

**School of Franciscan Studies
St. Bonaventure University
Summer Term 2001**

June 25 - July 6

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Francis: His Life and Charism - Mary Meany, Ph.D.
Writings of Francis and Clare - Jean-François Godet-Calogeras, Ph.D.
Franciscan Evangelical Life - Joseph Chinnici, OFM, D.Phil.Oxon.
and Margaret Carney, OSF, S.T.D.

July 2-13

Franciscan Spirituality - Ilia Delio, OSF, Ph.D.

July 9 - 27

Franciscan Pursuit of Wisdom - Anthony Carrozzo, OFM, D.Min.
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Philosophy for Theology (July 2-13) Michael Scanlon, OSA, Ph.D.
Jesus and the Poets: A Millennial Look (July 2-6) Peggy Rosenthal, Ph.D.

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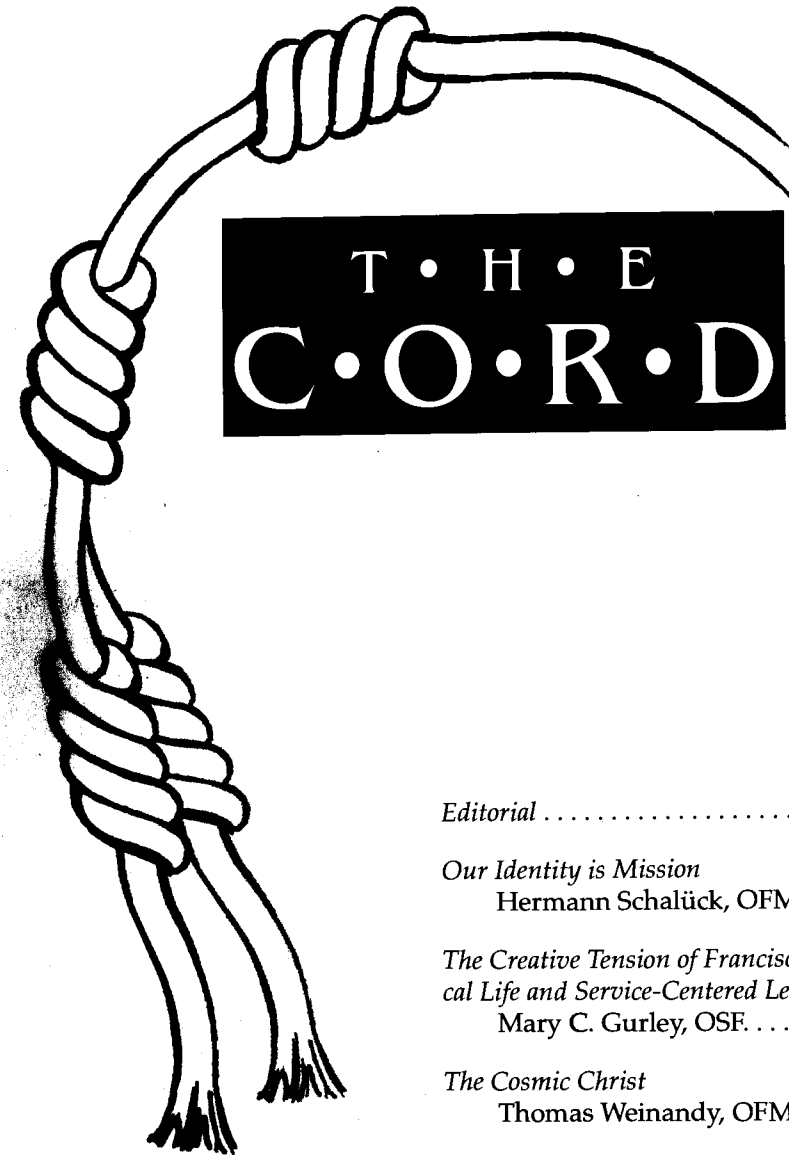


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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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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 foot-noted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:
(1Cor. 13:6). (2Cel 5:8).
(RegNB 23:2). (4LAg 2:13).

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

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Editorial

John Holt tells this story:

Not many years ago I began to play the cello. Most people would say that what I am doing is "learning to play" the cello. But these words carry into our minds the strange idea that there exist two very different processes: 1) learning to play the cello; and 2) playing the cello. They imply that I will do the first until I have completed it, at which point I will stop the first process and begin the second: in short, that I will go on "learning to play" until I have "learned to play" and that then I will begin to play. Of course, this is nonsense. There are not two processes, but one. We learn to do something by doing it. There is no other way.¹

Holt infers that he is never finished learning to play. In some sense he is always a beginner. Our lives are like that. Most of us have had a lot of experience in living, a lot of experience in living our Franciscan way of life. Shouldn't we be experts by now? If we expect this of ourselves and of one another, we lose an essential attitude that keeps us always open to new possibilities. If we, as Francis recommended, keep seeing ourselves as beginners, we are humble, because there are many things we do not yet know, many things we have not yet tried, and many things we are not yet really very good at.

Every day we have a new chance to come a little closer to living more authentically what we have been learning for many years. Our Rule articulates our profoundest aspirations. We are all aspirants in living our way of life. We don't do it perfectly. We don't even do it very well much of the time. There is room for laughter and warm humor and great patience as we put up with our own ineptness and that of our brothers and sisters. Yet as aspirants we admire and marvel at our own desires and know that only God's grace could move us to *want* the ideals formulated in this Rule, in this Gospel.

As a new year opens up to us, we start again from where we are. Today is the day we begin. We are little, but God guides our steps and will do for us what is impossible for us alone. Let us reflect on Francis's words in his Letter to the Faithful: "How happy and blessed are those who do these things and persevere in doing them, because the Spirit of the Lord will rest on them" (1EpFid 5-6).

Elise Saggau, OSF

¹As quoted in *Chop Wood, Carry Water*, ed. Rick Fields et al. (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1984), 22.

Our Identity is Mission: A Missionary Vision for the Franciscan Family in the New Millennium

Hermann Schalück, O.F.M.

[This presentation was given in London and Manchester as part of a
Jubilee Year series of lectures sponsored by the
Franciscan Association of Great Britain in March, 2000]

Introduction

My brothers and sisters, it is very good to be here and to reflect with you on some of the important issues related to our identity as Franciscan men and women in a rapidly changing world. I think that there are some common elements which prompt us to rethink, redefine, and possibly "reinvent" the missionary dimension as a constitutive part of religious life in general and of Franciscan life in particular. With the ever-increasing insights of missiology, anthropology, ecclesiology, and other social sciences, there is additional clarity concerning what we are talking about, but there also may be confusion about our "mission" as Franciscans.

Premises

I want to share with you some of my premises. First, it is obvious that there is tremendous diversity in the expressions of religious and Franciscan life within the Church. Each community has its own particular mission growing out of belief in Jesus Christ as the Incarnation of God's love in this world and in the continuous presence of the Spirit who leads the Church into an ever-deeper awareness of its own identity and mission. To use a homely image, it is fair to say that each community, each branch of our Franciscan family is like a particular plant in a vast beautiful garden. Some plants are medicinal,

some produce food, some seem to be serene in their quiet reflective beauty. All are planted for mission by God, each for a particular purpose.

Second, not all communities and forms of Franciscan life are intended to live forever. To continue the image of flowers in a garden, some communities have a perennial life, many are annuals. The death (in the Christian sense of the word) of a community may be a sign that this particular community has fulfilled its mission.

Third, during periods of historic transition, new religious Franciscan communities are born while others are forced to adapt and still others die away.

Fourth, we are now living in a period of major global transition. We are in what theologians call an "in-between-time." The changes are evident in the migrations of so many peoples, the access to global communications, the various popular revolutions and movements—political, sexual, biological, and so forth. All these have ramifications and consequences for our Franciscan life.

A Short Overview of Religious Life and Mission in History

From their very beginnings, religious life in general and Franciscan life in particular appear as the incarnation of God's love for this world, as signs of the radicalness of the Gospel, and as liberating forces that transform the world. From its first appearance, religious life was not defined as an expression of the pastoral or charitable activity of the Church, but rather as a visible and legible sign of what it means to be a Church, that is, at the service of the world.

Let us look at the fact that religious life and Franciscan life find their peculiar forms and forms of mission in every period of our history, especially in times of transition. Let us look at the middle ages when our founders, Francis and Clare, emerged.

Mendicant Life

By the end of the first millennium of the Christian era, European society was organized with a strong feudal base. Pockets of merchants and other entrepreneurs began to live in towns independent of the feudal lords. These new businessmen gave birth to a new style of life in which wealth was distributed in a more stable European society. From within this new culture grew the mendicant orders of friars, as well as religious and lay groups who were not associated with the old style monasteries but who traveled from village to village, from town to town, preaching a message of hope to the people. The first mission of the first friars was to live the gospel as well as to preach it.

Apostolic Life

Now for a very quick look at the beginning of our modern times, which may have begun with Columbus's setting foot, in 1492, on the American continent; or perhaps with the first Franciscans' arriving, in 1500, in what is Brazil today. At that time, the Church grew wealthy by its association with Catholic colonial powers, a reality to which there was a strong reaction. In northern Europe, the Protestant Reformation caught fire and changed the history of western Christianity. Within the Roman Church, the Counter Reformation gave rise to many new apostolic communities of men and women who wanted to live a simple lifestyle while caring for the poor and the disadvantaged in their societies. These religious served as teachers, nurses, preachers, and missionaries. This was a tumultuous period of many political, cultural, and scientific changes.

From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, hundreds of wars were waged and millions of people migrated from their homes to other countries. In academic circles, especially in the nineteenth century, there developed a divorce and mutual mistrust between the natural and the spiritual sciences, between religion and psychology. Yet, particularly in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, religious and Franciscan life flourished in spite of persecution and periodic bans and dissolutions of some religious communities and Franciscan provinces. These communities developed a strong self-confidence. They knew who the enemies were and believed that they, the Catholic religious, were right. Mission, in that situation, was to bring as many people as possible, even worldwide, to the truth (which meant into the Roman Catholic Church).

Today

Jumping ahead to the present day, we are once again living in a time of major transition and of major change, particularly in the renewal process started by the Second Vatican Council. Not only have our lifestyles, clothing, and prayer lives changed considerably over the past thirty years, but our civil societies have changed with incredible speed. Within the Church, there have been strong developments in Scripture scholarship and theological reflection as well as an incorporation of the natural and social sciences into theology. Our understandings of God, Church, and Mission are being affected by these changes. Theologians speak of a tremendous paradigm shift taking place. Let me use the following image to describe it.

For centuries, the observation of the sun rising and setting daily gave people reason to think that the earth was the center of the universe and that the sun moved around it. What began as a casual observation grew into a cosmology, that is, an interpretation of the perception. From this cosmology the Christian

Church and western civilization constructed a complete worldview, encompassing God's design for the human race, the need for salvation, worship, law, ethics, iconography, etc.

The new perceptions of Galileo Galilei, then, were not harmless or mere curious observations. Using a simple new lens, Galilei saw reality in a new way and introduced a tremendous paradigm shift into how humanity understood the solar system and the place of human beings in the universe. The experience of this perception discredited the previous cosmology and its assumptions. The new information was a tremendous threat to the way Christians understood God, their world, and themselves. We know that Galilei suffered from the Church's inability to accept his new discoveries.

Today we are in a similar time of crisis. Our cosmological assumptions are changing again. Perhaps the new lens that introduced the beginnings of another cosmological view was the lens of the camera through which we saw the earth from the moon for the first time. Throughout the world, we human beings have had the common experience of watching other humans pass beyond the laws of gravity and move into space. We have been able to watch our own planet rotate like a glowing Christmas ornament suspended against a black sky. From a camera that sat on the moon 280,000 miles away, we have seen earth as a globe without borders, fragile, alone, and brilliant.

Within this new cosmological perspective, human life is changing radically. Women, constituting half of the human race, are defining themselves and their rights vis-à-vis the other half. This is probably one of the most important discussions in the history of the human family. Religious realities are rapidly shifting. The world is becoming a global village where more and more people are interested in spirituality but do not identify with any religion, let alone a particular church. As we learn more about creation and electronically meet new brothers and sisters throughout the world, our perceptions must necessarily change. Not only our understanding of nature and of one another changes, but our understanding of God as well. Fewer people are frightened by the concept of God. All religions are seen as good and helpful for people's journey. More spiritualities are creation-centered and identified with the struggles of the poor and human rights.

For the first time in history, the whole global family can be simultaneously affected by the same experience at the same time. Television unites us. We watched the Russians march through the Chechen capital Grosny, celebrating what they thought of as a "victory." At the same instant, we witnessed the flood disaster in Mozambique. We telefax and e-mail across closed borders, for example, into North Korea and China, over the heads of despots, giving people hope as well as updated data about human rights violations. Power has shifted from factory production to information, which gives people the possibility to make choices for their lives.

