not a license to exploit but a gift bearing responsibilities to be fulfilled. The Song of Creation makes this quite clear. There Francis praises God through His Excellency the Sun our Brother, through our Sister the Moon, and through each Star, through Brother Fire and Mother Earth and Sister Death. Each tells us something of God. Each gives us something essential to life, be it beauty, warmth, light, or food. Each imparts some wisdom to us which would, if we could only learn it, enable us to live at home on Lady Earth.

Let everything you have made
be a song of praise to you.
Above all, our Sister, Mother, Lady Earth
who feeds and rules and guides us.
Through her you give us fruits and flowers
rich with a million hues.
O my Lord, be praised.

Growth in Wisdom and Joy

Francis only attained the full simplicity of such vision at the very end of his life when it broke upon his spirit like dawn after a period of deepest dark-

ness and depression. It is one of the most encouraging aspects of Francis that we can actually see him mature and grow, make mistakes and learn from them, change his mind and his opinions and do so often. It also means that his distilled wisdom is placed at our disposal. He offers himself as a giant so that we can stand on his shoulders, for these days are of great responsibility for the human race, and we need to be as far-sighted as we can possibly be—and far more than we have been to date.

One of Francis's changes of heart was on his death-bed when he had a last minute conversion to his body, apologizing for the harsh treatment he had meted out to it. This is encouraging for us who flinch from his ferocious penance and are only too pleased to find reasons for not imitating him. Leo tells us that Francis's primary concern was always to possess and preserve spiritual joy within and without (LP 97). If we could share this goal, we might be more eager to be a fellow traveler with him. He saw this joy as something to which we can choose and commit ourselves, rather than an adventitious or chance occurrence. Joy is the echo of God's life within us, as Abbot Marmion tells us, and from it we draw insight and discretion.

Fasting

With regard to fasting and asceticism generally, Francis certainly *preached* a golden mean:

In taking food, sleep and other necessities of the body, the servant of God must act with discretion so the Brother Body has no excuse to complain (LP 1).

He laid down few rules about fasting because he quickly learned that people varied in how much food they needed and, anyway, supply was regulated by poverty rather than demand. In fact, his own *practice* was often harsh in the extreme, but this arose increasingly from his intense longing for God and decreasingly from negative attitudes to the material.

His goal had been spelled out early in his conversion when the crucifix in San Damiano spoke to him and said: "Francis, do you not see that my house is falling into ruin? Go and repair it for me." Trembling and amazed, Francis replied: 'Gladly I will, O Lord'" (L3S 13). From then on, this was the context of his fasting and his prayer, his asceticism and his generosity. He made a resolution never to accept more in alms than he needed. In fact he often took less than he needed "so that I would not defraud the other poor. To act otherwise would be to steal" (L3S 111). He also made a resolution not to refuse alms to anyone who asked for the love of God and started off by giving an impover-

ished knight everything he was wearing, thus, suggested his biographer, going one better than St. Martin who only gave away half his cloak! (2Cel 5).

How would this work out in practice today? How would these attitudes work for us? What has Francis to offer which would help us rescue our world from desolation, our society from the extremities of surfeit and starvation, our brothers and sisters from that slavery of one sort or another which makes it impossible for them to serve God in joy and freedom?

A Contemporary Response

Presumably I have been asked to address this matter out of a supposition that Poor Clares know about such things, but in fact most Poor Clares have to make the same journey as their contemporaries. I, along with others, feel as confused as everyone else. The old reasons for fasting do not impress as they once did; the new reasons lack the powerful punch which comes from long observance. Children of the consumer society, we can find hosts of reasons why fasting is not for us. Often the mind set of our spiritual forebears seems to us too dualistic and punitive; we cannot see our souls as prisoners in our bodies and are more enriched by the Celtic approach which understands the body as the soul in fleshy form. If the body is no longer seen as the prime cause of all our sin and trouble, then we no longer need to punish and tame it. Yet we cannot ignore fasting all together. The Lord himself both practiced it and spoke about the need for it, and our spiritual forebears, Francis and Clare and hosts of others, fasted with such dedication that we would need compelling reasons for abandoning it.

There are, perhaps, two groups of replies, one arising from our own spiritual needs and the other from our wider understanding of the world in which we live. On the personal level, there is a real need to correct imbalances in our way of life. Often this can be done only by letting the pendulum swing, temporarily, through the path of austerity. Many of us habitually eat too much and own too many things and want too many more. The lines defining our lives, therefore, become clogged and fuzzy. Fasting is one excellent way to restore the spare, clean lines of freedom to our spirits, for it is a fact of experience that fasting brings insight, clarity, and inner freedom.

Yet even when we do succeed in fasting as we think we should, there are pitfalls, especially for the Celts among us who seem to have an inbuilt fascination with extremes. We can come to feel that if we eat a little less food, a little less sleep, we will step out of the material altogether, lifting it like a skirt on the floor while we ascend to some higher realm. We are wary of this because we have learned from hunger strikers such as Ratushinskaya about the quasi-mystical effects of too little food, music, warmth,

and heavenly colors which are solely rooted in the chemical changes wrought by hunger.

We also tend to make rules for fasting which are more severe than we can maintain and then we rapidly give up. Failure is made easy, too, because we are surrounded on all sides by available delicacies, which may be one reason why fasting is traditionally accompanied by some measure of withdrawal from our ordinary lives. We are also uneasy about the boundary between fasting and dieting, and usually, when we fast, have a secret hope of losing weight, which tarnishes the pure spirituality of it somewhat.

All these seem to offer us excellent reasons for not fasting so much or at all, or at least for postponing it while we think about it. Yet I suspect that for many of us, the basic reason for not fasting is that we lack the courage. We do not know how to handle the persistent slight headache, the increased grumpiness, and the tiredness. Although we acknowledge it as a sign of maturity, our culture does not train us for deferred pleasure, even the simple one that when we are hungry the most ordinary food, like bread and water, is suddenly revealed as manna and nectar. Their very simplicity and ordinariness are part of the revelation and delight. Fasting can sensitize our awareness in new and unexpected ways, especially when we have found a sustainable balance between fasting and eating—for Lent is forty days long.

A Franciscan Response

However, none of these are particularly Christian reasons for fasting, and we need to look to Francis, that intense lover of Christ, for something which—if we were faithful to it—would move our spiritual lives into new dimensions. When the crucifix spoke to him, Francis found an inner light which he knew he could follow. More significantly, he felt that the wounds of Christ were imprinted in his heart, so much so that his companions considered the later stigmata to be only an externalization of something interior which had happened long before. This caused his love of Christ and his distress at Christ's sufferings to grow steadily (L3S 14). Just as Francis's poverty led him to share in the riches of Christ, so his love led him to share in the sufferings of Christ.

Those to whom it has been given to weep for the pain of the crucifixion say that it is a unique kind of weeping, one which seems to scorch a path out of their most profound depths and yet to leave a track of clear light and joyful love. Surely most of us feel that if we could only come to that light and love, fasting, asceticism, and penance would not just be easy, but would have found an intense and adequate motivation. This is where we realize that our fasting and asceticism will only bear fruit when they grow gently out of our inner silence and time given to prayer.

Again, our culture does not help us, for silence has become hard to find. Yet if there is silence in the vast country within, then the outer noise will not be such a racket, but be transformed into voices, pain, longings. We shall hear the deeper desires of our society, the longings of those who shove us on the subway and push us at the bus stop. We shall begin to hear the unutterable groanings of the Spirit breathing through our world. This will then reflect back on our daily practice, so that through fasting and prayer, we will be led to almsgiving.

Almsgiving

If fasting deals with food and how we discipline our intake, then almsgiving deals with the subsequent decision about what we should do with the food, money, and time now at our disposal. One of the unexpected fruits of fasting, we will find, is a shift in values. Certainly Francis had this experience and as a result, went and lived among lepers, something which he previously found bitter and even intolerable. There among lepers, he tells us, the bitter was turned into sweetness for him. He learned to love what he had hated, to embrace what he had feared (Test 1:3).

Almsgiving is this process of the bitter turning into the sweet. It is a consequence of what we learn, without realizing it, when we fast. In essence, almsgiving means giving something to someone else who needs it and cannot repay us. It may be giving money to charity, or food and clothing to the homeless. It may mean supporting or working for the various organizations to get all our young people off the streets by the year 2000 or simply speaking to the homeless we meet as we go shopping, treating them like human beings instead of disasters. It may mean helping them by buying the *Big Issue*² regularly. It may also mean something quite different, like giving blood as a donor or calling on neighbors who need help or visiting hospitals. Above all, it may mean seeking out those whom the rest of society avoids.

This is what Francis did when he sought out the lepers and went and lived with them. He was beginning, says his pious biographer, "to think of holy and useful things" (1Cel 17). He then tells us how Francis once did what we can easily do especially if our own life is a struggle—he judged the poor and found them wanting. In recent years we have heard a lot from this judgmental voice, and perhaps we are a little tarnished by it. We can learn from Francis to be ashamed of this. He also made a resolution never to refuse anyone who asked for alms for Christ's sake. It was the beginning of compassion for him. He began to ask the rich, who flocked around him, to give him clothes and furs in the winter, always on condition that they would not ask for their return; and then he gave them to all the poor he met. He said that the poor and hungry

should be filled by the rich. He was a distributist at heart, which is why Chesterton loved him. He believed that if the rich gave as they could afford, at least on Christmas Day, then there would be no more poor. The plight of the poor touched him deeply:

In all the poor he saw the Son of the poor lady, and he bore naked in his heart him whom she bore naked in her hands (2Cel 83).

Conclusion

It is this that we want—somehow to bear naked in our hearts him whom Mary bore naked in her hands. Francis and Clare teach us. Without a focus on the poor Christ, fasting and almsgiving tend to become ecological correctives, and that will not see us through Lent. With this ardor, our lives are transformed. "May you always, more and more strongly, catch fire from this burning love" wrote Clare to Agnes of Prague (4LAg 27). Maybe her prayer will expand to include us who also want this intense, imaginative awareness of Christ, especially of Christ in what Clare, later in the same letter, calls the infinite and costly troubles which he took upon himself.

It is this fire which lifts fasting, almsgiving, and asceticism out of the class of being things which we suspect we ought to do but hope to find good reasons for avoiding, and lifts us up into that love which can only be spoken by the tongue of the Spirit. We look to Francis and Clare because they were gurus of the spiritual life, teachers whose teaching transformed the lives of hundreds and can do the same for us, and because their particular approach speaks to our condition. Clare wrote in her Testament that she prayed for those who were to come, that as God has given a good beginning, so God will also give good perseverance. With such prayers behind us, let us say, like Francis on his death bed: "Let us now begin to serve God, for hitherto we have done nothing" (LM 14:1).

Endnotes

¹Luke Wadding, *Annales Minores*, vol. II, pp. 24-5.

²The *Big Issue* is a London newspaper dedicated to informing its readers about homelessness. Its sale on street corners provides work for the homeless; its profits are dedicated to relieving homelessness. The *Big Issue* project is being replicated in many cities on both sides of the Atlantic.

*"In all the poor he saw the Son
of the poor lady."*

(2Cel 83)

Franciscan Evangelization

Mary Mott, FMM

Introduction

Another title for this article might have been "Is There a Franciscan Style in Evangelization?" The concern represented here reaches back into the centuries even as it reaches into the future; it is always a concern and always appropriate because it is the distinguishing character at the heart of the Franciscan vocation. If asked as a question, it never has a definitive answer, because historical configurations defining context are always evolving and changing. Today we pose this question as Franciscans who stand at the end of an old millennium, looking ahead to a new one full of unknown risks and promises, which, in turn, will further shape the Franciscan charism. We are truly persons formed in a time of intense transition.

Responding to the Lineamenta for the 1994 Synod on Consecrated Life, the Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular noted that "in each century Franciscans have tried to read the signs of the times and respond to them appropriately."¹ Yet, in this process of continued renewal and adaptation, there are constants. These include a contemplative relationship with God and all creation, communal life among the people, authority as service, non-violence and insertion in the world for the service of the Gospel.²

I would like to approach the question of Franciscan Evangelization from a missiological starting point, one which will examine these constants in their essential relation to communication of the Gospel. This method will stress some points in a slightly different way, with the accent on communication of the Gospel from within the Franciscan experience. Beginning with the consideration of Franciscan evangelization from the perspective of the particular insight Francis had about the Incarnation, I will examine the components of minority, community, and Eucharistic contemplation.

Franciscan Evangelization Shaped by Incarnation

At the end of his life, Francis talks about the significance of the leper's embrace for his own turning to God and his leaving this image as a legacy for those who would follow (Test 1). This embrace of a leper, in the actual event, was probably rather spontaneous. It deeply penetrated Francis's memory, however, and became a continuing and deeply formative moment, not only for Francis but also for his followers, for whom Francis was the primary transmitter of the charism. We know that Francis required service among the lepers for those who came to join the Friars.³

The horror with which Francis viewed lepers and the sweetness he experienced in this embrace is still present at the end of his life when he writes his Testament:

When I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. The Lord Himself led me among them and I showed a heart full of mercy to them. When I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body (Test 1).

Through this embrace Francis goes beyond venerating the memory of Christ Crucified. Now he grasps intuitively the mystery of God communicated through the Incarnation.⁴ Francis did not have the scientific language to articulate his new insight; perhaps he didn't have the kind of intelligence that could have expressed itself in the language of the schools. But in a far more impressive and lasting way, his new vision forged an expression through his way of being and doing, through his poetry and prayer, and in his style of relationships. As Dupré points out, medieval Christian doctrine was in profound conflict with the accepted philosophical principle that gave primacy to the universal:

In the Incarnation God has assumed human nature in one single individual. Remarkably enough, Christians began to challenge the primacy of the universal only after having supported it for centuries. Even then it was not logical consistency but the pressure of a nonphilosophical religious movement that forced speculative thinkers to reconsider it. The major challenge came from a barely educated religious genius—Francis of Assisi. His devotion to Jesus of Nazareth, the individual, opened a new perspective on the unique particularity of the person. Francis upset an intellectual tradition which he hardly understood and which he certainly had no intention of challenging. If the Image of all images is an individual, then the primary significance of individual form no longer consists in disclosing a universal reality beyond itself.⁵

Francis realized in a very concrete way that the Gospel path opened the way for ordinary humans to grasp the depth of a God whose love reached beyond the fullness of life in the Trinity towards every human person and all of creation. We hear this insight also expressed by Clare:

If so great and good a Lord, then, on coming into the Virgin's womb, chose to appear despised, needy, and poor in this world, so that people who were in utter poverty, want and absolute need of heavenly nourishment might become rich in him by possessing the kingdom of heaven, be very joyful and glad (1LAg 19-21).

Another meaningful and lovely image comes to us from the life of Francis when he re-enacts the birth of Jesus at Greccio (1Cel 84). He was much concerned that people would understand that in this birth God crossed whatever boundaries separated God the Creator from the intimate experience of creation:

It would be . . . so good, so edifying, to call to mind the birth of the Christ Child on the night of Christmas, to have set before our bodily eyes in some way the inconveniences of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he lay upon the hay where he had been placed.⁶

The Image of Embrace

What does this powerful insight about the Incarnation which marks the Franciscan charism have to say to our continuing exploration of Franciscan evangelization? As we think about the images of embrace that Francis left to his followers, we can recognize certain things that continue to challenge us across the centuries. First of all the embrace is costly. Francis remembers its costliness, a difficulty eventually transformed, but not diminished. Called to communicate the Gospel, not only or even especially in oral form, we must keep before us this costliness in the framework of the incarnate love of God. What are the instances in our lives today that pose the condition of costliness if we are to reach out to embrace others or to allow ourselves to be embraced by others? There are no generalities here, for each encounter provides its particular challenge. Let us remember these things:

- There are times when we choose to reach out, and after we overcome our initial discomfort, we can experience the presence of God;
- There are times when we are first of all recipients of an embrace, and

for those of us formed in a culture influenced by personal independence, this can offer some difficulty in letting ourselves be embraced;

- And there are those among us whose apparent despicableness is not in disease or uncleanness or extreme poverty or even in violent crime, but in their power, their wealth, their hidden schemes of violence turned against those without power. In the light of God's justice, what does Franciscan insight about Incarnation have to say to our way of evangelization in these instances? Where is God? How is God present? How can we see-judge-act with non-violence and as reconcilers without short-circuiting the space demanded by justice?

God is always before us challenging us to encounter the All-Powerful who enters the human condition, accepting its limitations. There are other spiritualities, grounded in the Catholic tradition, which open pathways and insights about the mystery of Incarnation. At times it may seem somewhat futile to attempt distinctions among traditions, since they interact with, and enrich one another. However, the catholicity of our common tradition is at the same time enriched and deepened by the specificity of each contribution. As Franciscans, our communication of the Gospel message requires our arms to be open towards the other, not excepting the other's sin, limitations, evil. Our stance must be an embrace of the other, however limited that other may appear, seeking to discern in the embrace the humanness of God. It can extend to leaving ourselves open to be embraced by God who has assumed our own limited human condition. For some this embrace is the process of a lifetime.

Minority—A Choice of Powerlessness

Considering further the insight of Francis into the Incarnation, we recognize that he had an innate sense of littleness, poverty, and powerlessness.

Francis cannot find words sufficiently worthy to extol poverty. He speaks so highly of the most high poverty that the language of the approved Rule reaches the heights of ecstasy. . . . When a person in speaking about a reality is transformed into a poet, then is he totally self-possessed.⁷

But this was not an insight for himself alone. He wanted his brothers to be called *Fratres Minores*, the lesser brothers (Reg NB 5: 12). He also uses this language of littleness in reference to Clare and her sisters: "Listen, little poor ones called by the Lord" (ExhPD 1). Clare, too, employs this language of littleness, referring to herself as the "little plant of the most blessed Francis" (RCI 1:3).

The capacity to move to the edges of society to find one's home and one's roots has marked the Franciscan movement with varying degrees of intensity since its beginnings. Franciscan identification with the marginal is not simply an external act of making an option for the poor; it is a movement from within. At the same time, minority cannot be entirely subsumed under material poverty, for it is more than not having possessions.

Minority in the Franciscan sense is about relationships first of all; it finds its source in the Gospel image of kenosis, that self-emptying that defines the Incarnation as God takes on humanness in Jesus. It is a condition of vulnerability and powerlessness. We see this in the lives of both Francis and Clare. Because it is conceived as a condition of vulnerability and powerlessness, minority frees us to embrace the other, an image that can take many forms. For Franciscans, there will always be the immediate response to the other. Such immediacy overflows from a spirit continually steeped in the wondrous mystery of God who enters the human condition and walks with us. There will also be the ongoing response in many of the situations we encounter. How do we continue to walk with those whom we encounter?

A particular icon of minority that stands out is that of Francis and the Sultan. Francis, with all his gentleness and his medieval understanding, went to encounter and embrace the Sultan in a call to conversion. He returned embraced by the Sultan and influenced by some spiritual practices of Islam. He later wrote to the civil leaders and the guardians of the Order:

And you should manifest such honor to the Lord among the people entrusted to you that every evening an announcement should be made by a town crier or some other signal that praise and thanks may be given by all people to the all-powerful Lord God (EpRect 7).

And you must announce and preach His praise to all peoples in such a manner that at every hour and whenever the bells are rung, praise, glory and honor are given to the all-powerful God throughout all the earth (1EpCust 8).

Further, and perhaps more profoundly, minority is the source for a Franciscan understanding of authority and obedience. Authority is service that seeks to animate and to serve the memory of the community, especially about those matters to which we have together committed ourselves.

Obedience is first of all a commitment to collaborate with those called to the service of authority. The image is circular and communal. In many of our communities we have recognized the inadequacy of traditional terminology to express an ecclesiology of communion. Francis signaled a different way of relationships in choosing ministers and servants to exercise authority. His chal-

lenge came directly from the Gospel. Our challenge also comes from the Gospel, through Francis, and through the Second Vatican Council and its grasp of a vision for an ecclesiology of communion.

Obviously this also concerns those beyond the Franciscan family. But our concentration on living minority in our relationships with one another in community provides a strong image in a church and world struggling through transition. Our missionary relationships, extending outward from our communities, can contribute to the evolution of the ecclesiology of communion set in motion by Vatican II, but yet to be realized. Such an experience of church ultimately queries our presumptions about inclusion and exclusion. Through the Incarnation God radically undermines many of our personal, cultural, and ecclesial images and conceptions.

For Francis, minority meant offering, in the midst of daily events, everything into the Father's hands for the salvation of the world:

In his letter to the Friars Minor, he says: "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves so that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally." Francis now related obedience—the brothers are to remember they gave themselves—to a liability: "They must make themselves vulnerable to their enemies, both visible and invisible." The one who lives the Gospel and proclaims it to others takes on the obedience of the Son expressed in the Incarnation. It is a concept of service in humility, of obedience that extends as far as the offering of one's life—powerlessness.⁸

Evangelization is a missionary activity and therefore requires a situation of obedience.⁹ It involves the radical renunciation of both violence and the exercise of power. It involves the choice of "those social ranks in society where one has no right of command; it involves an undermining of social hierarchies through obedience."¹⁰ Here we have an image of obedience shaped by service and collaboration. It is not a question of exercising domination or being dominated. Obedience is a "yes" spoken freely that commits one to collaboration with one's sisters and brothers in community, especially with one's sisters and brothers on the periphery of society. It is a "yes" spoken with discernment and freedom to be at the service of the Reign of God within the church. This "yes" is a word that is constantly being shaped during our lives, forged at times in the midst of pain.

Community

Both Francis and Clare evidenced a clear and intentional relationship with those companions who joined them on their journey, the brothers and sisters

God gave them. Each of them in their respective Testaments expressed this relationship:

And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel (Test 14).

After the most high heavenly Father saw fit in his mercy and grace to enlighten my heart, that I should do penance according to the example and teaching of our most blessed father Francis, a short while after his conversion, I together, with a few sisters whom the Lord had given me, after my conversion, willingly promised him obedience, as the Lord gave us the light of His grace through his wonderful life and teaching (TestCl 24-27).

This concept of community or fraternity in the Franciscan tradition derives also from a foundational insight into the Incarnation. In defining Franciscan community, the word fraternity suggests a quality of relationships. This way of living together within the constraints of different views, different personalities, different ethnic backgrounds, different cultural frameworks—stretching at times to seeming incompatibility—is our first way of proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel. This foundational challenge of living together in the embrace modeled in the Incarnation is, par excellence, our engagement in evangelization. In whatever other ministries we may engage, our inner Franciscan rootedness is in our Gospel communities, our primary location of proclamation and witness.

Community is the place where justice is articulated in our relationships. It is the place where minority and vulnerability are lived first of all with the brothers or sisters whom God has given us. Commitment to just relationships is defined by “respect for the dignity of every human person, loving acknowledgment of each one’s fundamental right to freedom of conscience, and respect for the integrity of creation.”¹¹ If, in our missionary stance as Franciscans, we are to pose no conditions but reach out to embrace the other, then the source of that action is lived first of all in community. A true Franciscan community cannot be closed. Communal life among the people is part of the continuing tradition.¹²

Eucharist and Contemplation

Recently I was speaking about the Eucharist with a young Hispanic theology professor who is also a pastor in a Pentecostal church. He told me that in his tradition they understand the Eucharist to be a memorial and not real pres-

ence. He went on to relate with tears in his eyes that one Sunday a woman in his congregation told him that as she held the bread in her hands it was radiant. I shared with him an event in my own life which I think of as an icon of Anna—Anna who received the Child Jesus in the Temple. This was at an ecumenical assembly in which a priest of the Anglican Church celebrated the Eucharist. I was there as part of a Roman Catholic delegation. At the time of distribution of Communion, I noticed a woman whom I had come to know during the days of the assembly. She was from a Christian church which did not have a sacramental tradition. As she received the bread in her hands, tears were streaming down her face. Later that day I met her, and her greeting was: “Mary, today I held God in my hands!”

I do not use these examples to ignore more academic and important ecumenical discussions on the Eucharist. These are extremely important. But the stories here illustrate the sense of mystery which the Eucharist presents to us, as Christians explore together how God is among us. There is a great thirst for the Eucharist today. The search and pain around issues of a common table, the way that Eucharist emerges in conversations among Christians, even when it is not intended—these are all signs of how this tremendous mystery is at the heart of our Christian identity.

We know that this mystery of Eucharist was a central facet in Francis’s way of seeing reality. We recall his words:

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 (EpOrd 27-28).

Within the Franciscan family, we have different accents on the Eucharist. For some it may be a more pervasive image, an inspiration of a charism within a charism. Nonetheless, what is there for all Franciscans is the call to a contemplative attitude before all creation that finds its source in the reality of the Eucharistic mystery. This Bread, broken and shared, is the intersection of human and divine in everyday life; it is the event above all others that engages us in conversation with the continuity of the Incarnation in our time.

The Orthodox, in their theology of Eucharist, speak of this mystery as bread for the missionary journey. The Eucharistic liturgy

is the full participation of the faithful in the salvation brought about by the Incarnation of the divine Logos and through them [its extension] into the whole cosmos. . . . Through the humble and "kenotic" hiding of the divine word in the mystery of the bread, offered, broken and given, "we proclaim his death and confess his resurrection until he comes again."¹³

Mary of the Passion, a Franciscan woman for whom the Eucharist was central to her missionary understanding, spoke of "Jesus in the Eucharist as the Great Missionary," the one who sends us to the people, who in turn send us back to the Eucharist.¹⁴

It is perhaps the Eucharist that poses the most difficult question for our understanding of Franciscan evangelization today. We live in a time when good liturgy is sought. We often have to deal with liturgies that are not well celebrated. Questions of priesthood and ministry are profound, painful, disturbing, and diverse. Women are more intensely experiencing exclusion in relation to liturgy. A shortage of priests sometimes leads to eucharistic practices that move away from the central meaning incorporated in our liturgical understandings.

Within the context of a eucharistic and contemplative way of looking at the world, we experience the tragedy of our times. This dissolution of integrated relationships is present in creation, in societal relationships, and in relationships in the church. Can we embrace this tragedy in a eucharistic and contemplative way that can eventually transform the pain, the destruction, and the sorrow? Reflection on the life of both Francis and Clare offers us some hope for a positive answer—Francis at the end of his life at LaVerna; Clare holding the monstrance in the face of the approaching Saracens. These images might seem very far removed from our reality. We need to demythologize them.¹⁵ We are called to summon the eucharistic and contemplative vision that enabled both Francis and Clare in their time and translate it into our hearts in a new and dynamic way. Only as we own the vision can we hope to embrace the tragedy in a redeeming fashion.

What then is the challenge for us? We are within the Roman Catholic tradition. As Franciscans we are called to work from within that tradition. At the same time, our charism for minority places us on the margins, at the periphery, not in loyalty or fidelity, but in our conversations, in our embraces. Those with whom we converse and those whom we embrace are found first of all, though not exclusively, at the periphery. That is where we can experience relationships that are Eucharistic. In the retelling of the stories, new spaces will open.

Conclusion

In considering principal elements of the Franciscan charism in relation to evangelization, one realizes that the Incarnation is the framework for all the ways in which the original inspiration of Francis and Clare communicates the Gospel message. Minority, community, and Eucharistic contemplation define the space in which we live out the Incarnation in our own times. Underlying all is a manner of relationship realized by God in entering the human situation. Our reflection, however, would be incomplete without looking at the purpose. The God who embraces all of creation is the God of love. This God, defined within the God-self by a communion among Father, Son, and Spirit, enters into a limited situation in order to bring all to the fullness of communion. The purpose of our efforts as Franciscans is to tell the Gospel story in our lives in such a way that we help bring about communion among all peoples and all of creation.

The implications are tremendous. Many examples come to mind—Franciscans International, which assures a Franciscan presence and input at the United Nations; concern for the ecological situation and for all of creation, including concern for a reconciling presence and for the identifying of injustice; the way in which the image and memory of Francis speak to so many who come from different religious traditions; the multiple little images of relationships lived in ordinary everyday life all over the world.

These are among the significant signposts articulated through a Franciscan conversation with the signs of our times. They challenge us to move forward, seeking paths of communion in the midst of growing experiences of diversity. We are always compelled to move from exclusion to embrace in continuity with our God, who entered creation as a powerless and limited human child.

O marvelous humility!
O astonishing poverty!
The King of angels,
The Lord of heaven and earth,
Is laid in a manger (4LAg 20, 21).

Endnotes

¹Franciscan Federation, "Response to the Lineamenta," *The Cord*, 44:11 (November, 1994): 290.

²"Response," 290.

³Anton Rotzetter, OFM Cap, et al. *Gospel Living: Francis of Assisi Yesterday and Today* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1994), 19.

⁴Mary Motte, FMM, "In the Image of the Crucified God: A Missiological Interpretation of

Francis of Assisi," in *The Agitated Mind of God: The Theology of Kosuke Koyama* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 75.

⁵Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 38.

⁶Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 531-2.

⁷Rotzetter, 67.

⁸Motte, 81.

⁹Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975: 60.

¹⁰Rotzetter, 52.

¹¹Mary Motte, FMM, "The Purpose of Mission: At the Service of the Reign of God," in *Mission Update* (USCMA 4:2, 1995), 1.

¹²"Response," 290.

¹³Ion Bria, ed., *Go Forth in Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 17.

¹⁴Mary of the Passion, unpublished writings.

¹⁵Joseph Chinnici, OFM, "The Spirit of St. Francis Today," *The Cord*, 47:2 (March/April, 1997): 52.

Poetry contributions are welcome.

Guidelines for Poetry Submitted to *The Cord*

Poetry published in *The Cord* should reflect the purpose of the magazine, which is to spread knowledge and appreciation of the Franciscan spiritual tradition. It should have the following characteristics:

- 1) originality
- 2) creativity
- 3) a Franciscan theme
- 4) a sense of unity
- 5) content, form, and purpose

A poem may be rhyming or free verse. It should not ordinarily be longer than 25 lines and must not have been previously published. It must not be submitted to another publication at the same time as it is under consideration by *The Cord*.

Each poem must be typed, double-spaced, on a separate sheet of paper with your name and address typed on the right hand side near the top.

We will try to send a response to your poem within six weeks of receiving it. Poems will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Please keep a copy of your poem in case of loss or damage.

Poetry critiques will not be given.

A published poet will receive two free copies of the issue in which his or her poem appears.

All poetry should be submitted to:

Poetry Editor, *The Cord*
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The California Missions: Past as Prologue

Joseph Schwab, OFM

Living in a museum is unexpectedly lively. It is easy to assume that the past is a quiescent object, busy about nothing much more than gathering cobwebs and spiders, but I've found that living as a friar at the Old Mission in Santa Barbara, California, places me square in the middle of a controversy which is very much part of the active, persistent, and sometimes vociferous debate on the role of missionization in the history of the New World. We Franciscan friars have inherited a legacy of relationships with the native peoples of this hemisphere from the 1500s to the present, and our understanding of ourselves as active agents in this history affects the concepts of mission we carry in our present situation of ministry with Native Americans. Do we experience guilt? Openness? Pride? Confusion? In this short essay, I would like to offer some direction for answering these questions.

In my role as administrator of this particular mission, I'm often called upon to "explain" the role of the missions in the development of society on the former frontier of Mexico. What seems relatively simple at first becomes increasingly complex as historic relationships are considered—between native women and Mexican soldiers; between Spanish and Mexican friars; between people of mixed ethnic ancestry and those of purely European extraction. This path in history reminds me of hiking through the Southwestern mountains, which display a bewildering complexity in geological structure along the trails. It is bewildering until one discovers how to read the earth history exposed before one's eyes—finding a direction to take. The cultural setting of mission days was anything but simple. Living here were Indians from Mexico, Blacks, Filipinos, Chinese, Europeans, American-born Hispanics, indigenous people, and numerous mixed ancestry couples. What direction do we take? There are many deadends.

There is a pronounced tendency in modern ethno-historical circles to magnify the faults of the Spanish imperialism under which the friars worked for centuries and to magnify the virtues of the culture of the pre-conquest natives.¹ This is a reaction to older literature, in which Spanish missions were frequently romanticized as a kind of ecclesiastical Shangri-La. This revisionism (present) vs. romanticism (past)² is a source of some of the ambiguity we feel as friars concerning our past in California.

Revisionism does not lead to resolution. Ambiguous feelings were certainly prodded with the recent beatification of friar Junípero Serra, one of the best known figures in the history of evangelization in North America. Debate is frequent and sometimes fierce in California over the role of this friar and, by extension, of his fellow missionaries. Despite the fine work of some historians, it is surprising to find an extensive lack of awareness about the theological and philosophical foundations which underlay the relationships of Serra and his companions with the natives. What tools did they use to relate to the people to whom they were sent? How did they conceive of human society?

We should begin with the Franciscan philosophy and theology which gave direction to their ministry. Most notably, this means the work of Blessed John Duns Scotus. Junípero Serra was a professor of Scotistic philosophy and theology at the University of Palma, Mallorca, before coming to Mexico as a volunteer missionary. In the extensive field of Scotistic studies, the concept of *communio* seems the most applicable as we attempt to understand Spanish Franciscan missiology. Scotus taught the reality of God as community. Through this idea he explored the social dimensions of the human community in the development of a political and economic philosophy. This is most notable precisely because the missions were an experiment in the development of human community as agricultural communes. They were expected to be economically self-sufficient and to function within the larger socio-political context of New Spain.

Certainly no result of missionization can be adequately grasped or evaluated without an understanding of motive. Lacking an understanding of the foundational education which the missionary friars received, it is clearly impossible to arrive at an intelligent understanding of their activity in the New World or their motive for engaging in this activity. Consequently we cannot understand properly our own history as Franciscans. Where does Scotistic theology begin?

Scotus's foundational theological concept is that God is love, this love taking form in relationship—*communio*. The number of persons is not central, but rather the reality of persons loving each other. In Scotus's Trinitarian theology, a plurality of persons participates equally in loving, and the divine being of the Trinity exists in community. We as humans are called to image the activ-

ity of God through relationships in human society. The ultimate goal of humanity is to live in, through, and with the divine loving community of the Holy Trinity. Knowledge of this reality is necessarily a revealed knowledge which comes through the incarnation of the Son.³

For Serra and his followers, the indigenous peoples of the Spanish frontier were not able to know the revealed truth about the Trinity because no one had told them. The friars felt impelled to preach these realities in order to make Christ known. For this reason they left relatively comfortable and well-known positions in Europe to come to America. For Serra, influenced by Scotus, it was important that human persons not only have ideas about God (which the natives already had), but that they come to know God in personal communion. According to Scotus, God gives us the ability to do this; we do not have it in our nature. Happiness is only perfected in the knowledge and experience of the Triune God. Christian theology becomes something very practical. Its goal is happiness in the life of the individual.

In keeping with a practical application of theology, the missionary friars in California developed a system for community living including Scotistic concepts of property, financial gain, buying and selling, restitution, contracts, and many other ideas. A constant surprise to visitors of the missions is to discover that the property (thousands of acres) of each particular mission was considered property of the native community, not of the Church or State. This followed from a Scotistic teaching that before the fall there was no private property.⁴ Communal property in a village was a key element in Mexican Hispanic society, where it was referred to as the "ejido."⁵ The idea of property as communal also corresponded well with the native concept of property in California. In native spirituality, the goods of the earth were seen as divine gifts benefiting the human community. The human person was understood in terms of the group, whether tribal, clan, or religious order.

And what of the individual in community? The person is not simply an automated individual humanoid, a particular example of one among many, nor is community simply a collection of such types. A human being is characterized by relationships with other humans, just as God in Trinity exists in a relationship of persons. Human persons and human community take on divine resemblance to the degree that they are perfected. This perfection results from living in the source of life and reality, the Trinity. Communities and individuals are to come to love as the Trinity does and to "incarnate" this love in the establishment of a just society.

Much has been written on the justice or lack of it in the mission systems of the Americas. We can and must be aware of the flaws in the missiology of the Tridentine Church and consequently in our friar ancestors.⁶ Fixation on the flaws, however, is as inadequate as the romanticism of past historians. As a

modern day friar living in the physical setting of a former Spanish mission founded in 1786, I am attempting to shed a bit of light on a past which is partially shrouded in the obscurity of subjective interpretation, whether romantic or revisionist. With due consideration given to the motivations and concepts with which the early friars were working, I believe that more light can be shed in the future on the study of our Franciscan heritage in the Americas, a heritage founded upon the Scotistic concept of community in love. This is a heritage which gives us a foundation upon which to construct a just society for the future.

Endnotes

¹For example, compare Robert Johnson and Edward Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1995) with Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (Boston, Roberts Bros, 1884).

²A well reasoned discussion of this controversy may be found in Kenneth Brown's, *Four Corners: History, Land, and People of the Desert Southwest* (New York, Harper Collins, 1995), 157, 207.

³Allan B. Wolter, OFM, "Duns Scotus on the Necessity of Revealed Knowledge," in *Franciscan Studies*, 11 (St. Bonaventure, Franciscan Institute, 1951): 241-3.

⁴*Duns Scotus' Political and Economic Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Allan B. Wolter, OFM (Santa Barbara: The Old Mission, 1989), 33.

⁵Kenneth Brown, 210-221.

⁶For example, see Francis Guest, "The California Missions Were Far From Faultless," in *Hispanic California Revisited*, ed. Doyce Nunis (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library, 1996), 307.



Robert Pawell, OFM

Why Am I Glad to Be a Franciscan Today?

Brother Brian, SSF

The Inaugural Meeting of The Franciscan Federation of Australia was held in August, 1994. From the outset the Federation welcomed all Franciscans—Anglican, Catholic, Ecumenical. This has been an enriching experience for all. As one Anglican Friar wrote: "The Franciscan Federation Meetings have borne witness to mutual openness and trust, love and concern, faith and hope. For me there is a real sense of belonging to a wider, loving, and more vibrant "family" of brothers and sisters." The current membership comprises four Anglican groups, sixteen Catholic, and two Ecumenical.

At the Annual General Meeting on August 22, 1998, Guidelines for the Federation were finalized and voted on, and the members had the opportunity to view the newly created website for the FFA. The guest speaker on this occasion was a friar from the Anglican Order of the Society of St. Francis, Brother Brian, SSF. Brother Brian lives in the Hermitage of St. Bernadine at Stroud, NSW. It is a place for those wishing to experience quiet and retreat and is located amongst the bush and scrub of the Hunter Valley. The text of his address follows.

Those of us who have to preach sermons or deliver homilies may often ask the question in beginning our preparation: "What shall I preach about?" Fortunately we are helped by the lectionary and by the Church calendar. For we are to proclaim Christ and base what we say on the written Word of God. But when we are invited to be the occasional speaker at the Fourth National Assembly of the Franciscan Federation of Australia, the question: "What shall I talk about?" becomes harder to answer. When I saw on the program that I was to be the occasional speaker, I thought at first that meant I am to speak occasionally, a brief word here and there, and not too often; but then I realised it meant more than that. So what am I going to try and talk about? For in this past year I have been no further south from Stroud than "Francis Haven" (near Guildford), where four of us had a very happy retreat, and Canberra for

a conference of the Three Orders of SSF and our Brothers' Provincial Chapter meeting; and no further north than Kempsey for pastoral visits to a community of Anglican Sisters at a place with the enchanting name of Dandialong.

What I have chosen to do is reflect on the question, "Why am I glad to be a Franciscan today?" and hope that you are glad to be Franciscans, too. My answers may not be the same as yours. Obviously, some of the things I say may be colored by my peculiar Anglican upbringing and background.

Perhaps I could begin by explaining briefly how I became a Franciscan and a member of the Society of St. Francis. I was fortunate to have been born into a Church family. My parents were devout Christians who had an enormous influence on me. They had six children, three daughters and three sons. I was number five. During WWII, I was called up into the British navy and was in it for three and a half years. During that time the desire I had as a small boy to be a priest became very strong. When I finished with the navy, towards the end of '46, I went through the process of selection to be a candidate for ordination. I entered King's College, London, to read theology in '48 and after that completed my preparation for ordination at St. Boniface College, Warminster. I was ordained deacon in '53 and priest in '54 in Bristol Cathedral and was appointed an assistant in a downtown parish in Bristol.

I mention this because it was during my time as a theological student in London in my mid-twenties that I struggled with two things. One was the whole concept of the religious life, religious orders, and religious communities. You can't live in the United Kingdom (or any other European nation) or read Church history without being aware of the influence religious life has had upon the culture of the nation and its peoples over many centuries, even though there were times when some religious orders and communities failed tragically to live up to the ideals of their founders. Yet despite that historic influence, religious life in the post-reformation Church of England has not rated very high. Anglican religious communities, whose members have taken vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, have had to struggle to be recognized and accepted by the Church. Very little is said or taught about the religious vocation being one way by which people may find themselves chosen by God to serve him and his Church. So as a student I discovered the religious life, believing, as I still do, that it is authentic in today's world and Church and will always be so. If it dies it will rise again as it has in the past.

The second thing with which I struggled as a student was the living of the Gospel. I wanted to see the simplicity of the Gospel being expressed clearly without being smothered, as I thought, by the accretions of the ecclesiastical establishment. In my search for the religious life around 1950, two or three communities in the Church of England were suggested. Although they had

good reputations, none was quite what I was looking for. Then one day I was introduced through a friend to an Anglican Franciscan friar, who invited me to a house in a derelict street in Stepney, East London, where he was a Brother.

Over the following months I got to know these Brothers and came to believe that here, more than anywhere else I had experienced, the Gospel was being lived out in flesh and blood. The Incarnation was not just some theological dogma in a text book in a seminary library; it was here in Stepney, expressed by a group of Franciscans living in a very noisy street in which the other houses surrounding them were brothels or providing other forms of suspicious entertainment. On Friday nights I would often go to the house to help teach English to seamen off the ships in the London docks. They came from countries around the world where English was unknown. If they had any religion, it was generally that of Islam. But that didn't seem to worry the men who came or the Brothers. All were accepted and acceptable.

Yet in this there was no compromise of the Christian Faith. Through the grating in the street pavement, passersby could see the chapel in the basement of the house, where a light flickered indicating the Blessed Sacrament. They could see, at the appropriate times, the Brothers and other people with them praying the offices, celebrating the Eucharist, or praying silently. I knew that this was the kind of religious life I wanted. In this experience, and as a result of visiting two other very different friaries in other parts of the country, I was gradually drawn to St. Francis and then to St. Clare and the Society of St. Francis. After ordination and an assistant curacy in a parish, I was able to join the novitiate in 1956 at the age of 31.

From this initial introduction through that house in Stepney (which no longer exists because the street no longer exists) and in subsequent years, I think there are a number of things which have made me glad to be a Franciscan today.

Being a Franciscan means no more and no less than attempting, by God's grace, to live the Gospel to the full in today's world. If society changes, which it has and does, if the Church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit makes changes (and what better example of this than the second Vatican Council, which has affected us all or we wouldn't be together here today—Catholic, Anglican, and Ecumenical), and if our own Franciscan communities and orders have to make changes and adjustments in order to witness to Christ crucified and risen, be sure that the Gospel does not change and cannot change. As the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." St. Francis wanted no more than that his followers should be people of the Gospel of love. Simplicity, detachment, humility, love, and joy—all that we mean by poverty—were the ways by which he and his followers lived out the Gospel of love in their day. How are we to do it in our day? For

surely those same notes of humility, love, and joy still apply in this and every generation. How do we express simplicity and practice detachment and poverty both communally and individually? What bold adjustments is God asking us to make as we enter the New Millennium?

That house in Stepney taught me that the Franciscan way is an inclusive one. Those Brothers lived among the marginalized people whom respectable persons would have referred to as the dregs of society. They befriended all who came to them and accepted people of other world faiths or none at all for being who they are. That is never easy. We may be as much nauseated in having to mingle with people of all sorts and conditions as St. Francis was with those who suffered from leprosy. Yet this is living the Gospel of love. It is not producing a report on the computer to present to a meeting of social welfare "experts," who often don't live in the murky districts where their clients reside. But being a Franciscan has taught me in so many ways that Christians are to be "in the world yet not of the world." As Franciscans we are to preach the Gospel not merely by our words but even more by our presence, our example, and our way of life. The poor are all around us. They are not just the beggars and the homeless, but also the yuppies, the alcoholics, the drug addicts, and those for whom suicide seems to be the only way out. I have learned, I hope, or will learn that the Franciscan fraternity is not a private club or a secret society, because Christ is the Redeemer of the world. The Gospel embraces all.

That house in Stepney introduced me to what it means to experience Franciscan fraternity. Not only was I welcomed into their midst when, as a student, I visited the house; but I also sensed the spirit of brotherhood which existed among them. That doesn't mean that they didn't have community problems. I was to learn later that they did, but it appeared that they worked at being a brotherhood. They had care and concern for each other. And on the whole that has been my experience as a friar over the years.

St. Francis stressed fraternity. It was never to be forgotten. In the Rule for Hermitages there must be that loving care and concern between the mothers and the sons. At a time in so-called Western society when there is so much fragmentation and individualism, the witness of brotherhood and sisterhood is so very important for stabilizing society; yet it can only be achieved because we are the brothers and sisters of Christ. He is our Elder Brother. The corporate praying of the offices and Eucharist are the heart and mainstay of fraternity, particularly when we live in community.

There are other things which make me glad to be a Franciscan. In a Church like the Anglican communion, which claims, rightly or wrongly, to be comprehensive, there are often tensions between attitudes that are labeled evangelical or catholic or charismatic or even liberal. When people say to me: Are you a liberal? I usually reply: How liberal do you mean and about what? If they

ask if I am evangelical, I say yes, of course. I have a love of the Lord Jesus as my Redeemer, a high regard for Holy Scripture, and I want others to know their Saviour. If they ask: Are you catholic? I reply: Yes, indeed. I have a high vision of the doctrine of the Church as the extension of the Incarnation, of the laity as the people of God in God's world, of the ordained or sacred ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, and of the sacraments as the chief means of grace. If they ask: Are you charismatic? I answer: Yes, I am. I was baptized and confirmed (and later ordained), and I pray. I believe God has bestowed on me and on all other members of the Body of Christ a variety of the Spirit's gifts, and in some measure I manifest the fruits of the Spirit. So I am charismatic.

Now Francis and Clare were all these things, in my view, as all these are in the Gospel. Their spirituality transcended the small-minded demarcations which some of us tend to make concerning the meaning of labels. And if I had not become a Franciscan I might have been even more small-minded than I am.

It is good to hear these days a concern about the environment and ecology. There is an increased interest in creation theology. But it seems to me that it is not new, though in some past generations it may have been neglected. Surely the current concern and interest challenges the greed of those who want to rape the land and shatter the natural world which God has created. St. Francis however had a reverence for nature and creation long before the present concern. His Canticle of the Sun symbolizes that. And particularly as Franciscans we are challenged to notice and appreciate the small and the beautiful things of the world, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral. All reflect something of the grandeur of God.

With that goes peace-making. Francis in his day was a great peacemaker. "Pax et Bonum" was his famous greeting. His peace issued from his union with Christ. It flowed from his life of prayer and penance and was conveyed to others and the world around through his presence and his preaching. And to me that is the only kind of peace really worth having. It is the "peace of God which passes all understanding." It is a deep peace which can be caught or felt.