Over the last twenty-five years, we have been witnessing a shift away from an ecclesiocentric and/or exclusively Christocentric model of mission (also of religious and Franciscan life). We are moving towards a model which, though thoroughly ecclesial and grounded in true discipleship of Christ, opens new horizons in this world and also in the world to come, in the world of the "new heaven and the new earth," that is of God's Reign. It is the Reign of God which defines the identity of the Church and is bound to re-define religious and Franciscan life within the Church. If the identity of the Church is mission, then the Reign of God and its values like peace, justice, divine filiation and human fellowship, unconditional respect for all life, brotherhood and sisterhood of all the nations under one God, become the goal of the mission of the Church.

Contemporary theology has reached a fairly strong consensus about the base for the self-understanding of the Church—the center of Jesus' life and ministry was the proclamation of the breaking-in of the Reign of God through his words, his gestures (deeds), and especially through his death and resurrection. Biblical scholars tell us that Jesus' self-understanding consisted in his being the prophet of that new reality which is called the Reign of God. He speaks about a God who relates to every single human being, to the whole of creation, to history in and through which his love will unfold and grow until the end of time. "The Kingdom of God . . . is the utopian vision of a society of love, justice and equality, based on the inner transformation or empowerment of human beings. A vision in which people will 'act' and 'live together' differently because they will 'be' and 'feel' themselves differently" (P. Knitter).

Vatican II has placed mission at the very center of the Church's self-understanding. The Church is not missionary by one or other action but by its very nature. Mission belongs to the very essence of the Church. One could easily say that the Church's identity is mission. In this perspective, mission does not proceed from a special mandate received from some ecclesial authority, but from baptism itself by which every Christian is initiated into that missionary "communion." This "communion" is not a closed circle, but rather a living body the nature of which consists in sharing and self-giving, as Jesus has given himself for the sake of the "many." In a very clear sense, the Church does not exist for itself. It is rather, as *Lumen Gentium* puts it, the "sacrament," the visible sign of the communion of humankind and of the whole creation with God. It is the sacrament of God's love for the whole of creation.

Mission and Reverse Mission

When we speak about "mission," it is easy to look for a project, a book to publish, a tract to write, a talk to give in Westminster Cathedral Hall, a film to produce in order to communicate the "content of the message" in order to

change others' lives for the better. But "mission" is not a certain amount of measurable information to be communicated, taught, or handed over. It is an attitude of being sent to announce, by presence and maybe by word, the Reign of God and its coming.

Seven hundred and eighty years ago, at the time of the Crusades, our brother Francis traveled to the East with the intention of preaching to the Sultan, the enemy of his people. If the Sultan would convert to Christianity, there would be peace. Francis was fortunate because the Sultan was a wise and open man. Rather than being angered by Francis's preaching, the Sultan invited him to live in his camp and to continue their discussions over a period of time. It was Francis who experienced a conversion, something he may not have expected. He did not become a Muslim, but he returned to Assisi with a great respect for the Saracens. He was more deeply evangelized himself than was the Sultan. In the First Rule for our life (Chapter 16), Francis wrote that the brothers who go among the "Saracens or other unbelievers" should live among these people being "subject to all," quarreling with no one, and by their lives give witness to their faith as Christians. Only if and when it pleased God should they preach and baptize.

Francis gave us a wonderful model for evangelization and mission. We go into a situation that is foreign to us and we live respectfully with people as we come to understand their ways. We do not and should not argue with them, and we do not attempt to preach until God makes it clear that we should do so.

Mission, in the understanding I want to communicate to you, is a fundamental attitude of listening, of communicating with others. It is a viewpoint with a deep inner conviction of our own identity, an inner transformation which allows us to see what is really there—to see, to experience the humble and simple God living among us or, to put it in a different way, we living within God. Mission is choosing to have our eyes opened and to be witnesses to the Reign of God. It is to believe and to hope in the Reign of God that is around us, that is beneath the surface of life, that is within each person, not only the Christian. It is a chosen attitude, a disposition toward peace and toward justice, desiring to see all as it is intended to be by God. It has the ability to bring out what is hidden, like "the steward who brings treasures from the store-room." It is a way of seeing and understanding the world and its people with faith in God's Incarnation in Christ. There is a marvelous story about St. Ignatius Loyola that describes this attitude of faith. Whether it is true or not, it has a wonderful message. When St. Ignatius was an old man living in retirement, he was often seen in the garden walking among the flowers. Ever so often he would hobble up to a plant that was in full bloom. He would push his cane up against the flowers and gently shake them saying: "I know, I know, do not shout about it so loudly"!

Let me now address a few questions that may arise from a renewed concept of mission, the mission of the whole Church, and our mission as Franciscans. Dedication to the Reign of God will open up many questions about the way we do things when we go about our mission. For example, what would it mean for us as Franciscans of the different branches to go back to China today? To go with a renewed attitude of faith and trust into a situation which many people think contains only evil? What would be our intention in such a mission? The Chinese have the world's oldest continuous civilization. We believe that God has been loving the Chinese people, living and working among them for thousands of years. So why would we feel called to go and live among them? Some of our brothers and sisters are already there. What would we need to tell them? or to ask them?

What lessons are we learning from our Church's recent experience in parts of Africa, for example, in Rwanda? How could we preach or witness our faith that Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again? How might we announce that Christ will come again into our post-modern societies of Britain or Germany? He may want to meet us in the market places of our neo-liberal world within the institutions of the international community.

When we go to plant the Church or our Franciscan family in other countries, how do we go about this? How mobile are we, how flexible, how poor, how Franciscan? How respectful is our attitude towards the cultures and ways of the people? Do we hang onto the ownership of structures and of local churches or are we ready to leave when the time comes? Is now the time when the young churches developed by missionary institutes and the Franciscan family should become active themselves in sending missionaries—not only to Europe, but to other poor churches and countries? Why are there not more missionaries from Africa, Asia, and Latin America to other countries in the south? Do we evangelize by our witness, give evangelical dignity and equality among ourselves in the first place, lay and clerics, men and women, as we are bound together by the same fundamental task of evangelization. Do we perhaps export our old problems and divisions to the young churches? That would be fatal!

Challenges

Lest we fool ourselves, we must remember that in nature most renewal is through transition and even death. Unless the seed fall to the ground and die, it will not produce wheat. Death opens up the possibility of progress and development, a rebirth to a life that is different from a prior stage. Maybe we are being prepared for the next planting and, like the seed, can only believe and hope that the unknown future is already within us. Perhaps we are now being pulled into the next period, across the threshold. Often there is resistance

whenever creation comes to an evolutionary boundary crossing. New energy is created by the friction resulting from resistance to evolutionary movements. This new energy helps to propel creation into its next stage.

I think that all of our institutes of religious life and all the branches of our one Franciscan family need to adapt to the issues surrounding us. We need to form small groups of Christians living a gospel-inspired life among people who are indifferent, blind, or hostile to the Reign of God. We need to learn how to live in international and intercultural communities, not just out of necessity but as a public witness to the solidarity of the human race. We need to work together and collaborate, men and women, women and men. We need to pray and work, on a regular basis, with people of other religions. We need to share with the scientific community the message that God is deeply involved with creation. We need to speak on behalf of those who do not have a voice.

Lessons about the renewal of religious and Franciscan life and mission can be learned from our smaller brothers and sisters, hydrogen and oxygen molecules. Even though they are so well defined and useful, they often merge and find new life, losing themselves and becoming one in our Sister Water, who, St. Francis reminds us, is precious, useful, chaste, and pure. In water, hydrogen and oxygen have a temporary and useful fulfillment that was undreamed of. However, each must change, convert, lose itself in order to unite and become something new. Earlier in history, the message of the Incarnation passed from its Jewish home to the West, to Greece and Rome, where there was a fusion between the message from the Orient and the culture of the West. In many ways this exchange or union is similar to the fusion of hydrogen and oxygen in the substance of water. Are we prepared personally or institutionally to bring the molecule of our world and let it merge completely with another's world so that there will be a new understanding of the Incarnation and its ramifications and a new understanding of our one mission?

Much of religious and Franciscan life as we know it is changing if not dying, changing into a new life that is yet unknown and that may frighten us. But that is what happens. For the next century, there will be various experiences of religious and Franciscan life in the Church. Not only will they be diverse but they may be functioning out of different understandings of what our Church is and in very different social situations. In some countries, religious communities will prosper as they did in the past. In others, even with our best intentions and efforts, there will be fewer members and even the disappearance of some institutions.

Just as the prospering commune of Assisi was the catalyst for the innovation brought about by Francis and Clare, we can expect that our new world will be the catalyst for new spiritual leaders and new forms of life that will appear. The new forms of "religious" life will respond in fresh and bold ways to the challenges that come from the evolving global village. They will be

concerned with opening the eyes of those who cannot see to the obvious signs of the Reign of God.

We must pay attention to the dangers of an incorrect reading of the signs of the times regarding religious life. These dangers exist in the local churches of both the southern and northern hemispheres. Some consider only the utilitarian, practical aspects of the life. They relegate to the background the fundamental charism or mission of religious and Franciscan life which consists in being a humble but prophetic sign of God's loving presence in the world and in the whole of creation. It requires being a sign of the living Spirit which gives birth to an ever-new incarnation of the Gospel and witnesses to the coming of the Reign of God within different cultures of the world. In its deepest dimensions, religious and Franciscan life is not only a resource at the service of pastoral ministry. It is essentially important in itself by giving witness to God and the transforming power of the Gospel in the Church and in society. Canon Law says: "The apostolate of all religious consists primarily in the witness of their consecrated life, which they are bound to foster through prayer and penance" (CIC 673).

The present situation in the various provinces of our orders seems to indicate that we have to read our history with the eyes of faith, within a true and hope-filled perspective of death and resurrection. This is one of the relevant perspectives of "mission." Our Friars Minor province in the Netherlands was once the largest province in the whole Order, with more than fifteen hundred members. Now there are some four hundred friars, and it is easy to imagine that the province will become even smaller. But it has a unique and recent history of sending many brothers out into different countries and cultures. The Dutch friars have been very generous and instrumental in setting up local churches and new independent and vibrant international Franciscan provinces in Brazil, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Korea, and Japan. Hundreds of our Dutch friars evangelized and died in these areas. Is the growth that we are proud of today in these countries the result of the self-emptying and dying of the sending province? I just ask the question. I don't know the answer. We look at this evolution, filled with hope that in Holland Franciscan religious life will by no means come to an end. We hope that it will continue—maybe with small numbers—but with new energies received from those young churches and provinces to which they have been ministering.

Are we open and ready to learn these difficult lessons which history teaches us? My impression is that what often prevents us from being courageous in "reaching out" and "going beyond" is the understandable but dangerous reluctance to give away, to give up. This can be a disastrous strategy of maintenance instead of mission—a strategy of crisis-management which does not allow for creativity, for visioning, for sending, and for sharing our existing resources.

Some Special Challenges

A Call to New Frontiers.

Being a "Gift of the Spirit," religious and Franciscan life refuses boundaries. We know the famous story of "Lady Poverty" in the Sources. Lady Poverty asks the friars to show her their cells, and they answered "Our cloister is the world" (SC 63).

More often than not religious and Franciscan life defies strict definitions, the naming of structural elements, and it defies geographical limitations. Its very nature is dynamic and should not be static. Religious life has often been the primary agent of change within Church and society. By its very nature it is a constant pursuit of the "ultimate," the continuous search for the fullness of life and history. It has to do with the urgency for authentic witnessing to the truth that, despite many arguments to the contrary, God's love is and remains the agent in history and Jesus is and remains the Lord. He will return again to inaugurate the fullness of the Reign of God. Franciscan life thus breathes and celebrates that endtime already now. It is thus proclamation, anticipation, and prophecy. Franciscan life with its mission is a sign of the Kingdom of God which is part of the dialectic of the "already" and the "not yet."

A Call to a Renewed Spirituality of Continual "Passover"

Jesus' mission was a personal passover (kenosis) from what was familiar and secure into a world of sinners, outcasts, the indifferent, the corrupt, and the impure. Today, a creative following of Jesus has to contemplate and implement our community's passover into the lives of the poor by making our option for the poor a self-emptying into other contexts and other cultures. Thus it requires inculturation. As Franciscan men and women, we are called to pass over from a mentality which looks at our ministry solely as service to the visible Church to one which sees Franciscan ministry and mission as a collaborative service to and within the larger human family, especially with the laity. We need to be open to new manifestations of the Spirit. We need to pass over from predominantly local concerns to concerns about the global community and to the whole of God's creation, from self-centeredness to solidarity. This passover will offer us a renewed identity as one Franciscan Family. It is through being bound together into one Family—men and women, lay and cleric, secular and religious—that we witness, in ever more powerful ways, to the coming of the Kingdom.

A Call to a Transnational Attitude

We speak about the necessity of acting with integrity to implant a Church which is inculturated but which is also international—"catholic" in the wider sense of the word. It is so important in these days that we do not act impetuously and blindly. We need to be careful to avoid the danger of incommunicability through a superficial and erroneous concept of inculturation. We also need to be cautious of the danger of a new nationalism which can hide within the language of inculturation and "respect for cultures." An essential part of our mission is to help people avoid being trapped by the destructive elements of tribalism that apply not only to Africa but to the Balkans and to Europe as well. Our orders and congregations should be true laboratories for what it means to be an intercultural and international community of faith within our one Church.

A Call to "Reconciled Diversity"

This last point brings me to the challenge that we evangelize by witnessing to the evangelical dignity and equality that we practice among ourselves (*OFM Constitutions*, Ch. 5 Art 88). We must be living symbols of what in ecumenical theology is commonly called "a reconciled diversity." We have continuing historical problems concerning the relationship between secular and religious, between men and women, between lay and cleric; yet all are bound together by the same fundamental task of evangelization, mission, and witness. It is important for us as Franciscans to examine ourselves and to ask if we export to others our old problems and divisions. Do we even them to societies and nations which are already torn apart? The process of reconciliation, already begun among ourselves, must become even more pronounced. More must happen if we hope to be witnesses of the Reign of God among nations, tribes, and cultures. The message that we preach by word and deed must be incarnational. It must take shape through building Christian communities of fellowship, discipleship, brotherhood, sisterhood, and love. These communities must witness to that God who, in the understanding of Francis, is to be named Love, Peace, Beauty, Relationship in "triune diversity and simple unity." As we proceed into the new millennium, let us make unity in diversity and diversity in unity an encompassing, common project of renewal and renewed mission.

Mission Out of Contemplation

A more deeply contemplative Franciscan Family seems to be the only possible future for all of us. The quality of our life, prayer, and service will have to become much more important than the numbers of our members, the numbers of our pastoral and other commitments, and the numerous—geographi-

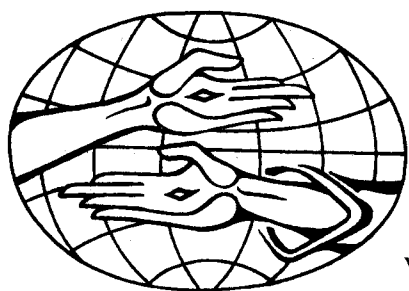
cally defined—"missions." In Europe, we become fewer, less numerous, and radically stripped of social prestige. This is an invitation to return to the well-springs from which we all drink and, from there, go forth with a fresh awareness of our mission. We are called to overcome narrowmindedness and self-destructive divisions through dialogue and collaborative ministry. We are also called to put aside excessive clericalism and build up one family of equals under the one Father in heaven. As true contemplatives, deeply grounded eucharistically in the experience of God's love poured out in Christ, we must become quicker, bolder, and much more effective in our service to the poor and the wounded. The love of God and the love of the poor is the one love Jesus has brought into this world. The God who is LOVE involves us in the mission of transforming creation into what it is meant to be—a temple of worship and a house of prayer where the false idols of today's world are given no chance to turn it in a "den of robbers" (Lk. 19:46). It is meant to be a garden of delight where creation remains an icon of God's beauty rather than the object of greed and exploitation by the human race. It is a home with one table, where the gifts of creation are enjoyed together by all its inhabitants, so that some do not gorge themselves while others starve (1 Cor 11,21).

What characterizes a "new missionary Franciscan spirituality" for the new millennium? Let me name a few things:

- A spirituality of insertion into the life conditions of people, based on sharing Jesus' motivation for his Incarnation, a spirituality of kenosis, of passover (Phil. 2).
- A spirituality of presence. We want to and must be with people and with each other as Yaweh in the tent of his covenant was with his people.
- A spirituality of solidarity and of compassion.
- An spirituality of integrity. The passion for God and compassion for and with the poor are to be lived in one fundamental attitude of faith.
- A spirituality of brotherhood and sisterhood, of fundamental equality of all the members in the one Franciscan Family, as a powerful sign of evangelization in our world in which power domination, and greed seem to prevail.
- A spirituality of hope, based on the experience of Francis and Clare of the transforming and liberating power of the Spirit who, as we believe, is also at work today.
- A dynamic and creative spirituality, as we become more "co-operators" of the Spirit.

Let me conclude these reflections and suggestions with a prayer:

Lord, make of us, the Franciscan Family, a rainbow,
a visible sign of peace and reconciliation.
A rainbow which boldly bridges the two millennia,
the old and the new.
A sign from heaven that you yourself have set there.
A sign of that promise which never deceives.
The rainbow is to be for everyone a sign of hope.
A sign of love for your creation,
of the promise of your Spirit which renews the world.
Make us restless, if we are too self-satisfied
and too self-assured, too narrow-minded.
If instead of remaining on the path
we think ourselves already at the goal.
Make us restless if over the many things we possess
we lose our thirst for your presence
and for peace in justice.
As we look at our future and mission,
let us manifest neither blindness nor indifference.
Grant us the inner peace which comes
from encountering you, also tact, friendliness,
and courtesy towards all life
and the whole of your creation.
Shake us awake, Lord, so that we may become more daring,
more in solidarity with one another,
more attentive to your Word,
more alert to hear the cry of the poor,
more open to the new generations.
Make us follow you more faithfully.
Yes, Lord, make us, the Franciscan family a rainbow,
a sign of hope for a new world.



HOPE
FOR
A NEW
WORLD!

The Cord, 51.1 (2001)

The Creative Tension of Franciscan Evangelical Life and Service-Centered Leadership

Mary C. Gurley, OSF

Many Franciscan women and men, either by choice or by assignment, find their ministry in leadership positions often described as executive or administrative. In parishes, schools and colleges, hospitals and social service agencies, congregational leadership and trustee positions, a large portion of their responsibilities are office-based. Days are spent with personnel issues, finances, planning, problem solving, committees, and memoranda. At the same time, mission statements, chapter documents, and the tenor of the times call them to service of the poor. The resulting tensions are rarely addressed. Current literature within the Franciscan family that focuses on the meaning and implications of Evangelical Life may, however, offer a common ground of understanding. It is possible for Franciscans who assume administrative responsibilities to stand next to other Franciscans who are ministering in direct service to the poor and know that each is fulfilling a contemporary call to Franciscan service in the church and to the poor.

Overview

It is not the purpose of this paper to provide answers. Rather, it will examine a small cross-section of contemporary literature—the evolving understanding of the meaning of the *vita evangelica*, selected observations on the social context within which we minister, theories of leadership from both the religious and business sectors, the practice of a “new asceticism”—in order to make some connections and ask questions that might further the dialog. Like the highway system in Spain whose roads wander the length and breadth of the country, all eventually meeting at a single sidewalk plaque in the center of Madrid, this paper will be developed in a number of segmented parts. The

intersection of the various parts will be a place for further dialog. The segments are: 1) Concepts of Franciscan Evangelical Life; 2) Some Observations on Contemporary American Culture; 3) The "Gospel-like" Call of Contemporary Leadership Theory; 4) Leadership Addressed from a Franciscan Perspective; 5) Challenges of an Evangelical Witness of Leadership; 6) Conclusions.

Concepts of Franciscan Evangelical Life

The call of Vatican Council II, specifically the issuance of *Perfectae Caritatis* in 1965, challenged all religious groups to re-discover their authentic roots. Fortuitously, this occurred almost simultaneously with work on the critical editions of our Franciscan sources being translated into English. In 1983, the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (SCRIS) published its *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate*, a document that identified two forms of institutes—the *vita monastica* (monastic life) and the *vita apostolica* (apostolic life). By that time, Franciscans were already well on the way to realizing that these church-imposed definitions did not fit the *forma vita* of their three Orders. It was very clear that the following of the Gospel, the *vita evangelica* (evangelical life), was the single, predominant, guiding charism for Franciscans. Compare, for example, the first sentences of various rules for the three Orders¹ and note the emphasis on the Gospel:

The Rule of 1221: "This is the life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which Brother Francis asked the Lord Pope to be granted and confirmed for him" (RegNB prol. 1).

The Rule of 1223: "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" (RegB 1:1).

The Form of Life given by Francis to Clare in 1212/1213: "Because of divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the most high King, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel. . ." (FormViv 1).

The Rule written by Clare: "The form of the life of the Order of the Poor Sisters that Blessed Francis established is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity" (RCl 1).

The Rule of the Third Order Regular: "The form of life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis is this: to observe the life of the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, in poverty, and in chastity" (TOR Rule 1:1).

The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: "The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people" (SFO Rule 2:4).

In a spirit of refounding, some contemporary Franciscan writers have connected anew with the original intent of Francis and Clare and have been exploring the implications which the evangelical life charism has for today's life and ministry. Our lived experience, says Joseph Chinnici², though not monastic, apostolic, contemplative, nor of a secular institute, has had elements of all four. Ours is the task to study the Christ of the gospels and the head of all creation, to study our sources, and to study the cultural context of our society as we try to articulate this "evangelical option" for today's Franciscans. Jean François Godet³ reminds us that evangelical life is not the life of the first Apostles according to the book of the Acts, but the life of the disciples with Jesus. There is, Godet says, no specific task in the evangelical life; there is no separation between contemplation and action; the call is to live daily with the Master.

Clare D'Auria⁴ develops her reflections around assimilating the values of Jesus as outlined in the Beatitudes. For Francis, this was a spirit of on-going conversion that changed attitudes and concretized them in "fruits worthy of repentance" (1EpFid 1:3). It is the manner of the deed, not the nature of the task that is important. Ministry, writes D'Auria, "must be characterized by mutuality and interdependence; we are sent to give and to receive." The theme is picked up by Roland Faley⁵ who reflects on the fact that although immersed in a culture, Francis was not held hostage to it but stood in clear contradiction to the transitory values of the popular culture. All of these voices signal a new prophetic moment, a call to sift through the accumulations of history and reclaim our charism in the Church.

The broad parameters of Franciscan evangelical life are slowly emerging. We seem to have a certain clarity about our not fitting into the current church-defined categories. We are getting clearer about the "new way" for which Francis sought papal approvals—a literal following of the Gospel. We continue to reflect on our Franciscan sources seeking models of how Francis and

Clare understood their own calls to Gospel life. Certain themes are emerging—a theology of the Incarnate Word and the written words of Scripture; continuous conversion; lives of relationship with one another, with one's culture, with the entire cosmic reality. We know that evangelical life calls us to be the link between the gospel we live and the world we serve. And we are beginning to make our own the fact that even as our scholars seek to define *vita evangelica*, the responsibility for bringing life to the concept lies more immediately within each one of us individually. Those Franciscans whose ministry is exercised from behind a desk or in a position of administrative "power" have a unique challenge in situating their work within a Gospel, evangelical life context. To this conundrum we will now turn our attention.

Some Observations on Contemporary American Culture

The clichés used to describe the wounds of our contemporary American culture are familiar to everyone: violence, consumerism, sexual madness, abusiveness, individualism. In his recent book *The Sibling Society*,⁶ Robert Bly sees the same problems but offers a different perspective. He refers to us Americans as "a sibling society." He asserts that adults have refused to accept their roles of responsibility, parenting, and mentoring—the phenomenon tracing its roots to and symbolized by the Woodstock event—and thus they regress toward adolescence. True adolescents, seeing this, have no desire to become adults (p. viii). We have lost, says Bly, the vertical dimension of society and settled for a horizontal gaze, a mirror society that looks out on others and adopts their dress, standards, mores, etc. so that we will be just like them and therefore accepted. The irony of the situation is that while we long to be part of the mass society, we hold ourselves in a solitary, disconnected, individualistic stance (p. 233-235). Bly challenges the reader to reclaim a culture that has a depth of firm codes such as one sees in old movies: promises must be kept, pleasure comes after relationship, parents are treated courteously, there are things more important than money, etc. To live and serve in this manner, he claims, we must be willing to take on adult roles. Bly offers whole chapters of how to do this. We need to re-create the adult and to honor the elder (p. 238).

Laurie Beth Jones approaches the issue in the same vein, but from a very different perspective. In *Jesus CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership*,⁷ she talks about the "homeless" people in corporate culture, the invaluable human energy and intelligence that is untapped and under-utilized, the multiple examples of corporate abuse, neglect, and violence (p. xiv). Her plea is for creative and innovative role models, leaders whose goals are to build up, not to tear down; to nurture, not to exploit; to undergird and enhance, not to dominate (p. xv).

Twenty years ago, Robert Greenleaf's classic text *Servant Leader*⁸ was defining leadership in much the same terms.

A mark of leaders, an attribute that puts them in a position to show the way for others, is that they are better than most at pointing the direction. As long as one is leading, one always has a goal. It may be a goal arrived at by group consensus, or the leader, acting on inspiration, may simply have said, "Let's go this way." But the leader always knows what it is and can articulate it for any who are unsure. By clearly stating and restating the goal the leader gives certainty and purpose to others who may have difficulty in achieving it for themselves (p. 15).

There is little doubt that there is work and ministry to be done here. This malaise of American culture—reflected to some degree in every smaller population segment, in the workplace, in institutions, in the Church—is what leaders and administrators face in their ministries. For direction and perhaps a few answers, we move to an examination of some blueprints that have been offered for successful leadership.