We may be mercifully spared at this time and in the early years of the next century from a global war. But we are not spared at the present time internal wars, violence of a most vicious kind, and attempts at ethnic cleansing. At every level of human confrontation there is need for peace-making, and we Franciscans are called to be peace-makers. How that is done in practical terms may depend on circumstances. At the international level the organization "Franciscans International" is making a bold attempt through the United Nations Organisation. But wherever we are called to live out our Franciscan vocation, we must desire and attempt to be the instruments of peace beginning with our own lives and in our own communities and families. We must get ourselves together.

And with peace is coupled joy. We know that to be full of joy we do not have to be bouncy and happy-clappy (at least not all the time) and driving everyone else up the wall. Joy is a deep inner quality and fruit of the Spirit, which can be known in times of testing and trouble as well as in moments of elation and hilarity. Yet I am glad to be a Franciscan because so often Franciscans are full of laughter and good fellowship. I believe one of the unwritten qualifications for electing a novice for profession is that he or she has learned to laugh at self and reverently to laugh with others.

Last, but by no means least, I am glad to be a Franciscan today because of the synthesis which ideally exists in the Franciscan vocation between the active and the contemplative. Thomas Celano, one of the earliest biographers of St. Francis, described Francis as "personified prayer" (2Cel 95). By that he meant that Francis's life *was* prayer. Not only did he pray at the liturgy and during his times of prayer, especially in the hermitages, but he carried that prayer over into everything he did and wherever he went. That surely is why he was so good to meet and had such an influence on people and eventually on the universal Church. It was why he could be used by God to fulfill his original mission, which was to rebuild the Church.

Yet I think it can be said that he stressed the contemplative dimension because that expressed his attachment to Christ whom he sought to imitate. Out of that Christ-centeredness, or along with it, came the various works of his apostolate, his itinerant preaching, and his care of the outcast. Thus "being" for Francis was as important as "doing"; and so Celano could say that Francis was personified prayer. The demarcation between the active and contemplative was not that great. How Francis prayed in the silence and solitude of the hermitage we are not sure. What we do know is that nearly all his written prayers begin with exclamations of the wonder of God, so that adoration and praise was the key to his devotion and spirituality. It was through this that he became, by the work of the Holy Spirit, God-centered, Christ-centered. It was not unlike that for St. Clare, whose prayer was described as gazing at the Lord, and who exhorted her sisters to praise and adoration. All this makes me glad to be a Franciscan today. By God's help I have somehow to become personified prayer. Haven't we all? That will do so much more for the world and the Church than busting our fuses by a multiplicity of good works without prayer.

By way of conclusion, I suggest that it is our common spirituality which brings us together in this Franciscan Federation. At a time when there is so much fragmentation, both within the Church on earth and within society, the witness which Franciscans can make to unity in Christ is a vital one. This unity is one of the key themes of the Gospel of love, truth, and holiness. Structures, laws, canons, constitutions, and the rest are important, but only if they enable

the character of Francis and Clare to be relived by their friends and followers today and tomorrow. We may at times become despondent in First, Second, and Third Order Regular communities about the shrinking numbers of members. But I suggest that the quality of our Franciscan life can be much more eloquent than large numbers. We should indeed ask: "What are the young looking for?" and make adjustments while remaining faithful to our way of life. It is quality of life which we need in our various fraternities, fellowships, and communities. We need to be regularly re-examining and reforming, and this, too, makes me glad to be a Franciscan today. And I pray that God will continue to give us all grace to rejoice in the vocation to which we have been called.

About Our Contributors

Brother Brian, SSF, is a member of the Anglican Order of the Society of St. Francis. He was ordained to the priesthood in Bristol, England, in 1954, where he was an assistant pastor in a downtown parish for some years. He has served his order both as Provincial Minister and as General Minister and is now at the Hermitage of St. Bernadine at Stroud, NSW, Australia.

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*.

Mary Mott, FMM, has been a member of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary since 1955. She did her doctoral studies at Boston College and post-doctoral specialization in mission theology. She is currently the director of the Mission Resource Center for the United States Province of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

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.

Hermann Schalück, OFM, was Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM), from 1991 to 1997. Presently, he is in charge of the Office of Missions for the German Bishops' Conference. He is author of *Stoking the Fire of Hope: Fioretti for Our Times* (Franciscan Institute, 1997).

Joseph Schwab, OFM, a member of the St. Barbara Province since 1978, received his master's degree in theological studies from the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley. From 1994-1998 he was Administrator at Old Mission Santa Barbara in California. He is now director of the Mission Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona, and on the board of the California Mission Studies Association.

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\$16.00 311+xviii pages paper, 1998
ISBN 1-57659-001-1

A COMPENDIUM OF OCKHAM'S TEACHINGS: A TRANSLATION OF THE *TRACTATUS DE PRINCIPIIS THEOLOGIAE*

by Julian Davies, O.F.M.

The *Tractatus* takes all of Ockham's views and explains them as related to or as consequences of two principles—the Principle of Divine Omnipotence and the Principle of Parsimony. The translator's Introduction offers some helpful hints for reading and explains and illustrates the relationship between the two Principles. A glossary of technical terms and a bibliography are included. Footnotes reference English translations of Ockham's works where such exist.

\$14.00 135 pages paper, 1998
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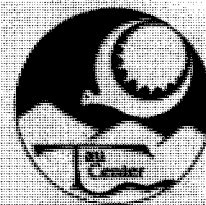
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Bill Hugo has been a member of the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph in the United States since 1973. He studied theology at St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee and received an MA in Franciscan Studies at The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, NY. He has been teaching the life of Francis to Capuchins and Secular Franciscan since 1984 and in 1996 published *Studying the Life of Francis of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press). He is currently writing a companion book, *Studying the Life of Clare of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook*.

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1999

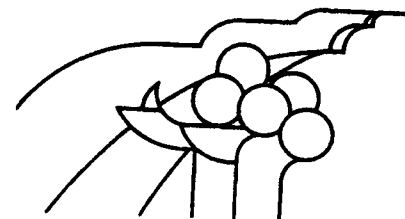
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Cost: \$275.00 Deposit: \$25.00 Register by April 10, 1999.

DIRECTED RETREAT

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For further information, please contact:

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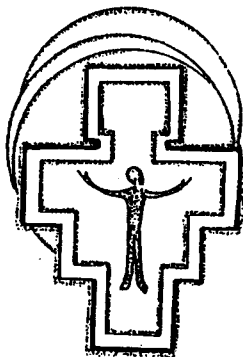
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May 15, 1999 — Marian College, Indianapolis, IN
June 19, 1999 — WTU, Washington, DC
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October 23, 1999 — Franciscan Center, Garfield Heights, OH
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For a detailed brochure, please contact:



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Tuesday, April 13-Friday, April 23

GATE Retreat in Mexico. \$700. Contact: GATE, 912 Market St., LaCrosse, WI 54601-8800, ph. 608-791-5283; fax 608-782-6301.

Thursday, April 15, 7-9 p.m.

Franciscan Vow Reflection and Renewal. J. Lora Dambroski, OSF and Bernie Tickerhoof, TOR. \$10. At Franciscan Spirit and Life Center. Contact: Mimi DiGregory, 3605 McRoberts Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15234; ph. 412-881-9207.

Thursday, April 15 - Monday, April 19

Franciscan Challenge. Bob Huttmacher, OFM, Ilia Delio, OSF, Mark Balma. TAU Center. Contact: The TAU Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993; fax 507-453-0910.

Sunday, April 18 - Saturday, April 24

Directed Retreat. J. Lora Dambroski, OSF, and Vinnie Fortunato, OFM Cap. At Franciscan Spirit and Life Center. Contact: see above.

Friday, April 23-Monday, April 26

Franciscan Hermitage Experience at the Franciscan Renewal Center with Mary Jo Chaves, OSF, Kathleen Daus, OSF, and Mary Smith, OSF. \$150. Contact: Franciscan Renewal Center, 0858 SW Palatine Rd., Portland, OR 97219.

Saturday, May 1

Rebirth of a Charism, Franciscan Federation, Dubuque, IA (see ad, p. 104).

Saturday, May 15

Rebirth of a Charism, Franciscan Federation, Indianapolis, IN (see ad, p. 104)

Friday, May 28-Sunday, May 30

Franciscans and Health Care, sponsored by The Franciscan Center of Washington Theological Union. Contact: WTU, 6896 Laurel St, NW, Washington, DC 20012.

Friday, June 11-Sunday, June 13

Franciscan Seeds for Fertile Fields, a gathering of Post-Vatican II Franciscans, sponsored by member congregations of upper midwest Common Franciscan Novitiate. With Mary Johnson SNDdeN, PhD, and Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF. In Joliet, IL. Contact: Jeanne Bessette, OSF, at 708-771-8383 or Kathleen Anne Copp, OSF, at 815-464-3880.

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The Way of Francis and Ignatius: Troubadour and Pilgrim. With Dick Rice, SJ, and Rosemarie Whitehead, OSF. \$350. At TAU Center. Contact: (see ad, p. 99).

Thursday, June 24-Sunday, June 27

Secular Franciscans All Commissions' Conference. At St. Bonaventure University, Allegany, NY. Contact: Mary Mazotti, SFO, 209-795-3809.

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions	ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo	FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
BenBern	Blessing for Brother Bernard	1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun	2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony	LaudDei	Praises of God
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy	LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours.
1EpCust	First Letter to the Custodians	OffPass	Office of the Passion
2EpCust	Second Letter to the Custodians	OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful	RegB	Later Rule
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful	RegNB	Earlier Rule
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo	RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
EpMin	Letter to a Minister	SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order	SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples	Test	Testament
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God	TestS	Testament written in Siena
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies	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
RCI	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCI	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
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SC	Sacrum Commmercium
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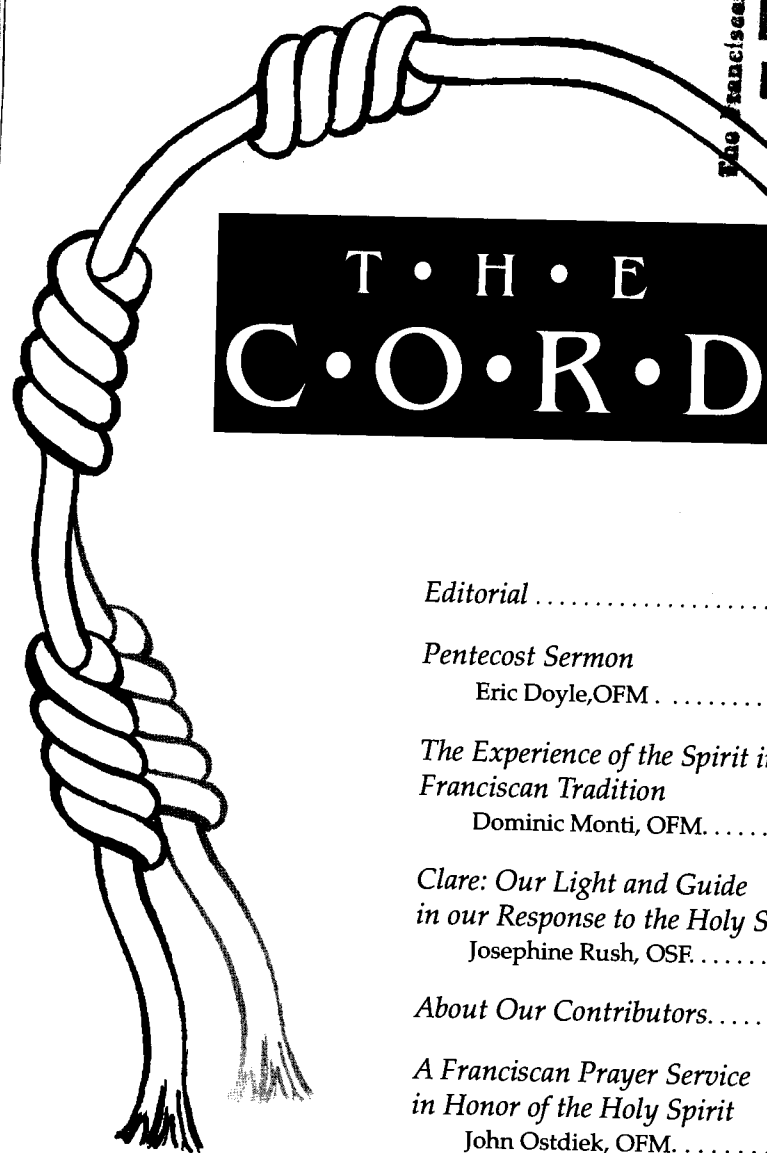
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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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

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The Cord, 49.3 (1999)

Editorial

"Let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (RegB 10:8).

"Let them devote themselves to what they must desire to have above all else: the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (Reg 10:7).

In the Rules of Francis and Clare we find this quite explicit directive that bids their followers to desire one thing above all others—to have the Spirit of the Lord and the Spirit's way of working. Last year the Church celebrated a "Year of the Spirit" in its preparation for the new millennium. And during this year's spring season of Pentecost, the heart of the Church opens anew to the great possibility of the Spirit. Once more we hope against hope that *this* time, *this* year, in *this* world we will truly experience, through the anointing by this tender and loving Helper, that definitive "turning" that will set us more precisely on the way of life.

And once more also, as life blossoms and greens around us, we find ourselves bewildered by the workings of war and human atrocities. Pundits reflect endlessly on who is right and who is wrong, who is evil and who is good. Those of us at a "safe distance" feel uncomfortable and wonder what our role is in all this—how it can, might, or should affect our own secure lives. Is this perhaps an invitation to look into our hearts and to find there all the evil and all the good that is being played out in the larger arena of our world? Is this a moment when we recognize our great poverty and need, and desire with our whole hearts the working of God's good Spirit?

Dominic Monti, OFM, on page 16 of this issue, suggests that a "charism" is the distinctive way the Holy Spirit works in the Church and in the world. If this is so, the Franciscan charism is the Spirit's own way of gifting our troubled times. Have we allowed this gift to anoint us, shape us, change us into servants of the Spirit's "working"? Is this what we "desire above all things"?

We offer this issue of *The Cord* in hopes that reflection on the Holy Spirit in our tradition may be a source of life and hope for each of us.

"How happy and blessed are those men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, since the Spirit of God will rest upon them and . . . will make [a] home and dwelling place among them."

(1Ep4d 5)

Pentecost Sermon

Eric Doyle, OFM

[This is a transcription of a tape recording of a sermon delivered in 1984 and preserved at The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, NY.]

“Jesus breathed on them and said: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

The Holy Spirit of God, who dwells in the mystery of God’s existence for ever and ever as the bonding between the Father and the Son, is probably the most mysterious of the persons of the Blessed Trinity. For the Word of God took our way of life and our existence to himself. Ever since the time of Jesus, humanity can never be separated from God. To think of the best and the kindest, the most mature, the most integrated of people is to think of Jesus, and to think of Jesus is to think of God, for Jesus is in my world as God’s witness. During his earthly life, Jesus used terms of intimacy and indescribable familiarity when he spoke about the one whom he called the Father. We cannot really get an idea of God from an earthly father. But when we go to this man Jesus, we can begin to understand something of what he means by that word. Father is used of the one who is Creator, from whom all is derived, and who, from all eternity, knows the truth of the Son and the love of the Spirit.

But when we come to the Holy Spirit, then there is even more difficulty. We have to use so often analogies which say a *little* about him, but seem in the end rather limp. And certainly, however beautifully the Spirit may be depicted as God, this does little to help us understand the inner workings of the Holy Spirit.

If however there is a way to understand a little of the Holy Spirit, then it surely must be through the Spirit’s workings. How something works will give you a little clue as to what it’s made of, what makes it tick, so to say. The Holy Scriptures associate the Spirit of God, first of all, with bringing order from chaos, from the primeval chaos over which the Spirit brooded, the chaos from which rose the order that we call the cosmos.

But then we meet the Holy Spirit again, depicted so beautifully in the episode of the Annunciation. The Spirit is not only responsible for order, but for the real, true, historical presence of the Word in our world. “How can this come to be since I know not a man?” Our Lady asks. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you,” the angel replies. And there from the Holy Spirit we have that tiny, vulnerable, adorably attractive little child who is the Word of God.

And then the Holy Spirit is the principle author of the Holy Scriptures. Anyone, even with the most cursory acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, knows that here is found the hand of a poet, the hand of creativity. Consider the psalms; consider the prologue of St. John’s gospel; consider the end of the book of revelation—all that is rich and beautiful. Never have words been used so beautifully for such a purpose.

The Holy Spirit also creates power in the Church. What came forth from the side of Christ on the cross, the blood and water, were made manifest in a power that one could hardly believe possible. Not only were the early followers bonded together, but they were bonded together without fear. They could proclaim the presence because they *were* it. That selfsame presence continues until now. And as if this is not enough, then we will hear the priest at Mass call down upon the elements of the bread and wine the Holy Spirit, so that the risen and glorified Savior is made really and truly present in our midst under the tiny form of the little hosts and the few drops of wine in the chalice.

Everything that is beautiful, all our desire for unity, all our desire for identity with the world of our experience, all words we say about almighty God, all poetry and art, all of it has its source in the creative Spirit of God. That is the font from which it is all derived. These workings tell us what the Holy Spirit of God must be like.

The Holy Spirit, then, is certainly the soul of the Church, our common soul, so to speak. It is because of the Holy Spirit that we are here and that there is an ongoing Pentecost. Notice in the reading for today that the disciples were in the upper room. They were afraid. What is the first result of love according to the Holy Scriptures? It drives out fear. Where love is, there is no fear. Where love rules, there is no will to power. And there we see the doors smash open. As Christ himself broke down the gates of hell in his descent to the lower regions, so the Holy Spirit broke open the gates of fear in the hearts of the disciples. What they received in that moment, they were impelled to share fearlessly with others.

Everything is possible through the Holy Spirit of God. First of all, the Spirit will teach us to pray. That is the first act of the true disciple—to worship almighty God. To reverence God’s holy name and to worship—that is the essence of the mission of the Church. It is the essence of the gospel; and the Holy Spirit is the one who teaches how to worship. St. Paul describes the

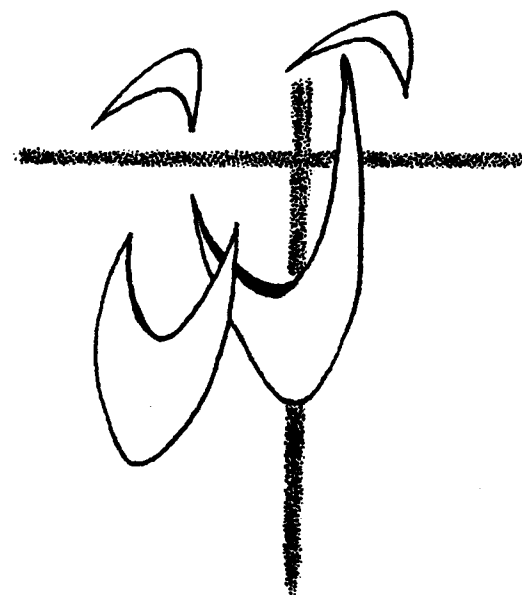
Spirit as dwelling in temples. These temples are ourselves. In the temple in Jerusalem, the high priests entered the holy of holies but once a year on the Day of Atonement. In that holy of holies dwelt the presence of the living God. In *this* temple of ourself, God dwells at the very center of our being. There at the heart of conscience, there at the core of who we are, the Spirit of God dwells and makes us holy.

Then, if we speak of the Church, we have, through the Holy Spirit, the great image of Our Lady. Our Lady has been described as the spouse of the Holy Spirit. She is the mother of God through the Holy Spirit. If she is an image in this regard to each of us as well as to the holy Church, then we may take up the point made seven hundred years ago by St. Bonaventure—that we can also be God's mother. God wishes to be conceived in us through the Holy Spirit, to grow in us as a child grows in the womb, and, then, mystically to be brought forth by our holy lives, by a change of heart and a radical conversion, by words that edify, and by example that spurs people on to what is better and nobler and holier. God wishes us to name this child. And what name shall we give? The name is Jesus. We need to say the name over and over again, for it is the gospel of the name that we preach. And this is the name that was given him from God the Father—Savior. There is no name more holy in heaven or on earth or under it.

And when it seems at times that Jesus recedes and does not hear us in prayer, when we feel we've lost him, then we must go with the Magi looking for him, for he will then be found in all the places that we never thought he would be. He is to be found everywhere, lifting the stones, in every nook and cranny, in the little corners, under the cobwebs, in a kind word, in somebody's wink. We find him by looking for him with the Magi. We ask so often: Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen his star in the east; we have seen his splendor shining. We have caught his fragrance and it is of the orchid. We have heard his voice and it is soft and tender. We have felt his embrace and it is irresistible. Where is he? And looking, we find him. And then we can kneel down and offer him the gold of our prayer and the frankincense of our devotion and the myrrh of our sorrow for sin. And then, led by the Spirit, we can take him into the temple of our heart to present him to the Father. Standing before the divine throne, we can offer God the only gift there is.

And finally, by the Holy Spirit, we are made apostles. The Church is apostolic, not simply because there are twelve apostles, but first because God sent an apostle to us from the distant nearness of his eternal life, the apostle Jesus. And when Jesus was glorified and took his place as Lord at the right hand of God, then did he send the Holy Spirit who was the second apostle. And this second apostle is the one who gave the twelve their courage to go out and

proclaim what they themselves had received. And that selfsame apostle, the Spirit of God, is the one who gives *us* the power to do the same, saying to us: There is no one who has not the talent and the gift in Christ. There is nobody who is not an apostle. There is nobody who is exempted from proclaiming the word of God. Everyone receives the Holy Spirit, who has been poured out upon us; and everyone is obliged, because of that gift, to share what was so generously given. It is commonplace, in an accident, that the victim is given the "kiss of life." That is the image that came to my mind as I heard the words of the holy gospel early this morning and now during Mass. "He breathed on them," and in that breathing the Spirit of God brought back to life forever the heart of the whole Church.



Francis X. Miles, OFM

Everyone receives the Holy Spirit, who has been poured out upon us; and everyone is obliged, because of that gift, to share what was so generously given. "He breathed on them," and in that breathing the Spirit of God brought back to life forever the heart of the whole Church.

(Eric Doyle, OFM)

The Experience of the Spirit in our Franciscan Tradition

[This paper was presented at the gathering of the Franciscan Family, co-sponsored by the Franciscan Federation and the Friars' Conference, August 18, 1998, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.]

Dominic Monti, OFM

It has been notoriously difficult to try to categorize Franciscan theology and spirituality, but one thing is certain: throughout our tradition we have tended to claim a Christocentric emphasis as our "distinguishing feature."¹ Certainly from the time of John Duns Scotus at least, the characteristic doctrine defended by Franciscan theologians was the absolute primacy of Christ. And so, when in the past we described our spirituality, we most often said that it was founded on a radical imitation of Christ. As Agostino Gemelli concisely expressed this: "Franciscan spirituality is summed up in an absolutely complete imitation of Christ."² Or, in Alexandre Masseron's popular introduction, *The Franciscans*, we read: "The ideal of St. Francis of Assisi was the imitation of Christ. . . . Francis desired to imitate Christ as perfectly as possible for our weakness . . . —to identify himself with his divine model."³

But almost all of these treatments passed over the role of the Holy Spirit in Franciscan life. In this regard we shared in the general "forgetfulness of the Holy Spirit" which characterized post-Tridentine Catholic thought generally.⁴ The typical progression in most theological treatments of the recent past was God, Christ, Church. God sent Christ into the world, Christ established the Church, and the Church possessed the means of salvation: the authoritative teaching about God and the sacraments which communicate the divine life. Yes, we affirmed our faith in the Triune God. But the actual role of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation was minimized.

We need only to return to the pre-conciliar classics of Franciscanism to see this tendency in our own tradition. All too often they understood the "imitation of Christ" as our attempt to enter into and appropriate certain facets or

virtues of Jesus' human life, almost in the sense of re-producing or copying some idealized model. Indeed, this motif goes back *almost* to the very beginning of our Franciscan tradition. The ideal of "the imitation of Christ" was becoming an increasingly popular one in Francis's own time,⁵ and so it was not surprising that early Franciscan authors used it to describe the goal of their founder as well. Thus Francis quickly was portrayed as the perfect imitator of Christ.⁶

The corollary of this is clear: if Francis was viewed as being the perfect imitator of Christ, then Franciscan perfection could only consist in modeling oneself on Francis as closely as possible. This line of thinking tended to emphasize that a good Franciscan should follow the Rule and constitutions "to the letter," as they embodied this plan of perfection. As one typical author, the Capuchin Césaire de Tours, put it:

The dead Francis still preaches to his sons: "Be imitators of me as I have been of Christ in his sufferings." The saintly followers of Francis have kept his image before their eyes and have reproduced it in themselves to the last detail. . . . Each succeeding century has seen a new reform in the Franciscan Order as an ever-renewed protest against the human tendency to lower all ideals.⁷

Such a model of holiness did not change; it was indeed static: "Let us not say that modern times are different than the Middle Ages, that customs have changed. These are specious objections which many Christians are tempted to make in order to escape the precepts of the Gospel."⁸ A spirituality of imitation demanded that we simply re-create the past. And the consequences of such a spirituality for the individual were stark indeed. The implication of the Franciscan's "desire to identify himself with his [or her] divine model" was "to abdicate all individual personality in order to assume the personality of Christ."⁹

Needless to say, such spiritualities would have little to say about the role of the Spirit. Certainly many of these authors gave theoretical acknowledgment to the Spirit as the source of the actual and sanctifying graces which enabled us to perform meritorious acts, but they did not speak much—if at all—of the Spirit's role of truly transforming our very selves from within, empowering us to read the signs of our own times and fashion fresh models of Gospel living.

This began to change in the late 1960s, as scholars doing critical interpretations of the writings of Francis—and then Clare—came to discover more and more the vital role that the Holy Spirit played in their life and thought. One of the first concrete results of this new insight was the letter, "To Have the Spirit of the Lord," issued in 1976 by the four General Ministers of the various congregations of Franciscan men to mark the 750th anniversary of

Francis's death. As they stated: "Anyone who reads the writings or lives of St. Francis attentively will easily see that the following elements are of central importance: to follow in the footsteps of the poor, humble crucified Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰

There is no doubt that for the past thirty years we have witnessed a reaction against the formalistic approach of previous Franciscan generations. Under the name of "openness to the Spirit" there has been a tremendous blossoming of truly creative initiatives. Much dead wood has been cleared and new shoots have appeared. And yet I think it is also true to say with Joseph Chinnici that recent Franciscan life in the U.S. has been too often marked by a kind of "religious eclecticism,"¹¹ rather than drinking deeply from the springs of our own tradition. Perhaps most of us have understood the phrase "the spirit of Francis and Clare" in the weaker dictionary senses of the word "spirit,"¹² that is, an amorphous "prevailing tendency" or "general intent" rather than in the stronger sense of an "activating or essential principle," namely the *Holy Spirit*. Despite all the language of returning to the charism of our founders, we Franciscans have often failed to appreciate the real depth of the thought of Francis and Clare on the Spirit. After all, what is a "charism" but the distinctive way the Holy Spirit operates?

This year, our ministers have written another encyclical, "Above All, Seek the Spirit of the Lord and His Holy Operation"¹³ Once again we are offered an opportunity to overcome this "forgetfulness of the Spirit" by retrieving a vital understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in the experience of Francis and Clare, and therefore of the place which that Spirit ought to take in the lives of us, their followers. This awareness is absolutely pivotal to the re-founding of Franciscan evangelical life today. As the greatest contemporary scholar of Francis's writings, Kajetan Esser, observed in one of his last writings: "With St. Francis it is not simply a question of an external following of the life of Christ, but rather first of all that Spirit of Christ must become alive and active in the would-be follower. This doctrine of the Spirit of the Lord . . . may be called the very center of St. Francis's thinking and Christian behavior."¹⁴

Certainly, few saints have experienced "the invasion of the Spirit"¹⁵ in their life as did Francis. As he looked back at his life in his Testament, Francis singled out several decisive moments in his life in which the Spirit of God had led him to creative action. From the very outset, he recognized that it was indeed the Lord who had moved him to begin to enter upon a life of penance. Particularly, Francis felt that it could only have been God's Spirit who had overcome his natural repugnance to lepers, leading him to work among them and to discover there the sweetness of God's presence.

Then, in contrast to the many sectarian movements of his time which had rejected the institutional Church in their desire to recapture a pristine Chris-

tian community of the apostolic age, Francis credited the Lord with giving him "such faith in churches" that he would enter them and "simply pray there." And despite a clergy that was often ignorant and immoral, Francis acknowledged that it was the Lord who "gave me and still gives me such faith in priests. . . that I discern the Son of God in them." Then decisively, "after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the holy Gospel." And finally, Francis saw that the way in which he and his brothers and sisters were to go about the world—as humble messengers of God's reconciliation—had also been an insight given him by the Spirit: "The Lord revealed to me a greeting: 'May the Lord give you peace'" (Test 1-2, 4, 6, 14, 23).¹⁶

But when we examine Francis's writings, we come to notice very quickly that he was absolutely convinced that the same Spirit which had moved him was acting in the lives of his sisters and brothers as well. Shortly after Clare and her first companions had come to join him in his Gospel life, Francis came to see that these aristocratic women "had no fear of poverty, hard work, suffering, shame, or the contempt of the world," but that indeed "one and the same Spirit" had led these "poor ladies" as well as himself from the world (2Cel 204). Thus he gave a brief "form of life" to Clare and her sisters which he began with these words: ". . . By divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the most High King, the heavenly Father, and taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the Holy Gospel. . . ." (RCl 6:2). And his brothers and sisters who had chosen to do penance while remaining in the world were inspired as well: "How happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, since the Spirit of God will rest upon them and he will make his home and dwelling among them" (1EpFid 5).

Certainly the motif of the Spirit permeates the Rules that Francis and Clare composed for their followers. Men and women who desire to enter this way of life must be "welcomed," as this move on their part is of "divine inspiration." Brothers and sisters who join the Order should dispose of their property as "the Lord may inspire" them (RegNB 2, RegB 2, RCl 2). Francis recognized that some of his brothers "by divine inspiration" might request their ministers to go and live among the infidels. This was a decision which the superiors should not oppose—if they saw that they were indeed fit—for such a courageous request on their parts must have been truly the work of the Spirit (RegNB 6:3-4). Indeed, all must recognize that any accomplishments they credit themselves with in their ministry must be attributed to the Spirit of the Lord who "does or says or works these good things in and through them" (RegNB 17:6).

Finally, both Francis and Clare tried to safeguard the primacy of the Spirit by including a "strikingly original" formula in their Rule: that the brothers

and sisters were to obey their ministers in all things that were not contrary to their own inner spirit (RegNB 5:1-2, RegB 10:1-2, RCI 10:1-2). This passage, which was to be the justification of many a reform movement in Franciscan history, was based on Francis and Clare's recognition that every brother and sister had "an indefeasible right" to follow their call by the Spirit to lead a Gospel way of life. For it was the "divine inspiration" in the heart of each Franciscan which was the very source of his or her vocation and thus ultimately had to take priority over the command of a superior.¹⁷

Perhaps the clearest testimony of Francis's conviction that the Spirit of the Lord was leading his brothers and sisters is his famous letter to Brother Leo, in which he advises: "In whatever way it seems best to you to please the Lord God and to follow his footprints and his poverty, do this with the blessing of God and my obedience" (EpLeo 3). Leo had to be open to the Spirit's workings in his own life, for this was the command of God to which an earthly superior's will had to bow. This is why we often say that what Francis and Clare founded was not so much an organization as it was a movement, an inclusive brotherhood and sisterhood of equals whose true General Minister was the Holy Spirit, who dwells within all and works as much in the poor and simple as in the educated and the noble (2Cel 193). If the brothers and sisters are thus attentive to the Spirit's command in each and all, the Seraphic Order will surely move into the future kingdom which God is creating.

But how are we to understand this emphasis on all Franciscans being led by this free breathing of the Spirit? In the mood of the late 60s and 70s version of renewal, are we to simply say that Francis and Clare are telling us all "to do our own thing"? To understand correctly Francis and Clare's emphasis on the Spirit, we must realize that it is rooted in a simple but very profound theology of the Trinity. For them the "Spirit" is not simply an impersonal force or a vague inner whim of the moment, but a *person*—the Spirit of the Lord Jesus who now dwells within us. This Spirit, who is the very bond of love between Jesus and *Abba*, his Father and Lord, creates the same bond within us—between each of us and our God and between one another as brothers and sisters. The fact that there is indeed one Person dwelling within many persons is the guarantee of unity amidst diversity and of true personalism, not libertarianism.

Perhaps the best way to understand what Francis and Clare mean when they speak of the oneness of the individual brother or sister with the Spirit of God is to examine Francis's truly profound image of the Christian as "spouse" of the Spirit. We have already alluded to the primitive form of life which Francis gave to Clare and her sisters, in which he reminds the poor women of San Damiano that, in embracing the Gospel as a way of life, "you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the heavenly Father and taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse" (Rcl 6:2). This metaphor of "spouse of the Spirit" was highly

unusual—indeed it seems to have been created by Francis. The ascetic tradition had previously referred to consecrated women as being spouses of *Christ*. For an example of this, we have only to contrast Francis's imagery with that employed by Gregory IX in a letter he addressed to Clare's community: "God the Father . . . has mercifully adopted you as his daughters. Through the working of the grace of the Holy Spirit, he has espoused you . . . to his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁸ I believe that the difference in the metaphor here—between being called spouses of the Spirit instead of spouses of Christ—is not purely a semantic one. Francis undoubtedly was aware of the traditional imagery, but his seizing upon this unique expression instead tells us that he wanted to say something absolutely foundational about the role of the Spirit within us.

Let us look at the image more closely. According to the Scriptures, what happens when one person espouses another? Is it not that "the two become one flesh"? (Cf. Mt. 19:5, Mk. 10:8.) Two persons in a very real sense become one—not in the sense that they lose their individuality, but that these two become one movement of love. Is not Francis trying to say that when a person is completely open and responsive to the workings of the Spirit, that person in fact "becomes one" with the Spirit of the Lord? Does not Paul say as much? "Anyone united with the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1Cor. 6:16-17). The Spirit of the Lord penetrates and permeates the deepest reality of what the person is. Therefore, just as Jesus was one with his Father in the bond of the Spirit in such a way that their wills were completely one, so too the disciple is drawn into this oneness of persons through the same Spirit. To the person who is open to the transforming power of the Spirit, what God wills and what that person wills become one and the same; and such a union bears good fruit.

Francis sees this dynamic perfectly exemplified in the person of the Virgin Mary. He praises her:

Holy Virgin Mary, . . .
there is none like you born into the world:
you are the daughter
and the servant of the most high . . . Father of heaven, . . .
you are the spouse of the Holy Spirit (OffPass, ant).

Francis sees Mary's total response—"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38)—as uniting her own will with God's, thus enabling her to bring Christ into the world. But what Mary embodies perfectly Francis sees happening in all "faithful souls" who "repent" of their self-centeredness and center their lives on God—they too become "spouses" through the Spirit who dwells within them, enabling them to become brothers and sisters of Christ by "doing the will of his Father in heaven." They become, also, Christ's "mothers" by giving birth to him through the

holy working" of the Spirit in their lives of witness and service (1EpFid 8-10). Indeed, Francis already described himself as a spouse and a mother when he went to Innocent III to have his Rule approved (2Cel 16). Through this striking imagery, Francis was trying to say that his radically innovative evangelical movement was not simply a human contrivance but truly the working of God. The metaphor is indeed a powerfully "pregnant" one—those who are "wedded to the Spirit" have the capacity of re-incarnating Christ afresh in every age.

If we reflect further on this truly profound understanding of the indwelling of the Spirit in the disciple who is "espoused" to Him/Her, we can see that it is impossible to distinguish what is the "working of the Holy Spirit" and what is the truly personal decision of the disciple. On the one hand, I as a disciple "give myself up" to the Spirit of the Lord, but in so doing my own personality is not "annihilated" (to use the phrase of Masseron cited in the beginning of this article). I do not "assume the personality of Christ" or of Francis or Clare. Rather, I become fully, completely, uniquely myself.

Each thing does one thing and the same: . . .
Myself it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*¹⁹

This is the basis of the attention to the individual person that we so often singled out as a feature of our Franciscan tradition. Not only is each individual a precious creation of God, but when people are open to the working of the Spirit of the Lord within them, they can embody and enact God's working in the world in a truly unique way. Only *they* can do the things they do! We see this so well in Francis's famous description of "the perfect friar" (SP 85). He did not give an abstract definition of Franciscan perfection. He did not hold himself up as the exemplar of Franciscan life. Instead he pointed out those unique qualities the brothers around him embodied: "the perfect faith of Brother Bernard," "the simplicity and purity of Brother Leo," "the courtesy of Brother Angelo," "the patience of Brother Juniper," and so on down the line. He saw a group of individuals—not copies coming from a cookie-cutter assembly line of "perfection"—but irreplaceable persons who enfleshed the working of God in their own unique way.

Francis and Clare recognized a basic paradox—it is precisely in surrendering to the working of the Spirit that a person actually become more his or herself. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2Cor. 3:17). This Gospel truth, which they intuited, Thomas Aquinas expressed some years later in more scholastic language:

The free person is one who belongs to him [or her] self. The person who acts spontaneously acts freely, but whoever receives their impulse from another does not act freely. Thus the person who avoids evil . . . because it is a law of the Lord's is therefore not free. On the other hand, the person who [spontaneously] avoids evil . . . is free. It is precisely here that the Holy Spirit works, inwardly perfecting our spirit by giving it a new dynamism, which functions so well that a person spontaneously [does what is right] through love. That person is therefore free . . . because his [or her] own inner dynamism leads [him or her] to do what God [wills].²⁰

Thus, it is just as accurate for us to say that Francis *decided* to go among the lepers, that Clare *chose* to follow the path of evangelical poverty, that Anthony *wanted* to go and preach among the infidels, as to say that it was God who "inspired" or "led" them to do these things. I think that, as they looked back at their lives, they knew that these spontaneous decisions on their part were due to the working of the Holy Spirit precisely because in these critical moments they had somehow freely discovered and expressed their own deepest selves.

What are the implications of this fundamental Franciscan tradition of the Holy Spirit for us American Franciscan men and women in the process of re-founding our evangelical life? As our ministers asked us earlier this year: "How are we to rediscover this powerful spiritual lymph which was there at our origins?"²¹ I think we all have to admit that the experience of the Spirit I have just described is very difficult to embody in any institutional structure, because this kind of "renewal" cannot be legislated or programmed, even though legislation and programs can assist or hinder it. As Yves Congar said so well: "The gift of the Spirit [to the Church] . . . involves certain attitudes that are called for and even demanded by what we are. This [gift] is both extremely strong and at the same time terribly fragile."²² We have seen that Francis had a great trust in the power of the Spirit's working in the lives of his brothers and sisters, but he also was very much aware that their human weakness could frustrate that Spirit's operation. Perhaps the best way to continue our discussion at this point is to examine briefly the two obstacles which Francis saw as impeding us from becoming truly "wedded to the Spirit."

Some Obstacles

The first barrier which Francis believed blocked the working of the Spirit was "the letter." Following St. Paul, he strongly believed that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2Cor. 3:6).²³ This perspective on Francis as a person

who exalted the Spirit over the letter is something that has been a rediscovery of the scholarship of the past twenty years, and it has indeed come as a revelation for an older generation of Franciscans drilled on the motif of Francis's literal conformity to Christ and a literal interpretation of his Rule.

There are indeed a number of references in our Franciscan sources which claim that Francis expressed a strong desire that his Rule be followed "to the letter" (e.g., LP 113 and SP 1). These references came to play a very prominent role in the history of Franciscan spirituality. But when we track down their context, we soon discover that they are drawn from later thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century accounts which were highly colored by the polemics of the Spiritual controversy.²⁴ Demoralized by what they saw as a sell-out of Francis's ideals by the majority of friars, zealots in the Order sought to create a bulwark against liberalizing tendencies by emphasizing "the letter of the law." This is certainly understandable. Nevertheless, their attitude is a striking contrast to that of Francis and Clare themselves, for when we examine their writings, we find that nowhere do they propose such an ideal of literal interpretation.

Yes, Francis did command his brothers in his Testament to observe the Rule "without gloss"—that is, they should not construct rationalizing and evasive commentaries on it as if it were a *law*. Rather, in the Rule itself he emphasized that the brothers must observe it "spiritually."²⁵ In fact Francis gives a considerable amount of discretion to his followers to follow their own conscience in whatever situation they happen to be, "for necessity knows no law" (RegB 9:16). What Francis and Clare meant by observing the Rule "spiritually" is that the friar or sister must be attentive and responsive to the *workings of the Spirit of the Lord within their own spirit as they attempt to lead a Gospel life*.²⁶ The Spirit is after all the "inner law" of the Rule, and this is what the brother or sister must desire to have above all things. This Spirit may liberate us from "the letter," but it is also extremely demanding. The Spirit continually calls its "spouses" to open and empty themselves to others in loving service, separating themselves from the wealth and power of "the world," identifying instead with its "lesser ones." But at the same time, the way that this demand is lived out must be a creative response of each generation to its own world, not to a thirteenth-century one.

Francis and Clare's approach here avoids two evils which so often plagued us in our past Franciscan tradition: "glosses" on the Rule which reduced its demands to a bare minimum and the type of pharisaic nit-picking which insisted on a literal reproduction of a way of life from the past. Both approaches viewed the Rule simply as "letter"—a written law. Thus when I entered the Order I noticed the bizarre situation which resulted when friars interpreted absolutely literally Francis's command that "they should not ride horseback"

(RegB 3:12). Some friars would categorically refuse to ride a horse at all for fear of committing mortal sin, while at the same time seeing nothing wrong with driving a luxury sedan even though they ministered in a working-class neighborhood. After all, the Rule did not address the issue of motor vehicles!

Connected with this question of the interpretation of the Rule is the way in which the Franciscan reads Scripture. Contrary to what many in the past thought, Francis and Clare did not feel impelled to take the Gospel "literally." Rather, hearing the stories of Jesus' radical obedience to the Spirit in his life and suffering gave them "signals" for the path they should take in their own life. It did not mean that they felt called to re-enact actually and necessarily the same stories.²⁷ Théophile Desbonnets has convincingly demonstrated that even in the famous episodes when Francis discovered a "life according to the Gospel," he did not literally follow everything he read in those accounts—he selected certain elements as he read the Gospel story in a kind of intuitive grasp of where the Spirit was leading him. In other words, Francis *chose* certain texts as central for himself. Under the Spirit's inspiration, Francis creatively re-appropriated the Gospel, focusing on certain elements as especially critical for his own situation.²⁸ Indeed, one can appreciate the truly free and creative nature of Francis and Clare's understanding of the evangelical life²⁹ when one compares it with many of the other "apostolic movements" of the time which attempted to copy meticulously Biblical norms.

Furthermore, so often in the past we have tended to remain with the initial biographical episodes, totally identifying Francis's desire to live a "Gospel life" with certain facets of the Gospel story, such as poverty and itinerant preaching. But as careful studies of Francis's use of the Scriptures have shown, he came to understand the "Gospel life" in a much broader sense. Francis did not attempt to limit his life to a literal reproduction of the historical Jesus. As time went on, he paid much less attention to the details of the life of Christ and more on the dynamic of that life as a whole. In fact, when we examine Francis's writings, we discover that his favorite Gospel passages were not those which referred to the literal descriptions of the earthly life of Jesus, but the Johannine ones which emphasize a relationship to Jesus in the Spirit.³⁰ As Thaddée Matura has put it: "For [Francis] the Gospel life is not limited to external actions, such as 'selling everything' or 'carrying nothing for the journey.' Instead, it means receiving the message of the Gospel as a whole."³¹

As Francis and Clare viewed it, the "Holy Gospel" is "the words, the life, and the teachings . . . of Him who humbled himself . . . for us" (RegNB 22:41). The Gospel message is thus crystallized into the self-emptying of God for our sake. This is why Francis and Clare focused so much on the stories of the nativity and the crucifixion. These episodes are the most vivid expressions in

the Biblical text of its central message—that the humble God has become one of us in order to love us to death.³² Thus, it is clear that the central theme of the Franciscan way of life consists in surrendering oneself in faith to the working of God's Spirit of love, holding back nothing of self, but giving oneself totally to the Most High God who has become most low, even unto death—surrendering all to us (cf. EpOrd 28-29).³³

These insights should enable us to gain a better perspective on the ideal of the "imitation of Christ" in the Franciscan tradition. Although this imagery of "imitation" was used within the thirteenth century to describe Francis's spirituality, Francis himself never uses the phrase. Rather, he sees his goal as "following in the footsteps of Jesus."³⁴ The difference is not just semantic, but leads to two quite different emphases in the life of the disciple. Indeed, perhaps it yields two distinct spiritualities of the Franciscan life.³⁵ The spirituality of "imitation" focuses on external behavior—the re-presentation of discrete pieces or aspects of Jesus' life. The spirituality of "following," however, focuses on the newness of the disciple's faith journey. As our ministers put it in their recent letter on the Spirit:

The ultimate explanation of Francis's "conformity with Christ" was not in a self-imposed programme 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.³⁶

In other words, Francis did not so much seek to model himself on an image of Christ "out there," as to possess the Spirit of the Lord Jesus within. He could in this way spontaneously "follow in the footsteps of Christ"—not slavishly copying the details of a first-century Palestinian Jesus, but creatively living out Jesus' obedience to the Father in a radically new way in thirteenth-century Italy.

The Spirit is likewise calling us to follow the trail blazed by Jesus, but the journey must be our own. Jesus has left us his parting gift of the Spirit with which he made his journey. If we are open to its working, it will replicate in the lives of us contemporary disciples Jesus' faithful obedience to God and loving service to others as we travel the journey in our new historical situations. The journey can only be our own; but the fact that the same Spirit who once led the Lord Jesus, Francis, and Clare now leads us will assure that the basic patterns of Gospel meaning will remain the same. We must never forget Francis's parting words: "I have followed my road. May Christ teach you yours" (2Cel 214). This is the charter of creative but faithful novelty among Franciscans and even assumes a certain pluriformity of responses among us.

Having said all this, I must sound a cautionary note and mention the other great obstacle which Francis recognized could block the working of the Spirit in the lives of his followers—"the flesh." Once again Francis is deeply Pauline in this emphasis. There always is that unconverted, unspiritual self within us that has not surrendered to the Spirit of the Lord. Despite Francis's confidence in his brothers and sisters, he was fully aware that they could still be "living according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit" (RegNB 5:4-5). None of us is ever totally "spouse of the Spirit" in this life. For this reason both Francis and Clare urged their followers to "pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (RegB 10:8, RCl 10:7).³⁷ They realized that there are many counterfeits of the work of the Spirit, and in many ways we can delude ourselves into thinking we are already being totally led by the Spirit. The work of conversion never ends but must always be taken up anew. This is why Gospel freedom cannot simply mean that I am able to do whatever I want. Many times it is our inauthentic selves doing the wanting. Like Paul, who in a classic passage in the Letter to the Galatians (5:16-26) contrasts the "fruits" of the Spirit of God with "the works of the flesh," Francis and Clare give us principles of discernment to see if we truly possess the Spirit of the Lord.

Principles of Discernment

The best place to look for these principles is in the very context in which they speak of seeking the Spirit of the Lord. Francis and Clare begin the sentence with: "*Instead*, let them pursue what they must desire above all things." Francis is contrasting "the working of the Spirit" with "pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, the cares and worries of this world, detraction and complaining." Clare adds "dissension and division" to this list. They perceive that the longed-for fruits of the Spirit's working are a willingness to serve others humbly, the "unity of mutual love," perseverance in prayer to God "with a clean heart and a pure mind," and patience in the face of opposition and human weakness—our own and that of others (RegNB 22:26, RegB 10:8, RCl 10:7). This list of the Spirit's fruits reads a little differently from the virtues of the ascetical tradition many of us older Franciscans were presented with. The life described by Francis and Clare demands sacrifice but does not hem us in; rather, it liberates us for God and one another.

How are these gifts of the Spirit in fact achieved? Simply by each brother and sister separately "working on" their own spiritual life? Our Franciscan sources do not believe that is enough. The fact that we can all fool ourselves points to the need for a deep sharing of the Spirit among us. For example, Francis and Clare both assumed that those brothers and sisters who were living "according to the flesh" would find other brothers and sisters who would

"humbly and charitably correct them" (RegNB 5:3-5, RegB 10:1). And the accounts of the early movement emphasize how the early brothers and sisters rejoiced in sharing with one another what God had accomplished through them and, yes, even candidly admitting their failures (e.g., 1Cel. 30, 40, 43). In many ways, Francis and Clare envisioned their communities as providing a "group spiritual direction." We must look again at the shared contemplative elements of our life. Simply bringing people together to work on a common project or because of human attraction is not Franciscan community in the Spirit. As brothers and sisters we live in the constant tension of being converted to Jesus and the kingdom. We must develop the structures and disciplines that assist that task. The focusing of our communities on prayer, developing the trust and openness that brings about a sharing of faith and values, and mutual encouragement and correction are all essential to a true "life in the Spirit."

This brings us to a final point. What might this consideration of the experience of the Spirit in the Franciscan tradition be saying to us American Franciscans today? This is not for me to say, but for all of us to discern among ourselves here and, more importantly, when we go home to our own communities. But let me just suggest two things. First of all, it is obvious that the role of the Holy Spirit is absolutely central to what our Franciscan charism is all about. "As has been said by eminent scholars, the movement set in motion by Francis was perhaps the greatest charismatic movement in the history of the church."³⁸ We must always keep the Spirit in the forefront. If anything, we Franciscans stand for evangelical freedom. Living this conviction out will place us in some tension with many elements of a Church which is still "forgetful of the Spirit." The observation Congar made twenty years ago rings true today:

We are still a long way from opening the life of the church, its parishes and organizations to the free [working of the Spirit's] charisms. Do we not suffer too much even now from a spirit of security and rigidity? . . . The church is an institution, but it is also and even primarily the "we" of Christians [in whom the Spirit dwells].³⁹

We Franciscans are called to be a freeing presence in the Church, who recognize and unleash the gifts of all its members. Our approach should be that of the Franciscan pastor who was asked at a diocesan meeting why his parish was flourishing. The friar responded: "We treat people with dignity and we don't put obstacles in their way."⁴⁰ But we cannot act in the larger Church in any self-righteous manner. We have to ensure first that our own communities are places of this Gospel freedom, and we must accomplish this "freeing" in the true spirit of the Lord as taught us by Francis, as people who build up and reconcile, not tear down and divide.

My second observation is that it is perhaps harder than ever for us to take the time to listen truly to the Spirit in our lives, so that we can indeed follow the Spirit's lead. Our contemporary American society gives precious little value to contemplation. Our Franciscan commitment to generous service can all too often mean that we end up being totally controlled by the demands of a job (or in these days, several jobs!). Overly-stressed people have little time for reflection and all too often find outlets in unhealthy addictions or mindless leisure activities that actually numb the spirit within rather than being truly recreating. We Franciscans are not immune to these pressures. It is difficult to make the time for real prayer—that "space" necessary to hear the Spirit moving in our lives. But this is essential. If we are listening to today's young people, we are finding out more and more that they are not going to join our Franciscan religious communities simply to find a position that will provide job security for full-time ministry. There are plenty of opportunities for fulfilling lay ministry in our church. But contemporary men and women will come to our congregations to discover sisters and brothers with whom they can create a space for the Spirit in their lives and share the experience of the workings of that Spirit in a context of affirmation, challenge, and mutual support. This new situation poses a tremendous crisis for existing models of apostolic religious life, but it should offer a promising invitation for us who espouse a model of evangelical life. Evangelical life is a "life in the Spirit of the Lord." May we discover the disciplines and structures which foster it! Let us conclude by joining Francis in prayer:

Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant us poor wretches to do for You alone what we know to be Your will, and always to will what pleases You, that inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened and aflame with the fire of the Holy Spirit, we may follow the footsteps of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by your grace alone, make our way to You, Most High! Amen! (EpOrd, 50-52).

Endnotes

¹Eric Doyle, OFM, "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), 2: "If there is one word which does complete justice to Franciscan theology and spirituality it is 'Christocentric,' and they have this as their distinguishing feature. . . ."

²Agostino Gemelli, "Franciscan Spirituality," in *The Message of St. Francis*, trans. Paul Oligny (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1963), 84.

³Alexandre Masseron and Marion Habig, *The Franciscans* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1959), 311.

⁹On the tendency in Catholicism to "forget" the Holy Spirit, see Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Vol. 1, trans. David Smith (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1997), 159-64.

¹⁰For a magisterial treatment of this topic, see Giles Constable, "The Ideal of the Imitation of Christ," in *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), 143-248.

¹¹Probably the earliest such reference is in the *Sacrum Commencium*, which calls "Blessed Francis . . . a [the?] true imitator of the Savior." Cf. *St. Francis of Assisi: Omnibus of Sources*, ed. Marion A. Habig, 4th edition (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983) 1531-1596, cf. especially 1551. All references to the early sources are from the *Omnibus*.

¹²Césaire de Tours, *Franciscan Perfection*, trans. Paul Barrett (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1956), 180.

¹³Césaire de Tours, 181.

¹⁴Masseron and Habig, 311.

¹⁵Cited from Optatus von Asseldonk, OFM Cap., "The Spirit of the Lord and its Holy Activity in the Writings of Francis," *Greyfriars Review*, 5 (1991): 106. This exhaustive study (pp. 105-158) and its companion, "The Holy Spirit in the Writings and Life of Clare," *Greyfriars Review*, 1 (1987): 93-104 are essential reading for this topic.

¹⁶See Joseph Chinnici, OFM, "The Prophetic Heart: The Evangelical Form of Religious Life in the Contemporary United States," *The Cord*, 44 (1994): 297.

¹⁷*Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1971), 843.

¹⁸"Above All, Seek the Spirit of the Lord and His Holy Operation: Second Letter of the Conference of the Franciscan Family on the Occasion of the Jubilee 2000, in the Year of the Holy Spirit," *The Cord*, 48.3 (May/June, 1998): 102-108.

¹⁹Kajetan Esser, OFM, "Studium und Wissenschaft im Geiste des hl. Franziskus von Assisi," in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, 39 (1976): 28, cited in von Asseldonk, 106.

²⁰The phrase is from Lazaro Iriarte, *The Franciscan Calling* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), 9.

²¹All quotations from the writings of Francis and Clare are from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

²²The truly innovative nature of this idea of Francis in this history of the vow of obedience is highlighted in the classic study of David Knowles, *From Pachomius to Ignatius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 83-85, from which the above quotations are taken.

²³"Letter of Pope Gregory IX," in *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. Regis Armstrong (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993), 103.

²⁴"As Kingfishers Catch Fire," *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W. H. Gardner and N. H. McKenzie, 4th ed. (Oxford: University Press, 1970), 90.

²⁵Thomas Aquinas, *In Cor.*, c. 3, lec. 3, cited by Congar, 2: 125 [trans. alt.]. This brief chapter (pp. 124-130) is an excellent discussion of "evangelical freedom."

²⁶"Above all, Seek the Spirit of the Lord and His Holy Operation," 104.

²⁷Congar, 2:126.

²⁸Francis cited this text in Adm 7:1.

²⁹The oldest manuscripts of the two sources mentioned in the preceding note date from the early fourteenth century. Although a good deal of the material in these stories is undoubtedly much earlier, their final redactions reflect the harsh judgments of the Spiritual controversies.

³⁰There are two references to "without gloss" in the Testament. Francis uses the term "spiritual" nine times in his Rule and "spiritually" eight times. See Thaddée Matura, *Francis of Assisi: The Message in His Writings* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997), 85-86.

³¹See the references in von Asseldonk, "The Spirit of the Lord . . . in Francis," 108-09.

³²This is a play on a memorable line in Patricia Hampl's *Virgin Time: In Search of the Contemplative Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1992), 120: "Franciscans read Francis and Clare not for stories but for signals."

³³Théophile Desbonnets, *From Intuition to Institution*, trans. Paul Duggan and Jerry du Charmé (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1988), 3-10. For a further discussion of Francis's alleged "literalism" in reading the Scriptures, see the important article by Alfonso Marini, "Vestigia Christi

Sequi or 'Imitatio Christi': Two Different Ways of Understanding Francis of Assisi's Gospel Life," *Greyfriars Review*, 11 (1997): 331-58, esp. 339-51. "Francis . . . understood his Gospel life in a way that was not mechanically imitative, made his choices from within the Gospel and the Bible in general, and interpreted in his own way the sacred text proposed to him" (350).

³⁴Marini, 350-351.

³⁵Optatus von Asseldonk, "Favored Biblical Teachings in the Writings of St. Francis of Assisi," *Greyfriars Review*, 3 (1989): 287-314.

³⁶Matura, 156.

³⁷Illustrative here is the story in which Francis at the end of his life declared he had no need to hear the Biblical stories read to him "for I have already made so much of Scripture my own that I have more than enough to meditate on. I know Christ, the poor, crucified one" (2Cel 105).

³⁸See also Matura, 158.

³⁹Constable makes this point well in the definitive study of the theme: "This type of absorption in the life and body of Jesus was characteristic of the spirituality of the late Middle Ages, and especially of Francis of Assisi and the so-called Franciscan school." Yet he quickly is forced to admit that "Francis himself nowhere in his writings specifically proposed the imitation of the humanity of Jesus or mentioned the Pauline passages concerning imitation, but he referred frequently to the teachings and the steps of Christ. . . . The literal imitation of Christ was advocated in works by his followers" (Constable, 192-93).

⁴⁰This is the thesis of the important article by Alfonso Marini cited in note 28.

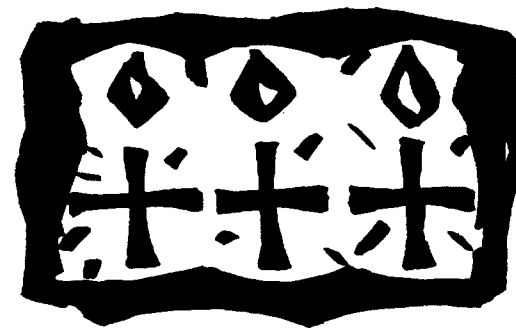
⁴¹"Above All, Seek the Spirit of the Lord . . ." 103.

⁴²The counterpart to this passage in Francis's earlier Rule is the whole of chapter 22, a critical passage for understanding what he means by "possessing the Spirit of the Lord."

⁴³"Above All, Seek the Spirit of the Lord," 103.

⁴⁴Congar, 2: 128-30.

⁴⁵Cited by William McConville, "Contemporary Ecclesiology and the Franciscan Tradition," in *Franciscan Leadership in Ministry, Spirit and Life Series*, Vol. 7 (1997): 122.



Francis X. Miles, OFM

Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant us poor wretches to do for You alone what we know to be Your will, and always to will what pleases You, that inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened and aflame with the fire of the Holy Spirit, we may follow the footsteps of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by your grace alone, make our way to You, Most High! Amen!

(EpOrd, 50-52).

Clare: Our Light and Guide in Our Response to the Holy Spirit

Josephine Rush, OSF

Introduction

My first meeting with Clare was as "Our Holy Mother St. Clare," a title that left her rather distant even though somewhat to be admired. I knew a good many facts about her life—that she was of the nobility of Assisi, that the Bishop presented her with the palm on Palm Sunday 1212, that late on the evening of that same Palm Sunday she secretly left her family home to follow Francis and subsequently founded the monastery of Poor Ladies at San Damiano. Yet even so I didn't know Clare as a person. Thankfully this changed later when I began reading the writings of Clare and came to see her with new eyes.

I am very happy to have this opportunity of reflecting with you on Clare and the Holy Spirit. After an introductory perspective on her life, we will look at the signs that reveal the work of the Spirit in a person's life, our own as well as Clare's. Then we will consider Clare's response to the working of the Spirit; and finally we will examine the challenge this offers to each of us.

Clare's life was framed by two prophecies. One was spoken to her mother Ortulana. The other was spoken by Francis himself. Before Clare's birth, when Ortulana prayed before the Cross that the Lord would help her through the dangers of childbirth, she heard a voice that told her she would give birth to a light which would greatly illumine the world (Proc 6:12).¹ Some years later, shortly after his conversion, when Francis was engaged in repairing the Church of San Damiano, he climbed the wall of that church and

shouted in French to some poor people who were standing nearby:
"Come and help me in the work [of building] the monastery of San

Damiano, because ladies are yet to dwell here who will glorify our heavenly Father throughout his holy universal Church by their celebrated and holy manner of life" (TestCI 12-14).

Both of these prophecies indicated the shape of things to come in the life of Clare—that she would be a great light that would illumine the world and that she would build up the Church by her holy manner of living at San Damiano. Eloquent testimony to the fulfillment of these prophecies was given by Pope Alexander IV in the *Bull of Canonization*, when he proclaimed:

O the wonderful brilliance of blessed Clare! . . . She gave light in life; she is radiant after death. She was brilliant on earth, she is resplendent in heaven! O how great is the power of this light and how intense is the brilliance of its illumination! (BC 3).

Just as it was the Spirit who was the author of the prophecies to Ortulana and to Francis, it was the same Spirit who led Clare in the footsteps of Christ and fashioned her into a model of gospel living. The Conference of the Franciscan Family confirmed this in the letter sent to us this year in preparation for the Jubilee of 2000. What it says of Francis can equally be said of Clare: "The Holy Spirit is the real secret which explains the life of Francis [and Clare] and the hidden spring from which flowed every intuition and initiative of his [hers]."² We might ask though: What do we look for when we want to uncover the work of the Spirit in a person's life?

Signs of the Spirit

As I reflected on this question, I considered the Acts of the Apostles, the witnesses of the many people I have met and have read about who have been touched by the Spirit, and finally the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. They all have something in common. They all speak of an outpouring of the life-giving Spirit of God bringing about what might be called "an awakening of the heart"³—a new awareness of God's love, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness; a desire to pray, to read the Word of God; an awareness of God's love being poured out on all peoples, indeed on the whole of creation; and a desire that all peoples might know God's love and mercy.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we see Peter right after Pentecost proclaiming the Good News with great clarity and conviction. But Peter wasn't always like that. Peter was the daring and presumptuous one who walked on the water; he was the one on whom Jesus conferred headship in the Church; he was one of the chosen three to witness the Transfiguration. Yet

in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter, for the first time, saw Jesus overcome by sorrow, fear, and weakness. This challenged his way of thinking, as it was quite the opposite of his vision of who Jesus was and of who God was. When to Peter's utter dismay Jesus was arrested, his whole idea of God was shattered. He sank into great confusion and darkness. In the midst of his inner turmoil, he was asked three times if he was one of Jesus' followers, and three times he denied that he knew Jesus. Scripture tells us that "while he was still speaking the cock crowed, and the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, and Peter remembered the Lord's words. . . . And he went outside and wept bitterly" (Lk. 22:60-62).

Suddenly the veil was torn away from Peter's eyes. Like Paul on the road to Damascus or Francis after embracing the leper, a radical change took place. Peter realized that, in all the ups and downs of following of Jesus, he had lacked a true knowledge of Jesus and a true knowledge of himself. Through this shameful humiliation Peter now saw God as "unlimited, boundless Love, offered freely and purely with a mercy which neither condemns nor accuses nor reproves."⁴ Till now he had been the one out there in front, self-sufficient and ready to dare and to do all things for Jesus. He saw nothing as impossible for him. "Now he understands that with God he can do nothing but let himself be loved, let himself be saved, let himself be pardoned."⁵

On Pentecost morning we see a new Peter, not the presumptuous Peter or the Peter plunged in sorrow, but a Peter confidently proclaiming the Gospel. He was empowered to preach what he himself had experienced, as he proclaimed to the Jews: "You must repent and everyone of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). And we are told that on that day three thousand were baptized! It was the experience of God's love that gave new life to Peter, transforming him and empowering him to preach the Word and build up the Kingdom of God.

You, I am sure, have met people in our day whose lives have been changed by the transforming work of the Spirit. In my own life I have experienced this outpouring of the Spirit. Before that time I would have described myself as a "good religious" in terms of external observance, yet I was self-righteous, judgmental and critical; I was faithful to daily prayer yet with little understanding of a personal relationship with God; I was committed to living the gospel yet I was very hazy and confused as to what that meant; I was committed to a life of conversion yet my life was not changing.

The Lord intervened in my life and in his great love and mercy opened my heart to experience his love in a very real way. As I prayed, it seemed to

me that all my life I had been praying in the half dark and now someone had turned on the lights. I knew the reality of the presence of God and so real was God to me that I would have preached it from the housetops. I was able to speak to God from my heart and expected to hear from God. I delighted in praising God. I began to understand that the basis of living the gospel is to love, to love others without finding excuses for withholding my love from anyone, and I was convinced of my need to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. Scripture became a living word that had meaning for my life here and now, resulting in a new zeal for bringing the knowledge of God's love to others. In short, I experienced "new life."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that the source of this "new life" is God's love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, giving us the ability to love others because we have received power from the Holy Spirit.⁶ By this power of the Spirit, our lives can bear much fruit, the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.⁷ Again the Spirit is visible in the gifts and ministries by which the Church is built up.⁸

This work of the Spirit, this "awakening of the heart," is what St. Paul prayed for in Ephesians 1:18—that "the eyes of our hearts would be opened. . . ." He was praying that our hearts would be awakened, that the grace of baptism would be actualized in our lives in a special way. This work of the Spirit changes and deepens our relationship with God, our relationships with others, and equips and empowers us to bring the Gospel to those we meet and with whom we live and work. It helps us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Clare's Response

As we read the early documents which relate the life of Clare, we see her drawn by the love of God to follow him unreservedly. The love of God filling her heart overflows not only to her sisters but to all in need. In examining Clare's response to the Spirit, I would like to focus on five areas:

- as she breaks with the conventions of the society of her time
- as she follows a new path for religious women
- as God's transforming love brings her into an ever deeper union with Jesus
- as she lives her life with her sisters at San Damiano
- as she becomes a light to the world.

Breaking with Conventions

One of the early documents giving details of Clare's life is *The Legend of St. Clare*.⁹ This legend, in describing Clare prior to her meeting with Francis, tells us:

From the mouth of her mother she first received with a docile heart the fundamentals of faith and with the Spirit inflaming and molding her interiorly she became known as a most pure vessel, a vessel of graces (CL 3).

Clare was a docile yet a daring disciple of the Spirit. She was taught to value things according to the inspiration of the Spirit, from the perspective of faith,¹⁰ a faith receptive to a more radical living of the Gospel. Francis's preaching the Gospel to her led her "to place a worthless price upon worthless things" (CL 4). Even while still in her own home, she disciplined herself by fasting, prayer, and willingly giving alms as much as she could (Proc 18:3). Such was her love for the poor that she would share with them the food that she herself was supposed to have eaten (Proc 17:1). She sold her inheritance, giving all the proceeds to the poor (CL 13). By selling her inheritance, Clare was making a decisive break with her family, declaring that she had no intention of getting married and that her inheritance belonged to the poor.¹¹ According to her noble status, she should have married magnificently and thus multiplied the wealth her family already had. But like St. Paul, once Clare met Christ, everything else counted for nothing. She wanted nothing to get in the way of her freedom to love;¹² she wanted only to run after Christ (CL 13).

Clare, we know, belonged to one of the noblest families of Assisi (Proc 18:4), of the urban aristocracy, for whom land, possessions, and property were of great importance, setting them apart in society. Yet the Spirit taught Clare to see these things as worthless. To understand fully the struggles which Clare had in making the decisions inspired by the Spirit, we must consider that, by the definitions of the society of her time, she should have taken the conventional path of marriage or she should have entered a monastery. Clare refused to accept these definitions. Furthermore, her social position hindered her from contact with those belonging to different social classes. Clare was thus someone to whom "the itinerant and uncertain life led by Francis and his companions was absolutely forbidden."¹³ For a woman to act in this way in the Middle Ages was to bring shame on her whole family, and, in the case of Clare, we know it provoked a violent reaction. The Legend tells us that her Uncle Monaldo and other relatives

employed violent force, poisonous advice, and flattering promises, trying to persuade her to give up such a worthless deed that was unbecoming to her class and without precedent in her family. But, taking hold of the altar cloths, she bared her tonsured head, maintaining that she would in no way be torn from the service of Christ (CL 9).

A New Path

Not only did Clare break with the conventions of her time but the Spirit led her on a new path for religious women. In giving up her inheritance, in turning her back on temporal security and establishing her Gospel way of life at San Damiano, Clare opened a new road for women. The Rule of Clare is the first known example in the history of the Church of a rule for religious life written by a woman for women.¹⁴ She broke the traditional pattern of the monastic life, a life of status with securities from land and papal privileges and, despite "the potential conflict between the aspirations of the Poor Ladies and accepted forms of female monasticism,"¹⁵ "lived her life in response to the movement of the Spirit within her."¹⁶ In fact Clare obtained from the Holy See a document called the Privilege of Poverty. This proposed a way of life with no possessions so that members could more freely and readily follow in the footprints of Christ. It was a privilege which guaranteed a life with no privileges, a life of total dependence on God. This single document sanctioned the originality and validity of life at San Damiano.¹⁷

Drawn by God's Transforming Love

It was God's transforming love that drew Clare. Clare recognized the work of the Spirit in Francis and so desired to see and hear him (CL 5). We are told that when she responded to the Spirit inspiring her to follow Francis, "immediately an insight into the eternal joys was opened to her at whose vision the world itself would become worthless" (CL 6). As she embraced her new life, she and her sisters "had no fear of poverty, hard work, trial, shame, or contempt of the world, but, instead, regarded such things as great delights" (RCL 6:2). Clare had enclosed herself in the convent of San Damiano where, through the Spirit, "she gave birth to a gathering of virgins of Christ . . . and showed her footprints to her followers by her own manner of walking" (CL 10).

As she responded to the Spirit working in her life, Clare grew in intimacy with God so much that "she held the pursuit of prayer as a friend"

(CL 4). Just think what this means. If we had to say how we held prayer, would it be as a friend or more as a duty? something we know we "should do," maybe to some extent desire to do—but as a friend? Do we cling to prayer as we would to a friend, particularly in times of great joy or need? Clare clung to prayer, for it was in prayer that she could pour out the love of her heart for Jesus.

Her sisters tell us what this means as they testify that she was vigilant in prayer and that

when she returned in joy from holy prayer, she brought from the altar of the Lord burning words, that also inflamed the hearts of her sisters. In fact they marveled that such sweetness came from her mouth and that her face shone more brilliantly than usual. . . (CL 20).

Does this ever happen to us when we pray? What kind of a change takes place?

They say also that she showed spiritual joy with her sisters, admonishing and comforting them with the words of God (CL 20). The work of the Spirit in her heart was revealed as she urged her sisters to "pray always with a pure heart" (RCI 10) so that they might feel "what his friends feel as they taste the hidden sweetness that God himself has reserved from the beginning for those who love him" (3LAg 12-14).

Perhaps more than in any other source, the Letters to Agnes of Prague reveal the depth of intimacy with Jesus characteristic of Clare's prayer. Agnes was a Princess of Bohemia who wished to follow Clare's way of life. In her first letter to Agnes, Clare described Christ as the Spirit had revealed him to her:

Whose power is stronger, whose generosity more abundant
Whose appearance more beautiful, whose love more tender
Whose courtesy more gracious.
In whose embrace you are already caught up (1LAg 9).

Life with Her Sisters

Clare's life with her sisters at San Damiano is related for us in the Acts of the Process of Canonization where we hear the living voices of people who had actually known Clare, among whom are sixteen sisters who lived with her. All testify to and underline the human reality that is Clare—sensible, tender, caring, discerning. The Canonization Process describes a domestic holiness where we see the fruits of the Spirit flourishing in ordinary interactions on a day to day basis. We hear of Clare's love and kindness in

covering up her sisters at night, being attentive to their needs; her gentleness and patience in consoling those who were tempted and depressed; her mercy and care for those not able to endure the harshness of some of their penitential practices. Three of the sisters gave witness to the humility of Clare in washing the feet of the sisters, while others testify to her curing their illnesses by marking them with the sign of the Cross.

In her life at San Damiano the emphasis was on humble service.

In the great Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries there were two categories of nuns. The choir nuns were from aristocratic families and devoted themselves primarily to prayer. Then there were lay sisters who looked after all the practical aspects of monastic life. It was not this way at San Damiano. Here all the sisters were called to serve . . . and there were no separate categories in terms of communal life.¹⁸

This is reflected in the story of the door falling on Clare. The door, at the entrance to San Damiano, was too heavy for the sisters to lift from her. It took three brothers to lift it; yet there was no harm done to her. She said it was as if a mantle had been placed over her (Proc 5:5). This story is set within the everyday activities that Clare was engaged in. The door would have to be closed at night. Though it was within two years of Clare's death, she was still performing a duty so ordinary.

Her prayer engaged her on a new level of life with her sisters. She saw each sister as a gift, and like Francis she "took the simple everyday paradigm of sister/brother and made it the heart of her vision of religious community."¹⁹ In her Testament she says:

May 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 charity for one another (TestCl 59, 60).

One can only love in this way if she has allowed the love of God to be poured into her heart by the Holy Spirit.

A Light to the World

This love was destined to be a light to the world. The sisters sought to live their life of prayer apart from the world. However, led by the Spirit, Clare's vision of enclosure was not Benedictine in character.

Clare thought of San Damiano as being an open community, a community so open as to be without boundaries, with an horizon as wide

as the whole world. . . . Though an enclosed community, their enclosure was unconfined, without limits.²⁰

She was not cut off from the real problems of the world. Others saw, heard, touched, and were able to be in contact with her. Clare encountered people who came—touched them—a picture of a real human exchange. In addition to the recorded miracles of healing and multiplication of food which happened inside San Damiano, we also have records of people coming to Clare in times of sickness and need to be prayed over, most usually with the sign of the Cross. Over half of these healings were for children²¹—a baby with a high fever, a young boy who had a pebble caught in his nose.

Popes sought her prayer and counsel (CL 27), and Francis himself sent Brother Stephen to San Damiano so Clare would make the sign of the Cross over him. Stephen departed cured of his mental illness (Proc 2:15). We know of her concern for the city of Assisi and how she came before the Saracens with the Eucharist as her only protection. Not only was San Damiano saved by her intercession, but the whole city as well. The Legend of Clare records for us: “. . . how many and how great were the souls who came to Christ through her. . . . Remaining enclosed she began to enlighten the whole world” (CL 10, 11).

Our Challenge

We may know Clare's story; “yet we must rehearse it again and again for ourselves, not to know the facts, but to love and imitate her example,”²² to allow the Spirit which was so alive in her to awaken our hearts too. For as the Letter from the Conference of the Franciscan Family reminds us: “where have the Christian faithful more right to find the ‘dwellings of the Spirit’ than in our Franciscan communities or fraternities?”²³ Can we use Clare as our mirror, bringing before her the desires of our hearts? Do our hearts hold within them the desire to love others as God loves us? Do we yearn to bring the good news of God's love and mercy to others? Is the presence of the Spirit visible through our love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?

This awakening of the heart is gradual—a lifetime process. Francis recognized that it is the penitential heart that is the dwelling place of the Spirit, that is, a heart that is always turning to the Lord. Both he and Clare encourage us to have a clean heart, i.e. a heart for God alone,²⁴ and it is the Word of God that will continue to purify and cleanse us. The major theme in the life and writings of Clare—that which holds everything together and creates a context for her form of life—is to have within us a great desire to

love as Jesus loves. In the letter which the General Minister of the SFOs wrote to mark the “Twentieth Anniversary of the Rule,” she points out that

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.²⁵

Bonaventure tells us that the Spirit comes in “where he is loved, . . . where he is invited, . . . and where he is expected.”²⁶ As the Word of God makes its home within us, our hearts will overflow with joy, thanksgiving, and gratitude. Praise and prayer will bubble up, will flow and run like living water. The more we come to know the heart of Christ, the more will our hearts be awake, beating with the rhythm of the Spirit.

Endnotes

¹References to basic sources are from *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. and trans. Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993).

²“Second Letter of the Conference of the Franciscan Family on the Occasion of the Jubilee 2000 in the Year of the Holy Spirit, *The Cord*, 48.3 (May/June, 1998), 102. This Conference consists of the Ministers General of the Friars Minor, the Capuchins, the Conventuals, the Third Order Regular friars, the President of the International Franciscan Conference of the Third Order Regular, and the General Minister of the Secular Franciscan Order.

³Andre Louf, *Teach Us To Pray* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1992), 34.

⁴Carlo Martini, *Ministers of the Gospel: Meditations on St. Luke's Gospel* (England: St. Paul Publications, 1995), 73.

⁵Martini, 74.

⁶*Catechism of the Catholic Church* Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, U.S.C.C., 1994), 735.

⁷*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 736.

⁸*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 688.

⁹In medieval usage, the word “legend” meant simply “an account to be read publicly,” not today's connotation of “a popular story regarded as historical but not verifiable.”

¹⁰Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF, “Clare and Intimacy with the Lord,” *The Cord*, 45.5 (Sept./Oct., 1995): 46.

¹¹Marco Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1993), 46.

¹²Karecki, 33.

¹³Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF, and Sergius Wroblewski, OFM, *Franciscan Study Guides for the Life and Times of Francis and Clare* (Franciscan Institute of Southern Africa, 1997), 6:9.

¹⁴Bartoli, 2.

¹⁵Ingrid J. Peterson, OSF, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 357.

¹⁶Peterson, 17.

¹⁷Karecki and Wroblewski, 6:18.

¹⁸Karecki and Wroblewski, 6:17.

¹⁹Marie Beha, OSC, "St. Clare of Assisi Teaches about Formation," *Human Development*, 17.3 (1996), 31.

²⁰Bartoli, 85-86.

²¹Bartoli, 168.

²²Ignatius Brady, OFM, "Clare of Assisi: Our Model," *The Cord*, 45:4 (July / Aug., 1995): 3.

²³Second Letter, 104-5.

²⁴Regis J Armstrong, OFM Cap., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings for a Gospel Life* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 42.

²⁵Emanuela De Nunzio, SFO, "The Twentieth Anniversary of The Rule: A Letter from the General Minister, SFO, *The Cord*, 48.3 (May/June, 1998): 112.

²⁶Cf. St. Bonaventure, "Dominica IV, Post Pascha, Sermo II," *Opera Omnia*, 9 (Quaracchi: Ad Claras Aquas), 311.

Contributors

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A Franciscan Prayer Service in Honor of The Holy Spirit

John Ostdiek, OFM.

[Note: this non-liturgical service is designed for use by those who wish to gather in prayer and reflection in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.]

Gathering/Opening

Presider: (In own words, welcomes those gathered and then begins:)

We gather in the presence of our God who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All:

Amen.

Presider:

Gathering to pray and to share after the example of Francis, we make visible the body of Christ Jesus. And in doing so, we, as Francis did, show a deep trust and loving respect for both the human and the divine presence in our gathering.

We see ourselves "at home" with each other and with God. We want to come closer to the Holy Spirit, to understand better the Spirit's urgings in us, and to give sincere witness to the Spirit's work in our world. Let us now pray that we may be open to the Spirit and to each other.

All:

All-powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God,
All good, supreme good, entire good.
You alone are good.
We give you all praise, all glory, all thanks,
All honor, all blessing and every good.
So be it. So be it. Amen. (LaudHor 11.)

Readings with Reflection and Prayer.

Reader 1: Jesus promises the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said: "When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. . . . I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him. . . . When he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. . . . He will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you" (John 15:26-16:15).

(Reflection/Sharing. Take some time, at the discretion of the group, to meditate quietly for a while, then share thoughts on this reading. Suggested: What does this promise of Jesus mean to me/us? How do I/we look to the Holy Spirit? Any other thoughts?)

Presider:

We pray: We have seen the true Light; we have received the heavenly Spirit; we have found the true faith. We adore the indivisible Trinity, who has saved us. Amen (Byzantine Liturgy for Pentecost).

Reader 2: Jesus prays for unity—among ourselves, with Jesus, with the Father. The Holy Spirit helps and guides us to that unity.

Jesus prayed: "I pray . . . so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us. . . . So that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. . . . Father, I wish that where I am they also may be with me" (John 17:20-24).

(Reflection/Sharing. What is the nature of the unity for which Jesus prays? What is the basis of unity? How does unity differ from uniformity? How can we be united, yet retain our individuality? What can I/we do to promote the unity for which Jesus prayed?)

For which Francis worked? In myself? Among those we meet? Consider: The Spirit makes present the mystery of Jesus to us. The Spirit gives us help/grace. The Spirit prepares others to see and accept our witness.)

Presider:

We pray:

All:

You are holy, Lord, the only God.
You do wonders.
You are strong, you are great, you are the Most High.
You are love, charity.
You are wisdom; you are humility; you are patience.
You are beauty; you are meekness.
You are all our riches; you satisfy all our needs.
You are our protector; you are our defender.
You are our strength; you are our refreshment.
You are our hope.
You are our eternal life,
Great and wonderful Lord,
God almighty, merciful savior. Amen. (LaudDei. Adapted.)

Reader 3: Charisms of the Holy Spirit today.

The Holy Spirit raises up new ministries in the Church through the promptings of grace called charisms. As Paul explained to the people of Corinth: "To one . . . wisdom, to another . . . knowledge, to another . . . faith, to another . . . healing, to another . . . etc." (1 Cor. 12:7-10).

Paul saw these various ministries as charisms, gifts from the Holy Spirit to be used in ministry to people. The operative word is "gifts." Today, we are convinced, the Spirit is just as active, just as concerned as in the time of Paul and the early Church. And the Spirit is just as generous to us as in Paul's time.

These charisms, carried out in various ministries today are a rich source of God's presence to and for the Church, the people of God. (John Paul II, *Christifidelis laici*.)

(Reflection/Sharing. What are God's gifts to me? Which do I think is the strongest? How am I using it? What are the gifts we receive from being followers of Francis? How am I/we doing with these gifts? What in Francis can we apply to today's world?)

Presider:

We pray:

All:

Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God,
 Help us in our weakness to do for your sake
 What we know you want us to do
 And always to want what pleases you.
 Inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,
 May we follow in the footsteps of Jesus,
 And so come to you by your grace—
 You, who live in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,
 And are glorified, God almighty,
 Forever and ever. Amen. (EpOrd 50-52. Adapted.)

Prayers of Intercession**Presider:**

Francis appeals to the heart. He found inspiration in a healing, touching, and caring Jesus. He found hope in a kind and gentle Father-God. So we, followers of Jesus in the pattern of Francis, open our hearts to that same caring God in these intercessions. I now invite you to voice your petitions.

(Suggest an appropriate response which the group can say at the end of each petition. Such a response might be, "Lord, hear our prayer.")

Closing Prayer**Presider:**

In his writings, St. Francis often associated the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, showing that the Spirit is always at work with the Father and the Son. Let us now pray together the hymn in which Francis asks the Spirit, with the Son, to offer thanks to the Father.

All:

All-powerful, most holy, most high, supreme God,
 Holy and just Father,
 Lord, King of heaven and earth,
 We thank you for yourself.

By your holy will
 And through your only Son
 And with the Holy Spirit,
 You created every spiritual and corporeal being;
 And, after making us in your own image and likeness,
 You placed us in paradise.
 Through our own fault we fell.
 We thank you for redemption.
 Through your Son you created us,
 And you willed to redeem us from bondage
 Through his cross, blood, and death.
 We thank you for the second coming.
 Your Son will come again
 In the glory of his majesty.
 All of us have sinned.
 We humbly ask that our Lord Jesus Christ,
 Together with the Holy Spirit, the Consoler,
 Would give you thanks for everything
 As it pleases you and him,
 And through whom you have done so much for us.
 Alleluia. Amen.

(Reg NB 22:1-5. Prayer of Thanksgiving. Adapted.)

Presider:

Let us now go in the peace of Jesus.

All:

Thanks be to God!



Book Review

Resource Manual for the Study of Franciscan Christology. Edited by Kathleen Moffatt, OSF, and Christa Marie Thompson, OSF. Washington, DC: Franciscan Federation TOR, 1998. 440 pp., paper. \$28.00.

The production of this resource Manual is a tremendous gift and challenge for the Franciscan family both nationally and internationally. As a gift, it is a compilation of well-organized and carefully selected primary and secondary sources. As a challenge, the Manual requires Franciscans to acknowledge that, when it comes to understanding the primacy of Christ in Creation, we no longer have an excuse for not knowing the fundamental insights and distinctive characteristics of the Franciscan theological tradition. With wisdom and grace, the editors of this volume have provided the Franciscan family with the resources needed to grapple with a number of christological questions that are consequential for our lives and ministries. Among others, the following three questions are foundational to the aims and objectives of this volume. As Christians, what response do we give to the question "why did God become human?" As Franciscans, how does our understanding of the primacy of Christ distinguish our lives and action in the Church and in the world? As individuals and communities, how does our familiarity with the defining insights of the Franciscan theological tradition enable us to live the evangelical life with fidelity and creativity?

The Resource Manual is divided into six sections. The section headings include basic considerations, Franciscan sources, contemporary reflections, the christology of St. Clare, supplementary sources, and selected bibliography. Basic familiarity with the writings of Francis and Clare is assumed. Classic texts from the tradition include excerpts from the works of Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, and Alexander of Hales. Included among recent and contemporary sources are selections from the writings of Philotheus Boehner, Ignatius Brady, Ilia Delio, Eric Doyle, Edith Van Den Goorbergh, Margaret Guider, Zachary Hayes, Michael Higgins, Nguyen Van Khanh, Michael Meilach, Daniel Migliore, Kenan Osborne, Ingrid Peterson, Margaret Pirkil, William Short, Gabriele Uhlein, Jack Wintz, and Allan Wolter. Helpful appendices include documents of the Church and the general ministers that focus on the life and legacy of John Duns Scotus.

The texts are characterized by a variety of scholarly interests, methodologies, and perspectives. Each text is prefaced by an outline that serves as a helpful guide for study and reflection. These readings have broad appeal to a variety of audiences ranging from the theologically sophisticated to any Franciscan moved by the desire to do meaningful and substantial theological reflection. Overall, the selected texts have in common a clarity of purpose, a definite rigor, and styles that are informative, engaging, and persuasive. Grounded in scholarly research and attuned to exigencies of Franciscan life at the threshold of a new millennium, this collection of writings represents a noteworthy accomplishment on the part of the editors to guarantee that the necessary resources for doing christology in the light of the Franciscan theological tradition are made accessible to interested readers within and beyond the Franciscan family.

As a promising resource for theological education and spiritual formation in the Franciscan tradition, the volume merits the attention and consideration of individuals and communities. To those who, on the basis of past experience, may have questions and hesitations about the adequacy and appropriateness of a compendium approach to any topic in theology, it is worth noting that the theological value and enduring relevance of the selected texts have been verified by the receptivity and enthusiasm of the readers and audiences for whom the articles and presentations were originally intended.

In conclusion, the Manual represents the very best in visual design, solid theological content, and a user-friendly format. The vision, dedication, and expertise of Kathleen Moffatt, OSF, coupled with the talents and skills of her many collaborators, is in evidence from cover to cover. Though not intended as the *first* in a series of resource manuals on the Franciscan theological tradition, I have no doubt about this volume's potential to cultivate ongoing interest and desire.

Margaret E. Guider, OSF

*Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God,
Help us in our weakness to do for your sake
What we know you want us to do
And always to want what pleases you.
Inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,
May we follow in the footsteps of Jesus,
And so come to you by your grace—
You, who live in perfect Trinity and
simple Unity, And are glorified, God almighty,
Forever and ever. Amen. (EpOrd 50-52. Adapted.)*

From The Franciscan Institute

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FRANCISCAN STUDIES, THE DIFFERENCE WOMEN ARE MAKING. Volume 8 of Spirit and Life Series

A collection of talks presented at Washington Theological Union, May 29-31, 1998. Includes Maria Calisi, Margaret Carney, Ilia Delio, Paul LaChance, Roberta McKelvie, Dominic Monti, Elise Saggau, Adele Thibaudau, Gabriele Uhlein.

*Price \$12.00. 130 pages, paper. Available June, 1999.

FRANCISCANS DOING THEOLOGY: AN INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM TO ACCOMPANY *THE HISTORY OF FRANCISCAN THEOLOGY*

prepared by Mary C. Gurley, OSF

This resource attempts to capture both the content and the dynamics of the National Franciscan Forum held in Colorado Springs in June, 1997. It invites its users to join in the conversation to reclaim the theological foundations of Franciscan evangelical life. The materials included in this program provide an in-depth focus on the major conference presentations and are intended to guide the users through the process used at the Forum. Included are: uncut videos of the keynote address, the lecture presentations, the faculty dialog, and the concluding remarks; comprehensive outlines of content; recommended preparatory readings; follow-up questions; follow-up readings.

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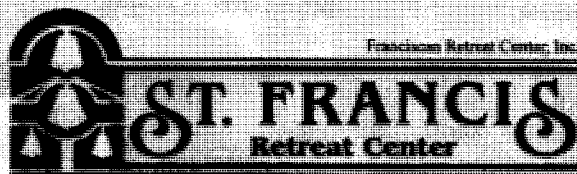
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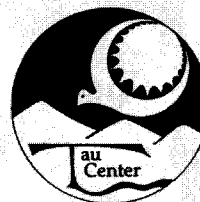
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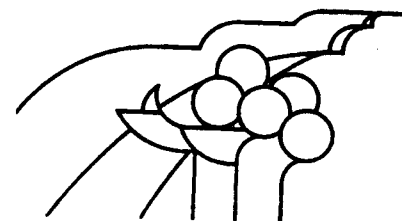
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Presented by:

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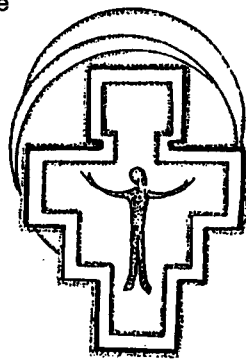
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Fax: 715-385-9118
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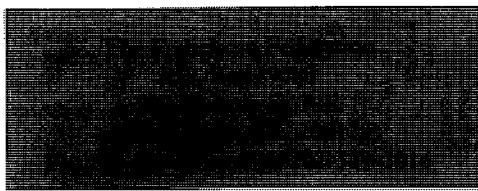
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October 23, 1999 — Franciscan Center, Garfield Heights, OH
November 6, 1999 — Scotus Hall, Millvale, PA

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THEME:

The Universe: Discovering the Heart of God

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Ilia Delio OSF: author, Franciscan theologian and Assistant Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Franciscan Studies at Washington Theological Union, Washington, D.C.

William Stoeger S.J.: Staff Astronomer—Vatican Observatory, Tucson, and Adjunct Associate Professor of Astronomy, University of Arizona, Tucson.

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Tuesday, June 8-Sunday, June 13

Franciscans Doing Scripture. National Franciscan Forum. See ad, p. 155.

Friday, June 11-Sunday, June 13

Franciscan Seeds for Fertile Fields, a gathering of Post-Vatican II Franciscans, sponsored by member congregations of upper midwest Common Franciscan Novitiate. With Mary Johnson SNDdeN, PhD, and Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF. In Joliet, IL. Contact Jeanne Besette, OSF, at 708-771-8383 or Kathleen Anne Copp, OSF, at 815-464-3880.

Sunday, June 13-Saturday, June 19

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Sunday, June 13-Saturday, June 19

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Saturday, June 19

Rebirth of a Charism. Washington Theological Union. See ad p. 156.

Thursday, June 24-Sunday, June 27

Secular Franciscans All Commissions' Conference. At St. Bonaventure University, Allegany, NY. Contact: Mary Mazotti, SFO, 209-795-3809.

Sunday, July 4-Saturday, July 10

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Sunday, July 11- Sunday, July 18

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Monday, August 2-Friday, August 13

LIFE Program. See ad p. 154.

Writings of Saint Francis

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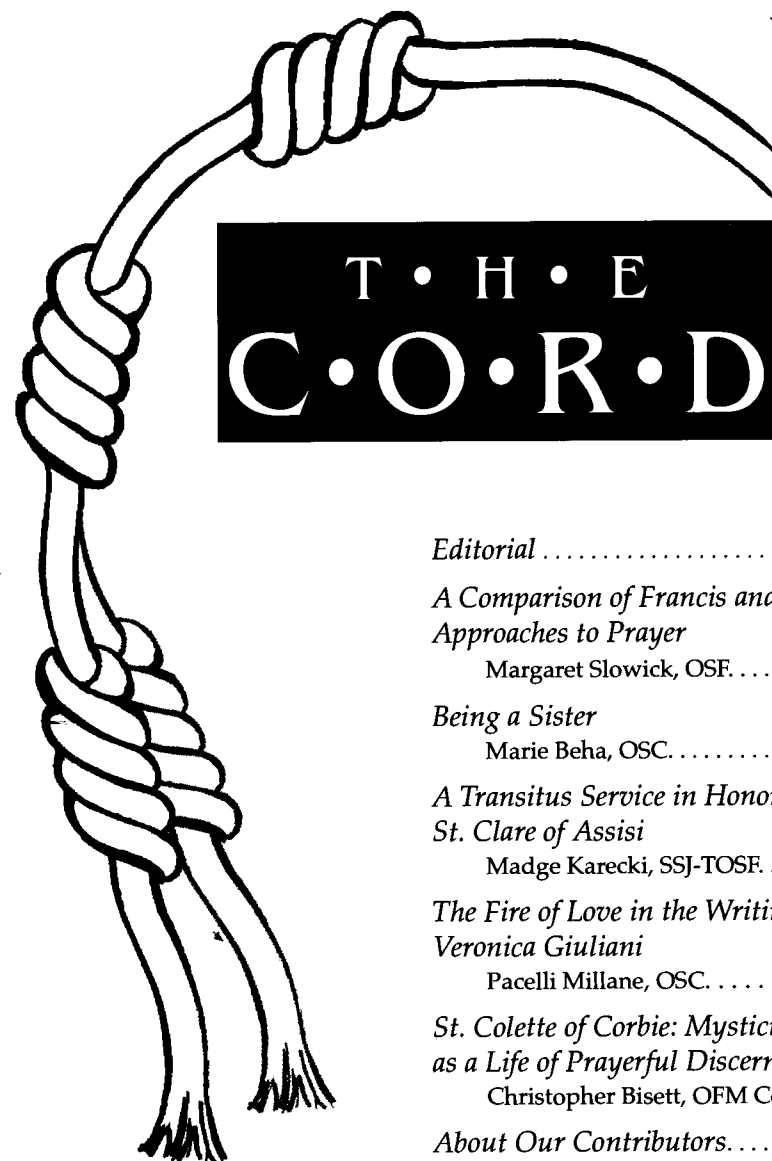
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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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

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The Cord, 49.4 (1999)

Editorial

[The Saints] are the initiators and the creative models of the holiness which happens to be right for, and is the task of, their particular age. . . . Their death is . . . the seal put on their task of being creative models, a task which they had in the Church during their lifetime, and their living-on means that the example they have given remains in the Church as a permanent form.¹

It seems very basic to human life that we search for "models," persons whose lives were or are lived in such a way that they have energy and direction for others. Such a person, who is gifted with the grace of being a "creative model," consciously or unconsciously sees his or her life as an "adventure" and pushes back the horizons of expectation embraced by society. This person establishes an original way of living that comes as a surprise to his or her own age and that perdures as a source of wisdom and inspiration for future generations.