The "Gospel-Like" Concepts of Contemporary Leadership Theory

Contemporary leadership theory, both religious and secular, has come a long way from the carrot and stick models wherein the "boss" could manipulate workers. Advances in human development concepts and motivation techniques combined with a more mobile and articulate workforce has opened new avenues for constructive, effective leadership. The literature that is evolving at a dizzying pace is solidly valued-based and addresses many of the ills of society and workplace that Bly has found so destructive.

In the mid to late 80s, Peter Senge⁹ introduced the concept of Learning Organizations and a whole set of values to accompany the concept. The old mode—the top thinks and the local acts—gave way to integrating and acting at all levels (p. 7). The traditional view of leaders as special people who set the direction and made the key decisions was replaced with new roles for leaders. All in the workplace were now considered part of a learning organization with a shared vision, and the role of the leader became that of designer, teacher, and steward. As designer, the leader was to fashion the governing ideas of purpose, vision, and core values of the organization; assist in the development of policies, strategies, and structures that would translate the guiding ideas into decision, and create learning processes. As teacher, the leader was to help all in the organization bring to the surface the underlying mental models that guide

their work. As steward, the leader was to be servant (a concept borrowed directly from Greenleaf), and as such was to exercise this role at the level of the people he or she led and at the level of the larger purpose or mission that underlay the enterprise (pp. 10-13).

A few years later, Stephen Covey¹⁰ published *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and one of its sequels, considered here, *Principle-Centered Leadership*. Like Senge, Covey addressed the leader's need for a personal and moral stewardship with three defining characteristics: integrity, maturity, and an abundance mentality (p. 61). The chapter headings of this self-help book for leaders reads like an examination of conscience, and the characteristics of principle-centered leaders are a blueprint for holistic living. Leaders are continually learning, are service-oriented, radiate positive energy, believe in other people, see life as an adventure, are synergistic, and exercise for self-renewal (p. 33-39).

One of the latest books, Max DePree's *Leading Without Power, Finding Hope in Serving Community*¹¹ pulls together many of the previous ideas in a few simple sentences:

A movement needs 1) spirit-lifting leadership that enables, enriches and holds the organization accountable—and then lets go; 2) competence in relations as well as skills; 3) a high sense of creativity—in places of realized potential, creativity becomes a moral issue; it is the means through which we protect the human environment; 4) clear commitment to substance over bureaucracy. Superficial and trivial activities must always give way to a serious concern for content and substance, optimism and openness to life; 5) a civil place—people who respect each other and work for a common good (p. 15).

Leadership Addressed from a Franciscan Perspective

In his dissertation that studied leadership behaviors of Third Order Regular colleges in the United States, Thomas Bourque¹² draws heavily on literature similar to the above to frame his survey instrument. Results of the study indicate that the college presidents who were studied understood, and to a great extent practiced, some form of visionary-type leadership described above. Their administrative staffs agreed. There was also evidence, though it couldn't be well measured by the instruments used for the study, that the educators who were studied had developed a leadership typology that encompassed more than visionary leadership behavior. It also reflected the Third Order Franciscan charism. In fact, one of Bourque's conclusions was that "perhaps educational and corporate leadership is what the Franciscans have to offer to the poor, the less, and the minority of today's Church and society" (p. 73), a point to which we will return later in this paper.

Other Franciscan writers have addressed leadership from a Franciscan perspective and apart from leadership theory. Margaret Guider¹³ addresses the status, role, and function of the Franciscan administrator in the 1990s and raises questions about how we might form healthy attitudes about power and authority. Giles Schinelli¹⁴ posits Franciscan leadership in relationship using as sources: (a) The Letter to a Minister wherein counsel is given to stay in relationship even with the difficult person (EpMin 2-11); (b) the Third Admonition that encourages preservation of relationship (Adm 3: 7-11); (c) the Letter to Leo insisting on personal responsibility in following Jesus (EpLeo 3); and (d) Francis's insistence on regular chapter meetings in order to preserve relationships. Phillip O'Mara¹⁵ translates an obscure fourteenth-century document on leadership written by an anonymous author and long attributed to St. Bonaventure. His words strike a note of resonance with some of the ideas we have been considering here:

One whose life is devoted to other people must always give a good example, meeting the needs of each person while pleasing all. His task is complex and requires that he maintain a golden mean, eating neither too much nor too little, being neither immoderately gloomy nor jolly, weighty nor superficial, solitary nor social, silent nor a chatterer. He should speak without flattery or excessive harshness, and ought to be neither unreasonably strict nor slack. . . . It is, of course, impossible to maintain the perfect balance, and so the course that consistently achieves the best results is to be as kind as possible (49-50).

It is Chinnici, however, who begins to bring together so many of these disparate elements. His initial studies of the meaning of evangelical life have now developed to the stage of asking the question this paper addresses: What does evangelical life mean *vis-à-vis* leadership? In two articles, "Conflict and Power: The Retrieval of Franciscan Spirituality for the Contemporary Pastoral Leader"¹⁶ and "Clare and Leadership,"¹⁷ Chinnici reflects on the social/historical situation in which leadership must function. Drawing on the words and experiences of both Francis and Clare, from within the milieu of their times, he makes application to the present situation. Thus he writes:

There seems to exist in almost all situations (of pastoral leadership) an experience of the leader as living in the borderland between charism and institution, community and bureaucracy, individual rights and the demands of the common good, the Franciscan ideals of poverty and personalism and the corporate realities of efficiency and business ("Conflict and Power," p. 206).

Over and over again, in vocational literature, in social analyses, in our own persons, we experience the conflicting values of the contemporary world: What is a culture of narcissism for one is the liberation of the individual for another; what is the disappearance of centralized authority for some is the reassertion of individual rights and the principle of subsidiarity for another; what is an increasing growth of irresponsibility and laziness from one perspective is the seedbed of contemplative life and leisure for another. . . . It is a world of contrasts, and leadership can only exist inside this experience. A leader must be one who can give and perceive life in a world of conflict ("Clare and Leadership," n. p.).

Challenges of an Evangelical Witness of Leadership

We need, says Chinnici, to construct a bridge between the religious experience of Francis and Clare and that of our times. We need also, I believe, to construct a bridge between the environment in which today's Franciscans are called to be leaders and/or administrators and the foundational values of their professed Franciscan evangelical life. And we need, finally, to construct a bridge between the immediate and persistent call to direct service to the poor and the reality that a large number of us are missioned to desk-bound, administrative-type responsibilities. It would be too simplistic to end this paper by concluding that a true understanding and embracing of evangelical life is the bridge for all of these entities. In fact, however, the evangelical life *is* the bridge, but a few words are in order to mark our journey to this point.

The first bridge, the one between the religious experience of Francis and Clare and that of our times, is the easiest in terms of access. The availability of our early sources, the scholarship concerning these sources that is filling our libraries, the articles that are being written about Franciscan life are all at hand for those who would "take and read." The reading, however, must also extend, figuratively and literally, to the signs of the times. We cannot engage the world if we are ignorant of it. And given the plethora and variety of sources for information about our world—news media, the Internet, organizations working for social justice, Franciscans International, to name a few—ignorance is not an option. How can we be content to indulge ourselves in our private lives and religious practices if our call is to gospel living? The call for Franciscan leaders is to anchor themselves in the charism, know the place to which the bridge must extend, and walk that bridge in solidarity with those they lead and serve.

The second bridge is the one between the environment in which we function as leaders and administrators and our personal call to evangelical holiness. This bridge is far more difficult to construct because the very nature of the ministry to which we are called will often work against the person we are trying to be. In the "Prophetic Heart,"¹⁸ Chinnici suggests the need to recover

the ancient disciplines and practice asceticism in a manner that connects the needs of our own heart with the needs of those among whom we work. In Chinnici's words:

Whereas the nuns and monks practiced their asceticism within the social model of the enclosure, and the hermits retreated to the hill-tops, and the wandering preachers called for reform, the members of the evangelical alternative mirrored the fruits of these disciplines—a pure heart, humility, thanksgiving, courtesy . . . in their life together as sisters and brothers and in the marketplace of the city. [These] disciplines . . . provided them with a means of addressing the knots of human existence which their own hearts shared with all of their fellow citizens. . . ("Prophetic Heart," 12-13).

One need not ponder too long to determine appropriate ascetical disciplines for today's Franciscan leaders.¹⁹ For example, in a world of corporate "perks," the leader can choose to live simply and plainly, uninterested in and unencumbered by the trappings and privileges of office, and a silent witness to the hollowness of an excess of material things. Such a stance also positions one in a place of solidarity with the workers who, too often unjustly left outside the circle of power and wealth, cannot share in the profits of their labors. Another ascetical discipline, the discipline of time, allows for the human situation. In an age of digital clocks marking the seconds, workdays beginning and ending in darkness, and calendars stretching to twenty-four months, the Franciscan leader is called to be a responsible steward of God's time. In right balance there is a time for work and a time for play; a time for God, a time for others, a time for self. In gospel time—evangelical life time—there must be space for pilgrimage, hermitage, fraternity, and rest. To recognize this need in one's own life is to allow those whom we are leading to be equally gifted with time.

A further asceticism is the ability to draw a circle of reasonable limits around one's involvements and the need to accomplish everything. This is especially difficult when one is ministering in an area of direct service wherein the temptation for leaders is to perceive their role as one of making things happen. The Franciscan leader, however, must forsake the "savior" role and concentrate the lens on a ministry of presence.²⁰ To allow oneself to be powerless, to be dependent on God and on others, to fill up what is lacking in one's own person are all at the heart of service in an evangelical mode. Whatever the asceticism one chooses (or needs), leadership for the one who takes seriously the call to evangelical life must consist primarily in a gentle spirit that listens attentively to God in-breaking with infinite love at this moment. And one of the fruits of an ascetical life is that others can be fed and nourished. Leadership calls a Franciscan to no less.

The third bridge to be considered is the one that links direct service to the poor to administrative and/or executive leadership. The insistent call of our various congregations and provinces to serve the poor cannot be lightly dismissed, for it is at the heart of gospel, of Francis and Clare, and of evangelical life. Sometimes we've rationalized our ministries by defining the various kind of poor—economic, social, academic, emotional, etc.—but we continue to return to the nagging question: "Is my ministry really serving the poor?" Margaret Carney²¹ has suggested that we might look at the question in a different way, from the perspective of the minister rather than from the nature of the ministry. The basic and unequivocal premise is that all of us are and must be in the service of the poor. It is simply the place where we stand as minister that is different.

Consider this paradigm: Franciscan "A" lives in and among the poor; the place where she/he dwells is the place where she/he serves. This is the radical service we most commonly envision when we speak of being with the poor. Franciscan "B," however, lives in a residence away from the area where he/she ministers to the poor. Each day, refreshed and renewed, the minister goes out to be among the poor and from this abundance attends to their needs. Such, for example, is the person who travels into the inner city each day to feed the hungry who come to the soup kitchen. Franciscan "C" is even further removed from the locale of the poor. He/she ministers in an institutional setting—a house or center or school or hospital to which the poor are welcomed and their needs served. While the serving is genuinely to the poor, multilayered structures and geographic distance from the place where the poor live detract from the immediacy of contact. Franciscan "D" sits on a congregational council or hospital board or behind an administrative desk and never sees the poor nor do the poor see her/him. But every decision that is made, every dollar that is invested or allotted, every person assigned or project undertaken is done with the needs of the poor as priority consideration. Who then, which Franciscan, serves the poor? All do. All must.

Thus, in this schema, the emphasis shifts to more important questions. No longer an issue of who serves, the questions now become: What is in my heart as one who serves? How is my ministry, whatever its nature, gospel-based service to the poor? We end, then, where we started. An evangelical life calls us to live the gospel, to have the mind and heart of Christ in whatever circumstances and ministry is ours.

Conclusion

Leadership responsibilities of an executive or administrative type are not antithetical to service for and with the poor. Nor are such responsibilities and

an evangelical life commitment an incompatible relationship. When looking to ministry, a Franciscan of any of the three Orders has ready example in those who have gone before. Francis himself encouraged his brothers to do the work for which they were able. Sometimes this was caring for the lepers; sometimes it was tending the family garden; sometimes it was preparing a Christmas pageant or reconciling civil leaders or preparing documents or bargaining with the hierarchy. The call to the university was as insistent as the call to the mission field—both led individuals to a place in the Franciscan book of saints.

Clare was given little freedom of choice about the circumstances within which she would live her call to gospel life. Instead of the itinerancy and martyrdom that she sometimes envisioned, she was an abbess. She was mentor to a queen. She was a seamstress and the first woman canonist. Her sisters, aristocratic and poor alike, all earned the appellation of Poor Ladies.

Bonaventure was called to lead the First Order in the most difficult of administrative times. Colette of Corbie left behind her life as a holy recluse to administrate and reform two orders. The Brothers and Sisters of Penance ministered in the immediate circumstances of daily life, enlivening parish life, serving the poor, burying the dead. Each call to each individual had to be answered with a reliance on God's providential care, fidelity to the gifts given to them individually and personally, the prayerful discernment/dialog of trusted friends, and a faith-filled conviction that to live the gospel wasn't really about their own desires anyway. The poor would be served if followers of the poor Christ and the Poverello remained faithful to their gospel rule of life.