The Franciscan movement has drawn energy and inspiration for several hundred years from the original and creative inspiration of Francis and Clare of Assisi and their first followers. These founding spirits set in motion an impulse of divine grace in the world that touched others in extraordinary and transforming ways. Intervening generations have been gifted with their own "creative models" within the Order, assuring that the original impulse would live on and be meaningful to changed circumstances.

In this issue of *The Cord*, we once again honor our sister, Clare, as one of these original and creative models. Wittingly or unwittingly, she became a light for her own times, an instrument of God's merciful and insistent love. And over the generations others have drawn from her inspiration the energy and wisdom needed for their own times. Two of her outstanding followers are presented here as creative models in their own right—Colette of Corbie and Veronica Giuliani. And, once again, we enjoy some reflections of our contemporary brothers and sisters on the significance of this sister for ourselves today.

Endnote:

¹ Karl Rahner, SJ, *The Theology of the Spiritual Life, Theological Investigations*, Vol. 3 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967) 100.

A Comparison of Francis and Clare's Approaches to Prayer

Margaret Slowick, OSF

In whatever way it seems best to you to please the Lord God and to follow His footprints and His poverty, do this with the blessing of God and my obedience (EpLeo 3).¹

O most noble Queen,
gaze upon [Him],
consider [Him],
contemplate [Him],
as you desire to imitate
[Him] (2LAg 20).²

As leaders of a new movement of the Spirit within the Church, Francis and Clare must have been called upon often for spiritual advice, as illustrated by the above passages. From Brother Leo to Agnes of Prague, those who sought to follow Jesus after the example of Francis and Clare would undoubtedly have been eager to gain insight into their prayer, "the wellspring of Franciscan life"³ which provided the foundation for everything these two inspirational leaders did and said. Neither Francis nor Clare left us an explicit methodology of prayer; perhaps this is a sign that a "free spirit" within the person praying is an essential element of this new spirituality.⁴ We do have enough information from their writings, however, to be able to make a few observations.

As one would expect, there are striking similarities in the approaches to prayer taken by the two saints. From the opening quotes of this article, it is evident that both Clare and Francis placed the highest priority on following in the footsteps of Christ. Thus the prayer of both is centered in Christ and in the desire to imitate Him. And both would undoubtedly agree that prayer

itself should be given high priority in one's life, to the extent that even one's work should not be allowed to interfere with it. Accordingly, Francis writes in the Later Rule:

Those brothers to whom the Lord has given the grace of working should do their work faithfully and devotedly so that, avoiding idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthly existence must contribute (RegB 5:1-2).

And in an almost identical passage, Clare writes in her Form of Life:

Let the sisters to whom the Lord has given the grace of working work faithfully and devotedly after the hour of Terce at work that pertains to a virtuous life and the common good. [Let them do this] in such a way that, while they banish idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthy existence must contribute (RCI 7:1-2).

The similar language of these passages certainly indicates that Francis and Clare were of one heart on this matter. However, it would not be accurate to say that one imitated the other in their approaches to prayer. Although they seemed to approach prayer with a similar mindset and gave it the same priority, Francis and Clare prayed in ways that seem to be more complementary than imitative.⁵ This complementarity can be seen in the ways they describe their relationship with God. Prayer obviously cannot exist without this relationship; and, as one would expect, the relationships Clare and Francis have with the Divine bear the stamp of the uniqueness of each saint. Again, it is not surprising to find similarities. For instance, both would agree that one's relationship with God should be of an ongoing rather than an occasional nature. Thus Francis urges the brothers to "pray always" (RegNB 22:29), and Clare encourages Agnes to move in her prayer toward an abiding presence with her Beloved rather than occasional encounters with the Divine.⁶ But differences are also apparent. And the basis of at least some of the differences may well be in the obvious—the identity of Clare as a woman and Francis as a man.

The difference seems most evident in their relationship to Jesus Himself. For instance, Francis's love for Jesus could certainly be described as passionate. But passion takes on a different nuance with the woman Clare, so much so that Pope John Paul II characterized her as "the passionate lover of the poor, crucified Christ."⁷ In the Fourth Letter to Agnes, Clare's use of quotations from the Song of Songs seems quite fitting:

Draw me after you,
 we will run in the fragrance of your perfumes,
 O heavenly Spouse!
 I will run and not tire,
 until you bring me into the wine cellar,
 until your left hand is under my head
 and your right hand will embrace me happily,
 [and] you will kiss me with the happiest kiss of your
 mouth (4LAg 30-32).

Nuptial imagery with reference to God has certainly existed through the centuries on the part of both men and women; however, it is not present in the writings of Francis as it is in Clare. Francis's passion for Jesus is indisputable, but he does not express it in this particular manner.

As devotion to Jesus as Beloved and Lover is more evident in the writings of Clare, so devotion to God as Father is more evident in the writings of Francis. In fact, a significant aspect of the impact of Christ on Francis lies in Christ's role as the One who reveals the Father: the Christ who is "the only guide and way who can conduct [us] toward Light Inaccessible."⁸ Although Clare does refer to God the Father with sentiments of gratitude and awe, especially in the Testament, she does not express her love for the Father in as ardent terms as Francis does. In God the Father, Francis was truly in touch with the transcendence of God and responded with profound adoration:

You are holy, Lord, the only God, You do wonders.
 You are strong, You are great, You are the most high,
 You are the almighty King.
 You, Holy father, the King of heaven and earth (LaudDei 1-2).

In light of this, Francis's approach to prayer could be seen from the perspective of one who, unable to please his earthly father, deeply desired to please his Heavenly Father. Clare, on the other hand, might be said to approach prayer as a call to ever deeper intimacy with Christ.⁹ In her letters to Agnes, we see Clare's clear focus on Jesus as Spouse. "Clare learned to pray by looking deeply into Jesus," writes Mary Francis Hone,¹⁰ and this gaze was, beyond any doubt, a gaze of love. This "gaze of love" leads quite naturally into Clare's use of mirror imagery in her prayer, especially as a way of facilitating one's spiritual growth.¹¹ By looking at herself in light of the Mirror that is Christ, the person praying can see the ways in which she differs from Christ and the ways in which she can be formed into His image.¹² This growth into the image of Christ is central to Francis, too, but his approach to it seems to be based more on using the words of the Gospel as his guide. This would explain his strong emphasis on the words of Jesus as "spirit and life"—words to hold onto, cherish, and make part of one's very self.¹³

Those words of the Scriptures pervaded the spirituality of both Francis and Clare. The lives of both saints were imbued with the Word through liturgical celebrations and the Liturgy of the Hours. Both prayed Francis's Office of the Passion, and the Lord's Prayer would have been a vital part of their prayer as well. Certainly their lives were firmly grounded in the Word of God; yet even here, their particular emphases are apparent. Francis prefers the Gospel of John and the Psalms; Clare more often uses passages from Matthew and the Song of Songs.

In the light of Clare's identity as a woman, it is not surprising to find her drawing on the female saints as models, and she does so much more frequently than Francis. Her references to the martyr Agnes, for instance, seem quite appropriate in the context of Clare's relationship with Jesus as her Beloved, since Agnes's relationship with Christ could be similarly described.¹⁴ The one woman who held a significant place in the prayer of both Clare and Francis was the Virgin Mother. Mary occupies a central place in Clare's Third Letter to Agnes, and Francis's Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary clearly demonstrates her importance in the context of his own spirituality. As the dwelling place of Christ, Mary exemplified the faithful Christian for both Francis and Clare.

Mary's fiat enabled the Word of God to become flesh; and in the mystery of the Incarnation, Clare finds an awesome expression of the poverty and humility of Christ:

O marvelous humility!
 O astonishing poverty!
 The King of Angels, the Lord of heaven and earth,
 is laid in a manger (4LAg 20-21).

Francis, too, is deeply affected by the poverty and humility of Christ; he writes the following in reference to the Eucharist:

O sublime humility!
 O humble sublimity!
 That the Lord of the universe,
 God and the Son of God,
 so humbles Himself
 that for our salvation
 He hides Himself under the little form of bread
 (EpOrd 27).

This spirit of poverty and humility pervades the prayer, the writings, and the lives of both Clare and Francis. It is present in many forms—as a way of imitating the poor Christ, as a quality of life which makes fraternity/commu-

nity possible, as an attitude which cultivates within us a spirit of gratitude for God's loving Providence. Imagine how different the writings—and the lives—of Francis and Clare would look without the presence of themes of poverty and humility, so central to their spirituality!

The culmination of Jesus' life of poverty and humility was, of course, His suffering, death, and resurrection. The image which dominated the prayer of both Francis and Clare was, without a doubt, the Crucifixion. Francis's reception of the stigmata in 1224 was the culmination of his life in *imitatione Christi*. His total identification with the Crucified pervaded his whole being, body and soul. For Clare, long periods of meditation on Christ's Passion characterized her prayer, often accompanied by tears. Like Francis, but without the visible marks of the stigmata, she too experienced union with Christ crucified.¹⁵

Thus Clare and Francis were ultimately at one in their deepest experiences of prayer. Throughout their lives, their approaches to prayer carried common themes as well as differences in emphasis and expression. At the core of their prayer, they were one. Taken together, their approaches to prayer give us a more complete picture of the endless possibilities for authentic relationship with God. In prayer, as in all of life, the complementarity of the masculine and the feminine enriches us and gives us life.

Endnotes:

¹Quotations from Francis's writings are from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., and Ignatius Brady, OFM (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

²Quotations from Clare's writings are from *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, trans. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1993).

³Ignatius Brady, "The History of Mental Prayer in the Life of the Friars Minor," *Franciscan Studies*, 11 (1951): 345.

⁴Pacelli Millane, OSC, "The Search for God in the Tradition of St. Clare," (Thesis, St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 148.

⁵Millane, 35.

⁶Millane, 51.

⁷John Paul II, "Pope John Paul II's Letter to the Poor Clares on Her Feast," *Greyfriars Review* 7 (1993): 125.

⁸Damien McElrath, *Franciscan Christology* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 5.

⁹Millane, 46.

¹⁰Mary Francis Hone, "Woman Most Powerful," *The Cord* 33 (1983): 209.

¹¹See 2Lag and 4Lag.

¹²Regis Armstrong, "Clare of Assisi: The Mirror Mystic," *The Cord* 35 (1985): 199.

¹³See RegNB 22: 39-41.

¹⁴Regis Armstrong, "Starting Points: Images of Women in the Letters of Clare," *Greyfriars Review* 7 (1993): 352.

¹⁵See Legend of Clare 31; see also Hone.

Being a Sister

Marie Beha, OSC

"The Lord gave me brothers." Francis rejoiced in the double gift of vocation and of companions to share his way of life with him. Though we have no textual evidence that Clare used these same words, we do have many, many references in her writings to the relationship of sisterhood and her description of this for those who joined her at San Damiano.

So what does it mean to be a sister? Many of us have had the experience; all of us know its meaning, at least in some way. So like Clare herself, we have only to tap into this rich resource to discover a bedrock of the Franciscan charism. In the present article, I hope to articulate some elements of this common experience, adding those qualities of sisterliness that Clare stressed in her writings, and then to present some of the ways in which this can be enfolded in a Poor Clare community. I draw on the real life experiences of my own Sisters in our monastery in Greenville, South Carolina. While these experiences are necessarily particular to the community there, they offer concrete examples of how each of us can grow in relationships that embody the truth that we are all "one family in God."

Being a Sister

What makes us "sisters" or "brothers"? Being born of the same parents is the basic reality from which everything else flows. Blood relatives are so bound together that there is no escaping our connectedness. Even if separated at birth and raised in very different environments, a common genetic inheritance can still be used to identify our relationship.

Most sisters and brothers share not only heredity but also environment. Raised in the same family, growing up in the same home and same neighborhood, we are shaped by common experiences. Yet there is also a way in which these common elements are experienced uniquely by each of us. In this sense,

no two sisters or brothers are born into the same family, the same home. The very arrival of a new baby makes everything different!

Clare and her two sisters, Catherine (later known as Agnes) and Beatrice, were born of the same parents and grew up together in the family castle, yet Clare carried all the responsibilities associated with being the first born. Beatrice, as the youngest, had two older sisters to look up to; and Agnes, in between them, would naturally have been a follower of her adored older sister. All three suffered from the absence of a strong father figure; all profited from the strength and religious devotion characteristic of their mother. But each experienced these in way unique to herself.

Family bondedness also provided a natural basis for the first community of Poor Ladies, as Francis called Clare and her companions. Not only did all three Offreduccio sisters join the new community, but cousins also came, followed by neighbors and ultimately even Clare's own mother. Some of the sisters came from the nobility of Assisi, rejecting status and renouncing inheritances to follow the poor Jesus; others entered from the rising merchant class and some from the poorer citizenry. But within the community all became "ladies," sharing in the service of the "great king."

Such equality is a basic characteristic of being sister or brother, since it establishes persons in a mutual relationship. If I am your sister, you are equally my sister and vice versa. We cannot escape this fact, though we may try to do so by laying claim to being the "older," the "bigger," or any other quality that sets us apart. Clare alludes to this basic equality of relationship within community when she urges the sisters to have mutual love one for the other (RCl 10: 7), hoping that the sisterhood will be so strong that there will be no need to assert individualism through rank or office.

Another characteristic of sisterliness is its enduring quality. Even if sisters or brothers refuse to speak to each other or have anything to do with each other, their relationship remains. Attempting to "disown" the other does not change reality, but in fact implies it, since we cannot disown what we have never been able to claim.

On a more hopeful note, being sisters is meant to be a life-giving relationship. What begins as a "given" of birth, can become a life choice. This is strikingly documented in a letter Agnes wrote to Clare in which she lamented about how her "soul and body suffer 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."¹ Similar bonding "for life" is expressed by Beatrice, the youngest of the three sisters, during the process for Clare's canonization. When asked how she knew about Clare's virtues and her miraculous powers, Beatrice responded that she "had been with her in the monastery for twenty-four years or so. In addition she acted and talked with her as with her own sister" (Proc 12: 7).

Out of this formative experience of having sisters, being born of the same parents, growing up together bonded by similar life-giving experiences, Clare went on to establish a new religious Order with sisterhood as one of its distinguishing characteristics. She did this, perhaps instinctively, by describing a community characterized by similarity of origins, shared common life, equality, and mutual relationship for life. The "how" of this is what we wish to examine next.

Sisters at San Damiano

At the heart of their bonding the Sisters enjoyed a common vocation as Christians and as Clares. Having the same origin and belonging to one family in Jesus, they shared common goals and aspirations. Clare never stopped giving thanks for having been called to this way of life: "Among the other gifts that we have received and do daily receive from our benefactor, the Father of mercies and for which we must express the deepest thanks . . . there is our vocation" (TestCl 2). At the end of her life, recognizing that this common inheritance extended beyond the boundaries of the immediate community at San Damiano, she imparted her blessing "to all others who come and remain in [our] company as well as to others now and in the future, who have persevered in every other monastery of the Poor Ladies" (BCI 5). Commonality in origins naturally leads to common life. Unlike other monasteries of her day, Clare saw all the members as Sisters, living together, sharing a common life of work and prayer without distinction of classes or division into "superior" and "inferior."

Because the basis of their being sisters was "observance of the holy gospel" (RCl 2), Clare repeatedly urged them to "be ever zealous to preserve . . . the unity of mutual love, which is the bond of perfection" (RCl 10: 5). Their charity was to be as warm and tender as that of a mother for her child. "If a mother loves and nourishes her child according to the flesh, should not a sister love and nourish her sister according to the Spirit even more lovingly?" (RCl 8:16).

The Rule goes on to spell out details: "Let each one confidently manifest her needs to the other" (RCl 8:15). Even if a Sister has not sought help but another observes her need, the latter may call this to abbess's attention (RCl 7:8). Similarly, if a Sister receives a gift she herself does not need, "let her give it lovingly to a Sister who does need it" (RCl 8:10). It seems no accident that such mutual exchange of need would be foundational for a group whose charism was rooted in gospel poverty.

So the neediest in community were to have first claim on the charity of their Sisters. "All are obliged to serve and provide for their Sisters who are ill

just as they would wish to be served themselves" (RCl 8:14). With similar kindness Clare provides special care for those with special needs: warmer clothes, more comfortable bedding (RCl 8:17), as well as dispensation from the rigors of the fast day menu (RCl 3:10).

But being sisters is not idyllic. The close proximity of living in an enclosed community, like the very inevitability of family conflicts and tensions, can breed misunderstandings and quarrels, crescendoing into enmity. Then what happens? Clare's gospel realism is evidenced when she prescribes in her Rule that any Sister who has offended another should prostrate at her feet and humbly ask pardon. And the other's response should be immediate forgiveness. How ideal! But Clare knew that things would not always work out like this. When relational difficulties are prolonged and unity in the group begins to be affected, it is time for the community to take action. Clare sees this as the responsibility, not just of the abbess, but of all of the Sisters (RCl 9:1-4).

If such community action does not bring about change in behavior, correction needs to be repeated with public punishment added if necessary. Meanwhile Clare warns that "The Abbess and her sisters must beware not to become angry or disturbed on account of anyone's sin, for anger and disturbance prevent charity in oneself and in others" (RCl 9:5). What Clare seems to be ruling out here are not feelings of anger so much as the kinds of interior disturbances that result when wrongs are reviewed over and over again in one's mind. Then lack of peace threatens love and sisterliness in the whole community.

While recognizing that relationships between sisters can be destructive of individuals and of community, Clare devoted most of her attention to the positive ways in which the Sisters supported each other in the full living of their vocation. United by their common call, all shared in the life and work of the community. Individual tasks were assigned during the morning chapter, so all were accountable to all (RCl 7:3). All ate at the same table, sharing the same food and fasting together when the supply of bread was too meager to meet their needs (RCl 4:13). And at the end of the monastic day all, including the abbess, slept in a common dormitory (RCl 4:13).

Important decisions were the responsibility of the whole professed community and not reserved to those in positions of authority. As a consequence, persons wishing to join the community were admitted by consent of the sisters, since all would have to live with the new members (RCl 2:2). When alms were received, the whole community determined their use (RCl 7:4), just as all decided how much debt the community could "afford" (RCl 4:19).

Preserving that holy simplicity, humility, and poverty which were at the heart of Clare's charism was also the responsibility of "all my sisters, both those present and those to come" (TestC 56). Because all had come for a life of

prayer, Clare urged them "to pray to God for one another, for by carrying each other's burden of charity . . . we will more easily fulfill the law of Christ" (LEr 17). Not only were they to pray *for* each other, but the Sisters would also spend many hours each day praying *with* each other. In fact, communal prayer, liturgical prayer, was the only kind prescribed by Clare in the Rule (RCl 3:1).

The abbess was not only elected by all the Sisters but in a move revolutionary for her day Clare even specified that the chapter could depose her if she were no longer competent for their service and common welfare (RCl 4:7). Clare also specified that the abbess should be a member of the community, (RCl 4:4) something we would take for granted today, but not so obvious in a period of history when offices were bestowed as favors even on nonmembers.

In the beginnings of the community, Clare resisted attempts to make her abbess, preferring to remain one of the Sisters; but when Francis commanded her in obedience, she yielded, accepting the title but redefining the reality. We see evidence of this when she describes herself first of all as "sister," to which state were added the special responsibilities of "mother" (BCl 6). The primary role of the abbess was to promote mutual love and peace among all the Sisters (RCl 4:22), presiding over the community more by "virtue and holy behavior than by her office" (RCl 4:10). She is to avoid "exclusive loves, lest by loving some more than others she cause scandal among all" (RCl 4:10). Even though she presides over the weekly chapter, she also confesses her own "common and public offenses" just like any other Sister (RCl 4:16). As one of the community she shares the common life in "dormitory, refectory, infirmary and clothing" (RCl 4:13). She also consults the entire community "regarding whatever concerns the welfare and integrity of the monastery for the Lord frequently reveals what is best to the least among us" (RCl 4:17, 18). In such practical ways Clare, like Francis, establishes familial relationships as bedrock to a gospel way of life.

Being Sisters Today

What Clare and her sisters did in their day continues in Poor Clare monasteries all over the world. How is this experienced in everyday life in these our times? To find out we asked the Sisters of the Poor Clare community of Greenville, South Carolina, to describe ways they have known sisterliness. While their stories are uniquely personal, they seem typical of what continues as a vibrant tradition some seven hundred years after Clare and her first Sisters. Some common themes that emerged: unity in community prayer and work, help in time of need, support in small ways as well as during periods of crisis, directness in communication, and a love that forgives over and over.

Many spoke of experiencing the fundamental oneness that binds the group together as family. One Sister specified a palpable sense of unity after a close election, when a sizable minority were disappointed, yet all showed real support for those newly elected. And those who had not been elected led the way in giving evidence of peace and joy. So even what was potentially divisive underlined a spirit of unity.

Another Sister recounted that some of her deepest experiences of oneness came in community meetings, especially on those occasions when all worked together until a consensus was reached that everyone could live with. In the process, individuals risked disagreeing with each other just because they knew that beneath their very real differences lay basic unity.

The liturgy provided other Sisters with opportunities to experience how the group really was "one in Christ Jesus." Tasteful flower arrangements and well prepared music gave concrete evidence to how much liturgical prayer was a common value. When all were assembled waiting for the Liturgy of the Hours to begin, common expectations and shared desires united them. In a kind of reverse experience, one individual admitted coming into choir and discovering that she was not really at one with her Sisters. Then the gospel mandate of "Go, leave your gift and first be reconciled" (Matt. 5:24) became an immediate imperative. Times of personal prayer also shed light on the specifics of an individual's lack of love and need for repentance.

Working together was another way in which the oneness of sisters was both nourished and expressed. Some Sisters recalled occasions when a sudden rain had flooded the whole basement area and the entire community showed up at three a.m. with buckets and mops. Those too frail to manage the heavy wet mops emptied buckets or used dust pans to scoop up the water.

Sisters also remembered the many times the whole community had rallied around to deal with a large donation of food that had to be taken care of immediately, even though the hour was late and everyone tired. Sometimes it was a donation of overripe tomatoes, bushels and bushels of them, or a chest freezer full of fresh caught fish, heads, scales and all! In these and other instances, the emergency evoked a common response that served to nourish sisterhood.

This same "grace of working" together, as Clare phrased it (RCl 7:1), was also experienced in more routine matters when all helped in cleaning up after a meal and washing the dishes. One visitor commented on the "delicate choreography" that allowed the group to function as one without need to talk about it. And new candidates mentioned how surprised they were to realize that the abbess took her turn carrying out the garbage, just like everyone else.

Many Sisters also spoke of experiencing sisterliness in offers of assistance. Several specified times when others had responded generously to requests for

help, no matter how much sacrifice of free time might be involved. Others remembered how they had received offers of help before they had even asked for it. Another Sister relived an occasion when she had had an accident, making an awful mess that got cleaned up quickly and efficiently without any indication of impatience or complaint.

The current abbess described how touched she was by the generosity of the Sisters when asking them to do some work she knew they would rather not perform. While admitting their reluctance, Sister after Sister accepted the responsibilities, expressing their desire to "pitch in and help."

Crisis times often provided special occasions for Sisters to know the power of having "been given sisters." One recalled how supported she felt when she had serious problems with her vision and the concern of the Sisters was palpable to her. A Sister who had had open heart surgery spoke with heartfelt gratitude of how the community's love had supported her before the surgery and "carried" her through a prolonged recovery. Another remembered that, as a relative newcomer to the community, she had been impressed by the way everyone entered into the pain of a Sister whose mother was ill and the continued caring of the group for another trying to cope with a brother's destructive behavior.

In contrast to these crisis times were the ordinary experiences of sisterhood in little things. One Sister mentioned the tenderness of discovering some little surprise hidden in a basket of provisions; another recalled the lift she experienced when the birthday card received from one of the Sisters included a detailed list of "thank yous."

Teaching each other new skills also re-enforced the mutuality of sisterliness as the roles of teaching and being taught were constantly shifting. No one stood on dignity but each built on others strengths and supplied for others weaknesses. For example, one of the oldest Sisters in the community seemed quite comfortable being introduced to the computer by a recently arrived postulant. The older Sister's turn came when she could teach a new generation of cooks the best way to steam rice so that it wouldn't all stick together!

On a more profound level, one Sister recalled watching a Sister accept the doctor's verdict: "Sister, I am sorry, but there is nothing more I can do for you" by replying: "Then, I will go home and die." And that is what she did, faithfully living in community to the end. Another mentioned how she was called to gratitude for the Word of God just watching a Sister with very limited vision, magnifying glass in hand, struggle to read the next day's gospel.

"Making it nice for the Sisters" was a commonly heard phrase and covered such varied activities as taking time to decorate the choir or the refectory for a feast day or preparing some food that a Sister specially enjoyed for her birthday. One Sister recalled the Sister who did the shopping coming back

home to get her, "because those sandals looked like they would be perfect for you and you need them." Or another driver making a doctor's appointment "enjoyable" by taking the long way home because it was prettier and putting on some good music just because she knew it would be a treat. All these little things speak of a sisterliness that goes beyond duty out of love.

This was also experienced in communication that was direct, all inclusive, loving, and forgiving. Only the trusting relationship of Sister to Sister made this possible. One Sister mentioned how much she appreciated it when someone who was having a hard time with some decision she had made came to her with the problem rather than "complaining" to others. Another spoke of her gratitude when a sister who disagreed with her expressed her disagreement in a loving, nonjudgmental way. They were able to work through their hurt feelings until they reached a peaceful acceptance of the fact that they simply saw the issue differently. What mattered in the long run was not their differing opinions but their loving communication. As one Sister expressed it: "A sister is someone with whom I can be totally myself, relaxed, able to laugh and cry, share deepest secrets."

Such love was so respectful that when differences of opinion occurred those in the majority position did not override the smaller segment of the community who thought differently. Even though the majority opinion eventually prevailed, all felt listened to. In a similar vein others expressed gratitude for a level of trust that permitted them to express difficulty with a sensitive issue, knowing they would get honest and nonjudgmental feedback. Sisters also spoke of being challenged and "corrected" by others. The latter ranged from having someone share a "helpful hint" about a better way of doing something to being told that something one had done, or failed to do, had been hurtful.

All these examples underline that being sisters includes willingness to be with each other when the relationship becomes difficult. While directness may be the first step, beyond that is the willingness to acknowledge being wrong, asking pardon, and then receiving immediate forgiveness; no holding of grudges, or continual reminders of past wrongs, just mutual acceptance of weakness. Then the restored relationship becomes even stronger than the original one. A Sister remembered how grateful she had been just to hear that a fracture between two other Sisters had been mended. Another spoke of being strengthened when a Sister publicly asked pardon for losing her temper in a way that had disturbed others' peace.

In an area of more daily concern, someone mentioned how reassured she was by the patient tolerance of the community when she made mistakes in the liturgy. And a postulant remarked how grateful she felt when the community permitted her to try something new, trusting her to "get it right" or at least to try again.

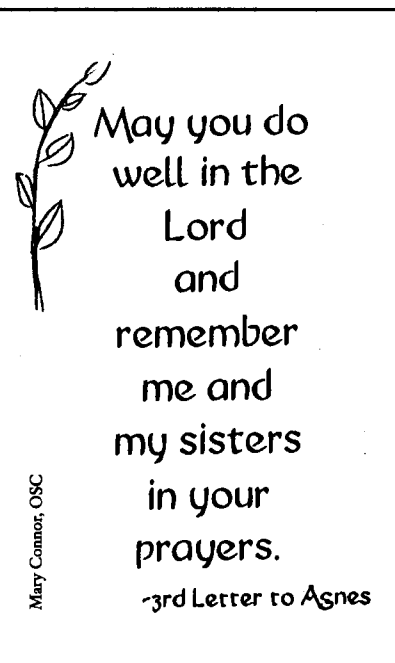
On the lighter side, Sisters also expressed how their bondedness was strengthened when others were able to share with them something they really treasured—from family photos to precious memories—or to ask for a favor, perhaps something as personal as "I need a hug today." As sisters holding all things in common, individuals shared in each other's special interests—a book "I know you will like," a lovely nature picture, or even the news that an unusual looking insect had been sighted out back on the rose bush! And when Sisters succeeded at things ranging from a new skill mastered to a first batch of bread that rose on schedule, from a published article to a new musical composition, all rejoiced. Being able to laugh together, even just to be silly with each other, also reinforced the feeling of being at home with each other.

Behind all these experiences of living together, Sisters experienced the reality that all were "members of the one Body." Each discovered God reflected in others; each saw the incarnate Jesus in her Sisters. Using the phrasing of Francis and Clare, this was the reality of being "sisters and mothers" in a community. Unity in community leads to shared prayer and work, to a love that responds generously in times of crisis but is also expressed in the daily little thing. It is experienced in a climate of care-filled trust that gives rise to communication that is direct, personal, and forgiving.

Such living together in peace and joy forms a community of sisters whose love extends to the whole family of nations. Following the wishes of Clare, the Sisters hope to become models and mirrors not only for their own sisters but for the all the world (TestCl 20-21).

Endnote:

¹⁴"Letter of Agnes of Assisi to Her Sister Clare," *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993), 109. All references to Clare's writings and biographical sources are from this book.



A Transitus Service in Honor of St. Clare of Assisi

as represented by
Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF

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Preliminaries:

The following things are needed for the celebration:

- Ten readers
- The Bible
- Bread
- An image of Clare
- Candles
- Incense
- Plants
- Tapers for participants
- Container with sand



The Transitus can be celebrated in various ways. The preferred way would be to have it take place in two different locations. The first two scenes might take place in one room and the last scene in a chapel or another room. Incense could be burning before the image of St. Clare and a container with a sufficient amount of sand so that the tapers will stand.

Substitutions might be made for the suggested music if other appropriate hymns are known by the participants.

This version of the Transitus of Saint Clare was compiled and arranged with texts from Clare's Writings, the Legend of St. Clare, and Marco Bartoli's Clare of Assisi. I have taken some liberties in the interpretation of the events of the last weeks of Clare's life and their arrangement. May the celebration of the Transitus lead those who celebrate it to deeper faith.

Scene One: The summer of 1253 at the Monastery of San Damiano

Narrator 1: The Lady Clare lay weak and frail upon her straw pallet. For more than twenty years she had borne the cross of illness in her body. In this way she identified with Christ Crucified and all those people of the world who suffer unjustly. Now as she rested, some of her first companions reminisced about the early days in the community.

Narrator 2: The sisters seemed inconsolable at the thought of the imminent death of their mother, Clare. As they sat together it was Clare's own sister, Agnes, who tried to encourage the others to keep faith. Remembering the beginnings of the community she recalled:

Agnes: I remember it as if it were yesterday—how I fled our family's home near the Cathedral of San Rufino so I could join Clare at the Church of Sant' Angelo in Panzo. I can still see us talking to Francis before we accepted the bishop's offer of San Damiano. It was an answer to our prayers.

Pacifica: I can remember that the whole Offreduccio household was in a turmoil. But after your uncles saw your resolve, they returned knowing that they would not be able to persuade you to come back home.

Agnes: Yes, once the Lord enlightened our hearts to do penance through our father Francis, we began this way of life under Clare's direction. That was 1212. So many years ago, and now it seems as if it was just yesterday.

Cecilia: I remember how pleased and grateful our dear mother Clare was when Francis saw that, although we were physically weak and frail, we did not shrink from deprivation, poverty, hard work, trial, or the shame or contempt of the world—rather, we considered them as great delights. He frequently examined us according to the example of the saints and his brothers and greatly rejoiced in the Lord. So he bound himself, both through himself and through his Order, always to have the same loving care and special solicitude for us as for his own brothers.

All sing: "Ubi Caritas."

Benvenuta: I don't think I will ever forget the delight in Clare's eyes when Francis wrote and gave us a form of life, especially recommending that we always persevere in holy poverty. When he was alive he was not content to

encourage us with many words and examples to the love of holy poverty and its observance, but he also gave us many writings so that, after his death, we would in no way turn away from it, as the Son of God never wished to abandon this holy poverty while He lived in the world.

Agnes: Clare, I think, was wise to move quickly to petition the Lord Pope Innocent III for our most revered Privilege of Poverty. She knew that poverty was the way that leads to the land of the living. Time and again we willingly bound ourselves to our Lady, most holy Poverty. That was what Clare wanted.

Pacifica: And Clare felt very strongly about our union with our holy Mother the Roman Catholic Church. She always taught us that our life had no meaning apart from the mission of the Church.

Cecilia: That's why she treasured and understood that prophecy of Francis which he made when he was rebuilding this place. She could repeat the prophecy from memory: "Come and help me in the work of building the monastery of San Damiano, because ladies will again dwell here who will glorify our heavenly Father throughout His holy, universal Church by their celebrated and holy manner of life." Clare, as we know, always wanted us to live up to that prophecy.

Narrator 1: And so it was that the sisters kept the memory of the beginnings of the community and the precious gift of Clare alive in their minds and hearts. Her passing would indeed be difficult for them.

Agnes: If only the Rule Clare wrote could be approved by the pope! We must trust that since Cardinal Raynaldus, our Protector, approved it last year, maybe now, the Holy Father will also give it his blessing.

Pacifica: Yes, that would bring joy to our mother's heart. Brothers Bonaugura and Amatus brought word that tomorrow the Lord Pope and his advisors will be in Perugia. We must wait and pray.

Narrator 2: Divine Providence had already hurried to fulfill its plan concerning Clare. Christ hurried to lift up the poor pilgrim to the palace of the heavenly kingdom. Clare already desired and longed with all her heart to be freed from the body of this death and to see reigning in the heavenly mansions Christ, the Poor One, Whom, as a poor virgin on earth, she followed with all her heart.

Scene Two: The Pope's Visit

Narrator 1: Toward the end of July the Lord Pope, accompanied by his cardinals, came to the monastery. The Pope immediately requested to see Clare. The sisters led him to her pallet in the infirmary. There, the Pope extended his hand so that Clare might kiss it. Clare kissed the Pope's hand and said:

Clare: May I also kiss your foot, my Lord?

Narrator 2: The Pope was taken aback by Clare's request because he felt humbled in her presence, but he wanted to comply with Clare's wish. He put his foot on a wooden stool near her bed. She reverently inclined her face toward it kissing it above and below. Clare then asked:

Clare: My Lord, may I receive forgiveness of all my sins?

Pope: Would that my need of pardon were such as yours!

Narrator 2: Seeing that Clare was so weak the pope blessed her and assured her of his prayers. As he was about to leave, Clare called out to him:

Clare: My Lord, I beg you to look kindly on our form of life and give it your approval. I am eagerly awaiting this favor.

Narrator 1: The Pope came close to her and whispered something to her that the sisters could not hear. Immediately Clare seemed to be at great peace. The Pope then left.

Narrator 1: Clare, drawing together her reception of the Eucharist earlier in the day and the visit of the Pope, raised her eyes to God with tears in them and said to her sisters:

Clare: Praise the Lord, my children, because today Christ has condescended to give me such a blessing that heaven and earth are not enough to compensate for it. Today, I have received the Most High and have been worthy to see His Vicar.

Narrator 2: The sisters stayed around her bed keeping vigil. Among them was Agnes, begging her sister not to depart and leave her. (It must be remembered that Agnes had been away from San Damiano for twenty years governing the monastery at Monticelli.) Agnes was heartsick at the thought of being parted from Clare. Clare, sensing Agnes's pain, looked at her lovingly and said:

Clare: It is pleasing to God that I depart. But stop crying, because you will

come to the Lord a short time after me. And the Lord will console you greatly after I have left you.

*Participants now move in procession to the chapel or another room.
While walking, all join in singing the hymn: "Jerusalem, My Happy Home."*

Scene Three: Clare's Last Days

Narrator 1: In the days immediately before Clare's death, the people of Assisi and the neighboring regions came to the monastery to pray and to be near her. She was already being honored as a saint by the prelates and cardinals who frequently visited her. Brother Raynaldo, who was at that time the quester, came in to see Clare. He encouraged her to be patient in all her suffering. Clare responded in an unrestrained voice.

Clare: 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 too hard.

Narrator 2: On August 9 a messenger from the papal court arrived at the monastery. The portress accepted the rolled parchment from the man with great anticipation. She quickly ran to the infirmary where many of the sisters were gathered to keep vigil with Clare. Then Clare unrolled the parchment and light filled her face. Tears came streaming from her eyes. Besides the official document, the Pope had included a few lines in his own hand. Clare motioned to Agnes to come forward and read the document so that everyone could hear the words of approval. Agnes took the scroll and began to read. She concluded by reading the note in the top margin which was written by the Pope himself.

Agnes: "So be it! For reasons which are obvious to me and to the Protector of the Monastery, let it be so."

Narrator 1: Agnes explained that the pope used the letter "S," the first letter of his baptismal name, Sinibaldo, for his sign of approval. Agnes then returned the parchment to Clare, who held on tightly to this precious document. She kissed it over and over again and rejoiced that her Gospel way of life had been recognized by the Church.

Narrator 2: Death, we know is a passage, and Clare already lived in the world to which she was passing over. As she lay on her pallet she called for the friars to come and read the passion. Since she herself used the Gospel of Matthew most frequently in her writings, Brother Leo chose that account.

Leo: A reading from the Gospel according to St. Matthew (*Matt. 27:45-55*)

Reflection/Homily

Narrator 2: Clare was aware of the depth of God's love which was shown through the Passion of Jesus. She and the sisters had experienced God's generosity on a daily basis through His providential care. One of the incidents that came to mind as the sisters kept vigil was that of the multiplication of bread. In these last days of Clare's life the sisters, desiring to bring her some joy, brought bread to be shared. Clare blessed the bread and it was broken for all to eat and experience God's love.

(Bread is passed among the participants).

Narrator 1: Brother Juniper, the Lord's jester, then got up and uttered words which warmed Clare's heart. She was filled with joy and was greatly comforted by them. The sisters, along with Brothers Leo and Angelo, stood near Clare because they sensed that the Lord was about to call their beloved mother home. Clare looked at all of them lovingly and gave her sisters a blessing.

Clare: I bless you during my life and after my death, as I am able, out of all the blessings with which the Father of mercies has and does bless His sons and daughters in heaven and on earth and a spiritual father and mother have blessed and bless their spiritual sons and daughters.

All: Amen.

Narrator 1: Then Clare, drawing another breath, continued:

Clare: Always be lovers of your souls and those of all your sisters. And may you always be eager to observe what you have promised the Lord. May the Lord always be with you and may you always be with Him.

All: Amen.

Narrator 1: Then Clare, addressing her soul, said:

Clare: Go without anxiety for you have a good escort for your journey. Go, for He Who created you has made you holy. And, always protecting you as a mother her child, He has loved you with a tender love. May you be blessed, O Lord, You Who have created my soul!

Narrator 2: Then her youngest sister, Beatrice, asked:

Beatrice: To whom are you speaking?

Narrator 2: Then Clare turned to her and replied:

Clare: I am speaking to my blessed soul. And do you not see, O child, the King of glory Whom I see?

Narrator 2: Clare then fixed her gaze on the door and seemed to grow more and more joyful. Many of the sisters said they saw a vision of virgins in white garments, one of whom embraced Clare. Then these virgins brought Clare a most beautiful mantle with which they covered her while some of them decorated her bed. Clare, having completed her earthly pilgrimage, breathed her last.

Narrator 1: And so Clare died surrounded by her sisters and the first companions of St. Francis. She had lived in a confined retreat for forty-two years. She had broken open the alabaster-jar of her body by scourgings of discipline so that the house of the Church would be filled with the fragrance of her ointments. It therefore, pleased Pope Alexander IV to canonize her a saint of the Church on July 16, 1255. He declared:

Pope: Clare: her brilliant deeds distinguished her here below.

Clare: while on high the fullness of the divine light shines on her.

Clare: her amazing deeds of wonder make her known to Christian people. . . .

In this Clare, a clear mirror of example has been given to this world; by this Clare, the sweet lily of virginity is offered among the heavenly delights;

through this Clare, obvious remedies are felt here on earth.

She shone forth in life; she is radiant after death.

Enlightening on earth, she dazzles in heaven!

Let Mother Church rejoice because she has

begotten and reared such a daughter. . . .

During the following song, each participant takes a taper, lights it, and places it in the container which stands before the image of Clare:

All Praise to Lady Clare

- 1) All praise for Lady Clare
Bright mirror of the Lord.
The little plant of Francis
Receives her true reward.
She lived as a poor virgin
And now embraces Christ
To reign with him forever
A light for all the Church.

- 2) All praise for Lady Clare
Who counsels us in truth
To walk the path of Jesus
The way of lasting love.
To give up all that binds us
To things that cannot last.
And with swift pace and light step
Tread in Christ's footsteps fast.

- 3) All praise for Lady Clare
Adorned with virtues fair.
Because she prized above all
The love of the Poor Christ.
She gazed upon Him daily
Considered Him in love;
And contemplated deeply
Her dear, Beloved One.

- 4) All praise now to the Father
And His most loving Son.
With God the Holy Spirit
Forever Three in One.
They crowned the Lady Clare
A saint for all the Church.
That we in our own lifetime
May follow in her way.

I bless you
as much
as I can
and more
than
I can.

-Blessing



Mary Connor, OSC

Text: Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSE, b.1948

Tune: ST. THEODULPH, 7 6 761 D; Melchoir Teschner, 1584-1635



Text: Antiphon in MS 338, Assisi, Office of S. Chiara; Antiphon in MS 46, Chiesa Nuova, Assisi.
Tune: Robert M. Huttmacher, OFM
O Let the Faithful People Sing (The Franciscan Institute, 1993) 111.

The Fire of Love in the Writings of Veronica Giuliani

Pacelli Millane, OSC

In the Poor Clare tradition, St. Veronica Giuliani is prominent for writing about her experiences in mystical prayer. Veronica Giuliani is not well-known in the American world, nor was she part of the great age of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century religious renewal. However, as we rediscover the riches of Clare of Assisi, we need to be attentive to the mystical experiences of Veronica and the other women mirrors of Clare's spirituality in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The Italian Bishops and the Center for Studies of St. Veronica Giuliani are exploring the possibility that she will become a Doctor of the Church because of her clear mystical teaching.¹ She writes of her experience of God without the defined structure of theological concepts and definitions, but the text reveals the progression of the action and fire of God in her life. She places great emphasis on the Passion of Christ.

First, we will consider some background for Veronica Giuliani. Then, we will focus more directly on her experience of the "three fires" in one of her writings, "The Purgatory of Love." Her image of fire is extremely strong and is reminiscent of the fire image that is found in the visions of Hildegard of Bingen.²

General Background and Biographical Data

Ursula (Orsola) Giuliani (the baptismal name of Veronica) was born on December 27, 1660, in Mercatello, Italy, the seventh daughter of Francesco and Benedetta Giuliani. Ursula's desire for God began at a very young age. She later records in her "Diary" a conversation with the Madonna and the Infant Jesus, which she had at the age of three (D. I, 2-5)³. Between the ages of three and six, after hearing the lives of the martyrs and Rose of Lima read, Ursula wanted to imitate their heroic deeds (D. I, 5; V. 666).

For this young child, deep personal suffering was not far away as death struck the family. Her mother died when Ursula was around seven years old. Two of her sisters had died earlier. On her deathbed, the mother called her five living daughters to her and commended each of them to one of the five wounds of Jesus. Ursula was given the wound in the side of Jesus.

The devotion to this wound in the side of Jesus was a special influence throughout her life. Often meditating on the passion of the Lord, Ursula experienced a flame of love in her heart at her First Communion and as a young girl (D. I, 15; V, 736).

Ursula desired to live a more austere life and finally obtained the consent of her father to enter the Capuchin Branch of the Poor Clares of Città di Castello in Umbria. When Ursula began her novitiate on October 28, 1677, her name was changed to Sister Veronica. A year later, on November 1, 1678, she made her profession.

After an initial experience of repugnance towards the austerity of her religious life, Veronica was given exceptional moments of feeling God's love through infused contemplation. One morning during the feast of Pentecost, Veronica felt a fire burning within, but did not see it. She understood that the Lord wanted to prepare her for something. She felt herself consumed, but did not understand how. She experienced a great longing for God and could say only: "O Love, O Love, O Love" (D. I, 24-25).

On Good Friday, 1681, the Lord imposed the crown of thorns on her head (D. I, 46-50, 122, 158; V, 752-768). There was within her a desire to suffer and expiate her sins; there was a deep hunger for penitence. Her contemplation of the passion of the Lord was accompanied by an experiential participation in his sufferings.

Seven years later, at age twenty-seven, Veronica was given the task of mistress of novices. She was twice more re-appointed to this task of teaching the novices, even when she was abbess.

In 1694, she received the vision of the interior castle and the gift of the mystical marriage (D. I, 391-394). On Christmas day, two years later, Jesus wounded her heart with an arrow and the wound bled frequently (D. I, 734-35). On April 5, 1697, Veronica received the stigmata of the five wounds in her own flesh (D. I, 97-103, 894-899; V, 796). Her abbess reported this stigmatization to the Holy Office, and Veronica was obliged to submit to many tedious examinations, burdens, and humiliations during the following years. For fifty days she was isolated in the infirmary. She was deprived of active and passive voice in the community for seventeen years and was deposed as Mistress of Novices for a time and isolated from the outside world. She was not allowed any visits or correspondence except with her confessor, the Bishop, and the Sisters of her community and of Mercatello.

Her confessor and spiritual director, Ubaldo Antonio Cappelletti, describes in detail the calvary of Sister Veronica from March 1702 to July 1708 (D. V, 595-659). In February 1703 Veronica relates in her "Diary," in a separate small treatise, her first experiences of the "Purgatory of Love," which began in August 1704 and ended on Pentecost of the following year. This time was a period of inner purification for her as well as intense participation in the passion of Jesus, especially the agony of Christ on the cross.

Veronica was called to pass through another period of intense darkness from 1711-1715. In the midst of this, she wrote:

I am abandoned, in a very dense darkness. It really seems to me that I am buried and shut up without the least help. However, I experience in all of it a great contentment. In the intimacy of my soul I feel contented because it desires nothing but the will of God (D. III, 741).⁴

The next year she wrote:

Yes, now, I am beginning to enjoy and to know the real way of finding God who cannot be found in consolations, but in aridities, abandonments, antagonisms and sufferings. Here one learns the real mode of divine life—all in God, all hidden in God. One lives of God, one is held in God, one rejoices with God (D. III, 939-940).⁵

After these years of darkness, Veronica was gradually freed from the imposition of external sanctions. In 1716 the Holy Office lifted the ban on passive voice, and she was again eligible for election in the community, though still under the surveillance of the Holy Office. Immediately the community chose her as Abbess and she continued to be reelected until her death.

During her time as Abbess, and especially during the last eight years of her life, Veronica desired only to follow the will of God. She said: "It is not to die, but to obey." On March 25, 1727, she wrote the last page of her "Diary." On June 6, she became paralyzed on one side and died on July 9, 1727.

Influences

We are fortunate to know some of the influences in Veronica's life through what books were available to her in the monastery library. The Poor Clare monastery at Città di Castello had a library comprised of an assortment of ascetical and mystical texts. It had three editions of Lansperge's life of Gertrud of Helfta, writings of Catherine of Siena, Alphonso of Madrid, Diego of Estella, and Teresa of Avila. John of the Cross appears to have been read most frequently by the community. Other spiritual writers were well-known to

Veronica—Francis de Sales, Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, and the Capuchins, Benedict of Canfield and Matthew of Parma. She was formed into the Christian mystical and ascetical tradition through the writings of men and women from a period which extended over four or five centuries, and this tradition is reflected in her writings.

Writings

It was the desire of her confessors and superiors that Veronica describe her mystical experiences. Thus, there are about twenty thousand manuscript pages of her religious experiences. Her writings, in the form of a diary, contain diverse biographical and spiritual experiences that go back to the time of her childhood. There are more than five hundred letters addressed to her sisters of Mercatello, to her confessors, and to the two successive bishops who had directed her to write of her personal experiences. Many of these autobiographical documents remained unpublished until the end of the nineteenth century.

Presently, there are the original manuscripts of Veronica's Diary⁶ and three other editions of her written texts. One edition was prepared by P. Pietro Pizzicaria.⁷ Another was edited by Oreste Fiorucci⁸; and a third is a photocopy⁹ for the use of students. Much scholarly work has already been done in Italy, although there is much that still needs to be accomplished. Few texts have been translated into English, although parts of her "Diary" have been translated into French and other languages.

To understand the experiences of Veronica, it helps to have a good understanding of the theology of suffering/expiation. Veronica was a woman who faced both internal and external suffering, some of which was self-imposed.

The Purgatory of Love

The text, "Il purgatorio d'amore"¹⁰ ("Purgatory of Love"), is a small volume of twenty pages written in Italian. It is a brief account of the transformative experience of Veronica. According to Silverio Zedda, SJ, it could be called a compendium and is "judged to be a most illuminating document on her entire spiritual experience."¹¹ It was June 11, 1705, when her confessor ordered her to write of this experience (D. III, 248, 262).

Veronica gives the descriptions of this "fire of divine love" using the predominant metaphors of fire and light. We want to examine the differences between the "three fires" as Veronica describes them. She had first spoken in 1703 of a "purgatory of love." However, her description of this earlier experience is different from her description of the third experience on Pentecost, 1705. The year of 1704 appears to have been a time of preparation. (D. III, 72,

150, 178, 231, 234, 245). She said that sometimes during this year the fire burning in her lasted only an hour, but sometimes it continued for five hours (D. V, 804).

Sorrow for her sin overwhelmed her, and as she grieved deeply, her heart was continuously set on fire. This divine Love burned intensely within her. Although she did not see flames, yet she experienced everything to be burning. She used vivid language to express that the fire consumed every particle of fault. "Everything seems to me to be burning, everything seems to be fire. Yet in such a way that no flames are to be seen; one only feels the burning" (D. V, 804-805). The fire within was very strong. She said that "fire is being added to fire, yet the spirit remains so fixed in the divine will that, to please God, it desires still more burning" (D. V, 805).

Veronica creates two structures in the person to explain the experience. She often refers to two parts of the soul—"humanity," representing the inferior part, and "spirit," "the light and brightness of our mortal being" (D. V, 808).¹² She explains that "humanity" loves its own convenience and is therefore an enemy of the good. "Humanity" complains, grumbles, and does not like to suffer or to sacrifice. "Humanity" is affirmative in that it represents the senses, human prudence, and love. "Humanity" does not like the dark night or to be abandoned in the time of temptation; rather it seeks consolation and sweet repose (D. V, 807-808).

Thus, this first fire of the "purgatory of love" is about that purification which must continue until there is literally nothing left in the person of any kind of fault or transgression. Veronica provides such vivid expressions as: "Meanwhile, 'humanity' realizes that new suffering is near, it [humanity] trembles so strongly that it makes the whole cell around me tremble as it is my only thought" (D. V, 804).

The second image is even stronger. Veronica fixes her soul in God and waits to understand what He asks of her in the divine will. The "spirit" is filled so much that all earthly pains seem as nothing. God literally sets her on fire with divine love. She experiences herself to be burnt, "burnt up, my very bowels and marrowbone eaten by the fire" (D. V, 806). And so "humanity" is prostrated and feels that it will die. The "spirit" image becomes much stronger. God is light and the light becomes stronger. The light is so powerful that the "spirit" is more fully taken up into God. "The soul knows that it is sharing in something of the divine. It feels God is in it, and itself in God." Veronica explains that this light is truly an out-of-body experience. In this light, she discovers her secret failings which she had thought were virtues (D. V, 806). This second fire does not continue as the first but creates a greater effect. The "spirit" is open to the action of grace and to the upward movement towards the transformation into pure love. The "spirit" leads beyond the ordinary senses,

which brings one into the light and action of God and moves in the nakedness of faith. There is purity of intention and search for God's will alone (D. V, 808).

The third "fire" is a sudden flash, and Veronica experiences her heart set aflame by Divine Love. In several instances, she says that there are no words to describe this experience. It is a transformation and union of the "two parts of oneself which act against pure love: that is, the love of oneself and 'humanity' are completely taken away." It is as if there is a separation of soul from the body, and "humanity" would accept any other pain if it were possible to escape this one. Divine love, however, possesses the soul and merges it into a fiery furnace (D. V, 807). This furnace is the school that teaches the Divine Will. It is this third fire that brings her into the desire for God alone, makes her thirst for the health of others' souls, and brings her to rest firmly in God (D. V, 808). The burning of this fire of Divine Love accomplishes the work of transformation.

"The Purgatory of Love" is a short work, recording for us the manifestation of God in the fire. It gives us some understanding of this period of Veronica's transformation and is considered a compendium of all her writings.

Conclusion

The life of Veronica Giuliani is characteristic of the mysticism of the Baroque period. Her spiritual life had distinct stages of loving contemplation and intense experience of the passion of Christ, of the mystery of the cross, of awesome desire for immolation and expiatory suffering.

Her life was filled with much extraordinary phenomena. Veronica, like Francis, bore the marks of the wounds of the Lord in her body for many years. Her approach to the mystery of suffering is evident in her texts. Her affiliation to the wounds of Christ is not merely devotional, as in some of the women of the Middle Ages, but is an actual physical participation in the sufferings of Christ. It is as though she lived two lives—an intense interior life and an exterior life in her community. However, her diary gives witness to her ability to unite the internal and external journey.

This woman is far from the fertile religious soil of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and thus we see a different emphasis in her work from that of the medieval mystics. As studies progress, it will be necessary to look at some of her choices and ask new questions, but this must always be done with an understanding of the culture of her time and the development of psychological studies in our own time.

Eighteen years after her death, her cause for holiness was introduced, and she was canonized on May 26, 1839. Thus Veronica Giuliani stands in the

long mystical tradition of the Poor Clares as a woman who welcomed all her life the inner gifts of God. She spoke of this as "Paradise on earth" (D. I, 184, 210, 572; IV, 594; VI, 177). About six months before her death, she said,

Lord I do not want to offend you any more, and I am sorry to have offended you. Never again will I sin. I will give my life and blood for your glory and Your divine will. . . . I have no other will than Yours. Your divine will is made mine, and I will live and die in it. And, after death, for all eternity, I will do your will, forever, forever" (D. IV, 903).

Endnotes:

¹For a study regarding this possibility see: Atti del Convegno di studi, *S. Veronica Giuliani dottore della Chiesa?* (Città di Castello: Centro Studi S. Veronica Giuliani, 1979).

²For some of the fire and light images used by Hildegard of Bingen, see: Saint Hildegard, *Scivias*, trans. Columba Hart and Jane Bishop (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), for Vision One, 149-53; for Vision Two, 161-64.

³All references of this nature throughout the paper are from the *Diary of Sister Veronica Giuliani* and indicated by D.) See note #6 for complete bibliographic information.

⁴For a good study of the spiritual journey of Veronica see: Léon Veuthey, OFM Conv., "Experience de la grâce dans l'itinéraire spirituel de Ste Véronique," *Collectanea Franciscana*, 31 (1961): 257-282. For the English translation, see: Léon Veuthey, "The Experience of Grace in the Spiritual Journey of St. Veronica," trans. Dominic Mousseau, OFM Cap., and Christopher MacIntyre, OFM Cap., *Round Table*, 30 (1965): 37-47, 87-97, 217-229. Translation of the quoted passage, 225.

⁵Veuthey, 279; Mousseau and MacIntyre, 226.

⁶The greater part of the manuscripts of the *Diary of Sister Veronica Giuliani* are in the Archives of the Monastery of the Capuchin Nuns of Città di Castello under the following subheadings:

"Diario," 36 volumes.

"Codice Fiordelli," ms. entitled "Lumi, grazie, doni" (copies of passages of the *Diary* from 1714-1715 and 1700).

"Codice Tassinari," a bound volume with the letters of Veronica to Carlo Antonio Tassinari. Cartelle, 1-8, Passages of the Diary, Letters, Reports, and Poetry. Archivio Vescovile di Città di Castello (recently transferred to the Archives of the Monastery).

The Monastery of the Poor Clares of Mercatello has a complete copy of the Diary and other important documents. The Archdiocesan Archives of Ravenna has the original manuscript of the "Purgatorio d'Amore."

⁷*Un tesoro nascosto, ossia Diario di S. Veronica Giuliani, religiosa cappuccina in Città di Castello, scritto da lei medesima*, ed. P. Pietro Pizzicaria, 8 Vols. (Prato: Giachetti, Figlio E C.).

Vol. I. 1895.

Vol. II. (1693-1694-1695). Prato, 1897.

Vol. III. (January 1, 1696-April 30, 1697). Prato, 1898.

Vol. IV. (May 1, 1697-December 31, 1699). Prato, 1899.

Vol. V. (January 1, 1700-July 31, 1702). Prato, 1899.

Vol. VI. (August 1, 1702-December 31, 1709). Prato, 1901.

Vol. VII. (July 1, 1711-July 31, 1715). Prato, 1903.

Vol. VII. (August 1, 1715-December 31, 1719). Prato, 1905.

Un tesoro nascosto, ossia Diario di S. Veronica Giuliani religiosa cappuccina in Città di Castello, ed. Umberto Buccichioni e Comitato per il II centenario della morte della Santa (Città di Castello: Orfanelli S. Cuore).

Vol. IX. (January 1, 1720-December 31, 1721). Città di Castello, 1927.

Vol. X. (January 1, 1722-March 25, 1727). Città di Castello, 1928.

⁸*"Un Tesoro Nascosto" ossia Diario di S. Veronica Giuliani: Religiosa Clarissa Cappuccina in Città di Castello scritto da lei medesima*, ed. P. Peitro Pizzicaria; new edition, Oreste Fiorucci (Città di Castello: Monastero delle cappuccine).

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Vol. V. Unedited fragments of the Diary, ed. Lazzaro Iriarte and Antonino de Felice (Città di Castello: Monastero delle cappuccine, 1987).

Vol. VI. *Diario di S. Veronica Giuliani: Le lettere*, ed. Maria Cittadini Fulvi and Lázaro Iriarte (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1989).

Vol. VII. *Diario di S. Veronica Giuliani: Indici analitici Generali*, ed. Lazzaro Iriarte (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1991).

⁹There are 77 volumes of the *fotocopie*, copied under the direction of Mons. Antonio Minciotti in the Centro Studi "S. Veronica" di Città di Castello available to students. They are distributed as follows:

Diary	61 vols.
Relazioni	3 vols.
Letters	6 vols.
Various	5 vols.
Ancient Copies	2 vols.

¹⁰The original manuscript was found in the Archdiocesan Archives of Ravenna. Dr. Antonio Minciotti, Director of the Center for Veronican Studies at Città di Castello, Italy, had this text published and it was subsequently translated into various languages.

¹¹Veronica Giuliani, *The Purgatory of Love* (Città di Castello: Centro studi Veronichiano), 11.

¹²Veronica used a schema similar to that of Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510), who created a dialogue between the "Body, Soul, and Self-love." Veronica uses the dichotomy of the "spirit" and "humanity." For further reference, see: Catherine of Genoa, *Purgation and Purgatory: The Spiritual Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

**O Clare, shining evening star, brightest
because of your brilliant merits,
bind us by a perfect union
in the Love of Christ.**

Antiphon in MS 338, Assisi, Office of S. Chiara;
Antiphon in MS 46, Chiesa Nuova, Assisi.
Robert Huttmacher, OFM, *O Let the Faithful People Sing*
(The Franciscan Institute, 1993) 111.

St. Colette of Corbie: Mysticism as a Life of Prayerful Discernment

Christopher Bisett, OFM Conv.

Poverty, love of the crucified Christ, service to the marginalized, living according to the Gospel, common life and prayer, and fraternal charity are just some of the aspects that are popularly identified with our Franciscan tradition. However, when one examines the history of the First and Second Orders, it is easy to see that two other features quickly emerge: renewal and re-founding.

Renewal and Refounding

Towards the end of Francis's life, efforts were already being made on the part of some of the friars to receive permission from the Holy See to mitigate some of the observances of the Rule, most especially holy poverty. These friars considered the *Regula bullata* to be too demanding. As the early biographies of the Seraphic Father reveal, this "betrayal" of the "Marrow of the Gospel" (i.e., the Rule) was a source of tremendous personal pain for the Saint. In the eyes of the Poverello, these friars were unfaithful to their spouse, Lady Poverty. This singular issue was sufficient to generate the first division of the friar community shortly after the death of Francis.

Yet, this phenomenon was not exclusively the problem of the friars. Clare, too, sought to live in strictest poverty, truly *sine proprio*. However, for the Poor Ladies this was not an easy value to embrace. The difficulty was not to be found primarily in the enclosure, but in the hierarchy of the Church. Clare fought to the last days of her life to receive permission to embrace a life of absolute poverty, a value she deemed "a privilege." However, not long after her death, the Holy See intervened to provide a mitigated observance of the Form of Life (1253). The Church sought to protect the "weaker sex" from the harsh demands of absolute poverty. Yet, there were some within the community of the Poor Ladies who did desire to live a more relaxed life, and to them

the Church readily provided the means. In 1263, Pope Urban IV promulgated a new Rule for the Poor Ladies.

Thus, from the very beginning of our Franciscan family, there has existed a tension between those who observed the *Regula bullata* and the Form of Life. One side sought to meet the demands of ministry and the realities of an ever changing economic milieu. The other side desired to protect the pristine prophetic message and value of the "Marrow of the Gospel" by living in absolute trust of God's providence through total poverty. The past seven and a half centuries of our history have been a record of the pain and disruption that these divisions have caused the First and Second Orders.

Throughout this turbulent past there have occasionally arisen men and women who have ministered as prophetic voices of reform. These people of vision called upon the members of the First and Second Orders to return to the observance of the evangelical form of life which first inspired Francis and Clare and their early companions. Often these voices have been those of mystics—people who lived in a vibrant and intimate relationship with the Divine. Within this mystical-prophetic tradition such individuals as Bernard of Siena, John of Capistrano, and Colette of Corbie stand out as "lights in the darkness." These prophetic persons were believed to live the "spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthly existence must contribute" (RegB 5:2b). They revealed through their lives and words the supreme reward of the Gospel life—intimacy with God. These men and women were truly filled with the breath of the Divine Spirit. The mysticism of their voices of reform and renewal served as a testimony to the efficaciousness of the way of life espoused by our seraphic founders. In a sense, the mystical experience—intimacy with God—is to be found at the root of any true reform; it is at once the beginning and the end of the process of conversion. One of these mystics, Colette of Corbie, played a vital role in the reform of both Orders, and to her we turn our attention.

Colette of Corbie

Colette was born into a world torn asunder by the effects of the Hundred Years' War, the ravages of the Black Death, and the schism of the Church that was generated by the debacle of the Avignon Papacy.¹ She was born January 13, 1381, at Corbie near Amiens. Her parents, almost sexagenarians, named her Nicolette in gratitude to St. Nicholas for her birth.

Robert Boellet, Nicolette's father, was the master carpenter of the Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Pierre at Corbie;² and her mother, Marguérite Moyon, was a woman of deep prayer and devotion to the Passion of Christ.³ According to her biographers, Colette lived a simple and relatively uneventful life as a child. She was known for her generosity, willingness to work with her

hands, piety, and faith. She "loved to pray at the Abbey and manifested great compassion and generosity to the poor."⁴ There were no external signs of extraordinary holiness or the mystical life, with the exception of the following:

Colette, as she was called, was a singularly attractive child, very lovely to behold, but so tiny that her father was quite concerned about it. The child prayed that she might grow taller, and her prayer was answered. As she grew older she lived at home almost as a solitary, busying herself with prayer and manual labor. . . . Even in her retirement, her beauty attracted so much attention that Colette, finding it a hindrance, prayed that her complexion might be changed, and we read that her face became so thin and pale that she was scarcely recognizable. . . .⁵

These are the only two miraculous incidents that are recorded in the various lives of Colette. By and large, her childhood was free of extraordinary events. It is to be assumed, by the silence of these accounts, that she developed and lived in a way that was common for other pious children of the time, free of miraculous occurrences. It is unfortunate that relatively few historical sources about the life of Colette exist in English. I have had to rely on hagiographical sources which can pose historical difficulties. The problem with such sources is inherent in the practice of telling the lives of the saints with a "creative" attempt to emphasize their outstanding holiness. These sources borrow stories from the lives of other popular saints, and thus historical accuracy is compromised. In any case, some of the hagiographers are of the opinion that Colette learned from her mother to cherish the Passion of Christ; and apparently she developed an affection for listening to the Divine Office as a result of hearing the monks of the abbey chant the liturgical hours. Most of the hagiographies claim that she desired to live a gospel way of life from her earliest years.

The quiet ordinariness of Colette's life changed when she became seventeen. In the first of two major transitions, or better yet periods of discernment, she would begin to discover her mystical gifts as she sought to do the will of God in her life.

Transitions

The first period of transition was very frustrating for Colette. Both of her parents died within a short period of time, and she was left to the protection of the Abbot, Dom Raoul de Raye.⁶ The tragic loss of her parents placed Colette in an unexpected position of discernment. The responsibility of choosing a path of life was suddenly and sadly thrust upon her, and it was certainly challenging for this young girl. Her search for the will of God led her through

three different vocational possibilities within a relatively short period of time, none of which seemed to satisfy the desire of her heart. She craved a life of stricter observance, and yet all of her searching could not bring her to a place where her heart's aspirations could be fulfilled. At first she attempted to live as a lay-sister at the Benedictine Abbey near Corbie. After abandoning the Abbey, she entered the Urbanist Poor Clares at Beauvais.⁷ Both these attempts, however, met with frustrating failure. This unfulfilled quest brought her to a second period of discernment—life as a recluse.

While enclosed in her cell attached to the wall of the village church, her discernment began to take a new turn.

During the three years which she spent in this cell, she practiced extraordinary austerities, eating little, sleeping on the ground with a log of wood for a pillow, and spending most of the night in prayer.⁸

There God gave her sublime mystical experiences. She practiced an intense life of prayer and penance, and experienced terrible and direct assaults of the devil, who appeared to her several times in the guise of hideous and frightful beasts. But there she received a revelation of her mission in a series of visions.⁹

As a recluse, Colette was supported by the generosity of the local people, and they often came to seek her spiritual assistance. According to the biographies, the priest of the church began to regulate the flow of visits so that the recluse could resume her search for God in solitude.

All the accounts we have of Colette suggest that, in the manner of the times, dreams and visions played a large part in her spiritual experience, including what might be called her processes of decision-making.¹⁰

Colette herself also had visions, in one of which the Seraphic Father Francis appeared and charged her to restore the first rule of Clare in all its original severity. Not unnaturally, she hesitated, but she received what she recognized as a sign from Heaven when she was struck blind for three days and dumb for three more days. Encouraged by her director, she left her cell in 1406.¹¹

During her years of enclosure, Colette's heart had begun to open more fully to the visitation of God's Spirit, as she entered more deeply into the "holy conversation" which is at the root of the mystical life. The young saint began to grow in familiarity with the movement and the voice of the Divine Spirit, and this inflamed within her a new and unexpected devotion. From her solitude, Colette was to discover, with the help of her spiritual director—the Fran-

ciscan Father Henry of Baume—the aspiration of her heart. Through her mystical encounters in prayer, she was enkindled with a passion for living according to the form of life that God had granted to Francis and Clare. From the enclosure, Colette would come forth with a new strength, a new purpose for her life, and a deeply passionate relationship with God.

A formal dispensation from her vow as a recluse was, however, necessary before she could leave her cell. . . . The Papal Legate, then in Paris . . . granted the dispensation on the 1st of August, 1406. Colette was then twenty-four years old. . . . Through the influence of Blanche de Genève, an audience was obtained, and the Holy Father, surrounded by his Cardinals, received Colette with great benevolence. She presented her formal petitions, asking firstly to be received into the Second Order of St. Francis (the Poor Clares); and secondly, for authority to undertake the reform of the Orders. . . .¹²

The pope signed the request, had her make a profession to him on October 14, 1406, and permitted her to found a monastery and to admit there all the religious who so wished. . . . Colette received the title “mother and abbess of the reform.”¹³

Colette returned to her native Corbie in the hope of establishing there the first reform community, but this was not to be. According to some of the biographers, the people of Corbie resented Colette for abandoning her enclosure. It seems that the people saw her departure as a betrayal of their trust and generosity, for the people had built her cell, provided for her needs, and relied on her spiritual assistance. Whatever the motives, the feelings were clear—the people were hurt and did not want to assist Colette with any of her projects.

For three years Colette and her small community lived in a section of a castle that belonged to one of her benefactors, the Countess of Genève.¹⁴ In 1410, the young reformer established her first foundation in a dying convent of Poor Clare’s at Besançon.¹⁵ This convent would serve as the birthplace of her reform of the Franciscan family.

The Colettine Reforms

A legacy of Colette’s spiritual wisdom can be found in her written reflections on Clare’s Form of Life, found in the Constitutions that she composed for her community. It is important to note that “Colette established the *Form of Life of St. Clare*, not the *Rule of Urban IV*.”¹⁶ In her earlier experience of religious life with the Poor Clares, Colette lived in a community governed by the Urbanist Rule, and she considered that way of life too lax. Clare’s Form of Life was the rule that challenged and inspired her. Colette’s reflections on this

rule, as expressed in her Constitutions, were approved by the Minister General of the Friars Minor, William of Casal, and confirmed by the Council Fathers at Basle in 1434.¹⁷

Colette did not want to innovate but to understand better the form of life given by St. Clare and to protect it. And if she took out anything or modified some elements, it was to preserve its spirit in a changed context.¹⁸

Colette’s Constitutions called the Poor Clares to embrace “the highest poverty” and to live in loving communities where prayer, most especially the Divine Office, was preferred to all else. Throughout the document, Colette expressed a profound tenderness and concern for the well-being of the weak and physically infirm members of the community, especially the dying.¹⁹ Gentleness and sensitivity moderated the discipline of the reform community. It can be said that her Constitutions are very compassionate and humane.²⁰

So inspiring was her call to live the Form of Life and so extensive were the powers granted to her through various papal bulls that the Colettine Reform generated a reform of the friars also.²¹ Though short-lived, the Friars of the Colettine Reform played a significant role in the history of the reform of the First Order community until their suppression by the Pope in 1517.²² The Poor Clares of the Colettine Reform continue in existence to this day.

Mystical Prayer

Despite the work of reform, Colette never allowed anything to interfere with what the Lord had begun in her during her years of seclusion. The pursuit of God’s love was the priority of her life. The movement of God deep within her heart was for Colette the source of strength and wisdom in discerning and fulfilling the will of God. Colette sought the Lord’s guidance in all things. The “cell of her heart” was her privileged and secret place where she would frequently go to rest in the embrace of God. After her departure from the cell at Corbie, Colette preferred the intimate embrace of prayer and solitude to the very end of her life at the age of sixty-seven, March 6, 1447.

“The principal occupation of the little handmaid . . . was to praise, honor and pray to God in whatever place she was.” Like Francis and Clare, she also prayed during the night while the sisters slept. She had no precise method of prayer and . . . her prayer was above all heart-to-heart. She prayed fervently and affectionately, most often vocally. Her spirituality was very strongly centered on Christ, not so much the glorified Christ as the suffering Christ of the passion. . . . Her devotion to the passion was intimately linked with the Eucharist. . . . That life of union with God unfolded in a climate where extraordinary phe-

nomena were a daily occurrence. . . . Miracles were constant and covered every aspect of life.²³

She beheld our Lord in a vision suffering and dying on the cross, and always on Fridays, from six in the morning until six in the evening, she meditated unceasingly on the Passion, neither eating nor drinking nor doing anything else. In Holy Week particularly, but also at other seasons, she would be rapt in ecstasy when assisting at Mass or when praying in her cell, which was sometimes irradiated with a supernatural light, whilst her own countenance shone with celestial brightness. Almost always after holy communion she was rapt in ecstasy which lasted for many hours.²⁴

The chanting of the Divine Office was to her a special source of happiness. . . . Soeur Perrine tells us that she recited the Office with such fervour that it seemed as if she were in the visible Presence of God. . . . She received Holy Communion far more frequently than was customary in the Church at that time; sometimes every day.²⁵

Colette's spirituality reflects several of the basic practices and themes of Franciscan spirituality—devotion to the Passion of Christ and the Eucharist, attraction to solitude, the primacy of prayer, affectivity, Christocentric prayer, fervent and faithful celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass.

Although the years preceding Colette's enclosure as a recluse in 1402 were generally uneventful, there is sufficient evidence to claim that the years which followed the enclosure were filled with miraculous and supernatural occurrences (e.g., visions, resuscitation of the dead, healings, and attacks by demons). However it is important to note that her mysticism was not the product of such experiences. If anything is true, her intimate relationship with God was born out of, and nourished by, the spiritual practices and disciplines that were available to anyone at that time. Holiness, intimacy with the Divine, is the work of the Holy Spirit and indeed a grace. The extraordinary occurrences in the life of Colette were the fruits of her intimacy with God, signs of the power of God's loving embrace in her life. That mystical relationship began by the simple practices of the spiritual life which opened Colette's heart to the invitation of God. Thus, holiness was born from the grace-filled invitation of the Lord to enter into a deeper, more intimate union and was made possible by a grace-given response from the depths of her humanity.

Conclusion

We too can enter into the three-fold process that leads to holiness of life—mysticism, discernment, and reform. It is in the very depths of our being that we encounter the Divine, and in the embrace of the Spirit we discover the

Source of our inspiration. Through the long and difficult process of discernment, we are able to interpret the inspiration that comes from a mystical encounter with the Lord. We are challenged to act on that inspiration, the gift of the Holy Spirit, by reforming our lives and living according to the vision and plan of God. This three-fold process is open to all who are willing to respond to the invitation of God's Spirit, the Spirit that calls each of us to holiness and fullness of life. In the truest sense, holiness and the path of mysticism are really words used to describe our attempt to fulfill the first and greatest commandment left to us by Jesus: "You shall love the Lord your God with *all* your heart and with *all* your soul and with *all* your strength and with *all* your mind" (Luke 10: 27b).

Endnotes:

¹Marie-Elisabeth, OSC, "Colette of Corbie," *Greyfriars Review* 4:1 (1990): 101 and Pacelli Millane, OSC, *The Search for God in the Tradition of St. Clare*, Thesis (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1990), 56-57.

²Millane, 60.

³Conor Maguire, *St. Colette of Corbie* (Ireland: Catholic Truth Society, 1947), 3.

⁴Millane, 60.

⁵Herbert Thurston, SJ, "St. Colette, Virgin," *Butler's Lives of the Saints* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1962), 506-7.

⁶Millane, 60.

⁷Millane, 61.

⁸Maguire, 5.

⁹Marie-Elisabeth, 102.

¹⁰Duncan Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Medieval Franciscan Order: From Saint Francis to the Foundation of the Capuchins* (Rome: Capuchin Historical Institute, 1987), 449.

¹¹Thurston, 507.

¹²Maguire, 7-8.

¹³Marie-Elisabeth, 102-3.

¹⁴Millane, 63-4.

¹⁵Maguire, 9.

¹⁶Millane, 63.

¹⁷Marie-Elisabeth, 103.

¹⁸Marie-Elisabeth, 105.

¹⁹Maguire, 16.

²⁰Marie-Elisabeth, 105-6.

²¹Nimmo, 445-446.

²²Alban Butler, "B. Colette," *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints*, ed. F. C. Husenbeth (New York: D. & J. Sadlier, 1882), 282.

²³Marie-Elisabeth, 106-7.

²⁴Thurston, 508.

²⁵Maguire, 17.

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Margaret Slowick, OSE, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin, Ohio. She serves as a campus minister at Heidelberg College and Tiffin University. A graduate of The Franciscan Institute, she has recently completed researching the origins of Franciscan Third Order Regular congregations in the United States.

Reflection in the Dormitory of San Damiano

William Debiase, OFM

Sickness was an integral part of Clare's life. We know from the witness of the sisters who lived with her that for the last twenty-nine years of her life, which would roughly coincide with the time after the death of Francis, she was very ill. The Versified Legend of the Virgin Clare states:

Her body begins to grow weak, her body is consumed with a long-lasting ailment. As God plans, it is believed that as her vivacity made her shine with the splendor of deeds, she is more distinguished by her merits in suffering.¹

Eventually Clare became completely bedridden. She had to be propped up in bed to do her spinning and to make corporals. Already by 1230, when the Saracens under Frederick II scaled the walls of San Damiano, she was so seriously ill that she had to be helped up from her sickbed.

It was during these years, however, that Clare accomplished her greatest task, the preservation of the "Privilege of Poverty." She would not give an inch in her defense of the dream. It was during this period that she wrote the Rule which definitively set in place her dream. This was all being done while she was very sick.

To look at Clare's illness in the context of who a saint is might suggest some images of the Church. Saints are gifts given by God to the Church. They are models of faith, our intercessors before the throne of God, given to us as mirrors of what we are or should be. Each saint in some way speaks to us about some aspect of our Christian lives.

In looking at Clare in the context of her being a gift of God for the community and acknowledging that every aspect of her life is important, we must

ask: what does her sickness say to the Church? Does God have a message for us hidden within those twenty some odd years of pain?

Illness is a sign of the radical incompleteness of human beings. Our ultimate completeness will come at death when we will share fully in the Resurrection of Christ. The redemption for which all creation yearns will come, but until then we have to experience a good deal of suffering. Vatican II reminds us that the Church itself, as it goes on its pilgrim way, is not complete. We might even describe it as "sick," not in a perverse sense but in the sense of not yet being everything it is called to be. The Church, as the rest of creation, is waiting for the final act of redemption in which everything that is will be made whole.

Clare, lying on her mat, limited in so many ways, was not yet a fully redeemed person. In this she was like the Church. Just as her light shone through the darkness of her illness, so does the light of the Church shine through its incompleteness. As Clare accomplished much in her weakness, she is a model for the Church, whose accomplishments are not the results of its own strengths. The Church, in its very weakness, identifies with the rest of creation.

Clare on her sickbed was open to the graces of God. That is what an experience of sickness can do. It can bring us into contact with "poorness of spirit," which knocks away all the other props and makes us realize that all good things are from God. The "healthy" can be closed to this possibility because they see no need. The Church, therefore, like Clare, lives the paradoxical reality that in acknowledging its sickness and incompleteness it becomes a vessel of the Lord.

Endnote:

¹"The Versified Legend of the Virgin Clare," *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1993), 30: 1175.



May God bless you.
May God look upon you with mercy
and give you peace.

-Blessing of St. Clare

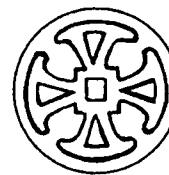
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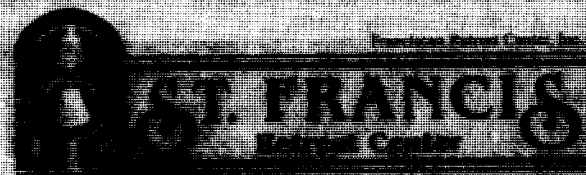
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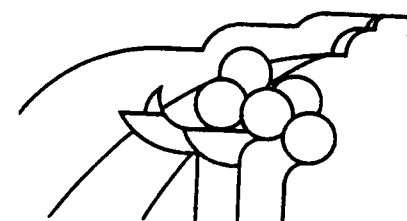
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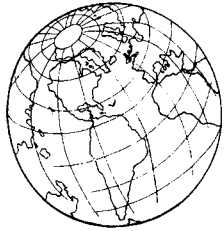
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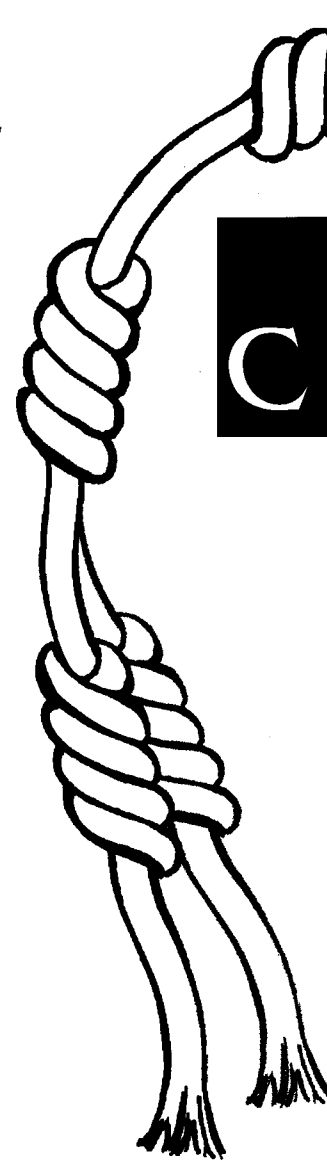
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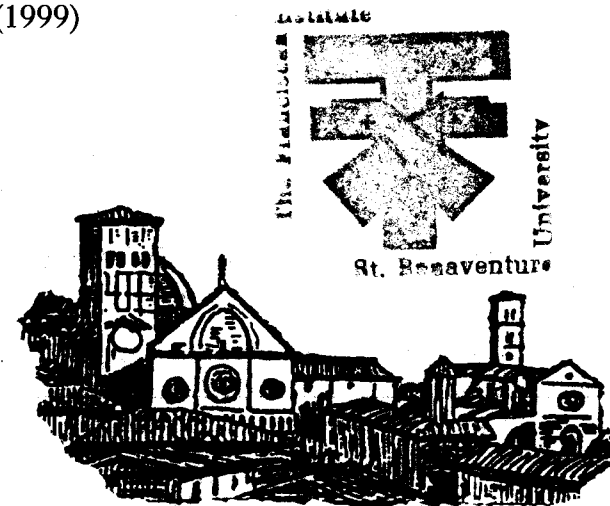
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Editorial



Two years ago Assisi and its environs were struck by a major earthquake. Our hearts ached for the loss of life, property, and security that afflicted the people of the area. We mourned the damage and destruction sustained by so many of the places we regard as holy to our Franciscan tradition. Two years later, as life structures and buildings are slowly being rebuilt in this area, we pay tribute to the nobleness of spirit that impels human beings to pick up the pieces and start over. We rejoice that our own "holy places" are being restored and celebrate the generosity of spirit that makes this possible. As Assisi looks hopefully and bravely to the new millennium, we are conscious that this little city has a long history of just such hopefulness and courage. Long before Francis and Clare, it had endured innumerable crises, surviving wars and natural disasters; and long after them it continues to endure, providing a cherished and inspiring image of hope.

In this issue of *The Cord*, we once more honor Assisi and its citizens, who continue to recover and rebuild. A pastoral letter, written by the Bishop of Assisi, expresses the affection and wisdom of a caring heart and the responsibility of an ecclesial shepherd in the lengthy aftermath of this extensive disaster. Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program, reflects on her personal experience of the earthquake and how it felt to revisit the city a year later.

In addition to these articles, Harold Niedzwiecki, OFM, reflects on the inspiration he finds in the Franciscan way of life, and Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF, suggests how our congregational chapters can be an experience of group spiritual direction. Finally, Timothy Johnson reviews for us a book by Ilia Delio, OSF, on Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ.

**"We Give Reason
for the Hope That Is within Us"**
(1 Pt. 3:15)

Sergio Goretti

Bishop of Assisi – Nocera Umbra – Gualdo Tadino

[This pastoral letter was published in Assisi in 1998 and
is reprinted here with permission.]

Translated by Robert M. Stewart, OFM

Introduction

In these pages I revisit the difficult period of the recent earthquake, as I have seen it and tried to interpret it. In this endeavor, consistent with the mission that has been entrusted to me, I have been inspired and led by the Word of God.

It is not easy to describe all that has happened. It is painful to speak about the outer wounds; and it is difficult to understand the inner ones. It all happened in but a few moments, almost like a nightmare from which one is still not totally free. It is an experience that was recorded and will be recorded in every field, in the social, economic, and religious life. We will never again be as we were. However, even the earthquake, like every other event, must be "read" in the light of faith.

Now the long and delicate period of material and moral reconstruction awaits us. There will still be need to make constant reference to the Gospel, to grow further in solidarity and sharing, so as to transform into good that which now has made us suffer. We have been tried, but we are not and we will not be abandoned.

Assisi, 15 March 1998

Involving Everyone

The warning of what was to happen came in the first days of September. Small and short jolts made us tremble day and night. It was thought that they were the aftershocks of the earthquake that had hit near Massa Martana, but that was not the case!

September 25, I was at Bologna for the National Eucharistic Conference. Commitments that I had accepted in the diocese beckoned me to leave; important events occurring in the city of San Petronio tempted me to stay. Duty prevailed, and towards midnight of that same day I re-entered my residence in Assisi. I had not been in bed long when at 2:30 in the morning a strong jolt suddenly awoke me. I found myself covered with plaster and debris that fell everywhere. I spent the rest of the night among the people of Assisi who, frightened, had poured into the streets.

Providence intended that I experience the same fate and the same suffering as my people. My thoughts ran immediately to the various communities of the diocese. I grew anxious thinking about what might have happened. Unfortunately, there were quakes of even greater intensity the following morning, with further and much more serious damage. Then, we did not know that the tremors would continue for months, to the point that, even as I write, the phenomenon does not seem to have completely ended.

Duty bade me to go about from morning to evening, visiting all the parishes and all parts of the diocese, from the largest to the smallest. It was indeed my desire to meet and to see everyone. Every part of the diocese was damaged. At Bastia Umbra, Cannara, Bettona, Sigillo, Valfabbrica approximately twenty percent of the houses were uninhabitable; the percentage grew slowly as one moved beyond to Santa Maria degli Angeli, to Assisi, to Fossato di Vico, to Gualdo Tadino, and finally to its painful apex at Nocera Umbra and the villages of the Appenines. Particularly hard hit were the churches. In the face of such devastation, a nagging thought accompanied my steps: how is it possible that all this happened so unexpectedly and in but a few moments? I read that same question, distressing and incredible, in the faces of the people I met.

Amazing Signs

Since the first days of the earthquake there have been providential signs and many acts of faith and courage that have inspired confidence and hope.

Given the vastness of the destruction, it seems nearly impossible that there were so few dead and wounded. Certainly, there is an immense sorrow for the deceased. Their sacrifice is in part an offering of us all. In faith, our prayers

have accompanied their return to God. Towards their families, there remains the duty of a strong and continued presence and solidarity. Overall, however, it can be said that death has touched us, has shown us its harsh face, but has not overwhelmed us. Behind this sign is an important lesson of life. Tearing things from us and exposing the fragility of human beings, the earthquake invites us to rediscover higher values. Can happiness, much sought but little present in our current society, be based solely on things? Can human beings, even with all their abilities and potential, do without God? Are we not perhaps similar to a blade of grass that today is here but tomorrow dies?

The behavior of people has been touching. Cases of desperation have been rare. Almost everyone has shown dignity and respect. I will never forget the eucharistic celebration at Nocera Umbra the day after the earthquake. I raised my head and looked into the eyes of the people present. Without a word being spoken, we communicated many things. Eyes, tired from a sleepless night, beamed full of love. There in an unbelievably crowded tent, amidst continuing tremors, crumpled and quake-worn clothes eliminated differences. At the sign of peace, I noticed that the embraces were now different from the usual exchanges between people. At the end, everyone wanted to greet me. Nobody complained. I saw in those people an extraordinary strength. Though I had hoped to encourage them, it was I who was encouraged.

Since the earthquake there has sprung forth a great solidarity. Many met with us: the Honorable Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, President of the Republic; the Honorable Romano Prodi, Prime Minister; and numerous Ministers and under-Secretaries of State. The aid has been immediate. The civil institutions—though in unavoidable confusion those first days and in some zones facing particularly difficult situations for geologic and climatic reasons—were able, in a short time, to prepare camps, feeding centers, gathering places, social and health centers, etc. And people from every part of Italy came to help. The unity of the country was concrete, visible, precious.

The volunteers deserve particular mention. Watching these groups—who for the love of Christ and their neighbor, asking and receiving nothing, left their comfortable homes and came to share the fate of the earthquake victims—the fruits of the Holy Spirit became palpable for me. Only the Spirit, in the silence and depths of one's conscience, can work such miracles of goodness and altruism!

Among the gestures of solidarity received, which are impossible to enumerate, some acquire a special importance. An Austrian child named Luke sent fifteen shillings to me with fifteen kisses for suffering children. A woman with a terminal disease, she herself already quite ill, asked her son to sign a money order in her name and to write to us this note: "May my suffering become relief for another." A very poor woman who had been paralyzed some

forty years sent a long letter telling me that she did not have anything to give but that she offered all her suffering for my people and for me. The Church-communion is a splendid truth that never ceases to astonish! The Jewish community of San Francisco in California, together with the Catholic archbishop, grateful for how much Assisi had done for the Jews in the last war, sent me a warm message of solidarity and a concrete gesture—a gift for the Seraphic Institute of Assisi.

The whole Church has been touched and is with us: the Italian Episcopal Conference, national and diocesan *Caritas*, parish communities, religious institutes, and various individual persons. The images diffused throughout the world by television—images of the collapse of part of the Upper Basilica of St. Francis and of the death of the two Conventual friars and the two experts from the Arts Commission—and above all the love for St. Francis and Assisi have activated a solidarity never before seen in similar situations of suffering, with beneficial effects for all the earthquake zones. Once again St. Francis has blessed his land!

But admittedly, things have not gone without flaw. There have been forms of self-interest and at times a selfish refusal to collaborate. Some have wept only for their own suffering, ignoring that of others. The pairing with Italian ecclesiastical regions, whose coordination had been entrusted to the national *Caritas*, has not been "fairly distributed between all the realities affected by the earthquake," as the Permanent Council of the Italian Episcopal Conference asked (19-22 January 1998). But whatever these deficiencies, however painful, they cannot cause us to forget the immense good which has allowed us to continue our daily lives, especially in such incredible circumstances.

Particularly comforting has been the closeness of the Holy Father. On the day of the first and more devastating tremors of the earthquake, he was to go to Bologna to conclude the National Eucharistic Conference. Even then, from what has been reported to me, he wanted to stop on his return to Rome in the places devastated by the earthquake. He immediately sent us a paternal and affectionate message. He asked that Cardinal Camillo Ruini, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, and Bishop Paul J. Cordes, President of the Papal Council "Cor Unum," visit in his name the dioceses hit by the earthquake. He then came in person, January 3, 1998, visiting the places hardest hit by the earthquake and stopping to pray at the tomb St. Francis. His exhortations (which he offered along with concrete aid) provide inspiration to rebuild not only material structures, but also and above all the spiritual life of believers.

The procession which occurred the evening of October 4, 1997, the feast of St. Francis, between Assisi and St. Mary of the Angels, had a huge and unexpected participation, although it had not been adequately publicized. It

was a moment of great communion and true diocesan unity! Everyone in that moment understood the significance of what they were doing—amidst the trial, it was necessary to look upon Christ Crucified, accompanied by Our Lady, all of us united to offer mutual support and encouragement.

Many have prayed for us in their churches and homes. Others came to pray with us in surprising places. At night, when our cities were quieter than ever and seemed somewhat like ghost towns, it was moving to think about a monastery—or perhaps a small tent—where cloistered nuns adored the Blessed Sacrament.

At the time of King David, the Arc of the Covenant, before being transported to Jerusalem, remained for three months in the houses of Obed-edom. Something analogous occurred in the diocese. The urn of St. Rinaldo, saved from the stones which fell from the roof of the cathedral of Nocera Umbra, was brought into the house of a great war invalid. His home now welcomes a continuous flow of devout people. As God “blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that he had” (1Chron. 13:14), thus the Lord, through the intercession of St. Rinaldo, has continued to bless his city and the diocese.

Some Commitments

A bishop has the responsibility to take upon himself the problems of his people.

Who to help first? Obviously, those harder hit and those more exposed to danger. The destruction by the earthquake was not the same everywhere. The hardest hit zone was Nocera Umbra and all the villages along the Appennine ridge. There the damage was more devastating. Moreover, in these mountain places the people are more exposed to the rigors of winter. I could not ignore this situation; neither could I accept that greater attention was reserved for places of greater social and economic importance. I have spoken insistently about this, at times resorting to some very strong language. It was important for me to call attention to the situations of greater suffering. But clearly there was not some political calculation, as some have tried to insinuate.

The serious damage that the earthquake caused to the artistic patrimony of Assisi was felt throughout the world. The television carried these images to every part of the earth, creating concern and fear. We are dealing, in fact, with well-known masterpieces and much-loved places—for their spirituality and world-wide significance. Art, the highest expression of the genius of a people, is a patrimony that belongs to the whole human family. This wealth, unique and unrepeatable, must be conserved and handed on. I was glad for the diffuse discussion of the damage to this treasure and for the fact that famous experts rushed to Assisi’s “bedside.” However, there was clearly an imbalance. While

everyone spoke about the art (not all at the same level of significance) to the point that some of those images became almost a symbol of the earthquake itself, they failed to speak adequately about the people and their suffering. The human person fully alive is the true “glory of God” (St. Irenaeus) and nothing can be placed before human dignity. People confirmed this imbalance for me when they asked: Why does everyone go to Assisi and other important places while nobody comes to help us?

In order to express my faith and commitment, I sometimes resorted to an image—it does not suffice to build a beautiful house if no one can live in it; and it is not a worthy thing if there are people who do not have a house in which to live. In other words, attention to the people and attention to the art—which are not two irreconcilable and opposing aspects but two dimensions of one and the same human reality—must be carried forward contemporaneously and harmoniously.

When the earthquake began, the first signs of the winter were upon us. Not even one day could be lost in preparing areas for temporary housing and community centers. But what type of areas to choose? There were conflicts between those who wanted large areas, advancing reasons of public order, and those who instead preferred small areas to allow formation of homogeneous groups respecting ties of family, friendship, and work activities. Further, particular attention had to be given to the agricultural families who, after having lost their homes, could not be forced to abandon as well their activities tied to the crops and animals.

The bishops of Umbria were united in proposing directives, as evidenced by the official notices they published after their meetings on October 3 and November 5, 1997. Greater attention would have avoided the positioning of superfluous housing modules in some areas, and instead supplied them more quickly to the Appennine populations who for months were forced to remain in tents and trailers.