Whether in leadership or administration or behind a desk or in an institutional setting, we *are* serving the poor when we simply do the work for which we are able, in the ministry we have been given, in the ordinary circumstances of daily life. Our mission statements and chapter documents, as well as the tenor of the times that call us to serve the poor, are rooted in the *vita evangelica*. We are truly living an evangelical life when, ministering within the circumstances of whatever culture in which we find ourselves, we see our work as an extension of the gospel-life we have professed.

Endnotes

¹Throughout this paper references will be used as follows: for the writings of Francis, , *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap. and Ignatius C. Brady, OFM (New York: Paulist Press, 1982); for the writings of Clare, *Clare of Assisi, Early Documents*, ed. and trans. Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993); *The Rule of the Third Order Regular* (Washington, DC: The Franciscan Federation, 1982); *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order*, in Robert M. Stewart, OFM, "De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam" *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* (Roma: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1991).

²Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM, "The Prophetic Heart: The Evangelical Form of Religious Life in the Contemporary United States," *The Cord*, 44.11 (Nov., 1994) 292-306.

³Jean François Godet, "Poverty as a Condition for Our Relationship as Sisters and Brothers," Paper presented to the Franciscan Federation of TOR Brothers and Sisters of the United States in Aston, PA., 1984.

⁴Clare D'Auria, OSF, "Franciscan Evangelical Life and the Third Order Regular Charism," *The Cord*, 44:11 (Nov., 1994) 307-316.

⁵Roland Faley, TOR, "Witness to Jesus," Unpublished paper.

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The Cosmic Christ

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[This presentation was given in London and Manchester as part of a Jubilee Year series of lectures sponsored by the Franciscan Association of Great Britain in March, 2000]

St. Francis is one of the best known and best loved of all the saints of the past millennium, if not of the entire history of the Church. He is universally respected by Catholics and Christians, and even admired by those of other faiths or no religion at all. The reason is that he literally embodied the person and teaching of Jesus. Moreover, he has made Christ present not only in his own person, but also through those thousands of men and women, religious and laity, who, over the past eight hundred years, have striven to follow his evangelical way of life. They, and presently we, like St. Francis himself, have wanted and continue to want to be "troubadours of the Great King." In being such troubadours, Franciscans have made and continue to make a substantial contribution to Christology—to the significance of who Jesus Christ is and to the place he holds within the whole created order of time and history.

To speak of the Cosmic Christ is to speak of the primacy of Jesus Christ. Within all of creation, within the whole cosmos, Jesus Christ alone holds primacy of place. His name is above every other name. He alone is supreme. He alone is Lord. Not only was everything created by him, but also, and more so, all was created for him. As Franciscans, we, in accordance with our christological tradition, proclaim that the principal reason the Father created the world in all its magnificent variation was to give glory to his incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. The primary task of the Holy Spirit is to gather the whole cosmic order into union with Christ and to empower all human beings, from Adam and Eve to the last person conceived, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Such a Spirit-filled profession of faith is to the Father's glory, for this is the supreme desire of his paternal heart. As Franciscans we realize that to proclaim that Jesus is indeed Lord, that he alone holds primacy of place, not only rightfully redounds

to his glory but to our own as well. The glory of every Franciscan, as is the case with every Christian, is to be a troubadour of the Great King. There is no greater calling, no greater honour, no greater vocation.

The Primacy of Christ: The Historical Setting

The Franciscan theology of the Cosmic Christ, the primacy of Christ, was forged within controversy. Since the fourteenth century, two schools of theological thought—the Franciscan and the Dominican—have engaged in a protracted debate over the rationale for the Incarnation. For the great scholastic Franciscan and Dominican theologians of the Middle Ages, the question revolved around whether or not the eternal Son of God would have become human if human beings had not sinned.

The Dominicans, following their esteemed brother St. Thomas Aquinas, advocated the theory that the Incarnation was primarily for the salvation of fallen humanity. If humankind had not sinned, the Son of God would not have become human. Aquinas argued that such a view was more in accord with scripture and tradition. Moreover, he thought it was impossible to give, with any certainty, an affirmative answer to such a hypothetical question. Nonetheless, in his Commentary on *The Sentences* of Peter Lombard, he admitted that, because the exaltation of human nature and the consummation of the universe are achieved through the Incarnation, the other opinion was also probable (Cf. *In III Sententiae*, d.1,1,3).

The Franciscans, following their esteemed confrere Blessed John Duns Scotus, championed the view that since God the Father created everything for Christ, the Son of God would have become human in order, rightfully, to claim his kingdom regardless of humankind's fall. The primacy of Christ could not be founded upon sin, for then sin, an evil, would dictate the necessity for the Incarnation and thus become the principal cause of the Incarnation. It is impossible for the primacy of Jesus Christ to be predicated upon the mistake of sin, rectified only by the Father inaugurating a secondary and supplementary plan—that of the Incarnation. For Scotus, the Father predestined his incarnate Son to hold primacy of place within creation and thus, while sin became a secondary reason for the Incarnation, the glorification of Jesus must be the primary purpose for which all was created.

Now I, because I am a good Franciscan and more so because I desire to know the truth, want to argue for the primacy of Christ. I believe that the Father did indeed intend the Incarnation from all eternity and that he created all for the glorification of his Son. Jesus is the Cosmic Christ in whom the whole of creation finds its source and end. All was created for his glory, and the supreme glory of each human person is to give glory to Jesus. However, I wonder if, within the Scholastic and subsequent debates, the Franciscan tradi-

tion has not lost sight of Francis's charism to be a troubadour of the Great King. I wonder if, in attempting to assure that sin did not dictate the Incarnation and so undermine the primacy of Jesus Christ, the Franciscan christological tradition has not, unwittingly, deprived Jesus of his true glory as the Cosmic Christ.

To address this concern, I will sketch briefly how Francis perceived the primacy of Jesus Christ and then examine some New Testament passages that are foundational for an authentic understanding of the primacy of Christ.

St. Francis and the Primacy of Christ

St. Francis is the source and inspiration of our christological tradition on the primacy of Christ. Francis was not a speculative theologian. He took reality as it was, and, in that sense, was a very practical man. Francis was concerned with who Jesus actually was and what Jesus actually did. So we must examine why Francis is the fount from which the theology of the primacy of Jesus, the Cosmic Christ, flowed and still flourishes. Why did Francis, as the troubadour of the Great King, see his supreme glory in living and singing the praises of Jesus?

For Francis, there never was any separation between the primacy of Christ and the Jesus who died on the cross for our sin. For Francis, it is precisely the Jesus who actually died for our sin that is now the Lord of glory. For Francis, Jesus is the Lord of glory and all primacy belongs to him precisely because he mounted the wood of the cross. This is where I think the subsequent Franciscan christological tradition may have somewhat gone astray. It tended to found the primacy of Christ solely upon the Father's will to create—all was created for Christ. However, in relating Christ's primacy solely to the order of creation, it became separated from his cross and so undermined the glory of Christ's primacy which finds its supreme expression in the cross. For Francis there never was any such separation. Yes, all was created for Jesus Christ, and his primacy was willed by the Father from before the world began, but the manner in which his primacy is historically established and manifested is through the cross. Francis perceived that the cross reveals the supreme glory of Jesus Christ and is the reason why, therefore, everything was created for him.

For Francis, the eternal Son of God humbled himself in the Incarnation, taking on the poverty of sinful humanity. This is the lesson of Greccio that Francis so much wanted to portray. The poor, innocent, and vulnerable child in Francis's arms on that cold Christmas night was the Lord of glory, and his glory was manifested precisely in his poverty, innocence, and vulnerability. It was in this humble state that Jesus offered his holy and pure life to the Father as a sacrifice for our sin. It was the humble and poor Jesus, the crucified Jesus

that Francis loved and sought to imitate. It was the crucified Jesus who spoke to him from the cross; but that same crucified Jesus, as the San Damiano crucifix portrays, is the living Lord of Glory.

Francis learned to embrace the leper and, in so doing, learned that Jesus embraced our leprous humanity in the Incarnation. And as Francis was healed of his delicate and refined middle class values and life style in embracing the leper, so he learned that Jesus had healed all of humankind of sin in embracing our sinful humanity. Francis could be the troubadour of the Great King, he could sing the praises of Jesus, he could proclaim him as supreme within the whole of creation, because he witnessed and knew the source of such glory and supremacy. For Francis, the glory of Jesus is found in his weakness, his poverty, his humility, his gentleness, his mercy, and above all, in his cross.

I want to reconnect the primacy of Jesus Christ with the cross because this is what I believe Francis did. To separate the primacy of Jesus Christ from the cross places his primacy outside of history, outside of who he truly was and what he truly did. Not taking account of sin and death and of the cross by which both were vanquished makes the primacy of Jesus Christ a mere fairytale disconnected from reality. In placing the primacy of Jesus Christ back into history we learn why he holds primacy of place. Jesus is Lord, he is the Cosmic Christ, precisely because he defeated sin, Satan, and death—the whole cosmic order of evil—and in so doing established a new cosmic order of life and holiness where he and those who believe in him reign in eternal glory. Francis was aware, at least instinctively, of all of these concerns, and his awareness sprang from his knowledge and love of Scripture. We will therefore examine, in the remainder of this presentation, some New Testament passages in order to ground biblically what is the authentic Franciscan understanding of Jesus' primacy as the Cosmic Christ.

The Colossian Hymn (1:15-20)

The author of the Letter to the Colossians wrote to that Christian community because he feared that its members were flirting with empty philosophies, probably Gnosticism, and "the elemental spirits of the universe" and so were not remaining loyal to the Gospel "according to Christ" (Col. 2:8).

Contained within this letter is the early christological hymn that was Duns Scotus's theological inspiration (see Col. 1:15-20; Eph. 1:10, 20-23; Heb. 1:1-4). This hymn can be divided into two stanzas (vss. 15-17 and 18-20).¹ The first stanza proclaims that the beloved Son is "the image of the invisible God." He is the image of God not only because, as Son, he perfectly images the Father, but also because, as incarnate, he is the perfect visible icon of the invisible Father. Moreover, he is the "firstborn of all creation," not only because, as the divine Son, he existed eternally and thus prior to all of creation, but also, as

the incarnate, he was the first to be conceived within the Father's divine plan for creation. Here we find the primacy of Jesus Christ predicated upon both his divine and human states for he is within both states the perfect image of the Father. As such he holds pride of place within the Father's creative plan.

Moreover, as the divine Son, all was created "in him"—"things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all were created by and for him [*eis auton*]. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:15-17, cf. Heb. 1:3,6, Jn. 1:3, 18). Here again we find the primacy of Jesus Christ clearly expressed within the order of creation. The Father creates all *in and through* his Son, and so everything is subordinate to him. Everything is dependent upon him for existence. Thus he is before all things not only in time but also in rank for in him everything is held together in harmonious existence. But equally then, everything is created *for* the Son. Everything exists to give glory to the Creator. This is the source of the unity of all things. That everything was created "for Christ" is a clear expression of his cosmic primacy.

The second stanza declares that Jesus Christ is also supreme within the order of redemption. "He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent [*en pasin autos proteuon*]"—(literally, in all things he holds the first place) (Col. 1:18). Because Jesus Christ is the gloriously risen firstborn from the dead and thus the beginning of a whole new creation, he is the Lord of a whole new cosmic order. To be a new creation in Christ is to be a member of that new cosmic order which finds expression in his body, the Church, of which he himself is the head.

What has Jesus done which attests to his pre-eminence both within the order of creation and within the order of redemption? The Colossian hymn answers:

In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross (Col 1:19-20).

Jesus' pre-eminence resides in his being the eternal Son who shares fully in the Father's divine nature for the fullness of God dwelt within him (see Col. 2:9). The Father gave him a rank equal to his own. However, his supremacy is not the result of divine nepotism. Rather, as the obedient Son, he reconciled to himself all things, and so is supreme. This reconciliation was accomplished at a great price and as one of us within our sinful condition. Reconciliation is the fruit of Jesus' sacrificial offering of himself on the cross (the mark of sin and condemnation), and so peace is obtained through the shedding of his holy blood.

Thus, the Colossian hymn testifies to the many-faceted and intertwined aspects of the primacy of Jesus Christ:

1. His primacy pertains to his being the incarnate and eternal Son of God.
2. As the eternal Son of the Father, he is supreme not only in that all was first created through him and for him, but also in that all was recreated through him and for him. The primacy of Jesus Christ as the Father's Son is founded upon both the act by which he created everything, and so as Creator is the source of all unity, and also on his act of redemption, and so as Redeemer is the new source of a recreated unity. Thus as Creator and Redeemer, he is pre-eminent in every way.
3. His primacy, as historically revealed, cannot be separated from the condition of sin. Rather, Jesus' primacy in the order of creation is ratified and established within the order of redemption. What the Father established in creating everything for Christ finds its fulfilment in that all is redeemed for Christ. The primacy of Jesus Christ is perceived in that all was created through him and all was redeemed through him and thus all was created for him and all was recreated for him—to give him glory both as Creator and as Redeemer.

The Colossian hymn reminds us that the Christian Church is primarily the gathering of those who have been ransomed from sin and reconciled to the Father and have now given their lives to Jesus Christ as their Lord. The Church is that Spirit-filled body of people who acknowledge and live under the headship of Jesus Christ and so find their unity in him. Christians are precisely those who recognize the primacy of Jesus Christ and profess that they have indeed been created and redeemed *for Christ*.

The Letter to the Ephesians (1:3-14)

A similar argument can be found within the opening chapter of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. We are to bless "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" because he has "blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." Before the foundation of the world the Father chose us in Christ. Thus, the Incarnation is not simply a derivative and so secondary response to sin, but it is at the very heart of the Father's cosmic plan, for we were already chosen in Christ prior to creation. Moreover, through Jesus we were to be holy and blameless. Ultimately, the Father destined us to become children of God as Jesus himself is the Son of God.

While all of this was predestined in and through Christ before the world began, Paul does not hesitate to declare that this was actually accomplished by way of redemption, through the shedding of Jesus' blood by which we have forgiveness of our sins. What was predestined from the beginning and what

was actually accomplished in our redemption is ultimately, for Paul, the revelation of the very mystery of the Father's eternal will which he "has set forth in Christ," that is, "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." This uniting of all heavenly and earthly things in Christ, reminiscent of the Colossian hymn, could only be accomplished through his death, and so manifests his cosmic primacy that was eternally willed by the Father.

What we find in this Ephesian passage is a clear proclamation of the cosmic primacy of Jesus Christ, a primacy willed by the Father before the foundation of the world. Yet this cosmic primacy could only be achieved through the death of Jesus, for it was only with his vanquishing of the divisions brought about by sin that cosmic unity could be established under his Lordship.

Letter to the Philippians (2:5-11)

The hymn in Paul's Letter to the Philippians equally testifies to this same pattern. God has highly exalted Jesus and has "bestowed on him the name which is above every name." Whenever the name of Jesus is expressed and heard, every knee is to bow whether in heaven or on earth or even under the earth, and every tongue is to confess that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord. Such worship and proclamation gives glory to God the Father. But why is Jesus' name supreme? Why has the Father exalted him above everyone else? Why is everyone, no matter where they may abide within the cosmos, to bow at the name of Jesus and proclaim him Lord of all? The answer is founded upon the humility of the Son, who, though he was indeed God, did not count his glorious divinity something which he must egoistically grasp. Rather, he willingly emptied himself of divine glory and came, not simply in the form of a man, but *more so* as a servant. It was in this humble subservient state that he was obedient to the Father, obedient even unto death, death on a cross. The cosmic Lordship of Jesus is intimately and causally connected to the cross.

The Gospel of John

The Gospel of John also witnesses to the intrinsic relationship between the cross and the primacy of Jesus Christ. Surprisingly, it has been little used, historically, to argue for the primacy of Christ; yet it, along with the Book of Revelation, presents the most thorough and most sustained argument on behalf of Christ's primacy. The Gospel of John perceives that what is enacted in time is but the playing out in history of what eternally transpires within the Trinity—the drama of the Father glorifying the Son and the Son in turn glorifying the Father. This mutual glorification is done in and through the reciprocal love of the Holy Spirit.

John proclaims that we have seen the glory of the only begotten Son (cf. Jn. 1:14). The Father sent his Son into the world for our salvation, but inher-

ent in this salvific plan was the Father's desire to reveal the Son's glory (Jn. 3:16). For John, the salvation of the world is the principal effect of the glorification of the Son. While the glory of Jesus and the salvation of the world are fully achieved and consummated in one and the same act, yet the exaltation of Jesus Christ is logically prior to and the cause of our redemption. Only in manifesting the pre-eminent glory of Jesus Christ did the Father bring about the salvation of the world.

Jesus did not seek his own glory. He indicates that there is "One who seeks it. . . . It is the Father who glorifies me" (Jn. 8:50,54). It was and is the Father's desire that all honor his Son as they honor him (cf. Jn. 5:22-23). The Father redeemed us in Jesus, not for our own sakes, but that we might be the Father's acceptable and holy gift to his Son for the praise of his Son's glory. Jesus prayed: "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world" (Jn. 17:24). Where did the Father most thoroughly manifest the glory of his faithful and obedient Son, the glory that he possessed from all eternity? Where did the Father declare that his Son deserves all glory, praise, and honor—that all primacy is his? It was on the cross.

The cross depicted both Jesus' affinity to our sinful condition and his glory as the only begotten Son. The glory of Jesus resides directly in his willingness to do the Father's will even to dying a sinner's death on the cross. At the moment when Judas left the upper room, in the utter darkness of the world's and history's sin, Jesus proclaimed: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified; if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once" (Jn. 13:30-32).

Jesus gave glory to his Father through obediently completing his Father's work and, simultaneously, the Father glorified Jesus. The cross, as the mutual giving and receiving of glory between the Father and the Son, was an historical dramatization of the heavenly relationship between the Father and the Son. In the cross, both the Father and Jesus revealed why primacy belongs to Jesus alone—the Father, by allowing the world to see under the most severe conditions of sin how obedient and loving his Son is; and the Son by being obedient and loyal, even within a humanity contaminated by sin and burdened by the condemnation he assumed. This is beautifully illustrated in a couple of scenes from John's passion narrative.

For John, the trial before Pilate prefigured, anticipated, and thus helped interpret the cross. During his interrogation of Jesus, Pilate asked him if he was the King of the Jews (cf. Jn. 18:33). Jesus answered that his kingship was not of this world (cf. Jn. 18:36). At Pilate's insistence, Jesus responded: "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my

voice" (Jn. 18:37-38).

The phrases—"For this I was born, for this I have come into the world"—are purposely equivocal. They intimate that the Son became human in order to be king. Yet, they also refer to his imminent passion and death, which is equally the result of his becoming human (*sarx*). This is exactly what John wishes us to grasp. This is the twofold truth to which Jesus will soon bear witness and which those who are open to the truth will accept in faith. The primacy of Jesus the king is to be manifested on the cross.

An equally revealing scene for John takes place at the scourging, for there the soldiers ironically declare the truth of who Jesus is: "And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and arrayed him in a purple robe; they came up to him, saying 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and struck him with their hands" (Jn. 19:2-3). Without knowing it, these men, ironically, proclaimed the truth that would resound both in heaven and on earth. Jesus is a king. There is no one greater, not because he conquered by arrogant worldly power, but because he was meek, humble, and rejected.

John continues using one scene as a type to prefigure, illuminate, and interpret the next. He skillfully composes as parallels the climactic judgment scene before Pilate and the crucifixion. In so doing, he helps the reader perceive the true significance of both. We can see this more easily when we set these texts side by side:

Gabbatha (Jn. 19:13-15)

Pilate . . . brought Jesus out and sat [him] down on the judgment seat at a place called the Pavement, and in Hebrew, Gabbatha. . . .

He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him."

Golgotha (Jn. 19:17-22)

Jesus . . . went out . . . to the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. There they crucified him.

. . . Pilate wrote a title . . . "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." . . . The Jews then said to Pilate: "Do not write. . . ."

The poetic resonance between Gabbatha and Golgotha suggests that John saw a correlation between the events of the trial and the crucifixion. Likewise, Jesus' movement helps to establish the parallelism. He moved from inside the Praetorium to the court scene outside; he moved from inside Jerusalem to Calvary outside the city. At Gabbatha, Pilate sat Jesus upon the imperial seat of judgment, and in so doing ironically declared that the one who was being judged was the true judge. He prophetically proclaimed Jesus, a man despised and detested, to be a king. On the cross, this prophecy was fulfilled. For John, the cross was the consummate sign of contradiction. It was Jesus' throne of glory because, in and through his most abject lowliness and humility—the bur-

den of our sin—he manifested his absolute faithfulness to the Father and his unconditional and all-consuming love for us. The cross affirmed the primacy of Christ, the fullness of his glory.

Again ironically, Pilate wrote in three languages for the whole world/cosmos to read the Father's verdict and nailed it on the cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (Jn. 19:19). This man Jesus, suspended upon the cross, is King and Lord. In him, the fullness of glory dwells and to him belong all praise and honor. When challenged by the people (then and now), Pilate prophetically echoed the eternal words of the Father: "What I have written I have written" (Jn. 19:22). The cross is the Father's final, definitive, and unalterable decree of the primacy of Jesus Christ.

As we noted in the Colossian hymn, so too in John's Gospel: the Church is composed of those who recognize the truth that their King is the crucified Jesus. Mary and John, standing beneath the cross and gazing up in faith, having been washed clean in his blood and reborn in the water of the Spirit, represent and prefigure the Church of all time (cf. Jn. 19:25-27, 31-37). Even doubting Thomas became the epitome of a man of faith. By placing his fingers into the nail marks in Jesus' hands and his hand into his side, he is the first to proclaim publicly that the one who took upon himself our sin (manifested in the now glorious wounds) is "My Lord and My God" (Jn. 20:28).

The Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation anticipates the heavenly worship where the glory of Christ's primacy will be revealed in full. Yet even in heaven, the Lord of lords and the King of kings, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last still bears the brandmarks of sin now made radiant—"He is clad in a robe dipped in blood" (Rev. 19:13). For it is the Lamb who was slain who is honored and glorified, and he alone is exalted and praised expressly because he bore our sin and died on our behalf (cf. Rev. 5:6).

Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood did ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and has made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power, and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! . . . To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever! (Rev. 5:12-13).

Multitudes in white robes washed clean in the blood of the Lamb acclaim their crucified Lord: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb!" (Rev. 21:9; 7:10, cf. 7:14; 12:11; 19:6-9). The glory of the cross, the lamp of the Lamb, eternally illumines the whole of heaven.

We need to examine one final controverted passage. Revelation 13:8 is variously translated: "And all who dwell on earth will worship it [the beast], every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain" (cf. RSV, NRSV, NJB, NAB). Or: "All the inhabitants of the earth will worship it [the beast], all whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb, slain since the foundation of the world" (cf. REB, NIV, NRSV as alternative translation). What was from the foundation of the world—the names written in the book of life or the Lamb that was slain?

In the structure of the Greek text, "from the foundation of the world (*apo kataboles kosmou*)" seems to modify the Lamb who was slain and not the names written in the book of life. There is a twofold reason why many contemporary English versions do not prefer this translation. Revelation 17:8 expressly states that the names of those who will be saved were written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, confirming Revelation 13:8. Also this translation seems to make more sense since Jesus was slain in time and history and not from the foundation of the world.

However, within the eternal plan of God, it is only because the Lamb, burdened with our sin, was slain that he conquered all his enemies (the beast), procured his throne, and secured those whose names are written in his book of life. In other words, the Father, from before the world began, predicated and pre-ordained the primacy of Christ the Lamb, totally and exclusively, on the cross. Within the Father's mind, the cross is not an afterthought to the glorification of his Son, but rather the pre-eminent demonstration and actual attainment of the primacy of Jesus Christ. Peter confirms this judgment:

You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake. Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God (1Pt. 1:18-21).

The salvific reasons for the Incarnation converge with and enhance the truth of the primacy of Jesus Christ. Our approach has been wholly biblical and historical, and thus in keeping with Aquinas's concerns. At the same time, it has upheld Scotus's insight that the supremacy of Jesus was first in the Father's mind. These valid convictions of Aquinas and Scotus form parts of a deeper and more central truth—the primacy of the Incarnate Son, as the Cosmic Christ, is achieved and most fully manifested in the cross. It is there that the cosmic glory of Jesus is beheld in all its luminous splendor and grandeur. It is this truth that the Franciscan christological tradition has, I believe, failed to appre-

ciate fully, a truth that Francis himself knew well. He was the troubadour of the crucified King. In his own stigmatized body he proclaimed that the cross transfixes, in all of its celestial radiance, the whole cosmos and in so doing testifies to the primacy of Jesus as the Cosmic Christ.

Conclusion

How are we, as Franciscans, to respond to the truth that the crucified Jesus is the Lord of glory—that he is the Cosmic Christ in whom all primacy belongs? First, this truth should be our pride and joy as Franciscans. In the two thousand years since its revelation, we, more than any others, have fostered and promoted the primacy of Jesus Christ, and we should continue to do so. Second, there ought to be deep sadness in our hearts which arises from the fact that so few people in our day love Jesus Christ and acknowledge his primacy. This is so not only among those who have not come to faith in Christ. Even among professed Christians Jesus is often not honored with the respect he deserves as Lord and Saviour. For Franciscans, this is a cause of profound distress.