The Mystery of Pain

A catastrophe such as the earthquake shakes us deeply and places before us difficult questions. There are those who speculate even on suffering. Since the first days of the earthquake, members of some sects and some presumed clairvoyants traveled the streets of the diocese talking about the punishment of God and announcing even more frightful cataclysms. This disconcerting campaign reached its peak on October 17, 1997, which fell on a Friday. But that day nothing happened! These were pseudo-religious, pathological, and irrational demonstrations, unworthy of people and far from the true faith.

More commonly, people are confused when faced with such suffering. If

God exists and is Good, how can he remain impassive before the suffering of his creatures? Epicurus had posed this question quite bluntly: "Either the divinity does not want to eliminate evil or it cannot eliminate evil; either it can but does not want, or it wants but cannot. If it can and does not want, it is hostile toward human beings—an attribute which no one accepts. If it does not want and cannot, it is hostile and weak and, therefore, not a divinity. If it wants and can—and this alone is worthy of divinity—where does evil come from and why is evil not eliminated by God?"

The problem is posed profoundly by Job. He, with great pain in his heart, says to God: "Why do you hide your face and count me as your enemy? Will you frighten a windblown leaf and pursue dry chaff? (Job 13:24-25). . . . I was at ease, and he broke me in two; he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces; he set me up as his target" (Job 16: 12). However, even in desperation, human beings cannot doubt God, and Job concluded at the end: "Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?" Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. . . . I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42: 3, 5-6).

The designs of God are mysterious, but one thing is certain: God loves us and takes care of us; God does not want our death, but our salvation. To respond to these questions, and above all to make sense of one's own life, the believer looks to Christ and to the Gospel.

The Son of God, from omnipotence became like us in all things but sin, from omniscience grew as every creature, from Lord of the earth became servant obedient unto death on the cross. He was able to command the winds and the sea, to heal every sort of illness, to drive out demons, to raise the dead. With miracles he rewarded the faith of the humble petitioners and confirmed his divine origin saying: "so that they may believe that you sent me" (John 11: 42).

Christ came into this world not to change its created limitedness, but to share the human condition. He went about doing good—and he continues to do so even today—not to eliminate physical evil and material difficulties, but to encourage and strengthen the faith of his disciples.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus took with him the apostles Peter, James, and John and brought them to a high mountain where he was transfigured before them. They saw the glory of the Lord and heard the voice of the Father who said: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Luke 9: 35).

Before so glorious a vision, Peter had proposed simply: "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Luke 9: 33). Jesus immediately called them to the truth. The goal, which those apostles had seen and which stands before each one of us, is

a goal that is reached by facing life every day, even the suffering and the cross: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9: 23). In faith, we cannot ask that things be made easy or that we avoid the cost. Rather, we seek strength to listen to the beloved Son and to do his will.

Once they introduced to Jesus a man born blind and they asked him: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:1). Another time, it was Jesus who anticipated their question, speaking about the Galileans murdered while they offered a sacrifice and about skilled workers repairing the tower of Siloam: "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem?" (Luke 13: 2-4). The answer of Jesus was analogous in both the cases. For the man born blind he said: "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him" (John 9:3). For the other two cases, he said: "Unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did" (Luke 13: 5). Jesus wanted to say that the evil which weighs heavy upon us is not the vendetta or punishment of God for our sins; it is the consequence of the limitedness of all created things.

God is full of goodness and mercy, as he has revealed himself in Jesus of Nazareth. He desires not punishment but conversion of the sinner, whom he awaits with the patience and love of a father. Disease, suffering, disasters—true thorns in the side of every creature living in the light of faith—make us more conscious of the fragility of earthly things and warn us not to place our ultimate faith in them. The most beautiful fruit of faith is this serene and confident realism.

Jesus became a human being to share fully in the human condition with its problems and evils. Indeed, he chose most difficult living conditions and a most cruel and ignoble death. He was sacrificed for us on the cross. His death-resurrection is our life. Nothing is more precious! He himself said: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). We are thus called to follow Christ even along the difficult way. Jesus himself in Gethsemane told his disciples: "Remain here, and stay awake with me" (Mt. 26: 38). St. Paul boasted of completing in his flesh what was lacking in the passion of Christ. The saints, in all times and situations, have seen in suffering the highest form of being like Christ, being more conformed to him.

Suffering, therefore, if accepted in union with Christ, is a privileged instrument of sanctification and becomes a precious form of sharing in the mission of the Church. Every drop of pain is gift, and it cannot be lost.

In the face of human suffering, Jesus was not indifferent but participated intensely and continuously. He journeyed throughout Palestine doing good, had compassion on the hungry crowds, wept at the news of the death of his friend Lazarus, sympathized deeply with the widow of Naim at the death of her only son and with Jairus who had lost his twelve year-old daughter. Above all, Jesus showed us the way to relieve suffering—to serve the needy, to love our neighbor. In the face of suffering, we cannot just sit in silence like the embarrassed friends of Job who, though they had come to be with him, did not have the courage to say a word to him “for they saw that his suffering was very great” (Job 2:13). It is necessary to do as the good Samaritan—not to pass by but to stop, to bend, to bandage the wounds of our neighbor, to bear his burden, and to lead him to safety; and then to continue on our own journey without leaving even our name:

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me (Mt. 25: 35-36).

Even the earthquake, with its burden of destruction and suffering, must be “read” and faced, allowing ourselves to be guided by these gospel instructions.

Exodus—Exile—Return

The will of God is manifested through the events of history, the so-called “signs of the times.” Looking back upon these difficult months and looking ahead to further struggles, we need remember what the Hebrew people—chosen by God from among all the nations of the earth and called to a unique mission—experienced in the time of the Exodus, the Exile, and the Return to Jerusalem.

The Hebrews, who had been slaves in Egypt, were sustained by God who had heard their cries and guided by Moses. After having crossed the Red Sea, they found themselves involved in the insidious and harsh life of the desert. The experience was long and difficult, at certain times even dramatic.

Their initial enthusiasm, their song of praise to God who had freed them, very soon gave way to murmuring, regret, and even rebellion: “What shall we drink?” (Ex. 15: 24). . . . “If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (Ex. 16: 3). The Lord himself said to Moses: “Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely;

they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” (Ex. 32: 7-8).

Even harder was the period of the Exile. The Holy City had been plundered and the people deported to Babylon. The situation was disastrous and nearly hopeless. All seemed lost. In the desert there had been deprivation and suffering, but the Hebrews were together. Now they had nothing: no king, no state, no religious references.

The weak in faith wavered and immediately began “to do evil in the sight of the Lord” (2 Kgs. 17:17). The opportunists were ready to join the bandwagon of the victors. Many wondered: where is that God who so often intervened, who had made an alliance with Abraham and Jacob? A few bravely remained faithful: “For you are the Lord our God, and it is you, O Lord, whom we will praise. For you have put the fear of you in our hearts so that we would call upon your name; and we will praise you in our exile” (Bar. 3: 6-7).

In the earthquake zones during these past months, in different times and various ways, there have been analogous experiences. We have been forced to flee with the terror of the earthquake pursuing us, as the Hebrews in flight feared to catch sight of the Pharaoh’s powerful army in pursuit. We too have had to leave behind important things. We are now forced to live as guests of others, or in narrow living modules, dreaming of being able to re-enter our cities and return to our homes.

God continued to love the chosen people even during the Exodus and the Exile. These difficult times were in a way a time of plowing and sowing. Making use of their suffering and vulnerability, God transformed a wandering and fragmented people into a community with strong affective, social, and religious ties. During the Exile, the people who persevered, inspired by the word and example of the great prophets, strengthened and purified their faith until it became as solid as rock. Jeremiah taught: “Turn now, everyone of you, from your evil way and wicked doings, and you will remain upon the land that the Lord has given to you and your ancestors from of old and forever” (Jer. 25: 5). Isaiah added “do not fear for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God” (Is. 41: 10).

For us too, this is a time of trial and purification, of plowing and sowing. Our houses need repair and reinforcement against any future earthquake. So too, our spirits need restoration and a profound revision. I sincerely hope that reconstruction will begin quickly and that wisdom will guide public authorities to just and far-sighted provisions. Families deserve to leave the trailers as soon as possible and to have fully operating social and religious services. Inflexible bureaucratic procedures and the delay in converting the decree on

reconstruction into law trouble us all.

However, after this season of plowing and sowing, the harvest will come for us as well. In the day of "return," we too will sing with joy Psalm 126: "When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.' Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves" (Ps. 126: 1-2, 6).

The words of the prophet Isaiah, spoken to Jerusalem, comfort us: "You shall no more be termed 'Forsaken,' and your land shall no more be termed 'Desolate'; but you shall be called 'My Delight is in Her,' and your land 'Married'; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married" (Is. 62: 4).

Some Pastoral Guidelines

The pastoral life must also adjust itself to a profoundly altered situation. We no longer have those structures that allowed us to know where and how to organize various pastoral programs throughout the year. The physical and psychological wear and tear—a fatigue experienced more acutely as time goes on—could cause us to become withdrawn and discouraged. The period of reconstruction will be critical. In the days of terror we all felt the need to join together. Now, in the time of reconstruction, everyone will be tempted to seize whatever is available and that could create division, rejection, and unforeseen and unintended injustices. We were already inadequate to the many needs of ordinary pastoral care. The earthquake has now increased these needs and made them more urgent.

Servants of the Gospel are called to make the most of difficult situations and to find the positive aspects within them. In times of crisis, material things lose their importance and, as a result, we see and appreciate what is essential. The earthquake has taught us that we can live with much less than we had before. In ministry, much time and energy are often consumed in insignificant activities. Crises break through our superficial existence and force us to reflect deeply. Common suffering helps us to rediscover the importance of family, simplicity, solidarity, and sharing. Preparation for the great Jubilee Year 2000, which risked being focused too much on external aspects, now must focus on what is essential—the rediscovery of Christ and his Church.

During his visit on January 3, the Pope invited us to look to St. Francis and St. Clare: "Francis and Clare were not without moments of suffering and solitude. We need but remember the many illnesses, hardships, and poverty that found their apex in the mystical embrace of the Crucified, which occurred on Mount La Verna or in constant adoration of the Eucharist. May the Fran-

ciscan message—the value that poverty and suffering assume in light of the Gospel—help you to recognize the gentle love of the Father even, or especially, in the painful events of these past months."

Based upon various discussions, I propose some suggestions for all the faithful, and in particular for pastoral ministers—priests, deacons, religious, and lay.

a) The Ministry of the Street. The gospel tells us that the Lord proclaimed the Good News "on the way" and "passing from village to village." Moreover, he had neither a house in which to take shelter nor a stone on which to lay his head. He accompanied the two disciples of Emmaus whom he encouraged: "Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them . . . the scriptures" (Luke 24: 27).

So too Francis, after having spent days in prayer and meditation, came down into the villages and cities to announce the wonders of the Lord. The street is open to everyone; it represents the journey of each person, a place of encounter and of dialogue. Modern life, comfortable and organized, allows us to overlook this basic means of communication or human interaction. We are all basically pilgrims; too often lonely and solitary pilgrims. The earthquake took from us our churches and pastoral structures. Many people live in trailers. We are called to encourage the faithful, to explain the Scriptures to them, to be with them, and to visit them where we find them. If before, in some way, we could expect that they would come to us, now it is we who must go to them.

b) The Ministry of Unity. This need has been perceived for a long time. Some years ago, with a pastoral letter, I subdivided the diocese into "pastoral units." Several reasons caused me to make that choice: the changed social conditions, the insufficient number of priests, the greater means of communication between places, the necessity that the larger and more organized parish communities help the smaller ones; the desire to make better use of the talents and abilities of the lay workers, etc.

Today, we must take still another step forward. Composed for the most part of small scattered centers, the diocese must move towards unified pastoral efforts or collaborative ministry. The clergy, in collaboration with permanent deacons, religious, and laity, will have to minister to an entire area—which can help us overcome the narrow-minded parochialisms which even the earthquake could not eliminate. The Church is rich with potential. As already imaged by St. Paul, the Church is a body with many members, and the Holy Spirit continues always to generate new and providential gifts (cf. 1Cor. 12: 4-27). We run the risk of suppressing those gifts. Sometimes the Church, unlike a tightly-knit body where each member contributes to the common good, becomes compartmentalized. For historical and juridical reasons, this problem is particularly strong in our diocese. There are still those who tend to close them-

selves off in their own little world. The earthquake has eliminated barriers; has struck everyone equally. Can we ignore this lesson?

It is my sincere desire that what the Church has not been able to legislate might now result from our common mission and service to Christ. In terms of our own differing gifts and vocations, each one of us must now ask seriously: In what way can I and ought I contribute to the good of the diocese of which I am part, in faithful and generous communion of affection and action with the shepherd who has the responsibility of guiding it? It would be a shame if the rich diversity of vocations within our diocese, precisely for lack of unity, became a kind of weakness! The field before us—plowed by a natural phenomenon of incredible power which destroyed established balances—awaits generous and passionate arms. Jesus the Master calls to each one of us: "You also go into the vineyard" (Mt. 20: 4).

c) The Ministry of Solidarity. As I have already said, various persons, agencies, and associations have shown us solidarity. We will never be able to express sufficiently the gratitude we owe them. The diocese of Gubbio has been very involved, and the diocese of Perugia has set up a collaborative "coupling" which is still operative. The diocese of Friuli and the ecclesiastical region of Liguria are also setting up collaborative pairing in two other zones of the diocese. However, these partnerships or pairings of parishes will eventually end, and we will then have to depend on our own resources. For this reason I have promoted pairings within the diocese between parishes less damaged by the earthquake and those hardest hit.

The diocesan family is one and we must walk together, not with some rushing ahead and others holding back. I am indeed happy with the generous response of the clergy, religious, and laity. I am counting heavily on these inner pairings to strengthen the unity of the diocese; to give new vigor to our charitable, catechetical, and liturgical life; to inspire confidence in those who feel lost; and to energize renewed preparation for the great Jubilee. Fraternity is the most precious gift that exists among believers. No one should be so obstinate as to refuse aid, and every one of us must rejoice in being able to give. As St. Francis reminds us, it is in "giving that one receives."

d) The Ministry of Faith Development. The earthquake has in ways been a confirmation of the spirit. Normally it is very difficult to penetrate the mystery of a person. But this situation has shown how the most fragile have wavered and the more solid in faith have remained strong in their belief. Today more than ever, our faith must have a solid foundation and not be based solely on external forms and traditions. In several parishes renewal groups are already functioning (small groups of adults coming together in someone's home to learn more about their faith). In other parishes the process is about to begin. The call to evangelize demands that we find new ways to construct Chris-

tian communities; the new evangelization seeks to nurture a strong faith and gospel spirit within all believers.

The Lord has called us to be salt of the earth and light for the world. He did not tell us to be plentiful, but to be leaven; and we become this leaven by developing as mature Christians, by becoming faith-filled believers who are able to share with others the reason for the hope that is within us (cf. 1Pt. 3:15). The pairing of parishes within the diocese should free up some people who can work locally with other committed adults to form and sustain these small faith-development groups.

We have a model to whom we should look for guidance: Mary, the creature chosen by God the Father to be the mother of his Son, the spouse of the Holy Spirit, the humble servant always ready to do the will of God. Mary is our comfort, support, and shelter. She first served God in silence and simplicity of life; she then stepped forward with courage when her Son was abandoned and nailed to the cross. Faith and courage are the qualities that we must seek, contemplating and invoking Mary, disposed to being like her, humble servants of the Gospel and of our brothers and sisters.

Conclusion

At the end of these pages, in which I have tried to be guided by hope, let me express myself in the poetry of an elementary school student, written for a meeting of the children of Assisi and Nocera Umbra:

Assisi, holy land,
you are like a cherry tree,
come autumn you die,
but in summer you will again blossom
with all your fruits.

(Marco Brizi)

May the Spirit of the Lord—in this year of preparation for the Jubilee Year 2000, when we are called to experience the Spirit as particularly alive and active in the Church—be for all the Consoler, source of peace and strength, of faith and hope. For each of us and for all of us together as Church, may the Word of the Lord resonate particularly and profoundly:

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;

to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.
(Is. 61: 1-2, 9)

Contributors

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The Cord, 49.5 (1999)

Assisi Rises with Hope and Promise

*Dedicated to all who made the
1997 Fall Franciscan Pilgrimage Program*

Joanne Schatzlein, OSF

Introduction

Each year I have the privilege of leading a pilgrimage group through the cities of Rome, Rieti, and Assisi. As a staff member of Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs,¹ I have always looked forward to mid-September when Franciscan women and men from all over the world gather in Rome to begin their journey. September 1998 was more poignant than most. According to the itinerary, the pilgrimage group would arrive in Assisi on September 26, the birthday of St. Francis of Assisi, a date forever etched in my mind. For on this day just one year previously, Assisi had been wracked with several major earthquakes along with constant tremors. André Cirino, OFM, Roch Niemier, OFM, Joseph Wood, OFM Conv., and I lived through that day, leading a group of over forty pilgrims through a drama staged by "terremoto," (earthquake), which left a wake of destruction and fear in the citizens, their homes, and the holy places of Assisi. Returning to Assisi on this, the first anniversary of the earthquake, filled me with memories of those days of September 1997.

September 26, 1997

Assisi's dawn was breathtaking on our first day in Assisi. As we prayed our morning prayer from a rooftop garden, we were grateful for the beautiful weather that had blessed our pilgrimage. We had finally "come home," having traveled by way of Rome and the hermitages in the Rieti valley. The staff en-

couraged the pilgrims to take their time in seeing the many holy places in Assisi. But the excitement and anticipation were too much for some, and they scurried about those first days, anxious to see the tombs of Francis and Clare and the frescoes they had heard so much about.

Our program in Assisi began at Chiesa Nuova where we told the story of Francis's family life. We introduced them to the neighborhood, visited Bernard of Quintavalle's house, and visualized what the Piazza Commune would look like in Francis's time. With this as our starting point, we then focused on Francis's conversion experiences, ritualizing various scenes as we moved from place to place in the ensuing days.

The spirit of our group was high. Having finally recovered from jetlag and nourished with delicious Italian cuisine, we were ready to continue into the heart of the program. But unforeseen events fashioned a pilgrimage that will likely never be repeated again in our lifetime.

At 2:32 a.m. on the morning of September 26 I was awakened from a sound sleep to the rhythmic roll of my bed from side to side. I thought the movement strange and was confused. I had been dreaming of traveling downhill in a car which suddenly veered off the road and crashed down an embankment. In retrospect, the shaking had disrupted the dream as well as my sleep.

I could not give this event a name as yet. But I heard André and Roch come out of their rooms. Together we realized that we had just survived "terremoto," an earthquake. André quickly checked on our pilgrims. They were for the most part calm, though some who slept in the upper level had some dirt and plaster fall over their beds. The staff of Casa Papa Giovanni who sleep in the house were very agitated and frightened. Our pilgrims were affected by their fear, but André calmed them all, checked the gas outlets in the kitchen, and we all went back to bed!

The sun rose into a clear blue sky and the crisp autumn day began in a very normal way. Shops all opened, the children went to school, and the talk among the people was about the earthquake. Television reports were coming in about serious damage in the city of Foligno. An older couple had been killed near Colfiorito, a small village located southeast of Assisi near the epicenter of the earthquake. There was little visible damage in Assisi at this point. However, at 8:00 a.m. we received word from Don Guiseppe, the pastor at Santa Maria Maggiore, that most of the churches in Assisi were closed until damage could be assessed. Many places had significant interior plaster damage and, until structures were examined, no one could enter them.

I began to search for an alternate place to celebrate our morning Eucharist. We had decided to continue our program, being assured that our pensione was safe. The only church remaining open was Santo Stefano's, a small church near Casa Papa Giovanni that serves the German community. I spoke with

Rosa, a good friend who is in charge of Mass reservations there, and she told me there was time available at 11:00 a.m. She added that Santo Stefano was probably the safest church to be in due to its arched structure nestled into the hillside.

Our group had an outdoor historical visit at Santa Maria Maggiore, the place where Francis stripped before the bishop. Before leaving this site, Don Giuseppe took André and me inside the church. It was our first visual experience of the damage caused by that early morning earthquake. Chunks of plaster, cracks and plaster dust were all over. Don Giuseppe was especially distressed since the church had just been renovated. He hurried us through, aware that danger existed until reinforcements could be placed along the walls.

During the entire morning, Joseph Wood had been hearing about damage sustained in the Upper Basilica of St. Francis. Reports described serious cracks in the walls, affecting the precious frescoes. A team of people, including friars, ministers of art and journalists, were in the Upper Basilica assessing and documenting the damage. Joseph had lived and ministered there and knew its art and spiritual history in depth. He was deeply concerned.

Our group arrived at Santo Stefano at 11:15 a.m. for Mass. I was impressed with the strength of character, the trust, and the willingness of the pilgrimage group to continue the program. I am sure some were not eager to be in this enclosed space. They found places to sit close to exits. At 11:36 a.m. a good size tremor rumbled through the valley, shaking us gently in the middle of Roch's homily. It happened so quickly that before we could decide to move it was over. Assuming we had experienced the expected aftershock, and knowing we were supposedly in a safe church, most of the group wanted to finish Mass. At 11:42 a.m., during the offertory, a second major earthquake even stronger than the early morning one shook the Umbrian Valley. The entire church of Santo Stefano rocked from side to side, its floor moving up and down. This time mortar fell from between the stones, dusting us all. Several of our pilgrims fled out the front door. Two were grazed by a heavy cement crucifix which toppled down from the roof of the church. Without further question we all vacated quickly, basically unharmed but profoundly shaken. In the garden of Santo Stefano we began to treat the minor injuries.

Two nurses in the group were ministering to a German woman who had been injured by the falling crucifix. We sent her down to the hospital as she had a serious head wound. By the grace of God the external injuries in our group were minimal. The inner trauma was evident, however, in the silence, the tight, drawn faces, and the questions of what to do next.

Word was coming to us that this earthquake had caused parts of the vault of the Upper Basilica to fall and that as many as four people had been killed. We were only about four blocks from this disaster. Our fears were fed by the

constant ambulance and fire sirens, the rush of rescue workers, and the constant hovering of helicopters over the city. Our fears were sustained by quiet but very evident tremors which continued throughout the day, reminding us that our Mother Earth had sustained a major jolt and was quivering in response.

The staff met immediately to determine what to do. Roch had been assured that our pensione remained safe. Some minor clean-up was needed and cracks were visible in many places, but subsequent inspections confirmed the safety of the house. Given the immense damage throughout the valley and the state of emergency, we realized it would be difficult to find buses and lodging elsewhere for over forty people that day. We agreed to remain at Casa Papa Giovanni and to make the best of a terrifying situation.

Our pilgrims were incredibly supportive and trusting. In the ensuing days our pilgrimage offered experiences that would be unique to this group. We attended Masses in the olive grove outside San Damiano, in the wooded areas in front of the Portiuncula, and in the garden of Casa Papa Giovanni. We journeyed with the people of Assisi and learned from them. They shared their belief that because the earthquake happened on Francis's birthday, he was speaking to them and telling them to change their ways. Some reflected that Assisi had forgotten that it was a spiritual place and had been more concerned about their commercial and material interests. We witnessed the grief of the townspeople who knew the two ministers of art who had lost their lives—Bruno Brunacci and Claudio Bugiantella. And we attended from a distance the funeral of the two from the Sacro Convento who had been killed—Angelo Api, OFM Conv., the postulant director, and Zdzislaw Borowiec, the Polish postulant who had entered ten days before.

Two days after the earthquake we took our group to Lago Trasimeno, the place where Francis made a forty-day retreat. The calmness of this place seemed an incredible gift, a respite from the ongoing tremors. We also journeyed to La Verna. Seeing the split rocks and the craggy crevices, we came to a deeper appreciation of the story that when Jesus died, the rocks in this place were split apart—perhaps another experience of “terremoto.”

But the fallen rubble, the tent cities, the stories of friends sleeping in their cars, the ongoing broadcasts of damage in the Umbrian Valley, the evacuation of the Poor Clares from the Protomonastery, the Monastery of S. Quirico, and the Monastery of St. Colette, and the departure of the friars from the Sacro Convento, San Damiano, and Santa Maria degli Angeli, kept the tragedy of these days alive for us all.

On October 3 another serious tremor shook the valley, as if the earth needed another movement to settle the agitation beneath. On that day, the Feast of the Transitus, we moved the pilgrims to Rome for the remainder of the program.

While relieved to move into a pensione where tremors would no longer interrupt sleep, there was unspoken disappointment in the hearts of these people who had not been able to see many of the precious places in Assisi—Rivo Torto, the Portiuncula, San Damiano, Santa Chiara, and the Basilica of St. Francis. Prior to leaving Assisi, I shared some thoughts with them about the experiences that would be uniquely theirs:

- only they knew what it meant to be evicted from places, thus entering deeply into Francis's experience of being kicked out of Rivo Torto.
- only they knew what it meant to be sent out to unknown places filled with challenges and danger; the brothers commissioned from the Portiuncula knew these same realities.
- only they knew the deepest poverty of being totally out of control of events, of placing one's life into the hands of another, of constantly giving up fears, concerns, and personal preferences in deference to the group; they, like Clare, knew the “Privilege of Poverty” as it was lived at San Damiano.
- only they experienced what it meant to live as a community of people, loving each other through their fears, ministering to each other through illnesses, colds, and deep fatigue; they had experienced the “fraternal life” that Clare, and ultimately all her Poor Clare Sisters live each day at Santa Chiara and in their enclosures.
- only they would know the disappointment of hundreds of thousands of other pilgrims who also would not be able to visit the Basilica of St. Francis for many months; they would be bonded with all people of the world awaiting the rebirth of all these sacred places.

January 2, 1998

It took several weeks back in the United States to convince myself that my bed wasn't shaking in the middle of the night. On several occasions I was convinced that I would read in the paper that Milwaukee had experienced an earthquake. I was happy to be on stable ground and was therefore stunned to learn that the entire pilgrimage staff was having its annual meeting in Assisi! The four of us who had been there in September were not initially eager to return. Yet for the remainder of the staff it was critically important to see Assisi and its wounds in order to adapt and shape future programs.

On January 2, 1998, a bus carrying the eleven staff members made its way to the city of Assisi. As the bus brought us in sight of our "home," all became quiet and somber. Eyes strained to catch glimpses of the much publicized damage to shrines, homes, and famous buildings of the commune. It was clear as we got closer that many structures were laced with a network of scaffolds and that giant cranes stood guard around the Basilica of St. Francis. Still, there was initial relief in the discovery that much of the landscape kept its familiar contours. As one staff member later reflected: "At that moment we were like refugees returning to a home ravaged by a war and afraid of what we might see."²

During the following four days we were encouraged that many significant places were partially open and available for future visits. We were warmly embraced by our many friends in the city, who shared their own personal experiences of "terremoto." We returned to Santo Stefano to reconcile ourselves with the place that had harbored our terror. In a ritual prayer, each staff member shared his or her own personal experience of the impact of the earthquake and blessed the entire church with holy water.

The most dramatic expression of faith came from the Assisi citizens in their depiction of Christmas creches. In the piazza of Santa Chiara, Mary, Joseph, and the Infant were housed in a tent. Outside Porta San Pietro, in place of the three wise men, stood the figures of a fireman, a rescue worker, and a volunteer, all honoring the Child Jesus. In the Lower Basilica of St. Francis, a complete replica of the Upper Basilica had been recreated, complete with gaping holes where the vault had fallen and rubble strewn across its floor. Where the high altar had once stood sat the Infant Jesus resting in a fireman's helmet as his crib. For the people, God's Incarnation was a profound reality. God could be found in this world of chaos, destruction, and desolation. The Word-Made-Flesh, Emmanuel, had come reminding us all that God indeed was with us. One sign in front of a manger scene summed up this reality: "Jesus is with His 'earthquaked' people. He is born amid confusion and debris."³

September 26, 1998

The people of Assisi remembered this first anniversary day in a deep and passionate way. Photos taken after the earthquake were displayed in the Piazza Commune. A concert dedicated to the four people who died took place in the evening. One look at the faces of those attending spoke volumes about the grief that continues over this loss of human life. Our friends in Assisi again shared their memories, and the bond of friendship deepened in the knowledge that we had been here the year before and could relive their experiences with them.

A Mass of Remembrance was offered the next day. Family members of those who had died attended along with the Assisi citizens. Books had been published sharing the story in words and in photos, communicating the message that Assisi, a city which had lived through destruction and pain, was now a city of hope and light. Crews work around the clock at the Basilica of St. Francis, the goal being to have this sacred place open for Christmas, 1999, when Pope John Paul II will dedicate a new high altar.

Many continue to live in the "container villages," and tourism is still markedly down. Shop keepers tell us that people come, but do not stay overnight. "Paura" (fear) still keeps them away. But people like Anne Robichaud, who directs Elder Hostels in the Umbrian Valley, have traveled abroad to correct the inaccurate stories which depict the "destruction" of Assisi and its art in ways that discourage visitors.⁴

October 3, 1998

On this Feast of the Transitus of St. Francis, Assisi prepared in ways not possible the year before. Memories of the past were set aside as many celebrations began. I found myself compelled to walk to the Portiuncula in the rain to see the lucinarium,⁵ which was lighting up the city. In my heart I knew this was a moment I did not want to miss, and the only decent view of this event is from the valley below the city—the same area where Francis spent time caring for lepers, welcoming Clare, sending his brothers out on mission, and ultimately giving himself over to Sister Death.

The Rocca Maggiore, that fortress that sits above Assisi, was breathtaking; each tower, window, and wall was outlined with luminary flames. In gazing up at the city, I was struck by the thought that this fortress had sustained many earthquakes and political upheavals in its long history. But there it stood, illumined in all its glory.

The Basilicas of Sts. Francis and Clare were notably dark, as if awaiting to be illumined again from within. Interior lights reminded one of all the work going on constantly to bring these places again into the light. Many homes also remained dark as people awaited needed repairs. But the beauty of the lights on top of this city filled one with hope that this "City of Light" will recover and from this experience will deepen its commitment to be a "City of Hope." This commitment is best summed up in the words of the Municipal Council of Assisi:

The City of Assisi has a particular mission to fulfill in the coming passage from the second to the third millenium: to continue to be a point of reference for all [people] of good will who want to experience

faith, love and a spirit of solidarity from the Franciscan message in contrast to that of materialism and consumerism that seem to have triumphed in our times. . . . Our welcome should give the tourist a feeling of being re-created physically and spiritually and desirous to return again to further deepen his or her understanding of Franciscanism, our art, our culture and the local tradition.⁶

May God continue to be with all in the city of Assisi who will bring "new light" to this birthplace of Francis and Clare.

Written in Assisi
October 1998

Endnotes

¹Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs has its office at 1648 South 37th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 53215-1724; phone: 414-383-9870. For twenty-seven years staff have led pilgrims to places important to the Franciscan family.

²In a letter to the author dated June 1998, Margaret Carney, OSF, shared her impressions of the visit to Assisi in January 1998 and the impact of the earthquake on the city. Margaret recently joined the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program staff.

³Carney.

⁴Anne Robichaud visited many cities in the United States in spring of 1998, showing slides of the destruction of the earthquake, but also the beauty of the Umbrian Valley that awaits each visitor. She returned to the United States in fall of 1998 for another speaking tour. In response, numerous Elder Hostellers are returning to Assisi.

⁵Lucinarium is the ritual of outlining buildings and walls in Assisi with luminary candles. This beautiful spectacle takes place each year on October 3, the Feast of the Transitus.

⁶Adriano Cioci, ed., *Assisi: Days of Pain, Days of Hope*, trans. Agnese Hutchinson, FSE, and Mary Frances Traynor, FSE (Assisi: Accademia Proterziana del Subasio, 1998), 39-40.

*Assisi, holy land,
you are like a cherry tree,
come autumn you die,
but in summer you will
again blossom
with all your fruits.*

(Marco Brizi)

This Is How God Inspired Me

Harold F. Niedzwiecki, OFM

As summer slowly turns to autumn I begin to sense a different mood in my life. The changes occurring in nature remind me of the impermanence of life and the reality of time. Aside from the usual calendar which governs all of our lives, the Church calendar presents us with opportunities to ponder and celebrate the mystery of life as it gradually unfolds in the lives of saints and our own lives. This calendar helps us to focus on highlights, significant events which are worth celebrating and imitating in our own lives. Our sense of solidarity with others enables us to learn and grow in our understanding and appreciation of all that life puts before us. Although our experiences are personal and unique, they can be shared and shed some light and be a source of inspiration for others.

At this time of the year Franciscans remember and celebrate with joy the Stigmata of St. Francis and his feastday. This serves as the broad context of my reflection and, within this context, I would like to share some experiences which, although representing my personal view, can be a point of departure for your own reflection.

Many years ago Epictetus said that wisdom comes from experience which is reflected upon. Many of my ideas come from books, conversations with others, my personal background in philosophy, theology, psychology, and Franciscanism. All of these illuminate my experiences in some way, and this Franciscan season prompts me to put some of my thoughts and feelings in writing.

It seems to me that as we grow in self-awareness and search for answers to life's purpose and meaning, sooner or later we are confronted by a compelling question or issue that we do not always consciously choose. It keeps recurring at times and in places where we least expect it. We feel it, we breathe it, we simply wait for some release of that tension which our curiosity creates. And

when an insight is gained, we delight in the “aha” experience. The question mark is replaced by an exclamation point and, like Archimedes, we are ready to shout “Eureka, I’ve got it!”

For me, such a compelling theme is the notion of spirit and some ideas related to it, such as wholeness and relatedness. So compelling was this to me that, while teaching in college, I was prompted to introduce a new course into our philosophy curriculum. I called it “Our Search For Wholeness.” I found it personally gratifying and the students found it very satisfying.

As I recently re-read the Rule and Testament of St. Francis, I began to make some interesting connections between the words of Francis and my own life experience. It is some of these that I want to share with you here.

“This is how God inspired me” are the opening words of the Testament of St. Francis. In the case of Francis it was his dramatic encounter with the leper that led to his eventual conversion. Suffering—his own and that of others—was certainly a compelling issue for the saint. We need not look for dramatic earth-shaking events to experience God’s inspiration. The divine energy of the Spirit permeates the whole of reality, and wonders begin to happen when our spirit is aware and receptive. Our attention and openness to all of reality will produce a genuine existential experience in us which can truly transform our lives. It could be, in effect, a kind of conversion from the dullness of routine and superficial living to a deeper meaningful existence. It will enable us to see life as mystery and not merely as a problem and will enrich us with a sense of wonder and awe which will help us perceive things differently and understand and appreciate the fullness of life. It will shape our attitudes and our response to what is happening in and around us.

God Gave Me . . .

Upon the occasion of a recent home visit a relative said to me: “How come you’re always so happy?” I’m not sure if that is true, but such was his perception, and it prompted another question—why are so many people unhappy? It seems to me that the rule or norm—God’s plan for us—is that we be joyful. Jesus said: “All this I tell you that my joy may be yours and your joy may be complete.” (John 15:11)

Many people are unhappy because of their attitude, their false expectations. They look for happiness in things and expect others to be their benefactors. They want to be loved rather than be loving. Such expectations and illusions frequently result in frustration and unhappiness.

How different Francis was. Everyone easily recognizes his carefree, joyful spirit but fail to see that this is the result of an attitude which prompted him to say: “God gave me. . . .” For example, in chapter five of his Rule: “God gave

me the grace of working.” And in the Testament: “God gave me some friars.” This mindset produces a grateful heart, and when we discover generosity and an extravagance of goodness and love towards us, how can we not be joyful? It is a wonderful affirmation of our being to have our own goodness revealed to us.

So, when I am asked why I am happy, I remember the many signs of love and goodness in my own life and am very conscious that “God gave me. . . .” Just yesterday I received a card from a dear friend with this message on it: “Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy.” It is easy to see why the words of Francis resonate in me and relate to my own experience. I feel truly grateful for so many blessings—for life, talents, Franciscan vocation and priestly ministry, friends who are very dear to me. Each morning and every night I remember that “God gave me . . .” and thank Him for yet another day.

God Inspired Me . . .

Among the many blessings that Francis experienced was the extravagance of a loving Father who “so loved the world the He gave His only Son” who, in turn, sent His Spirit to perpetuate His presence in the hearts of people. That presence is felt in many ways, one of which we call inspiration. The words of Francis reflect his awareness of this work of the Spirit in his own life. It was like a filter through which Francis viewed everything so that, like St. Paul, he felt it was no longer he that lived but Christ lived in him.

Thus, in chapter two of the Rule, Francis directs the friars to deal with the temporal affairs of newcomers “as God inspired them.” In chapter five he speaks of working in the spirit of faith and devotion, being careful not to extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion to which every temporal consideration must be subordinate. In chapter eight he reminds the friars to convoke general chapters of election at Pentecost, mindful of the role of the Spirit in the governance of the Order. And, in chapter ten he exhorts the friars to desire to have the Spirit of God at work within them so that their hearts will be free from self-interest. Finally, in chapter twelve he speaks of friars who might be inspired by God to go among unbelievers.

In the Testament, Francis’s proclamation of his personal beliefs and ideals, we find an expression of deep wisdom, spirituality, and fatherly concern. More than abstract ideas or an ideology, Francis shares his personal experience of how God inspired him with such faith in churches, in priests, in the Eucharist and sacred writings, in theologians and ministers of God’s word because it is these which give us spirit and life. It was God Himself who made it clear to Francis that he must live the life of the gospel and even revealed a form of greeting: “God give you peace!” The words of Francis are shared not simply as

a matter of information for the friars but rather as a source of inspiration for them. His life is an example of how the creative Spirit of God uses individuals to continue His work on earth. Making space for the Spirit in our lives enables us to do this work with joyful hearts, so that we show that the news we bring is truly good news, something to be happy about.

There is an interesting connection between the notion of inspiration and enthusiasm. They both contain the idea of spirit. The Greek *thumos* is the equivalent of the Latin *spiritus*. The connection is this: when we are inspired, we do not so much possess the Spirit as we ourselves are possessed, overwhelmed by this Spirit. We are literally *en-thumos*, that is, in the Spirit. The result of this is *enthusiasm*, an overflowing of the Spirit, often in some creative way. It might take the form of a book, a painting, or a song, perhaps a poem, or simply a life lived with zest and joy. This shows that joy comes from within us and is not dependent on things outside of us. Therefore, in our desire to change the world, we do well to pay attention to the inner window of our soul, the filter through which we view things, and not so much to the world out there. It is easier to clean our inner window than to re-arrange the world.

Thus, the image of spirit, seen in the context of our Franciscan season, illuminates my own experience. I understand much better at this time of my life that this is how God inspired me. The awareness that "God gave me . . .," that "God inspired me," leads to an insight that has become an essential part of the fabric of my life. I appreciate the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "God has revealed this wisdom to us through the Spirit. . . . No one knows what lies at the depths of God but the Spirit of God. This is the Spirit we have received, helping us to recognize the gifts he has given us. . . . We have the mind of Christ (1Cor. 2:10-16).

Just as many people are unhappy and lack *joie de vivre* because of misplaced values, so also many people in our culture experience a crisis of spirit. There is an obvious pervasive malaise or dis-ease in our culture manifested in confusion, alienation, loneliness, a sense of absurdity. Is it any wonder that people reacted so strongly to the deaths of Princess Diana of England, Mother Teresa of Calcutta or—to a lesser extent—Viktor Frankl of Austria? We admire these people for who they were and what they stood for. Perhaps their lives, their beauty and goodness point to the lack of these qualities in our own lives. Frankl says we find meaning in one of three ways: by experiencing a value—something beautiful in nature or art, by doing a good deed, or by suffering. All of these entail the work of the Spirit in us, and if we do not welcome the Spirit and make space for this Spirit in our lives, we court psychological or spiritual disaster. The life of Francis, because of the work of the Spirit in him, resulted in a fruitful harvest and became an inspiration to those who know him and choose to follow him.

God Gave Me Friends

Josef Pieper, in his classic work, *Leisure—the Basis of Culture*, speaks of the spiritual dimension in human beings. He says that spirit is the ability to establish relationships. We can relate to all of reality, not actually but, as he says, *in spe*, that is, in hope. When all of me—body, mind, soul, feelings—is in touch with all of reality, a whole new world opens up and I find myself face to face with mystery. Being the complex creatures that we are, we can relate to reality—God, people, things—at different levels. We can do so very superficially or at very deep levels.

Among the most cherished relationships of which we are capable is that of friendship. I personally find this to be a special gift which God gave me, reminding me of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's dialogue with Charles Kingsley. She asked him for the secret of his life, which she judged to be very beautiful. His answer was: "I have a friend." It also reminds me that Jesus chose twelve of his disciples to be apostles so that they might be with Him as friends. And Francis speaks in very tender words of the friars in his community and the people they encounter. There is to be companionship, trust and respect, gentleness towards all.

Conclusion

Former Minister General, Herman Schalück, OFM, offers a message about the value of relationships. Speaking of the quality of life in community he says:

Human beings have a specific dynamic, that of never taking anything on board in a neutral manner. In fact, we are constantly establishing relationships with all that surrounds us by the very fact of thinking, feeling, speaking and doing. . . . The human being is a whole. In this relationship with the whole, within or outside ourselves, there is an element which interacts: emotion. Emotion is at the basis of our affective relations, investing with "meaning" all that surrounds us. For this reason we react, sometimes with sympathy and sometimes with antipathy, sometimes with acceptance and sometimes with rejection, to all the most diverse elements which may present themselves and become part of our life. . . . We must be sensitive to this dynamism.

As we move with Francis through the various seasons, we have the time and opportunity to reflect not only on the historical Francis, not only on his story, but also on the mystery of our own unique story. We come to appreciate that the same timeless Spirit continues God's work of inspiration in anyone who invites the Spirit by listening with one's ears, seeing with one's eyes, and unlocking one's heart.

Book Review

Ilia Delio, OSF, *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1998), 268pp.

The significance of the Crucified Christ in Bonaventure's theology and in the spiritual life of all Christians comes into sharp relief in this study by Ilia Delio. Those familiar with the work of her mentor and friend, Professor Ewert Cousins, will find reflections of his insights throughout this reworking of a dissertation Delio presented at Fordham University. However indebted she may be to this well-known scholar, Delio's unique and timely contribution to Bonaventurian studies is evident throughout this monograph.

The thesis she consistently develops considers the Crucified Christ as *the synthesizing principle of Bonaventure's theology, drawing humanity and creation together into the unity of God. The basis of this unity is the suffering or crucified love of Christ which Bonaventure perceived as the diffusion of God's goodness in the world* (xvi). The driving force behind this broad, hermeneutical appeal to the Crucified lies, Delio maintains, in Bonaventure's experience on Mount Alverna, where he withdrew two years after his election as Minister General to seek peace. His mountaintop reflection on the stigmatized Francis yielded a compelling conclusion—the journey into the mystery of God is ultimately accomplished through the Crucified Christ alone.

Francis's paradigmatic experience and subsequent influence on Bonaventure's theological project leads Delio to dedicate Chapter One to an examination of Francis of Assisi's spirituality and Chapter Two to Bonaventure's appropriation of the message made manifest in the stigmatized saint. Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, Francis's writings do not share the prolonged focus on the Crucified Christ later attributed to him. While the Poor Man of Assisi demonstrated profound appreciation for the humanity of Christ, such devotion is understood through the prism of his relationship with the Father, who sends the Son into the world, and the Spirit, who enables the faithful to perceive the divine nature of God's Son. The emphasis on the Crucified as a privileged category of interpretation fell to biographers like Celano and, more forc-

ibly, to Bonaventure, who viewed the trajectory of Francis's ascent into God ever more exclusively in light of his ecstatic encounter with the seraph on Mount Alverna. Ultimately, Bonaventure's ruminations fostered the integration of Francis into the Seraphic Doctor's theological system as an exemplar of the Crucified Word made present to the world and a harbinger of the eschaton.

The ascent into God, as delineated in *The Soul's Journey into God*, is treated in Chapters Three and Four. Delio turns her attention to the Crucified Word who stands at the center of reality. The return to God begins and ends in Christ Crucified who, as the medium between the Father and the Spirit and temporal revelation of divine compassion, manifests the perfection of God's love and the fullness of human potential. Those turning to the Crucified in contemplation enter into a dynamic process of purification and illumination culminating in ecstatic union with God. Inflamed by the fire of the Spirit, the prayerful desire for the divine encounters the self-diffusive goodness of the Father in an outpouring of love through the Crucified, and seals the soul with the likeness of the triune God. This metaphysics of the good or love, adapted from Pseudo-Dionysius and firmly anchored in the ontological foundations of the Trinity, distinguish Bonaventure's metaphysics from Neoplatonism and offers firm footing to those climbing Mount Alverna in search of the Crucified.

Conformity to Christ, the Mystery of Crucified Love, and Union with Christ are the respective titles of Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. Here Delio elucidates the incumbent implications of Bonaventure's mysticism of the Crucified Christ. In the *Major Life of Saint Francis*, the Poor Man of Assisi emerges again as key to the understanding of Bonaventure's thought. Francis's conformity to Christ becomes an archetypal model underscoring the bodily expression of mystical union with Christ as the temporal and divine exemplar. *The Tree of Life*, with its appeal to visual imagery in meditation, reinforces the view that the whole person, body and soul, is subject to the transforming power of God's Word. This *mysticism of the historical event*, advanced by Ewert Cousins and revisited by Bernard McGinn in *The Flowering of Mysticism*, encourages entrance into the mystery of crucified love and opens a window on Bonaventure's cosmic vision of Christ by grounding historical reflection in the eternal Word of God. Union with the Word of God, both Crucified and Eternal, promotes a worldview marked by compassion. The cosmos is the arena of God's love forever marked by the descent of the Word into the poverty of human existence. This humble descent of the divine remains an on-going invitation to those sealed by the burning love of the Crucified to labor and petition unceasingly for the reconciliation of creation in Christ.

Chapters Eight and Nine explore the contemporary relevance of Bonaventure's thought. Once again, echoes of Delio's mentor and friend reso-

nate. Ewert Cousin's work frequently places Bonaventure's theological wisdom in dialogue with cultural and world religious traditions. Delio follows a similar creative impulse as she sketches how Bonaventure's mysticism of the Crucified Christ is to be appropriated in a wounded and fragmented world. Postmodern yearnings for peace and unity are answered in the suffering, both humble and holistic, of the incarnate Word of God who overcomes the barriers of dualism, individualism, and privatization.

Ilia Delio's work is certainly a welcome addition to a growing body of literature on Bonaventure's theology. Her nascent development of the metaphysics of the good together with her thought-provoking reflections on Bonaventure and postmodernism, are especially promising perspectives worthy of further elaboration. A future area of research that remains essentially unexplored in these pages is the relationship between Bonaventure's mysticism of the Crucified Christ and his own *itinerarium*. Delio's study highlights the later writings of the Seraphic Doctor. Earlier university writings do not display sustained interest in the Crucified theme. While Bonaventure's Mount Alverna experience is crucial in interpreting the alteration in textual accents, the shifting parameters of his own life's journey bears greater investigation. Texts and communities are intertwined. The interpretation of Francis's mystical journey was framed by the context in which Bonaventure, the seventh Minister General after Francis, served the Order and the Church. The peace of the Crucified, as he discovered in pastoral ministry and prayer, was sought by others as well. Their communal longing for peace may well have been the determining factor in eliciting his passionate articulation, in word and work, of the Crucified Christ.