Third, this sorrow should move us to proclaim fearlessly and wholeheartedly the glory and the splendor of Jesus. Because of our love for Jesus, we are to sing his praises in word and deed. This is our glory—to glorify, honor, and adore Jesus Christ. Fourth, this desire to magnify the name of Jesus should find its greatest expression in evangelization, especially within our own countries. We must ardently, and without apology, proclaim the gospel of Jesus so that all men and women might come to the living and transforming knowledge of Christ and so acknowledge him, in the Holy Spirit, to be the supreme and only Lord and Saviour.

Last of all, we should long for the day when Jesus will return in glory, for on that day all we desire will come to fulfilment. Then the primacy of Jesus as the Cosmic Christ will be definitively and undeniably manifested. Then every knee will bow, whether in heaven or on earth or under the earth, at the name of Jesus, and every tongue in every language will proclaim that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord. This is the day we await with anxious and ardent longing. This will be the day of most profound joy for us who are troubadours of the Great King, for on that day the eternal jubilee of praise of Jesus will commence in all its cosmic fullness. Come, Lord Jesus!

Endnote

¹For a discussion of this and other texts concerning the primacy of Christ from a Scotistic perspective, see J.-F. Bonnefoy, *Christ and the Cosmos* (Paterson: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965); M. Meilach, *The Primacy of Christ* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1964); and J. Carol, *Why Jesus Christ?: Thomistic, Scotistic and Conciliatory Perspectives* (Manassas: Trinity Communications, 1986).

Book Review

John Michael Talbot and Steve Rabey. *The Lessons of St. Francis: How to Bring Simplicity and Spirituality into Your Daily Life*. New York: Dutton, 1997. 255pp.

In *The Lessons of St. Francis*, John Michael Talbot leads his readers through fourteen short chapters on such basics of the spiritual life as simplicity, joy, solitude, humility, creativity, chastity, community, compassion, creation, service, peace, and prayer. Each chapter is introduced with a quote from Francis or a Franciscan source, offers a reflection often illustrated by events in the life of Francis, and concludes with some practical suggestions for ways in which this virtue could be lived today. Interspersed throughout the text are quotes from a wide variety of sources.

The author's style is direct and colloquial. He uses stories from his own experiences to illustrate his points and makes frequent references to the community he has founded, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. Though these monastic references may not be helpful to those whose life style is quite different, the author makes repeated attempts to appeal to all spiritual seekers.

The greatest strength of this book is the practical suggestions with which each chapter concludes. These range from the rather mundane to the imaginative. For example, the author suggests simplifying one's life style by deriving more protein from beans and rice and by fasting once or twice a week. He also suggests the practice of compassion through the "discipline of listening" without feeling compelled to approve or disapprove of what one hears. Joy can be cultivated by not worrying about tomorrow, being thankful, and becoming more forgiving of self and of others. Singing in the shower, writing creative letters (perhaps even illustrating them), and trying one's hand at growing something are suggestions that seem more playful.

The reflections seem to have grown out of the author's experience and are not simply head-centered meditations. Talbot speaks of living in community as providing "graduate level training in character building" and observes that the original sin of thinking we can control our lives without much reference to God is one of the chief barriers to joy. Less felicitous is his depiction of prayer as a way of "recharging our batteries" or of storing up a "huge reservoir of water" for which service provides a conduit.

The Lessons of St. Francis is beautifully produced. The typeface is easy to read and it is illustrated with lovely photos taken by a member of Talbot's community. It would be helpful to persons trying to incorporate more of the Franciscan charism into their daily lives, but it might disappoint those expecting new insights into Franciscan spirituality or a scholarly treatment of the themes chosen. Though the frequent use of quotations from many different sources adds to the value of the book, no references are given so anyone wanting to explore these ideas in their original context would be at a disadvantage.

Marie Beha, OSC

About Our Contributors

Marie Beha, OSC, a member of the Poor Clare community in Greenville, South Carolina, is a regular contributor to *The Cord*. She has also served on *The Cord's* editorial board. Her articles have appeared in *Sisters Today*, *Review for Religious*, and *Human Development*.

Mary C. Gurley, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston. She was, for several years, director of the Franciscan Renewal Center in Portland, Oregon. A graduate of the Franciscan Institute, she now serves as a faculty member and department chair in the School of Education, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, New York. She edited and designed the study program, *Franciscans Doing Theology* (The Franciscan Institute, 1999) and also serves on the editorial board of *The Cord*.

Hermann Schalück, OFM, is a friar of the German province. He was General Minister of the Order from 1991-1997, having served as Vicar General before that. Presently he is in charge of Missio, the International Catholic Mission Service of the German Bishops' Conference. He is author of *Stoking the Fire of Hope: Fioretti for Our Times* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1997).

Thomas Weinandy, OFMCap., is a member of the Capuchin Province of St. Augustine, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He received his PhD in Historical Theology at King's College, University of London, in 1975 and now tutors and lectures in History and Doctrine at the University of Oxford. For eight years he served as Warden of Greyfriars. He is also a Definitor of the British Province of Capuchins. A prolific writer for academic and popular periodicals, he also gives many parish missions throughout the United States, Canada, and the Arab Emirates.

We must never desire to be above others, but, instead, we must be servants and subject to every human creature for God's sake.

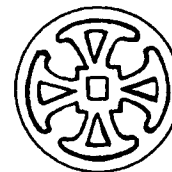
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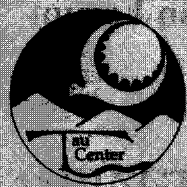
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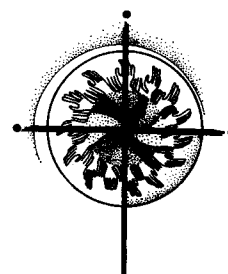
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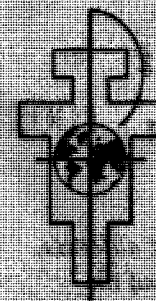
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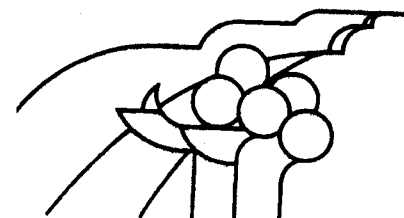
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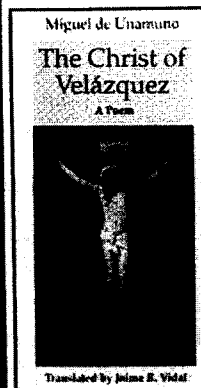
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Friday, February 9–Sunday, February 11

The Canticle of Conversion. Sponsored by The Franciscan Federation. At Franciscan Center, Colorado Springs, CO (see ad p. 51).

Sunday, February 18–Friday, February 23

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Monday, April 9–Sunday, April 15

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Friday, April 27–Sunday, April 29

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Monday, April 23–Monday, May 7

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Friday, May 4–Sunday, May 6

The Canticle of Conversion. Sponsored by The Franciscan Federation. At Millvale Motherhouse, Pittsburgh, PA (see ad p. 51).

Sunday, May 6–Friday, May 18

Franciscan Pilgrimages to Assisi and Rome. Contact Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs (see ad p. 48).

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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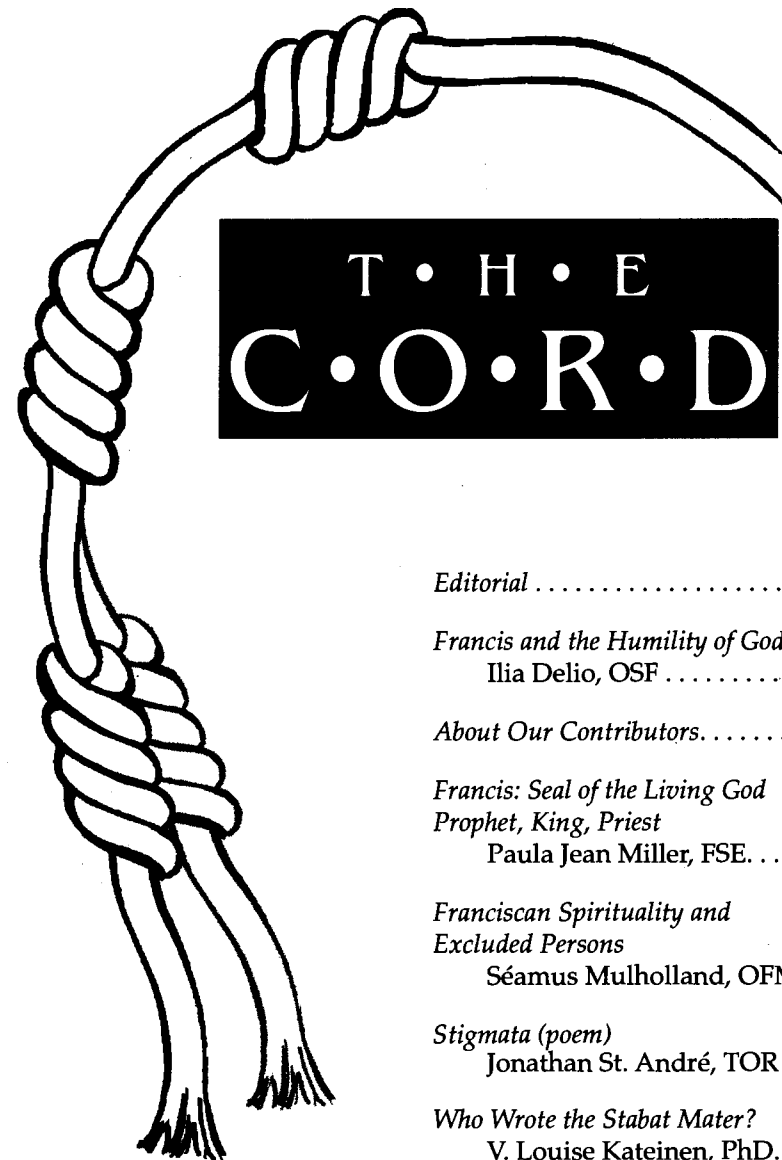
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1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be 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, 51.2 (2001)

Editorial

The Lenten season is upon us once again, and Christians' minds and hearts are drawn towards contemplating the Paschal Mysteries and reflecting on human life and death. There is probably no spiritual source as rich for Franciscan Christians as the amazing and incomprehensible reality of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection. The Son of God came among us as one of us and underwent the full human experience. From the earliest days of his conversion, Francis held before his contemplative vision the image of the Crucified Savior.

The Passion of Christ was for Francis, and for Clare also, a kind of lodestone, which continued to draw them into the deep places of the human experience. Reflecting on the sufferings of Jesus helped them understand the gospel paradox that only by willingly entering into the process of dying to ourselves are we able to achieve the life intended for us by our Creator. This aspect of Francis and Clare's prayer life is becoming clearer to us as a result of contemporary scholarship.

In the *Legend of St. Clare* we read: "She learned the Office of the Cross as Francis, a lover of the Cross, had established it and recited it with similar affection" (30). André Cirino informs us that "both Francis and Clare prayed the Office of the passion, she frequently and he daily." Cirino goes on to express his dismay that "among Franciscans down through the centuries, the Office of the passion seems to have fallen almost completely into disuse. . . . One rarely meets a Franciscan who knows much about the Office of the Passion, let alone how to pray it."¹ Why this should be has many historical explanations, but today, with all our tools for retrieving our spiritual tradition, we are able once more to have access, not only to the words with which Francis wove together this beautiful and contemplative prayer form, but to the spirit and understanding that motivated him to make this part of his daily liturgical prayer life. From such a contemplative focus came his tender compassion for the sufferings of his fellow human beings and his patient and hope-filled acceptance of his own bitter sufferings.

Today we have help to rediscover for ourselves the spiritual riches of this prayer form. The Franciscan Institute is now making available *The Office of the Passion* in a beautiful prayerbook form with many helps for personal and community devotion. It is a rich resource for Lent, for the Paschal Season, and for the whole liturgical year.²

¹André Cirino, OFM, "Foreword," *The Office of the Passion*, ed. and trans. André Cirino, OFM, and Laurent Gallant, OFM (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2001).

²See the ad on page 96 of this issue.

Correction: In the January/February, 2001, issue of *The Cord*, we neglected to report that the article by Mary Gurley, OSF, "The Creative Tension of Franciscan Evangelical Life and Service-Centered Leadership," was a reprint. The article was originally published by the International Franciscan Conference, Rome, in *Propositum* (December 1998), 44-55. We reprinted the article with permission. We regret the oversight.

Francis and the Humility Of God

Ilia Delio, OSF

Although Francis, the *poverello* of Assisi, has been described as the perfect imitator of Christ, it has always surprised Franciscan scholars to discover the paucity of references to Christ in his writings. The eminent Franciscan theologian, Thaddée Matura, has described God as the central figure in Francis's writings and identifies his writings as theocentric and archaic, meaning that their spirituality is much closer to the patristic fathers than to those of the Middle Ages. Francis places a much greater emphasis on God's work of creation, salvation, and redemption in his writings than on the earthly life of Christ. While Francis's biographers describe him as an *alter Christus* pointing to an intimate relationship between Christ and Francis, I would like to suggest here that Francis followed Christ because he was primarily attracted by and sought to imitate the humility of God. The humility of God is an essential aspect of Francis's thought and underscores the relationship between the Father and Son. To examine this idea, I will focus on several key aspects of God in Francis's writings, namely, transcendence, immanence, and divine humility, all of which Francis describes within the context of Trinity and Incarnation. I will conclude by offering some ideas on the relationship between divine humility and following Christ, and the implications of divine humility for God's presence in the world.