Dr. Timothy J. Johnson

In the morning the crowds that had assembled took branches from the trees and with a blaze of many candles carried [Francis's] sacred body to the town of Assisi, singing hymns and canticles. . . .

When they arrived at the city with great rejoicing, they reverently placed in the church of St. George the precious treasure they were carrying. It was there that he had gone to school as a little boy and there that he first preached and there, finally, that he found his first place of rest.

LM 15:5.

seasons in assisi

the crescent moon bright-
nature's light in winter's freeze-
ebbed another year.

sunrise over stone walls
perfumed petals incense spring
death to life cycles

saints called to prayer
footsteps tread through olive trees
summer's hopes renewed

barren, leaves withered
peace embraced the dancer's joy
and moonlight followed.



Mary Giorlando

assisi

beauty remembered:
the breeze like sacred music
stirs eternity.

Mary Giorlando

Chapters as Group Spiritual Direction

Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF

Francis Pompei, OFM, in his article "Franciscanism and Spiritual Direction," elaborates on the Franciscan lifestyle, remarking that the "coherence between what the brothers said and how they lived is important."¹ This suggested to me one of the purposes for our gathering in a House Chapter as well as for a General Chapter. The gathering involves a sharing of what we have been about and together seeing this reality against our Rule and community directives. At the heart of review of the perceived reality and the promised profession is a prayerful discernment by the members. Pompei goes on to say that "this fraternal dimension is central not only to what Franciscanism is all about, but also is a fundamental place for spiritual direction"² He claims the fraternity³ can be viewed as the spiritual director. Patterned in gospel living, we hold to the words of Francis who claimed that the Holy Spirit is the true authority, for wherever two or three gather in the name of Jesus, the Spirit is present. Hence, the potential for group spiritual direction is in the very life.

In my congregation, our House Chapters are scheduled seasonally, thematically tied to the liturgical year and/or in sympathy with Mother Earth. There are basically four elements that create the framework for these gatherings: reconciliation, shared input, prayer, and celebration. What strikes me is the similarity with the movements characterized by Pompei as Franciscan in the dynamics of group direction: coming together, sending out, coming back, and living together.⁴ These four movements and the four corresponding elements suggest a rhythm for the itinerant life of Francis and Clare. I suggest that they are connected as well to the root values of conversion, minority, contemplation, and poverty.

Coming Together

In a way, both the House Chapter and General Chapter call for the attitude of "attending to the holy."⁵ Margaret Guenther likens this to the tradi-

tion of Spiritual Guidance. The image brings to mind that we are called to become aware of, pay attention to, and finally become absorbed by the very everydayness of God. This image awakens in me a strong sense of the responsibility that is mine as a local community leader. While I realize that I am not responsible to make fraternity happen, nor expected to package it in myriad activities, much less shelve it for extraordinary moments of living together, it nevertheless, will at times require some work. At other times it will just happen. I think the key is to expect the presence of the holy. The challenge is to create an attitude of expectancy. I liken it to a story attributed to Anthony deMello, who tells of the abbot who went to the rabbi in the woods. The rabbi told him that one among them was the holy one. The abbot shared this wisdom with his monks, who began to observe one another secretly, to wonder about each other, and to act as if the other was the holy one. They began to reverence each other so much that people noticed that Love dwelt in their midst. The irony is obvious—seek and you shall find. Love is in the relationship.

What can we do to honor our coming together? What expressions of reconciliation will remove the blinders or the planks in each of us so we might begin to see the Christ incarnated in the other and among us? What must be converted in our hearts so we might believe that this is not only possible but already a reality?

Sending Out

The second movement is a sending out. Related to the House Chapter, it is the seeking of wisdom in a chapter from our Rule, from Scripture, or from a contemporary writing. There is a gathering of information in a spirit of mutual obedience. Strengthened by step one, i.e. our being together, we have the confidence to venture into something new. We encounter this newness in the light of our Franciscan tradition. We receive new insights through illumination. Our actions are seen as "incarnations of the actions of Jesus in a new context."⁶ In this light we are less afraid to claim our minority, for we have seen/known Love who accepts us as we are—brothers and sisters in all of creation. No power frightens us, for we already know our weaknesses and vulnerabilities. We are free to be challenged by honesty and truth. There is new awareness in seeking to know what it means to be brother and sister. It is not desiring anything more special than the tender and singular love which our Creator God lavishes on each creature.

Coming Back

Once we sense this, we are free to move to the next step in the dance: the coming back. In this we are filled with goodness and have something to share—

first, in quiet and reverent listening and then in respectful sharing of our faith experiences. Our words are more carefully chosen in that we do not need to show off or puff up in knowledge. We are free to be and to offer simply what we are before God, nothing more and nothing less. We are joined by our sisters and brothers in a contemplative stance where everything is holy. We discover that everything is a spark of the beauty and truth and light of God.

We need to change our idea that contemplation is a thing to do and realize that it is an attitude about living. We need to begin each day fresh in the sacramentality of time and persons. In this stance it is a coming home for everything and everyone. We must stand receptive to the annunciations, visitations, and incarnational moments in our lives and in our lives together.⁷ Liturgy has to be experienced at the supper table as well as at the eucharistic table.

Living Together

There is a natural flow, then, into the fourth movement of living together. Life becomes a celebrative dance as we are together re-imaged, made new again. Our gathering is not due to our strengths for ministry or our theories for economic savings, but results from our human condition. In our poverty, our brokenness, we realize we can “make our needs known with confidence” (TOR Rule, 23), for Love hears the cry of the poor.

Sometimes we might find ourselves resisting this knowledge, as it seems too good to be true, too trite to be real. Other times, in raw honesty, we might recognize that our communities don’t need us for what we can do for them, but rather for what we need from them and for what we are in the gathering. We need our communities in order to be who we are: sisters and brothers under the inspiration of God. This is poverty in its purist form. Our individual identity is in our relatedness to God, our Father, and therefore in our relatedness to one another. We cannot know ourselves or experience God apart from this truth. Though at times we are sent out alone, we must always make our way through these central movements, living out these attitudes in the rituals associated with a House Chapter. There will be times that these will be formal, as in a feastday liturgy or weekend House Chapter. Other times they will be as informal and uncomplicated, but no less essential, as breathing. For in truth these are the very rhythms of our Franciscan lifestyle.

The Challenge

This reflection confronts us with the challenge to take seriously the gatherings in preparation for General Chapter. These preparatory events match

the process as described in the Shalem process for Group Spiritual Direction.⁸ Present are the three conditions required. We have agreed to: “commit [our]selves to an honest relationship with God; to participate wholeheartedly in the group process through prayerful listening and response; and to open [our] spiritual journeys for consideration by others.” The insight is here. Can we connect learning with our life? The community gatherings no longer feel like preparation but like part of the foundational rhythm for listening and living the call to be Franciscan. Francis was not just uttering poetry when he said: “I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours” (LM 14:3).

What is “ours” can be discovered in the happening of a House Chapter if we pay attention to the critical movements just as a ballerina does to the dance. We will learn to trust our inner voices and experiences. We will begin to recognize the prophetic voices. We will dare to listen to each other and to the Spirit within. Practice will be perfected in the experience of the General Chapter where together we discover what is ours to do as a congregation.

One of the learnings is to see the connectedness of it all and to act on our new insights. These—Spiritual Direction, Group Direction, House Chapters, General Chapters—are not products. Neither are they mere processes which we enter into and, upon completion, wash our hands and move on. They are “life-ing” events, meant to be lived fully. Hence, from a Franciscan perspective, they are integral elements of the journey into God. They are images of the movements experienced by Francis, Clare, and Bonaventure as well as by the Franciscan family as a whole (and therefore reflected in us as individuals). They give us a greater sense of what Francis meant when he exclaimed: “Deus meus et omnia.”

Conclusion

In God all is a oneness; and yet, through Christ, distinct. The particulars, the “this-ness,” is an unfolding of God being recreated anew in each person or event. In this sense, the evangelical life can be likened to a holon, a new cultural metaphor describing a state of mutual interdependence. In this paradigm not only is there synergy (the whole is greater than the sum of its parts), but there is added a new and intriguing dimension—the whole is *contained* in each of the parts, as with a hologram.

Consider the different attitude we might bring to a House Chapter, as well as to a General Chapter, if we acted out of this truth. We are each unique, not because of something imposed from an outside created order, but because we participate from within the created order. Granted, every event, each person won’t be the fullness or perfection of the Triune God, but the wellspring of all possibility is dynamically in our here and now. I want to keep before me

how Francis responded when asked to point out the "perfect friar." He picked out elements (or this-ness) from a diversity of friars to form a whole (SP 85). If we dare strip away the clutter and cacophony that dims Christ's reflection, we can be transformed into a hologram of true holiness. Viewing our Chapters as group spiritual direction invites us to focus our listening hearts, expecting to find God in the sacrament of this event, in these participants, and in my participation.

Endnotes

¹Pompei, Francis, OFM, "Franciscanism and Spiritual Direction," *The Cord*, 37.6 (1987): 179.

²Pompei, 179.

³By fraternity," grounded in *fraternitas*, is meant the relationship of the members through Jesus who is brother to us all; hence the masculine term inclusive for male and female gatherings.

⁴Pompei, 180-1.

⁵Margaret Guenther, "Attending to the Holy," *The Way*, 34.1 (1994): 65.

⁶Ramona Miller, OSF, "Theological Reflection for Ministry as Franciscan," *The Cord*, 47.2 (1997): 50.

⁷Gabriele Uhlein, OSF, "Franciscan Spiritual Direction: Some Critical Aspects," *The Cord*, 46.5 (1996), 227.

⁸Cf. Rose Mary Dougherty, *Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1995).

Francis Blesses

Lord, . . .

you have shown this city the riches of your love.

It has become the abode and residence of those who know you as they should,

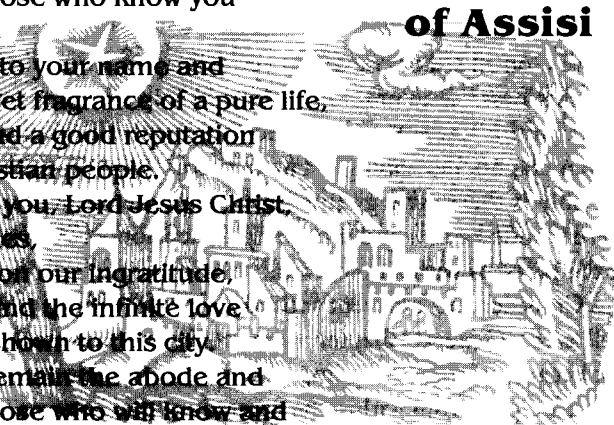
who give glory to your name and diffuse the sweet fragrance of a pure life, a solid faith, and a good reputation among all Christian people.

I therefore beg you, Lord Jesus Christ, Father of mercies,

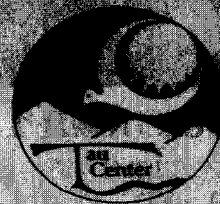
do not look upon our ingratitude, but recall to mind the infinite love that you have shown to this city.

May it always remain the abode and residence of those who will know and glorify your blessed and glorious name in the ages to come. Amen.

the City
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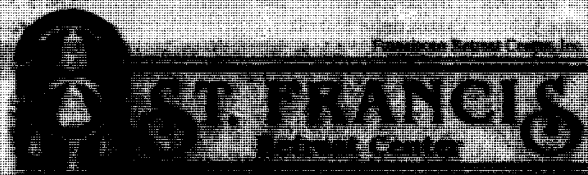
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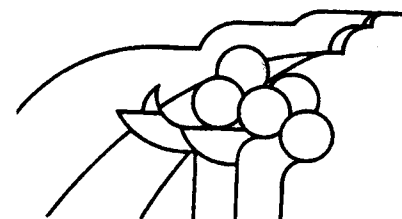
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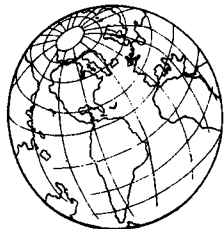
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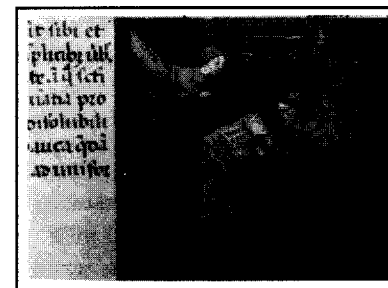
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Friday, October 1-Sunday, October 3

Franciscan Spirituality Weekend. With Jules Cave Bergquist. At St. Deiniol's Library, Hawarden, Flintshire, CH5 3DF, UK; ph. 01244 53235; fax: 01244 520643; e-mail: deiniol.visitors@btinternet.com

Friday, October 8-Monday, October 18

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Thursday, October 14-Sunday, October 17

Franciscan Solitude Experience. With André Cirino, OFM, and Jospf Raischl, SFO. St. Francis Retreat Center, Burlington, WI. See ad, p. 262.

Saturday, October 23.

Rebirth of a Charism. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. Franciscan Center, Garfield Heights, OH. Contact: see above.

Sunday, October 24-Sunday, October 31

Pilgrimage: Central California Missions. Covers all 21 California Missions. Contact: Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs, 1648 S. 37th St., Milwaukee, WI 53215-1724; ph. 414-383-9870; fax: 414-383-0335; e-mail: Lizcsds@execpc.com

Friday, November 5-Saturday, November 13

The Soul's Journey into God. With André Cirino, OFM. At the Franciscan Center, Andover, MA 01810; ph. 978-851-3391.

Saturday, November 6.

Rebirth of a Charism. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. Scotus Hall, Millvale, PA. Contact: see above.

Friday, December 10-Sunday December 12

Bringing Forth Christ: On Bonaventure's Five Feasts of the Child Jesus. With André Cirino, OFM. At Stella Maris Retreat Center, Skaneateles, NY 13152; ph. 315-685-1111; see ad, p. 266.

Writings of Saint Francis

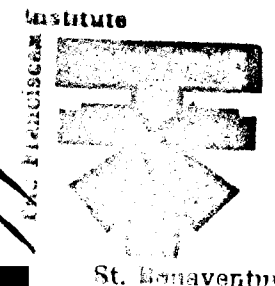
Adm	Admonitions	ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo	FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
BenBern	Blessing for Brother Bernard	1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun	2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony	LaudDei	Praises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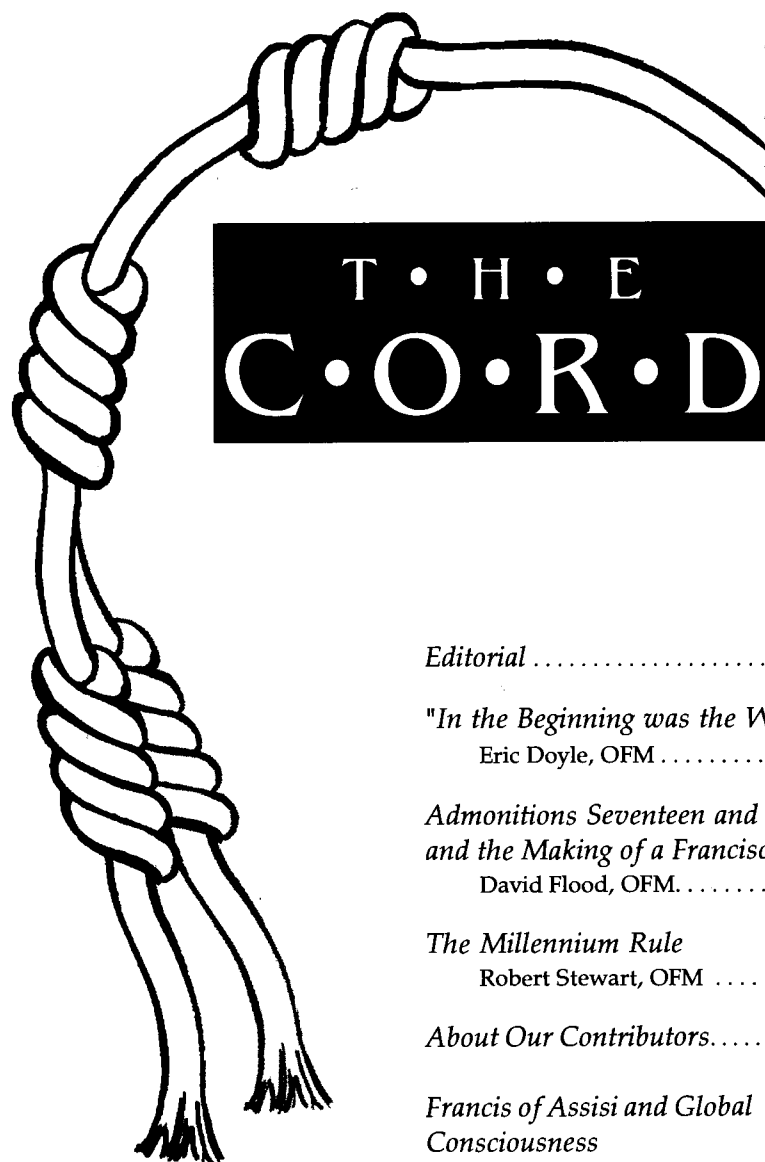


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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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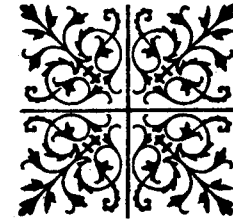
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(1Cor. 13:6). (2Cel 5:8).
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The Cord, 49.6 (1999)



Editorial

The November/December issue of *The Cord* always pays special attention to that favorite of all Franciscan observances—Christmas—the privileged moment when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The truth is, we will never get to the bottom of this incredible reality. No matter how hard we try, whether through study or contemplation, the truth that God wants to be among us as one of us will always be a bit too much for us. And the wonderful thing is, we do not have to understand it; we have only to accept that God should mysteriously love us so and live out the implications of that gift of faith as best we can, knowing that we have a brother that accompanies us on this amazing adventure and brings it to fruition.

Franciscan commitment to the mystery of the Incarnation makes us very “worldly” indeed. We continually search for ways to go from “gospel to life and life to the gospel” (SFO Rule) after the example of Francis, Clare, the early Franciscans, and all those who have faithfully preceded us. In this issue, Eric Doyle sets the tone with a reflection on the “Word-made-flesh.” David Flood explains how Francis’s Admonitions and the Rule helped to shape and form the early brotherhood according to a communal vision of Gospel life. Robert Stewart reflects on the Secular Franciscan Rule (and by extension on the Franciscan way of life) as a millennium challenge. Ilia Delio shares her thoughts on the need for Franciscans to have a global consciousness in this new age.

In this last issue of the year, the decade, the century, the millennium, we pause and look back in gratitude on what has been and forward in trust to what lies ahead. *The Cord*, in particular, closes its forty-ninth year of publication with special gratitude for all that has made its work possible. With the dawn of 2000, the periodical begins its fiftieth anniversary and invites its subscribers to celebrate with us this significant landmark in time.

We recently received word that Father Harold Niedzwiecki, OFM, of the Assumption province, died on June 25 at the Felician Sisters’ Infirmary in Lodi, NJ. His article, “This is How God Inspired Me,” appeared in the Sept./Oct. 1999 *Cord*. We are grateful for his contribution and ask you, our readers, to join us in gratitude for his life and in prayerful remembrance of him, his friar community, his family and friends.

"In the Beginning Was the Word"

Eric Doyle, OFM

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God"—the opening sentence of St. John's gospel. John distinguishes between God and the Word, yet both are equally God. He is speaking of the Father and the Son. Now when we recall that Jesus was the carpenter of Nazareth, it comes as a little surprise to hear him called "the Word." On analysis, this proves to be one of the most fitting names that could have been found. It had been used by philosophers before St. John, but it was always impersonal. In John's gospel, the word is personal, and that makes his use of it entirely unique.

The Old Testament is clearly aware of the power of God's word. Yahweh, God's name in the Old Testament, is creative and effective in his word. By his word, all things were made, says the Old Testament. Indeed, Yahweh's word is the presence of Yahweh himself. But even this pales before John's use. The word for him is personally distinct from God the Father. The Jews experienced Yahweh as a God of dialogue. He spoke to his people and he listened to them.

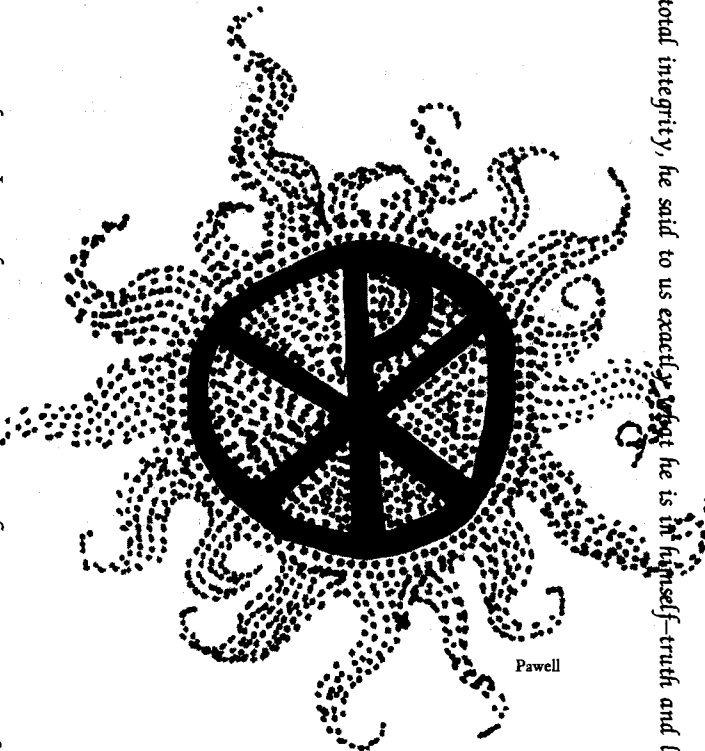
The first followers of Jesus during his earthly life realized that he was in continual dialogue with one he called his Father. The times he spent in solitary prayer were the high points of the dialogue. After he had risen from the dead, his disciples understood that there had been a dialogue of truth and love inside God forever and ever. God was not a lone power, but an eternal dialogue. And so they were able to say that Jesus was the Word-made-flesh, that is, a true human being dwelling in their midst. God had shared his dialogue with us. The Word didn't leave God when he became flesh, as though a gap appeared. The Word came to us in a different form, just as when we say a word it leaves us as a sound with meaning but stays in our mind as an idea. For

example, when someone says the word "window" it goes forth as a sound of the voice, but it does not leave the speaker's mind. It is real and present in two quite distinct ways.

In Jesus, we have among us the truth and love of God spoken for our sake. In Jesus, God gave us his Word. With total integrity, he said to us exactly what he is in himself—truth and love. And he remains unswervingly faithful to that Word. It was in a human being, Jesus of Nazareth, that God spoke his personal Word. That says volumes about the dignity of every human being. The Word enlightens everyone in the world, and through that enlightenment, each of us is made a word of God. Each person tells us something new about God. That is why it is so important to listen with attention and concern to what people say. And we have to ensure that we speak the truth in love and strive for that integrity through which what comes from our lips is one with what we have in our heart.

In Jesus, God gave us his Word.

In Jesus, we have among us the truth and love of God spoken for our sake.



Pawell

With total integrity, he said to us exactly what he is in himself—truth and love.

Admonitions Seventeen and Nineteen and the Making of a Franciscan

David Flood, OFM

Blessed the servant who does not rejoice more in the good which the Lord says and works through him than what he says and works through another. A man sins who wants to receive more from his neighbor than he wants to give of himself to the Lord God.

Admonition Seventeen

Francis of Assisi (with the help of his friends) wrote two Admonitions which have come down to us under the title, "The Humble Servant of God." They are Admonitions Seventeen (above) and Nineteen (below). They do not have to do with humility. Rather, they propose orientation, they encourage focus, they clear up the mind. So why the misnomer? Why talk about humility?

Admonition Seventeen refers to "what God is doing." What was God doing? Assisi's 1210 charter proposed that God was behind the municipality's order and ambitions. We know that Francis disagreed. He could discover no role he wanted in that history, as he implied in his Testament. With resolve and reflection, Francis and his brothers got another history going. An Admonition of Francis clarified and strengthened that action, which fell into the context of God's action. Francis spoke to the mind of each brother, and insofar as the brother responded well to the words, the brother both played more of his talent into the movement's action and emerged as that much more Franciscan. In Admonition Seventeen, Francis was speaking to "the early Franciscan." Francis's words entered the early Franciscan's mind to make a point important or useful for that brother's progress as a Franciscan.

The Early Franciscan: Some Background

Who was "the early Franciscan"? The expression "the early Franciscan" designates the individual brother as he learns from and contributes to early

Franciscan life. We can follow his trajectory in the chapters of the Early Rule. By drawing on the Early Rule, we can sketch a portrait of his consciousness and outlook. With that as our context, we will have an easier time figuring out how the proposals of Admonition Seventeen entered and worked within his life. We can propose an interpretation of the brief paragraph.

Chapter Ten of the Early Rule has a line which invites a brother to learn Franciscan ways and contribute to Franciscan life. The chapter deals with sickness. The problem posed by sickness inevitably arises in the life of a community, and this section of the text is the place to treat it. With Chapter Seven, the brothers put themselves to work and housed and fed themselves. Once they had started organizing life in their own independent way, they had to develop their original determinations. Life is like that. As it goes on, it regularly tosses up the need for new determinations, both theoretical and practical. And Chapter Ten deals with sickness, an economic and communal problem as well as an existential one. The brothers regulated the problem simply and understandably. When a brother fell out of the routines due to sickness, one or several brothers stayed with him; and when it was necessary, they solicited more competent help.

Once they had taken care of the economic and communal problem, Francis spoke up in the first person (the first time we hear his voice) and called on the brother to understand what was going on in sickness and to enter into that action as a brother. He told him to work with what God was doing in his life. If the sick brother could not see it that way and act accordingly, he was not living up to his commitment. If he could not turn his sickness to good use, he was not handling sickness as one of the brotherhood. "He does not seem to be one of the brothers" (RegNB 10:4).

We have here an expression which speaks to "the early Franciscan." He belonged to a group which had taken its life in hand. The brothers had withdrawn from the day's social determinations (life in Assisi or life in central Italy) in order to pursue a way of life. This way of life dictated as well the way, the efficiently practical and the sensitively theoretical way, of dealing with sickness. As the case of sickness and Francis's tentative words ("it seems") indicate, they were developing their understandings as they went along. They were defining "the life" progressively. Early Franciscan life was not a finished product but a formative process. That process is reflected in the whole body of the early Franciscan writings, beginning with the Early Rule. The Admonitions were touching up and refining a basic orientation which arose out of the work on the Early Rule. These historical sources—the Early Rule, the Admonitions, the other early writings—tell the story of the early Franciscan. They allow us to sketch his portrait.

We can follow in the Early Rule the way Francis and his brothers arrived

at their determination on care in sickness. Towards the end of Chapter Seven (Early Rule), the brothers counsel themselves to "see and honor" one another when their paths cross: "And wherever the brothers find themselves and in whatsoever place they come upon one another, let them welcome (*videre*) and host (*honorare*) one another spiritually and diligently without the slightest grumbling" (RegNB 7:15). The line comes from the days when the brothers did not have the organizational tightness which soon evolved. Groups of brothers fared for themselves between periodic assemblies with the others. In a sense, they lived as distinct units in the larger world of Penitents rather than as the structured organization historians ascribe to them. We know what they became, and for that reason we read the later structures back into their origins. Yet here we have the brothers telling themselves to hold together, assuring one another mutual support. In the sentence they tell themselves to welcome others there where they have based themselves and to share with them life's means. They host the arrivals diligently and spiritually. They do a good job of it—diligently. They do it as intrinsic to their life—spiritually.

Two verbs—*videre*, which means to see, and *honorare* which means to provide for needs—cover the action of mutual support. I have to justify putting the meaning of hospitality into the Latin verb *honorare*. In medieval dictionaries, the verb includes hospitality as well as the manifestation of respect. The context of Chapter Seven suggests that the brothers inquire about one another's material needs. They knew what their concrete circumstances were. Of course, when they saw and hailed brothers passing by, they asked as well about any need for food and shelter. We still do that today. I arrived by train in a city, I was expected by another Franciscan, and he immediately asked: Have you eaten? We have to give *honorare* that meaning.

I came across confirmation of this meaning when reading through Peter Olivi's commentary on the Acts of the Apostles. In Chapter Six, the master offered his views on the dissension which led to the designation of seven deacons. He blamed the failure on poor organization and not on conscious neglect. While explaining how it came about that some widows were neglected, Olivi quoted Paul's first letter to Timothy (5:3) about honoring widows. He continued: "As is evident [in Paul's words], honoring them means seeing to their needs."

The early brothers came to rely on one another in a way that enabled them to make good on their withdrawal from property claims. They made mutuality explicit in daily life before positing it as a principle (RegNB 9:10-11) and then applying it to sickness (RegNB 10). All of this lay in their initial orientation. It took time to arrive at theoretical explicitation. The process produced "the early Franciscan." To put it differently, a young man who joined Francis and his first companions *entered their story* and began *learning their language*.

The brothers worked at those jobs they had done prior to joining the brotherhood if the work was not incompatible with the life. Some of them helped in the almshouses (buildings of sorts, hospitals in part) where the needy gathered or where they were herded together on the outskirts of the city. Service to the forgotten people of such shelters, with the demands made on a brother's patience and understanding, was a privileged way of entering into the spirituality of early Franciscan life.

Through the sequence of events whereby a brother worked among the sick and the needy and the lepers, he entered a meaningful story. Initiated to such service by other brothers, he learned to treat the needy inmates as people and represent their right to the means of life in Assisi. He also got to know individual brothers, those with whom he worked and lived, and through them he got a better idea of daily Franciscan routines. He had begun to understand what he was getting into when he was examined on joining, and now he learned how it felt over time. He slowly acquired the consciousness of a brother (the consciousness of "the early Franciscan"). Soon he knew his way around as a brother. His daily authorities were no longer Assisi's leading men but those brothers who, for him, made visible and audible the reasons why he joined them. He developed a feel for the action and, from within the action, he began understanding the story. Together with his brothers he was wishing others peace and spreading peace in the footsteps of the Lord.

Within that action, he also got daily lessons in Franciscan language. Through their work on their basic document, Francis and his friends developed the particular vocabulary and ideas of their commitments and their hopes. When they sat down to distinguish their idea of work from the notion and practice of work in and around Assisi (which gave us the opening paragraph of Chapter Seven of the Early Rule), they spoke about the roles and the people of their work surroundings. They also described their idea of work, which included the well-being of their coworkers. As they thought about money (Chapter Eight) and dealt with the harsh judgments and contempt of successful people (Chapter Nine) and talked about true peace (Chapters Fourteen and Seventeen), they developed and learned the language of their particular story. The language arose, as language does, out of the discernment at the core of the brotherhood. The brother, "the early Franciscan," got drawn into the exchanges which produced and developed the common language. He belonged to the story. He understood its particular language. It became the medium of his sense of himself as a brother.

Someone who uses a Franciscan term—say *honorare*—without drawing it out of the Franciscan story, draws it out of another story, the meaning of which he projects onto Franciscan life. Words, particularly action words involved in socioeconomic relations, have their history. *Honorare* did not only mean that a

brother in need would be fed as a guest. The term had its Franciscan resonance. It belonged to the mutuality which was a defining characteristic of the Franciscan association. The welcome implicit in the term had become a ritual of brotherhood. *Honorare* belonged to the language of their life. That is especially so with such key words as service, poverty, spirit, gospel, penance; the list can go on until we begin seeing the outline of an emerging tradition and culture. We do not know what poverty means unless we understand how it got into the brothers' vocabulary and what it was doing in the life.

The agreements and actions of Francis and his associates gave rise to a distinctive spirit among them. Their words to one another came back with a ring of truth and promise. They felt inspired. Their persuasion of being led by the Spirit of the Lord transpires in the way they dealt with those who wanted to join them (Early Rule, Chapter Two). First of all, they judged whether God had led a young man to their door. He had to be "inspired by God" (RegNB 2:1). The expression contains a first whiff of spirit. Then, following on better acquaintance and basic explanations, insofar as the young man wanted spiritually to join them, the practical process of extrication from society and inclusion in the brotherhood began. Spiritually (*spiritualiter*, RegNB 2:4) is the operative word here. He had to be able to enter into the motivation which supplied the brotherhood framework and particulars, routines and orientation. When he joined them in that mind, then he began working his way into the story, learning the language, and nurturing the spirit. The young man submitted himself to a discipline of attention to what the Lord was doing with those traveling in his footsteps and helped verbalize the results. To the degree of his abilities, he had to do what Francis did in Chapter Ten when speaking about sickness.

The brothers confessed the Spirit of the Lord's presence in their lives most tellingly when they refused society's identification of their exemplary life. That occurred in Chapter Seventeen of the Early Rule (10-16).

Here is the background to that passage (10-16) in Chapter Seventeen of the Early Rule. At one moment in their early history, the brothers had proved themselves through the consistent goodness of their lives, as well as through the evolving coherence of their way of life. They had made an impact on people sensitive to their Christian qualities. It was no longer a question of writing them off as a meaningless band of marginals. For that reason, a strong opinion in and around Assisi tried to absorb them into the social and economic realities of the day. It praised the brothers as exemplary Christians while refusing to hear the implications of their call to penance. The Franciscan call to penance was a summons to share the good things of life and to live in social harmony. Insofar as they succumbed to society's politics of reductive assimilation, the brothers would slip into the role, so generously granted them, of holy

men. They would end up the moral warrants of Assisi's pursuit of wealth and glory.

The following passage from chapter Seventeen (10-16) deals with that so understandable strategy of Assisi. In these lines, the brothers reject the religious role assigned them by "the wisdom of this world" and confess themselves led by the Spirit of the Lord:

We must be on our guard against the wisdom of this world and the prudence of the flesh. The spirit of the flesh relishes public discourse but does little of use; it does not seek inner religion and true holiness, but pursues resolutely a reputation for religion and holiness. About such as these the Lord says: I tell you in truth, they have had their reward. On the other hand, the Spirit of the Lord wants the flesh chastised and despised, vile and abject. The Spirit of the Lord applies itself to humility and patience and pure and simple and true peace of spirit. It wants above all fear of God and divine wisdom and the divine love of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

With that distinction, the brothers confessed by what spirit they lived. Their distinctiveness was a work of God's grace. And then they put in clear terms the immediate goals of the movement: the distributive justice of returning to God the good things of life. Moreover, as the rhetoric of the last lines of Chapter Seventeen manifests, Francis and his brothers understood the consequences of their declaration as a commitment to social struggle.

Francis and his associates refused the social consistency of holy men urged on them by the defining voices of Assisi. The Spirit was not constructing a city where men celebrated themselves to the exclusion of the lowly and the disadvantaged. Something else was rising in history. The brothers had caught onto the agency bringing about "true peace." They did their best to heed its promptings and join its action.

In the crucible of that development, where society's false identification of Franciscan service attempted to turn it to Assisi's advantage, the early Franciscan continued to turn from the past and seek out the ways of the Spirit. Although he still had to bring cultural fragments and ingrained habits of the past into accord with a life of service and peace, he knew where he stood and with whom. If, at this moment, we ask him who he is, he answers: As a brother, I stand with friends as we see to the various ways in which the good things of life return to God. From case to case, we determine what has to be done. I live within that horizon as one led by the Spirit.

An individual knows who he is through the sequence of events whereby he allies himself with others within a distinct spiritual orientation. He inhabits a

social space which marks off the differences between his intimates and those who do not belong. A young man who joined the Franciscan brotherhood lived with the brothers outside the walls of a city, on the plain below Assisi, where all could approach them. He joined them as they worked in and around those hovels where Assisi's outcasts found shelter. There he learned to demand the common inclusion of such outcasts in the human world. This was not the unjust world of Assisian society, but the world which the Lord announced, where one's dignity was acknowledged and prized and where one was assured the means of life. He began using the pronoun *us*, with its place for *you* and *me*. Those pronouns lie at the core of Franciscan terminology and culture: the terminology and the culture which emerge from "the life" as it evolves, for our study, in the history of the Early Rule.

When, then, we ask the early Franciscan who he is, he speaks out of the social space that the Franciscans claimed for themselves in Chapter Seventeen. They inhabit the area where the Spirit of true peace is seeing to the return of all good things to God, whence all that is good comes. They are in sum making the world habitable for the *us* of God's family.

We now have some idea of whom Francis was addressing in Admonitions Seventeen and Nineteen. And we understand as well that Francis drew on the sensitivities and the rhetoric of his brothers when putting the Admonitions into writing. He needed the help of good conversation with intimates in order to get right the words of correction and encouragement that would open the brotherhood to the movement of the Spirit of the Lord.

Admonition Seventeen

Admonition Seventeen opens with the declaration: "Blessed the servant." Life in the brotherhood was invigorating, and Francis begins by telling the early Franciscan how he could foster the easy enthusiasm which suffused the brotherhood. Both terms, blessed and servant, have a sure place in Franciscan language. The chapter of the Early Rule (Chapter Seventeen) where they confess the movement among them of the Spirit of the Lord finishes with the joyous sweep which rapidly characterized the movement. The word servant emerged from the brothers' reflection on work. The repeated use of blessed and servant in the early writings, far from being monotonous, was a celebration of the good things which the Spirit was bringing forth, and such celebration was welcome.

And how does one open oneself to blessedness? There follows, in Admonition Seventeen, a description of the early Franciscan's ideal sense of self. He has so entered into what God is doing through the brothers that he rejoices in the manifestation of the Spirit's work, whether it occur through him or through

another brother or through some other person. True blessedness lies in the abundance within which we celebrate life and the world. It does not lie in the confused claim for oneself of the good coming about—good work, good speech, a joyous meal, a striking conference, a political action, and so on. The true servant serves that process and rejoices in it, whether, in its particulars, it springs from him or from another. The early Franciscan is told to live in God's good presence and not to construct in his mind a false sense of himself. He is servant and not graceful homilist. He will applaud the graceful homily, whether from his lips or others. The early Franciscan locates his center within inspired action—within that action which arises out of obedience to the Spirit of the Lord. Now that we have set aside human plans, Francis told his brothers, all we have to do is figure out whither the Lord is leading us (RegNB 22:9). And they had several good rules of thumb for figuring that out. Admonition Seventeen is one of them.

But there is a further sentence to Admonition Seventeen. Francis proposes the case of someone who wants to benefit from another's contribution to the action, rather than to contribute to the action himself. Let us take as example the case of seeing to a fraternity's (or family's) finances and mood. Each one has to contribute something. Otherwise the bills do not get paid and the group dynamics do not come alive. Francis proposes that the one who holds back, expecting the other to come through and even to pick up slack, not only threatens success, but he does wrong, he sins, he opposes himself to the Spirit's promptings. There are people who prefer to be carried rather than involve themselves, as well as they can, in the action. When Francis spoke to the sick brother, he was asking him to devise ways in which "to give himself to the Lord God."

When someone labeled such advice a call to humility, he set it in the context of the age's morality, a morality of control and of rigidity; he did not read it in the context of Franciscan life. He wanted his brothers (or, as superior, his subjects) to take the Admonition to heart and, as humble individuals, to do selflessly what they were told to do. In other words, he put himself in the category of sin, as Francis describes it in the Admonition. The one urging humility was more intent on receiving the benefits of humble brothers than on getting caught up by inspired action.

Admonition Nineteen

Here is Admonition Nineteen:

Blessed the servant who does not consider himself better when praised and lifted up by men, any more than when looked on as vile, simple,

and repulsive, for a man is as much as he is before God and no more. Woe to the religious who, advanced by others to high position, has no wish to come down. And blessed that servant who does not aspire to high position and always desires to be under others' feet.

There is much in Admonition Nineteen that allows for commentary similar to that proposed for Admonition Seventeen. If we do not read the lines in the context that we have constructed in this essay, then we have to ask who is speaking to whom? Is this the sure voice of someone lecturing another about indifference to the opinion of others, and does it not suggest someone who believes that he knows better and consequently needs himself the advice he so generously imparts? However, when we take the lines as one moment in the brotherhood's self-education, with the early Franciscan listening to and passing on a useful clarification, it makes sense. It can even be taken as a good criterion for selecting those to whom the brothers entrust power for the sake of order in the brotherhood. As we see from Chapter Five in the Early Rule, the brotherhood suffered from ministers who used their power poorly.

But does not the last sentence in Admonition Nineteen propose humility? "Under others' feet" is close to the *humus*, the ground, which belongs to the word's etymology. Yes, it does propose humility, but here we have to distinguish. The lines are nurturing the Franciscan's sense of self rather than laying down the practice of virtue and of humility in particular. Someone who has grasped the basic line of Franciscan action, in a common effort to obey the Spirit, will not aspire to high office and will not put himself before others. He will not put himself before others because he is engaged in providing service and not in achieving rank. The early Franciscan hears the counsel as the application of a general Franciscan truth to the question of office. Insofar as he sees the wisdom of Admonition Nineteen and abides by it, he is being wise, not humble. Someone who observes his behavior and understands it has grounds to conclude: My brother is behaving admirably; he sustains others rather than aspires to rule them; he is truly humble. Admonition Nineteen, drawing on the brotherhood's story and using its language, says: Be wise. Be spiritual. And one who is wise and spiritual is humble.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, let us draw a few threads together. First of all, for whom is Francis writing the two Admonitions? He has in mind "the early Franciscan." We have caught glimpses of the early Franciscan as we examined several passages from the brotherhood's writings. And further, seeing as we are interested in knowing the Franciscan story, which we continue in our day, we can listen

to the words as addressed to us. Immediately, Francis wants his young brother to understand the workings of the Spirit of the Lord. Then, as is so evident in his relations with the Penitents, he does his best to share what he and his friends have learned with all who readily seek the Spirit's guidance. In the two Admonitions, as well as in the early Franciscan writings generally, we have words which belong to us today, for we are the ones who give meaning to the word Franciscan.

And second, the Admonitions do not teach individual virtue. They encourage and correct the basic action of "the life." Within that action, in his and her own way, one can prosper spiritually and help return all good things to God. Individuals need the support of others. They need the framework and the conversation of a common pursuit of the good life. Anyone who uses the two Admonitions to teach virtue, as did those who gave them titles, slips under the censure at the end of Admonition Seventeen.

Finally, the Franciscan, whether early or latterday, matures and thrives as a Franciscan in the action. There he or she learns the language and becomes part of the story. The vigor and the ambition of the story depend on those who, for years, have called themselves Franciscans. Through interaction with such Franciscans, we learn the spiritual pronouns *we*, *you*, *me*. The early Franciscan writings speak to us today, for they got our story going and they encourage and clarify it today still. They are the sources of the Franciscan self. They manifest the making of the Franciscan identity.



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The Millennium Rule

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Twenty years have now passed since the promulgation of the "new" SFO Rule on June 6, 1978. Those years have brought many changes. The process of regionalization has been completed; and new Constitutions have been approved and translated into various languages.¹ In a reflection entitled "The Twentieth Anniversary of the Rule," Emanuela De Nunzio expresses her belief that "the Rule of 1978 is more 'Franciscan' than those which preceded it." The Minister General of the SFO recalls the initial less-than-enthusiastic reception of the Rule, but heralds this 20th anniversary celebration as an occasion for Secular Franciscans "to rediscover this 'gift of the Spirit which leads to the Father.'" She writes:

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 which would enable a disciple of St. Francis of Assisi to follow more closely the Lord Jesus Christ while remaining in the world.²

Though I want to be as optimistic and enthusiastic as the Minister General, I find myself asking why, if the Rule "is truly a 'gift of the Spirit which leads to the Father,'" has it not attracted, enabled, empowered many more people?³ Despite my confusion, my questions, and my doubts about the Rule, I want to agree with Emanuela. I do believe that the Rule is a "gift of the Spirit

which leads to the Father"—or at least *can* be. I believe that we have a Rule that has been read, but not always *understood*; a way of life that has been approved, but not always *lived*; words that have been spoken, but not always *enfleshed*. The question, the problem, the challenge: how to make those words live, how to move from speaking about a way of life to living that way of life!

The Millennium Bug

I hope that the reflections and images that follow become a spark which ignites, that they may be addressed not to the head but to the heart and facilitate the move beyond understanding to incarnation. Towards that end, I have chosen to reflect on the 1978 Rule of the SFO as the "Millennium Rule." That title or focus could suggest the immediate and obvious connection: that this is the Rule which will bring Secular Franciscans into the third millennium. However, I chose the image for the Rule's less obvious, but I hope, more profound connection to the so-called millennium bug; that is, I want to speak in analogous terms of the Millennium Rule's "bug" and its "fix." Weaving the analogy of the millennium bug throughout these reflections, I will move from the past to the present, with a glance to the future in terms of the Rule's bug, its fix, and a process of implementation.

First a word about the millennium bug. We have all heard about the possible havoc that computers will wreak upon us when we reach the year 2000—the problem now commonly referred to as the millennium bug.

The year 2000 problem (Y2K) is more than a computer problem; it is a serious business crisis with the potential to create great havoc over the next few years if organizations fail to cope with it. . . . Sporadic electrical transmission failures could occur along with failures in water and sewer systems, traffic controls, medical devices, fuel delivery systems, and telecommunication systems.

While some people continue to deny the extent of the problem and its consequences, most people now acknowledge the seriousness of the crisis of the millennium bug. The enormity of the problem becomes evident in the estimated cost of fixing it: some companies have already spent hundreds of millions, and the total estimate is in the hundreds of billions of dollars. I do not want to argue the specifics of the Y2K problem or its fix. Rather, I want to speak analogously about the Rule as a way to negotiate the year 2000 (Y2K), not as a solution to the computer dilemma, but rather as a solution to the more radical and profoundly critical problem of our society: the failure to love.

Here again, many people acknowledge the severity of the crises facing us as we move to the new millennium: the crises of war, poverty, pollution, nuclear

threat, racism, genocide, violence in all its forms. But there are those who deny or refuse to face the crises. We have cultures and governments which allow children to die of starvation, which pollute the earth in the name of progress, threaten nuclear destruction, refuse to address the unjust global economy. The enormity of the problems, especially as we try to consider the global situation, becomes overwhelming.⁴ Thus, we begin to believe that we can do nothing. It is not "governments" or "cultures," however, but people who individually and collectively do things.

Just as the millennium bug cannot be ignored without tragic consequences, we cannot turn from the global challenges which face us, the problems of violence and injustice in our world, the gospel call to build the Kingdom—"going from gospel to life and life to the gospel." I want to suggest a fix—the Millennium Rule and each Secular Franciscan's call to live the Rule in the face of such overwhelming problems—and to offer the example of the people of Eritrea.

Though generally known for little else than their war against Ethiopia, the people of Eritrea stand as a model of hope and challenge. A special report on Africa in *Time* magazine included a description of a very different country amidst the developing nations of Africa:

By logic, the nation of Eritrea (pop. 3 million) should not exist. The secessionist province's independence fighters ought never to have defeated Ethiopia in their 30-year-long struggle. They were outmanned, outgunned, abandoned or betrayed by every ally; their cause was hopeless. They won by force of character, a unity and determination so steely not all the modern armaments, superpower support or economic superiority of Ethiopia could withstand it. The spirit that saw the Eritreans through 10 years in the trenches of their mountain redoubt at Nakfa has built them a nation from scratch, since independence was finally consummated in 1993.⁵

The self-sacrificing character of this people, their extraordinary dedication to the public welfare, their unity and determination to face their problems together using their own resources makes them an apt symbol of hope.⁶ Against enormous odds, they have built a nation where there is "no begging, no corruption, virtually no crime."⁷ The description of the Eritreans suggested to me an even more powerful image—believers grounded in the Gospel of Christ working together to build the Kingdom; followers of Francis from various regions working together to create a world where there is no hunger, violence, and virtually no crime; Secular Franciscans throughout the world working together individually and collectively "from gospel to life and from life to the gospel."⁸ Amidst all the violence and against incredible odds, Eritreans live

from a different set of values; they have a different vision. Amidst the problems facing our world in the third millennium, Secular Franciscans live from a different wisdom and with a different understanding of power, given in their "Millennium Rule." As all Eritreans worked together in the face of crisis—men and women, young and old, people of various tribes and religions—so too, all Franciscans need to work together, none saying "I am too old" or "I am too young." Every Franciscan must ask "how am I called to serve in this world?"

The "Bug": The Making of the Millennium Rule

Secular Franciscans live "in the world." The emphasis on the *secular* nature of their vocation permeated the *Rule Project*, that is, the development of this Millennium Rule.⁹ Responses in 1967 called for a complete revision of the Rule precisely so that it could be both Franciscan and *Secular* (the 1968 draft text was rejected because it was too "religious"). The 1969 Assisi Congress offered guidelines for the development of the Rule, in sum: to live the gospel, following Francis, through conversion, in community, as seculars, in life-giving union with all Franciscans. The resultant *Basic Text of 1974* emphasized conversion but failed to articulate adequately the secular nature. The 1975 *Redaction* attempted to improve the text, adding a chapter, "In the Midst of the World." The final text of 1978 reflects the vision of *Gaudium et Spes*. Listen to the text of the Rule itself:

- The brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state [art. 2].
- Members of the Church through Baptism, and united more intimately with the Church by profession, let them be witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words [art. 6].
- Let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances of life [art 10].
- Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively [art. 14].
- Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives [art. 15].
- Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community [art. 16].

The *Constitutions* echo this emphasis:

The secular state characterizes the spirituality and the apostolic life of those belonging to the SFO. Their secularity, with respect to vocation and to apostolic life, expresses itself according to the respective state, that is, for the laity, contributing to building up the Kingdom of God by their presence in their life-situations and in their temporal activities [art. 3].

Indeed, the new Rule does express the secular nature of the SFO. But there is a bug in the Rule in two different "places": deep within the original "binary code," that is, within the original text; and in the change-over in the "binary code date" in the full implementation of the quick fix of 1977.

The first manifestation of the bug (the problem with the "binary code" or text itself) resulted precisely from the process followed for developing the new Rule. Just as the original computer programmers chose a 2-digit date code for good reasons, so too the people formulating the text of the new Rule chose particular guidelines for developing the Rule for good reasons. But as the choice of two digits contained an unexpected problem, so too the process for developing guidelines contained an unforeseen critical flaw—the process did not include a conscious return to Franciscan sources. Both choices were understandable: programmers needed to conserve space within the code and never imagined that the programs would continue beyond 1990; those present at the International Interobediential Congress worked without benefit of the critical studies on Franciscan texts which became known a few years later. Not surprisingly, therefore, the new Rule's form up to 1977 reflected more thoroughly the theology and vision of Vatican II than specifically Franciscan elements.

However, in October 1977, just prior to sending the text to the curia for approval, the Ministers General inserted as a prologue Francis's *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*, or what has commonly been called Francis's *First Letter to All the Faithful*. The insertion of what Esser claimed could be the original rule given by Francis to the early Penitents represented a fix for the bug in the text of the Rule.¹⁰ I see the addition of that text of Francis as the single most important moment in the whole process of the development of the new Rule precisely because it sees Francis's vision as the interpretative key.

But the second part of the Rule's bug concerns the implementation of the quick fix. To return to our example: if programmers do not rewrite the code, the year 00 will wreak havoc. If programmers do successfully rewrite the binary code with 4-digit dates, then programs will function correctly as we negotiate the Y2K. Analogously, if the Rule captures only the secular element, then our "being in the world," even doing good things, can be empty and mundane. But if this way of "being in the world" truly incorporates the fix, i.e. captures Francis's insight and experience, it will lead to the profound experi-

ence of being "spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1EpFid 1:7; 2EpFid 50).¹¹

I wonder if perhaps the fix has not yet been negotiated well enough. Why is there not more enthusiasm, joy, excitement, growth? I wonder if a malaise experienced in some parts of the Order, in many different fraternities, does not mirror the general experience of Catholics in our country. The pre-Vatican II Church could well be critiqued for being too other-worldly, over-emphasizing love of God and one's own personal salvation. The "Third Order Secular," as it was then known, was understood as efficacious for personal sanctification. The post-Vatican II emphasis on our involvement in the world and participation in the work of salvation has brought an increased emphasis on the community and a world-centered focus. It sometimes seems we neglect the God-centered focus, the transcendent dimension of life and faith.

In a recent article, "Religious Life and the Eclipse of Love for God," Edward Vacek, SJ, addresses this problem.¹² He speaks about the contemporary emphasis on love for self: "We hear endlessly repeated the half-truth that we cannot love others, including God, unless we first love ourselves."¹³ He speaks about how love for God has become morally optional for many people, how even religious people feel awkward speaking openly about their love for God, how intimacy with God is "something they no longer hope for and perhaps never did."¹⁴ It ought not be that way for Franciscans. How can this Franciscan "way in the world" be a vehicle for intimacy with God?

The "Fix": Understanding the Millennium Rule

The decision to enter all future dates in a specific format including four digits for the year does not in itself solve the Y2K problem. Analogously, the fix for the Rule does not simply entail the decision to insert a specific Franciscan text. The fix needs to be embedded throughout the entire code for the program. Francis's vision needs to be incarnated in every dimension of the secular life.

Francis exhorts his hearers to do penance. Francis calls those early Penitents to a life of *radical* conversion in the world. He proclaims:

Oh, how happy and blessed are those men and women who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with all their strength, and love their neighbors as themselves, and hate their bodies with their vices and sins, and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and produce worthy fruits of penance (1EpFid 1:1-4).

First Francis presents a call to radical conversion: to love God, to love all

people, to turn from selfishness, to unite oneself with the Body of Christ, and to practice the love we experience and profess. But Francis also proclaims that doing penance assures intimacy with God:

Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, because "the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them" and he will make "his home and dwelling among them," and they are the sons of the heavenly Father, whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (1EpFid 1:5-7).

In his Testament, Francis wrote:

The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and afterward I lingered a little and left the world (Test 1-3).

Critical for Francis and, thus, critical for implementing the fix is the *doing*. Francis's work with lepers changed what was bitter into "sweetness of soul" for him. As the fix in the code must be followed consistently throughout the entire program, so too Francis's vision given in the Prologue to the Rule must become the way of "being in the world." All Christians are called to love God and love neighbor. Somehow it must be the how of "doing" that love that is essential for the fix. What more precisely was Francis's call to *love* God and neighbor?

Unfortunately, "love" has many different meanings. We use the term very loosely: I love God; I love Francis; I love pasta. To complicate matters further, our ability to love depends upon our own human and spiritual development.¹⁵ But if love of God and neighbor is the essence of this penitential life, then we must seek to understand as fully as possible the meaning of "love." Robert Sternberg developed a model which effectively distinguishes the various types of love.¹⁶ His theory can also be useful in analyzing and understanding our own love for God and neighbor. Hence, I want to examine briefly his theory and use it to explore Francis's exhortation to love God.

A Call to Love and Penance

Sternberg proposes a structural model which has three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment. Passion, the motivational component, refers

to the intense longing for union with another person (sexual and/or psychological). Intimacy, the emotional component, refers to feelings in a relationship which promote closeness or connectedness. Commitment, the cognitive component, generally follows upon the short-term decision to love a certain other and consists in long-term dedication to maintaining that love. The three components develop differently within a relationship, change over time, and affect one another. While the model is admittedly an oversimplification of a complex human phenomenon, it can illumine various aspects or types of love.

Sternberg distinguishes different types of love: infatuation involves only passion; liking describes a situation where only intimacy is present; empty love involves commitment but lacks intimacy and passion; companionate love entails commitment and intimacy; romantic love embodies both intimacy and passion but lacks commitment; fatuous love involves commitment and passion without intimacy. Consummate love or complete love is the coming together in a relationship of all three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment. He believes that this type of complete love is difficult but not impossible to achieve.

Using Sternberg's model, we can identify different types of love for God. I believe that what Francis intends by his call to love God is consummate love, which is demanding and uncommon. Let us look briefly at some of the different ways that love for God is experienced or expressed and then move to a deeper examination of consummate love.

The love for God experienced and expressed by a person who has a dramatic conversion often takes the form of infatuation, a love which involves only passion. Admittedly, this can develop into a more mature form of love. However, if it remains at the level of feeling, it can die quickly—as soon as God is no longer experienced as attractive, comforting, or responsive to the person's needs. At the other extreme is love which involves only commitment. The person who slavishly prays, performs all religious obligations, or continues working hard in ministry, but in a detached, mechanical way, represents empty love, a commitment that lacks the deep involvement of passion and intimacy.

Perhaps more familiar and more subtly defective is love for God which lacks either commitment or intimacy. Romantic love, rich with passion, evidences excitement and can well energize others. But when it is no longer exciting or experienced as nurturing or is lacking in commitment, the relationship ends.

Fatuous love involves commitment and passion but can be dangerous because of its lack of intimacy, honest self-knowledge, and openness to the fullness of truth that is God. This type of love can take the form of fanaticism, self-righteous condemnation of others, or just an inability to accept the sinful, limited condition of the Church.

Admittedly these examples are exaggerated. The various experiences and expressions of love are more varied and subtle. Nonetheless, the model can be helpful not only in describing problematic religious expressions, but also in identifying or discerning how our own love for God might need to mature. Hence, let us look at Francis's call to love God and neighbor in terms of Sternberg's model.

Francis invites his hearers to a life of penance. His call to do penance is a call to a consummate love for God. Some Franciscans lose their way or burn out along the way of penance because doing penance has become *their* project and does not flow directly from their experience of God's having always known, accepted, and loved them in their sinfulness. In other words, "doing penance" reflects commitment without the necessary energizing dimension of either intimacy or passion.

In being led among the lepers, Francis came to know more profoundly his own being "in sin." In his commitment to be with the lepers and to care for them, Francis moved into deeper intimacy with God. In his Testament, Francis describes a change in vision. He came to know not only the lepers but also God, and thus himself, in a new way. But in seeing his true self, in bringing that weak and sinful self before a loving and accepting God, Francis became free. Standing naked before God, claiming as his own nothing but his sinfulness, Francis let God be God. His commitment fostered intimacy with God, which created passion within him.

We have such experiences. At times, in commitment to another, we come to see our own sinfulness more clearly. When we find the courage to risk sharing our inner self with another loving person, we experience intimacy, which transforms and energizes. When we are able to see and claim our sinfulness before God, we allow God to love us as we are (intimacy); we become truly free and energized to respond and to praise God (passion); and we continue to serve (commitment). We discover with Francis that "the love of him who loved us much is much to be loved" (2Cel 196). Francis intends a love which involves intimacy, passion, and commitment. He writes:

We must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh; rather, we must be simple, humble, and pure. And let us hold ourselves in contempt and scorn, since through our own fault all of us are miserable and contemptible, vermin and worms, as the Lord says through the prophet: I am a worm and no man, the scorn of men and the outcast of the people. We must never desire to be over others; rather we must be servants and subject to every human creature for God's sake (2EpFid 45-47).

David Flood suggests that these verses contain a summary of the Franciscan way of penance. In these verses Francis explains that those who do penance live by a different wisdom, engage in a different struggle, and have a different understanding of power.¹⁷ Living by a different wisdom, being "simple, humble, and pure," involves "intimacy." Seeing ourselves not according to the flesh and values of the world but honestly before God, knowing God's great love, makes us humble. Knowing our sinfulness and God's merciful love frees us to live simply. "Holding self in contempt" can be connected with true passion, which becomes the drive to know more fully Jesus, the crucified Christ, the revelation of God's love. Out of this intimacy and passion flows our commitment to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be humble and poor servants of all, precisely as a response to the love we have experienced. But this commitment involves living in the world with a different understanding of power.

Francis's call to penance, rightly understood, can be expressed then as a call to consummate love. While each person's experience and expression of doing penance is unique, what makes the doing Franciscan is the active pursuit of passion, intimacy, and commitment—all in relation to the love of God given in Christ crucified: "May the power of your love, O Lord, fiery and sweet as honey, wean my heart from all that is under heaven, so that I may die for love of your love, you who were so good as to die for love of my love."¹⁸

As intimacy grows so does our passion soar—gratitude for God's goodness and love; praise for all gifts and blessings; desire to be with the Lord and live in love; excitement and joy which know no bounds and drive us to serve God as simple, humble servants. Herein we find the appropriate link, the union between love of God and love of neighbor. Consummate love of God includes love of neighbor, but it rightly begins with God having loved us. This is the very energy from which we live and serve, from which we love our neighbor.

A commitment fostered by intimacy and energized by passion brings life and leads to the mystical union and ecstatic joy of Francis who proclaims: "Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them . . . they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1EpFid 1:5-7).

Negotiating the Y2K: Living the Millennium Rule

An anonymous poem entitled "The Most Beautiful Flower" relates the tale of a woman, full of self-pity, who is given a half-dead flower by a child who tells her of its beauty and its fragrance. When she realizes that the child is blind, she reflects:

Through the eyes of a blind child, at last I could see
 The problem was not with the world; the problem was me.
 And for all of those times I myself had been blind,
 I vowed to see the beauty in life, and appreciate every second that's
 mine.

The poem offers a penetrating image of engaging in a different struggle and living by a different wisdom. It speaks of how a person sees differently when touched by love. The woman was transformed; she was brought out of her self-centered concern; her blindness was healed by an act of unmerited love; with a new wisdom, she began to see differently.

A few years ago a secular Franciscan explained to me how she had been too afraid to participate fully in the fraternity's apostolate. She was too afraid to accompany them in the van to the slums of the inner city. Rather, she stayed at the suburban church and helped to prepare coffee and sandwiches. Then one day she asked if she could ride with them, explaining that she didn't want to get out of the van. The others agreed and she went. She continued to ride with them and eventually found herself out of the van distributing sandwiches and talking with the homeless people. Then one day the others didn't show up so she jumped in the van and did it all herself. She spoke about how much she now loved doing it, how much she received from those "morning runs." In the doing, what had been "bitter" and fearful had become sweet. But she was aware that she was able to join in the doing precisely because her sisters and brothers loved and accepted her as she was—fearful, hesitant, and blind. Her desire to serve (commitment) allowed her to engage in a different struggle, coming to know more fully herself, others, and God (intimacy), which brought a new passion to life.

Why does our "doing" not always bring us to intimacy with God? How is it that we do penance, work in our apostolates, serve the needy and yet know only weariness and frustration? Why don't more people experience mystical joy? Why, within a community engaged in the same apostolate, do some people grow in grace, feel alive and become empowered, while others feel overwhelmed and become frustrated? Could the difference not be that, in their doing, the latter pursue only commitment to the neglect of intimacy or passion?

Times of crisis, our own times of suffering and fear can be moments of grace. When led among lepers, Francis discovered a new wisdom. My own recent experience with cancer helped me to understand Francis's experience. My own doing penance with cancer, difficult and painful at times, brought me to see cancer as a "brother."¹⁹

And so the Rule is indeed a "gift of the Spirit which leads to the Father"; the Rule is an invitation to do penance, to love God and neighbor. The fix in this Millennium Rule was the insertion of Francis's exhortation to penance,

the inclusion of Francis's invitation to consummate love. Negotiating the Y2K of our Rule will entail the implementation of that fix.

One can only imagine what our world might look like in the next millennium if all Franciscans throughout the world work individually and collectively to implement the fix, that is, fully enter into doing penance, live by a different wisdom, engage in a different struggle, have a different understanding of power, relentlessly pursue consummate love, see our true selves in the light which is God, know at our depths God's love and healing, serve all of creation especially the "little ones" for God's sake. One can only imagine what our world might look like in the next millennium if all Franciscans truly live as "spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Endnotes:

¹The final revision of the General Constitutions will be discussed at the next General Chapter which will be held in Madrid, Spain, from October 23-31, 1999.

²Emanuela De Nunzio, SFO, "The Twentieth Anniversary of the Rule" *The Cord*, 48 (1998): 109-112.

³I asked similar questions in a previous work in which I tried to "unpack" the Rule through an analysis of conversion. See Robert M. Stewart, OFM, "*De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam*": *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* (Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, Rome 1991). I do not want simply to re-hash that theory but rather open up the Rule in new ways.

⁴Some people who attended the Environmental Health Conference in June 1998 (sponsored by the national Ecology Commission of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States) admitted feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the problems. However, they also felt energized by the gathering of people and expressed hope.

⁵*Time* (March 30, 1998): 41.

⁶"Every male is required to spend six months in military service and twelve months working in rehabilitation projects; many doctors who were abroad came back to offer their services; men and women broke rock by hand to repave a destroyed highway; the country is astonishingly free of the social plagues that taint much of the continent." See *Time* (March 30, 1998): 42.

⁷*Time* (March 30, 1998): 42.

⁸In discussing their country's situation, some Eritrean Capuchin friars recently described *Time*'s presentation as a bit "romantic" because, since independence was gained, the people have been less unified, the country less idyllic. However, they confirmed the accuracy of the image of Eritrea during its years of war and crisis. If, as is often the case, we tend to rise to the occasion and are at our best in times of crisis, then we ought hope that all Franciscans sense profoundly the full extent of our present world crisis.

⁹For an extensive discussion of the process followed in developing the new Rule from 1965 through 1978, see chapter 4: "The Development of the Rule to 1978," in Stewart, "*De Illis*," 241-320.

¹⁰For a brief treatment on the addition of the Prologue, see: Stewart, "*De Illis*," 310-311.

¹¹References to Francis's writings are from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, tr. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap, and Ignatius Brady, OFM (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

¹²See: Edward Vacek, SJ, "Religious Life and the Eclipse of Love for God," in *Review for Religious* (1998): 118-137.

¹³Vacek, 124.

¹⁴Vacek, 126.

¹⁵The discussion that follows assumes a person has reached post-conventional levels of human and faith development. For a basic introduction to adult faith development, see the work of James Fowler, especially *Stages of Faith*.

¹⁶Robert J. Sternberg, *The Triangle of Love* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1988). For a concise summary of Sternberg's theory, see: Robert J. Trotter, "The Three Faces of Love," *Psychology Today* (September 1986): 46-50, 54.

¹⁷See David Flood, OFM, "The Commonitorium," in *Haversack*, 3 (1980): 22-23, n. 4. For a fuller discussion see "The Commonitorium," *Haversack* (1979-1980): 3/1: 20-23; 3/2: 20-23; 3/3: 21-23; 3/4: 20-24; 3/5: 19-24; 3/6: 21-23; and the discussion in Stewart, *De Illis*, 174-183.

¹⁸Although the prayer *Absorbeat* cannot be claimed as an authentic writing of Francis, nonetheless it could well have been prayed by Francis and does echo the prayer that Celano attributes to Francis (2Cel 196).

¹⁹For a reflection on my experience with cancer, see: "A Leper Named Cancer," *The Cord*, 48/5 (1998): 234-240.

Francis of Assisi and Global Consciousness

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Introduction

Franciscan life today struggles to find its path through the labyrinth of a complex world. Social-political unrest, outbursts of violence, and ecological destruction place challenges and demands on living the Gospel life. We speak today of "global consciousness" and rightly so. Through advances in technology and mass communication we have almost immediate awareness of other cultures, religions, and traditions. We are impacted by profound suffering in the world—in Kosovo, Rwanda, and Columbia—as well as, perhaps, in our own immediate neighborhoods. We perceive spiritual meaning in oriental religions and adopt practices such as T'ai Chi Chih and Yoga, realizing their significance for the wholeness of well-being. We have become, in many ways, a global people with an awareness not only of historical change but of "otherness" and "difference."

And yet, when it comes down to who we are—or claim to be—we are Franciscans, Christians with a "Catholic" consciousness. Perhaps if we were catholic in the literal sense, we would be truly global. But the fact of the matter is, Catholic consciousness and global consciousness are not entirely synonymous. In fact, I would venture to say that Catholic consciousness, in some ways, conflicts with global consciousness. Catholic consciousness is fundamentally individualistic. One's relationship to God is essentially private, interior and personal. Although the sacramental and communal life of the Church is important to us, the journey to God is ultimately a solitary one. Catholic consciousness is built on the edifice of scholastic theology, hierarchy, patriarchy, and the primacy of law, and the safest way to God is by keeping the rules and

[Francis] preached to the people standing about,
and he spoke charming words

concerning the nativity of the poor King
and the little town of Bethlehem. . . .

His mouth was filled with
more sweet affection
than with words. . . .

When he spoke the name
Child of Bethlehem or Jesus,
his tongue licked his lips, . . .

relishing and savoring with
pleased palate the sweetness of the words.

The child Jesus had been forgotten
in the hearts of many;

but by the working of his grace,
he was brought to life again
through his servant St. Francis

and stamped upon their fervent memory.

At length the solemn night celebration was brought to a close,
and each one returned home with holy joy (1Cel 86).



following the laws. Whereas global consciousness demands an awareness of otherness and difference, Catholic consciousness underscores the primacy of the individual. The basis of this difference is what various writers have described as a shift in consciousness, from the first axial period to the second axial period.¹ In the first axial period, the human person as a rational, individual, and autonomous being emerged; in the second axial period, the person as one who is relational and interconnected is becoming more evident. We are in tension between these two periods because much of our theology has been formulated within first axial period consciousness. While we find ourselves becoming more immersed in the second axial period, therefore, a period of global consciousness, the theology that shapes our lives in the world is primarily first axial.

Although our tradition is medieval, it is my belief that a retrieval of early Franciscan theology can make a valuable contribution to Christian life in the second axial period. It is first and foremost a relational theology grounded in the self-diffusive goodness or love of God. The authenticity of this relational theology finds its roots in the charism of Francis of Assisi. What I would like to explore in this paper is the idea that Francis of Assisi developed a global consciousness through his relationship to Christ and is a model of the second axial person. Through conformity to the Crucified Christ, Francis transcended the boundaries of culture and tradition and found God precisely in the other who was different from him. Through his radical conformity to Christ, Francis developed an awareness that all peoples and all things of creation manifest the goodness of God and thus comprise the path to God. To begin to understand Francis in this light will enable us to broaden our understanding of God, of community, and ultimately, of finding our way to God in the contemporary cloister of the world.

The First Axial Period

In 1949 the German philosopher, Karl Jaspers, published a book called, *The Origin and Goal of History*, in which he postulated that between the centuries 800 and 200 B.C.E. a major shift in human consciousness took place in five major parts of the world: China, India, Persia, Greece, and Israel. He described this shift as an "axial period" since it "gave birth to everything which, since then, the human person has been able to be."² What makes this period the "axis" of human history, even our *own* history today, is the fact that humans emerged as "individuals" in the proper sense. The significance of axial period consciousness is apparent when considered in light of pre-axial consciousness. In the pre-axial period, the human person was cosmic, collective, tribal, mythic, and ritualistic. Myth was a way in which the human person gave meaning to

his/her world, which usually meant, in some way, a subservience to nature. The idea of primal consciousness as mimetic consciousness meant that humans identified with their surroundings. Ewert Cousins notes that the consciousness of tribal cultures was located in the cosmos and in fertility cycles of nature. Primitive persons "mimed" and venerated nature, which appeared as a sacred reality determining one's destiny. This created a harmony between peoples and the world of nature, a harmony expressed in myth and ritual. While primitive people were closely linked to the cosmos, they were also closely linked to one another. One gained one's identity in relation to the tribe. The strong web of interrelationships within the tribe sustained persons psychologically, energizing all aspects of their lives.

John Cobb claims that what lies at the basis of the axial period is the increasing role that rationality came to have at this time.³ The more profound role of reason in human life had several implications. Rationality, which meant the ability to control, check, and analyze, began to supercede mythical thinking, which was governed by "projection," fantasy, and fulfillment. Axial consciousness generated a new self-awareness that included awareness of autonomy and a new sense of individuality. The human person as subject emerged. Jaspers states that, with axial consciousness, personality was revealed for the first time in history. With the emergence of the rational individual came a new sense of freedom by which the human person could make conscious and deliberate decisions.⁴

In light of pre-axial consciousness, we can say that the axial period marks the culmination of a long process of human complexification and differentiation. As William Thompson states:

What we can notice is an increasing expansion of "worlds," from the immediate and mythical world of primitive man, to the conventional and thus increasingly rationalized world of the great civilizations, to the post-conventional world of axial man.⁵

This expansion or "evolution" in human development, from myth to rationalization to individuation, is what characterizes the axial person.

The Emergence of Religious Consciousness

According to Ewert Cousins, the emergence of axial consciousness was decisive for religions, since it marked the divide in history where the great religions emerged and separated themselves from their primal antecedents. The great religions of the world as we know them today are the product of the axial period. Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Judaism took shape in their classical form during this period; and Judaism provided the base

for the later emergence of Christianity and Islam. As Cousins states: "The move into axial consciousness released enormous spiritual energy. It opened up the individual spiritual path, especially the inner way in which the new subjectivity became the avenue into the transcendent."⁶ The human person no longer relied on the powers of nature to fulfill the desires of the human spirit. Now the realization of an autonomous, individual human nature underscored the awareness of a personal God.

One of the most distinctive forms of spirituality that became available in the axial period was monasticism. Although it had roots in the earlier Hindu tradition, it emerged in a clearly defined way in Buddhism and Jainism at the peak of the axial period and later developed in Christianity. Monasticism reflected the enormous spiritual energy released in the axial individual in which the new subjectivity became the avenue into the transcendent. Axial consciousness allowed the deeper self to sort out the difference between the illusion of the phenomenal world and the authentic vision of reality. On the ethical level it allowed individual moral conscience to take a critical stand against the collectivity. And it made possible a link between the moral and spiritual aspects of self, so that a path could be charted through virtues toward the ultimate goal of the spiritual quest.⁷

Within Christianity, monasticism became the predominant form of the spiritual life. Those who desired to seek ultimate fulfillment in God left the world to enter the cloister where the life of heaven was anticipated through contemplation. Christian monastic spirituality, with its inherent theology, typifies what came to characterize Catholic theology on the whole. The notion that God was ultimately the transcendent absolute being meant that the fullness of being could only be attained in seeking God by transcending the world. The I-Thou relationship that could lead to fully actualized personhood required that one dissociate oneself from family, friends, and the world itself. The word *monachus* means the "solitary one."

The pagan philosopher Plotinus described the journey to the One as the flight of the 'alone to the Alone,' a phrase that aptly fit the Christian spiritual journey. While not all patristic writers adhered to Plotinus's notion, still it characterized the monastic spiritual journey as one that was vertical, transcending, and individualistic. Correspondingly, the God to whom the journey was directed was transcendent, essentially unknowable, and, for all practical purposes, monistic. The Christian of the first axial period, therefore, looked to a radically transcendent God, a God of absolute being who, changeless, governed a changing world "from above." The task of the Christian was to reach the changeless world, the kingdom of heaven, by overcoming the "shipwreck" of this changing world through Jesus Christ, Savior and Redeemer. Monastic life was the exemplary Christian life because, through the grace of God, one

could live the angelic life within the confines of the cloister and anticipate the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem above.

The Second Axial Period

There is no doubt that as Christians move into the third millennium, the question of who Christ is for us resonates with new urgency. In his book, *Christ of the Twenty-First Century*, Cousins illuminates the relationship between theology and culture and asks, "who is Christ for us today?" The meaning of Christ, he states, now resonates through a dynamic and expanding universe, through billions of galaxies whose history extends fifteen billion years into the past and unfolds into a projected future of billions of years. On the planet earth, the question of who Christ is for us coincides with the emergence of global consciousness. When Christians raise questions about Christ, they must now ask: how is Christ related to Hindu history, to Buddhist history, to the history of the universe itself? Cousins attempts to answer this question by indicating that we are in a period of transforming consciousness. He claims that we are in a major shift, not only within Christianity but in all world religions and world cultures. He refers to this new period as the "second axial period," because it is a period of global consciousness whereby people are becoming more aware of belonging to humanity as a whole and not to a specific group. For the first time since the appearance of human life on our planet, he states, all of the tribes, all of the nations, all of the religions are beginning to share a common history.⁸

According to Cousins, the consciousness of the first axial period opened up many possibilities, particularly with regard to the experience of God. However, the release of spiritual energy thrust the axial person in the direction of the spirit and away from the earth, away from life cycles and the harmony with nature which the primal peoples experienced and which they made the basis of their spirituality.⁹ Monasticism did not exist among primal peoples, Cousins states, because primal consciousness did not contain the distinct center of individuality necessary to produce the monk as a religious type. Monks and nuns themselves took a radical stand as marginal persons, separating themselves from family and community, stripping themselves of material goods by practicing poverty, and withdrawing from the fertility cycles by celibacy—as wandering beggars or as members of monastic communities who shared their sense of radicalness.¹⁰

Although Cousins does not advocate an abandonment of monasticism in the second axial period, his attention to this period of global consciousness underscores the need for a new spiritual path to God, which he describes through the tradition of the mystics. It is the mystics, he indicates, who had

penetrating insight into the spiritual significance of the cosmos. In light of this, Cousins states that the global consciousness of the twenty-first century must be seen from two perspectives: 1) from a horizontal perspective, cultures and religions must meet each other on the surface of the globe, entering into creative encounters that will produce a complexified collective consciousness;¹¹ 2) from a vertical perspective, they must plunge their roots deep into the earth in order to provide a stable and secure base for future development. This new global consciousness must be organically ecological, supported by structures that will ensure justice and peace. The voices of the oppressed must be heard and heeded: the poor, women, racial and ethnic minorities. These groups, along with the earth itself, can be looked upon as the prophets and teachers of the second axial period. This emerging two-fold global consciousness is not only a creative possibility to enhance the twenty-first century, Cousins states, it is an absolute necessity if we are to survive.¹²

Jesus Christ: The Axis of Transformation

Global consciousness of the second axial period is based on the awareness of "otherness," that is, other cultures, traditions, religions, and non-human creation. Whereas the first axial person was characterized by an individualistic, rational, and autonomous nature, the second axial person is characterized ultimately by relationality. We now realize that we do not exist in isolation or as autonomous units. The Newtonian world of atomistic parts is now past. For the first time since the appearance of human life on our planet, all tribes, nations, and religions realize that they share a common history. The convergence of disparate cultures into an organic whole and the emergence of global consciousness aided by technology and mass communication now impel each person to become aware of belonging to the entire globe and not merely to an ethnic group or tribe or nation.

Whatever we say about Franciscan life today, we must admit that it is a life in transition within the second axial period. Because it demands a transformation in consciousness, that is, the development of a global consciousness, it is no longer viable or relevant for the follower of Christ to seek out an individual path to sanctity and salvation. Rather, the follower of Christ must seek the path of salvation that touches upon the whole of humanity, nurtures a sensitivity to nature and a relation to the cosmos, and is dialogical with other religions and cultures. In this respect, to speak of Franciscan life in the second axial period is to speak of a new way of living the Gospel life and of following Christ. If the path of individual identity must give way to a global one, it means redefining the path of the Christ in relation to a pluralistic world and an organic cosmos. It is here, I believe, that Francis's Christ mysticism has much to offer.

It may seem odd to choose a medieval saint as a model for a new age of global consciousness; yet, Francis of Assisi is a saint far more relevant to our global age than perhaps he was to his own. What makes Francis so relevant is not the life of poverty or itinerancy that he opted for; rather it is his loving relationship to all people including non-Christians, his sense of brotherhood to all of creation, and his desire to be Gospel-in-the world by living in the spirit of compassionate love. Leonard Swidler states that the most fundamental transformative element of the second axial period is dialogue, which he defines as a conversation with those who think differently, the *primary* purpose of which is *for me* to learn from the other.¹³ Although Swidler is alluding to dialogue with other world religions and cultures, the idea can be transposed to the spiritual life as the basis of all other relationships. Francis's relationship to Christ was an ongoing dialogue in which he recognized the truth of his own life and the truth of God. It is through dialogue or entering into the other, Jesus Christ, that Francis's openness to the plurality of the world matured.

Although he was not a trained theologian, Francis had a profound sense of God's presence in the world through the mystery of the incarnation. Because of Jesus Christ, every person, every created thing, including all the elements of the universe, spoke to Francis of the presence of God. He had a deep sense of unity with all things, calling each "brother" and "sister" because he recognized that each had the same primordial source as himself.¹⁴ Nowhere is this more eloquently expressed than in his *Canticle of Brother Sun*:

Praised be you, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars,
You have formed them in heaven clear and precious and beautiful.
Praised be you, my Lord, for Brother Wind,
And for the air—cloudy and serene—and every kind of weather,
By which you give sustenance to your creatures.
Praised be you, my Lord, for Brother Fire,
By whom you light the night,
And he is beautiful and jocund and robust and strong (CantSol).¹⁵

The *Canticle* is a joyful expression of Francis's sense of community, of relationship, of openness to the world that is created and sustained by the goodness of God. Although Francis does not specifically mention Jesus Christ in his *Canticle*, it is entirely penetrated by the mystery of Christ.¹⁶ There is a profound sense of interconnectivity in Francis's *Canticle* that cannot be ascribed simply to the poetry of the song. Rather, it is permeated by a "Christic" interconnectedness; Christ is the center of Francis's universe. Eutimio Da Arigma has described the *Canticle* as a hymn which proclaims the humanity of God as the "knot of cosmic interlacement." God is with all creatures in a deep sense of being intimately related to all things in creation which are taken into

his incarnation and transformed in his glory.¹⁷ We might say that in the *Canticle* Francis reveals his experience of the cosmic Christ, the crucified and glorified one, who has embraced all things in the diffusive love of God. For Francis, to live in Christ is to have the Spirit of the Lord who joins one to Christ in the most intimate way as mother, spouse, brother, or sister (2EpFid 51). Thus, one who lives in the Spirit lives in Christ and begins to see the world as it truly is, permeated in the radiance of the divine presence.

The basis of Francis's Christic universe, revealed in the *Canticle*, corresponds to the fact that his life-long spiritual journey was an ever-deepening relationship with Christ, an ongoing relationship of dialogue, growth, and transformation. It was a life of growing in love with an "other" who was different from himself. Because sin or the desire for self-appropriation constantly thwarts this growth in relationship, Francis realized that a life of penance was necessary. He conceived the life of penance as one of dispossession and other-centeredness, a life of following Christ Crucified in his suffering, death, and resurrection. According to Bonaventure, it is Christ Crucified who became the axis of Francis's transformation. By entering into dialogue with the Crucified, Francis came to discover the truth of his own humanity, indeed, of all humanity, and he learned to love by suffering in, with, and for the other. Francis grew in compassionate love. Bonaventure indicates that Francis came to resemble Christ through compassionate love not only in spirit but in his body as well, bearing the marks of the Crucified One in the wounds of his flesh. In one of his sermons, Bonaventure indicates that Francis was forged into the likeness of Christ through the power of love:

Just as iron 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.¹⁸

Yet, if Francis was formed into the likeness of Christ by the fire of divine love, one must admit that suffering was at the heart of his transformation. To conceive of his life as a progression from the romantic knight of Assisi to the icon of Christ with little in between is to overlook the key to Francis's transformation, and that is suffering. Francis learned to love the other by learning to suffer in union with Christ; it is suffering that revealed to Francis the mystery of divine love. He learned to love compassionately because he learned to suffer compassionately. He began to "feel" first with Christ on the cross by "seeing" the suffering of Christ who he believed to be truly divine and human. Through seeing and feeling the compassion of God, Francis came to see and feel with everyone he encountered and all things of creation.

The Franciscan mystic Angela of Foligno states that "as we see so we love, the more perfectly and purely we see, the more perfectly and purely we love."¹⁹ Because Francis came to see with the eyes of compassionate love, he began to love compassionately and this meant a *crossing over* to the other and a sharing with the other in suffering and joy. Although Francis "crossed over" into the life of the other, Jesus Christ and everything united in Christ, he did not become Jesus but he became truly Francis, the person of self-diffusive-compassionate love who tenderly embraced Muslims, Christians, and the scattered seeds of the earth.

The contemporary writer Pierre Teilhard de Chardin claimed that union differentiates because in union the identity of each individual element is deepened and fulfilled. The more "other" one becomes in union, the more one finds oneself as "self" since the irreproducible core of self is not annihilated but is the very basis of union.²⁰ Teilhard's notion of "creative union" underscores the mystery of Francis's life in Christ. The more Francis grew in conformity to Christ and was transformed in Christ, the more he discovered his own true identity. In other words, Francis became truly Francis in union with Christ and in discovering the truth of his identity, he discovered a self that is integrally related to the community of the cosmos.

Francis of Assisi and the Second Axial Period

There is no doubt that Francis had a deep sense of universal community and he discovered this through compassionate love by which he came to experience a unity of all things in Christ. We might say that Francis's global consciousness was made possible by his transformation in Christ. Christ became the center of his very being through the power of love. Thomas Merton says that only through Christ, who is the fully integrated Person, can one become trans-personal, trans-cultural, and trans-social.²¹ Only in union with Christ, the One, can a person truly be united to the many, since as Word and center of the Trinity, Christ is both the One and the Many. What must be underscored, however, is that Francis became one with Christ not by an [ontological] change in being but by becoming transcendent in goodness. To "be" is to be good and to be good is to love. Love shapes the person we become and the way we love influences the world around us. As Bonaventure states: "Love transforms because love unites."²² Francis became *like* Christ because he entered into a personal relationship of love *with* Christ. By taking the risk in faith of crossing over into the mystery of Jesus Christ, Francis discovered the mystery of divine love, a love that is humble, self-giving, and diffusive, a love that embraces the other in difference precisely because in difference love can be expressed.

In the second axial period, relationship and union is made possible by recognizing the other who is different from us and, through this difference, crossing over by way of compassionate, self-giving love. If we say that the second axial period is grounded in relationship, we must also say that it is grounded in interconnectivity. Global consciousness is the awareness of belonging to the whole and not existing as individual parts. Francis discovered the goodness of God as the interconnecting thread that unites all in the body of Christ, the one who fills the whole universe in love. He recognized the "particularity of goodness" in each and every thing, calling each "brother and sister" because he shared with them the same primordial source of goodness. The significance of sharing in the goodness of the other finds meaning in this interconnected universe.

The science of chaos today tells us that local changes can affect global systems. The flap of the wings of a butterfly in Peking can alter the weather pattern in New York. Living in an interconnected universe means that each part affects the whole since each part finds meaning only in relation to the whole. And so it is with us. Francis attained a world of peace because he saw each and every thing as part of the total goodness of God. Similarly, for us to live in the spirit of compassionate love in an interconnected universe means that the way we love the neighbor next to us could affect what happens in Kosovo or Columbia. The way we cross over in love to the one who is different from us may influence peace relations in the Middle East. To follow Christ in this interconnected universe demands that we no longer act as discrete parts praying our way to personal salvation.

To follow Christ in the second axial period is to come to the awareness that each individual person and created element is something of Christ precisely in the particularity of goodness that shapes one's being or existence. In this way, each person and created thing is a ladder by which we can climb up and embrace "him who is utterly desirable" (cf. LM 9:1). We find Christ precisely in the goodness of the other, and we love Christ by sharing in the goodness of the other. This sharing in the suffering and joy of the other has its effect on the whole universe. Indeed, the world is our cloister because Christ fills the universe. We have only to open our eyes and recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread, the suffering of our brothers and sisters, of our neighbor, and even within the depth of our own humanity. It is there that God is revealed, in the diffusion of compassionate love. Francis discovered a universe filled with the goodness of God by recognizing this goodness in the wounds of Jesus Crucified. We, too, must strive for a global community of healing and wholeness through the mysticism of the cross.²³ Only through the cross can we enter into difference and rise in unity. Only in union with the other, through the sharing of compassionate love, will we make our journey into God.

Endnotes:

¹See for example William M. Thompson, *Christ and Consciousness* (New York: Paulist, 1977); Ewert Cousins, *Christ of the Twenty First Century* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1992); Leonard Swidler, ed., *For All Life: Toward a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic* (Ashland, OR: White Cloud, 1999).

²Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, trans. Michael Bullock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 1.

³John Cobb, *The Structure of Christian Existence* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 52-9.

⁴Thompson, 23.

⁵Thompson, 39.

⁶Cousins, 6.

⁷Cousins, 7. This applies to all major world religions.

⁸Cousins, 2-4.

⁹Cousins, 7.

¹⁰Cousins, 7.

¹¹The term "complexified collective consciousness" was first used by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin to describe the convergence of centers of consciousness in the evolutionary process. See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Activation of Energy*, trans. Rene Hague (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 30-1; 101-03.

¹²Cousins, 10.

¹³Leonard Swidler, "The Age of Global Dialogue," in *Doors of Understanding: Conversations on Global Spirituality in Honor of Ewert Cousins*, ed. Steven L. Chase (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1988), 19-20.

¹⁴*Legenda maior* 8, 6. For English translation see Ewert Cousins, *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey Into God, The Tree of life, The Life of St. Francis* (New York: Paulist, 1978), 254-55.

¹⁵References to the writings of Francis are from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady (New York: Paulist, 1982), 39.

¹⁶Eloi Leclerc, *The Canticle of Creatures: Symbols of Union*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970), 31.

¹⁷Eutimio Da Arigma, *Cristo nel Cantico* (Milan: V. LePieve, 1966), 73.

¹⁸Bonaventure, "Sermon 2 on St. Francis," in *The Disciple and the Master: St. Bonaventures Sermons on St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Eric Doyle (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 92.

¹⁹Angela of Foligno, "Instructions," in *Angela of Foligno: Complete Works*, trans. Paul Lachance (New York: Paulist, 1993), 242.

²⁰Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), 262; and *Activation of Energy*, 116.

²¹William M. Thompson, *Jesus Lord and Savior: a Theopatic Christology and Soteriology* (New York: Paulist, 1980), 250-71; and "The Risen Christ, Transcultural Consciousness, and the Encounter of the World Religions," *Theological Studies* 37 (1976): 399-405.

²²*II Sent.* D. 15, a. 1, q. 1 (II, 393b). "Amor, quia unit, transformare dicitur amantem in amantem."

²³For a similar idea see Johann Baptist Metz, "In the Pluralism of Religious and Cultural Worlds: Notes Toward a Theological and Political Paradigm," trans. John Downey and Heiko Wiggers, *Cross Currents* (Summer, 1999): 227-36.

Contributors

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Eric Doyle, OFM, a member of the Franciscan Order since 1954, was a friar of the English province. He taught at the Franciscan House of Studies in Canterbury and was a member of the Department of Graduate Theology at St. Bonaventure University in New York. He is the author of *St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood*, originally published by Seabury Press, New York, in 1981, and reprinted by The Franciscan Institute in 1997. Father Doyle died in 1984.

David Flood, OFM, is a friar of the Montreal province. Among his many writings are *The Birth of a Movement: A Study of the First Rule of St. Francis* (Franciscan Herald Press, 1975), which he co-authored with Thaddée Matura, OFM, and *Work for Everyone* (Quezon City: CCFMC Office for Asia/Oceania, 1997). He collaborated with Gedeon Gál in producing *Nicolaus Minorita Chronica* (1996) and *Peter of John Olivi on the Bible* (Franciscan Institute Publications, 1997), writing English introductions to the Latin critical texts.

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. In 1996 he established, with other friars, Holy Evangelists Friary in Chicago, a community dedicated to the Ministry of the Word. He has been involved with retreat ministry since 1971 and has worked with the Taizé Community. A self-trained artist, he now serves out of Chicago, employing poetry and the arts in the Ministry of the Word.

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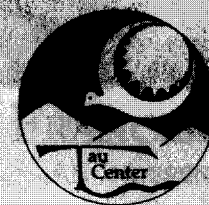
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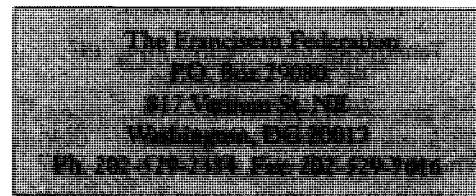
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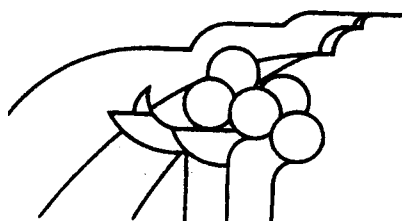


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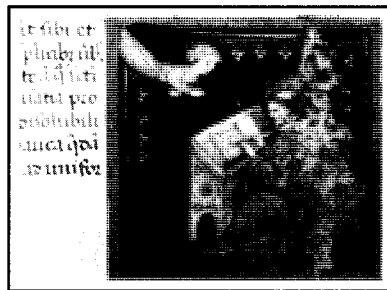
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*Toward the Mother of Jesus [Francis] was filled with an
inexpressible love,
because it was she who made the Lord of Majesty our brother.
(2Cel 148)*

On the Franciscan Circuit Coming Events, 1999-2000

Friday, November 19-Saturday, November 20, 1999

Healing a Broken World Through Gratitude. With JoAnne Haney, OSF. At Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993; fax: 507-453-0910.

Friday, December 10-Sunday December 12

Bringing Forth Christ: On Bonaventure's Five Feasts of the Child Jesus. With André Cirino, OFM. At Stella Maris Retreat Center, Skaneateles, NY 13152; ph. 315-685-6836.

Friday, December 17-Sunday, December 19, 1999

Bringing Forth Christ: On Bonaventure's Five Feasts of the Child Jesus. With André Cirino, OFM. At Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. (See ad p. 316.)

Monday, December 27, 1999-Friday, January 7, 2000

Franciscan Pilgrimage of Light. Assisi and Rome. Contact: Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs, 1648 S. 37th St., Milwaukee, WI 53215-1724; ph. 414-383-9870; fax: 414-383-0335.

Friday, December 31, 1999-Saturday, January 1, 2000

Millennial Chapter of Mats. At Portiuncula Center. (See ad p. 312.)

Monday, January 24-Monday, April 24, 2000

Sabbatical for Contemporary Franciscans. At Tau Center. (See ad p. 313.)

Sunday, January 30-Friday, February 4, 2000

Franciscan Gathering XX: The Gospel Path: Overcoming Our Tolerance. With Rose Margaret Delaney, SFP and Wayne Hellman, OFMConv. (See ad p. 320.)

Friday, February 18-Saturday, February 19, 2000

Introduction to the Enneagram. With JoAnne Haney, OSF and Ramona Miller, OSF. At Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993; fax: 507-453-0910.

Friday, February 18-Monday, February 21, 2000

Franciscan Hermitage Experience. With Helen Budzik, OSF and Ellen Duffy, OSF. At Franciscan Spiritual center, Aston, PA. (See ad p. 316.)

Friday, March 3-Sunday, March 5, 2000

Francis of Assisi: Early Documents. With Regis Armstrong, OFMConv. At Tau Center. (See ad p. 313.)

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