The Transcendence of God

"On every page of Francis's writings," Thaddée Matura says, "we encounter the omnipresence of God. God is the central reality from whom everything comes and towards whom everything converges."¹ To discover the centrality of God in Francis's writings is always a surprise for beginners in Franciscan spirituality. They emphatically proclaim: "But Francis was the perfect imitator of Christ!" Yet, when we begin to read Francis's own writings, we quickly find that he makes no personal reference to Christ while he directs his gaze towards the Father whom he describes in the context of a personal rela-

tionship, such as "my holy Father" (ex. OffPass, Ps. 1). If we examine the word "God," we see that, for Francis, it refers essentially to the Father who is the origin of all that exists and to whom all things return. Francis mentions the fatherhood of God frequently, using the word "Father" approximately ninety-two times in his writings, more than any other name for God.² Even though he addresses the Father personally, the Father is utterly transcendent, indicated by the descriptive superlatives Francis uses: "awesome," most high," "most holy," and "supreme." God is, in the words of Rudolph Otto, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the awesome and tremendous mystery who is beyond human expression and comprehension. As Francis writes in chapter 23 of the *Regula non Bullata*:

The most high and supreme eternal God Trinity and Unity
The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit [who] is
Without beginning and without end,
Unchangeable, invisible
Indescribable, ineffable,
Incomprehensible, unfathomable³

The significance of this passage is that Francis not only proclaims the ineffability and transcendence of God but he describes the incomprehensible transcendent God as the Trinity— Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What Francis points out here is that the transcendent mystery of God is not the Father alone but the entire Trinity. While the transcendent God is the Trinity, Francis gives primacy to the Father who alone is the source of goodness and the perfection of love as he writes:

O Our most holy Father,
Our Creator, Redeemer, Consoler and Savior
Who are in heaven, in the angels and in the saints, Enlightening them
to love, because you, Lord are light, Inflaming them to love, because
you, Lord, are love, Dwelling [in them] and filling them with happi-
ness, because you, Lord, are the supreme good, the eternal good from
Whom comes all good
without whom there is no good (ExPat 1-2).

The primacy of the Father as the source of love is also described by Francis at the end of his Earlier Rule where he addresses himself to the "all powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God, Holy and just Father," saying that "because we are wretches and sinners, we are not worthy to pronounce Your [the Father's] name" (RegNB 5). The Father, therefore, is truly the ineffable One, the holy transcendent God who is beyond our comprehension. The para-

dox, of course, is that Francis also attributes about eighty-six “names” or attributes to God, describing God as “merciful, gentle, delectable, sweet, just, true, holy and right, innocent and pure” (RegNB 9). The preeminent quality of God for Francis is goodness, and he finds the mystery of God a mystery of inexhaustible goodness. God is the “fullness of good, all good, every good, the true and supreme good” (RegNB 9). Thus, while God is “indescribable, incomprehensible, and unfathomable,” God is also describable, comprehensible, and fathomable. God is, in short, a coincidence of opposites: knowable and unknowable, utterly transcendent and supremely good, ineffable and describable.

How is it possible that Francis both knows and does not know the utterly transcendent God? The answer is simply that God is neither a self-sufficient monarch nor is the Father ever separate from the Son and Spirit. Rather, when Francis addresses himself to the most high Father, he describes the Father within the context of the Trinity. While God the Father prevails in Francis’s thought, the term Father is not associated primarily with us but with God “the Father of the Son.” Thus, Francis contemplates the fatherhood of God at its source, in the Son’s relationship with the Father. God is Father because he eternally begot the Son and that is why the Son is “beloved,” “dearest,” and “blessed.”⁴ In the priestly prayer of John’s Gospel, Francis finds that the Son glorifies the Father, conforms his will to the Father, and abandons himself to the Father (Jn. 17).

Where the Father and Son is, so too is the Spirit. When Francis speaks about God the Father in his writings, he always shows the Spirit present with and beside the Son (RegNB 21:1-6; 2EpFid 3:48-51; Adm 1). It is the Spirit who prepares us to follow in the Son’s footsteps in order to return to the most high Father. The Spirit cleanses, enlightens, and finally sets on fire the innermost recesses of our souls, and the Spirit’s grace and light foster “the holy virtues” in our hearts, changing us from being “faithless” into being “faithful to God.” It is in the “charity of the Spirit” that we know God’s love for us.⁵

Thus, when Francis addresses himself to God the Father he does so in the context of the Trinity. He stresses the Father’s love for the Son, his “other self,” so that the movement of the Father’s love for the Son is the same movement of love that reaches out to embrace all of us humans (RegNB 23:1; EpOrd 50). Thus, through the eternal embrace of the Father for the Son we are embraced by the Father as well, since we are caught up in the mystery of the Son in whose image and likeness we are made (Adm 5.1).

Divine Immanence and Humility

Although Francis emphasizes the transcendence of God, he also highlights the fact that the Trinity is a God of relationships and that God is related

to creation. The notion of a relational God is preeminent for Francis and scholars have shown that Francis was deeply influenced by John’s Gospel.⁶ The significance of John’s Gospel is the intimate dialogical relationship between the Father and Son bound by a common Spirit of love expressed in the divine will. The love of the Father is revealed in the Son, who always seeks to do the will of the Father and who sends the Spirit as Paraclete to attest to the truth of God as love in the hearts of believers. The deep intimate relationship between the “most holy” Father and the “beloved Son” bound by the Spirit of love shades all the prayers and thoughts of Francis. The persons in the Trinity are so united that he does not parcel out the events of creation, redemption, and salvation to different persons of the Trinity but sees the entire Trinity at work in all of these events.

It is because the persons in the Trinity are united in love that Francis understands the Incarnation within the context of the Trinity. For Francis, God’s immanence is revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ. In his second version of his Letter to the Faithful, Francis describes the kenosis of the Word, indicating that God comes to us in poverty and humility. He writes:

Through his angel, Saint Gabriel, the most high Father in heaven announced this Word of the Father—so worthy, so holy and glorious—in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from which he received the flesh of humanity and our frailty. Though he was rich beyond all other things, in this world he, together with the most blessed Virgin, his mother, willed to choose poverty (2EpFid 4-5).

While a quick glance at this text focuses on the Incarnation of the Word, a more thorough reading shows the role of the Father in this event. Describing the Incarnation within a cosmic hierarchy (God-angels-humanity), which is typical of medieval thought, Francis highlights the role of the Father who announces the Incarnation. That the intimate relationship between the Father and Son is at the heart of Francis’s thought is revealed in two ways in this passage. First, he describes the second divine person not as Son but as Word. While the title Son denotes a relationship with the Father alone, that of Word shows a relationship of expressed likeness to the Father as well as a relationship to humanity and creation.

Second, Francis states that the Father announces the Word. Offhand, the use of the word “announce” could connote a remote presence. From afar (“in heaven”) the most high Father announces his Word through the angel Gabriel. However, if we consider who it is who announces and what is being announced, we see more clearly the role of the Father in the event of the Incarnation. To announce is to speak. Here the announcer is the Father and that which is spoken is the Word. Francis highlights the divine relationship

by describing the Word as the Word of the Father. Bonaventure will later explain this relationship by saying that the Word is the expression of the Father, that is, everything the Father is is expressed in the Word. Thus, when the Word becomes flesh the mystery of the utterly transcendent Father is expressed in time but the Father remains hidden behind the veil of flesh assumed in the Incarnation, that is, the Word.

What Francis emphasizes in this passage is that the Incarnation is a work of the Trinity. When the Son, the Word of the Father, takes on our fragile human nature in the Incarnation (2EpFid 4), the Word does not *leave* the Father to take on our humanity; rather the eternal relationship of love between the Father and Son is now expressed in history and time. The infinite mystery of God as an eternal union of love between Father, Son, and Spirit is not undermined in the Incarnation—it remains an eternal mystery now expressed in the history of the world. The Incarnation of the Word is the hinge between God's transcendence and immanence. The Word is always the Word of the Father such that the Father is always in union with the Word through the Spirit. When the Word becomes flesh, the divine relationships do not change; they simply burst forth into time and history. God remains the awesome and tremendous mystery and yet is intimately near us, related to us in and through the Son.

While the holy transcendent One is the immanent One revealed in the Incarnation, Francis sees divine immanence in a particular way in the poverty and humility of Jesus Christ. The poverty of God is described in terms of kenosis, the self-emptying or descent of the Word from the divine riches of infinite love into our fragile human nature. The poverty of the Word incarnate is not peculiar to Jesus alone, however, but is grounded in the surrender of the Father who sends his Son into the world for our redemption. Francis sees divine kenosis in the birth of Jesus and in the passion and cross as he writes:

Then he prayed to his Father, saying: Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. And his sweat became as drops of blood falling on the ground. Nonetheless, he placed his will at the will of the Father, saying: Father, let your will be done; not as I will but as you will. And the will of the Father was such that his blessed and glorious Son, whom he gave to us and who was born for us, should, through his own blood, offer himself as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross: not for himself through whom all things were made, but for our sins, leaving us an example that we should follow in his footprints (2EpFid 8-13).

Francis indicates here that the will of the Father was to offer up the Son just as the will of the Son was to offer his life for the Father; thus he under-

stands the two wills to be joined by the one Spirit of (agapic) love. In this respect, the Father remains intimately present to the Son even to the point of the Son's death on the cross. The contemporary theologian Jürgen Moltmann says that in the cross the two wills of the Father and Son are completely expressed as one will of sacrificial love. He writes: "In the cross, the Father and Son are most deeply separated in forsakenness and at the same time are most inwardly one in their surrender. What proceeds from this event between Father and Son is the Spirit which justifies the godless, fills the forsaken with love and even brings the dead alive."⁷ Thus, Moltmann, like Francis, sees the cross as an event of the Trinity and not simply as an event of the Incarnate Word of God, that is, an event of sacrificial love.

While in his Letter to the Faithful Francis describes the Incarnation in terms of poverty or kenosis, in his writings on the Eucharist (in his words, the body and blood of Christ) he describes the Incarnation in terms of divine humility. Whereas the Letter to the Faithful addresses the particular way the Christian is to follow Christ, in his writings on the Eucharist, he is concerned with the mystery of God's presence and emphasizes humility as the *form* of God present to us in the Incarnation. By describing the Incarnation as an event of the Trinity, Francis indicates that in the Incarnation the Father is always in union with the Son. Thus, the Father is not "in heaven," at an infinite distance from the sacrifice of the Son nor are the Father and Son separated by time (and thus creation) since they are united as one in the Spirit. It is clear from Francis's writings that he is concerned with the relationship between the Father and Son precisely in view of the transcendence of God. In his first Admonition on the body of Christ, he highlights the mystery of Christ's divinity in relation to the Father. He begins this Admonition with a string of passages from John's Gospel that address the question, where is the holy transcendent Father in relation to the Son? He writes:

The Lord Jesus says to his disciples: I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would also have known my Father; and from now on you will know him and have seen him. Philip says to him: Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us. Jesus says to him: Have I been with you for so long a time and you have not known me? Philip, whoever sees me, sees also my Father (Jn. 14.6-9). The Father lives in inaccessible light, and God is Spirit (Jn. 4.24) and, no one has ever seen God (Jn. 1.18). Therefore he cannot be seen except in the Spirit since it is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh does not offer anything (Jn. 6.64). But neither, inasmuch as he is equal to the Father, is the Son seen by anyone other than the Father [or] other than the Holy Spirit (Adm 1:1-7).

The relationship that Francis emphasizes here is the hiddenness of the Father in the Son. If the Father is the object of Francis's adoration, Francis sees the presence of the Father in the Son, an "in-sight" made possible only by the work of the Spirit. It is the presence of the holy transcendent Father in the Son that renders the humanity of Christ more than mere flesh. As Francis writes: "All who saw the Lord Jesus according to his humanity and did not see and believe according to the Spirit and the Godhead that he is the true Son of God were condemned" (Adm 1:8). Further on he states: "And as they saw only his flesh by means of their bodily sight, yet believed him to be God as they contemplated him with the eyes of faith, so, as we see bread and wine with our [bodily] eyes, we too are to see and firmly believe them to be his most holy body and blood living and true" (Adm 1:20-21). What Francis highlights here is nothing short of the profound truth of God's presence—in the flesh and in the world. The most high and holy One who is ultimate transcendent goodness is hidden in the ordinary things of this world, here indicated by forms of bread and wine.

Francis uses the word "form" specifically to highlight the hiddenness of God who hides himself in the most unexpected ways. As Francis writes: "See daily he humbles himself as when he came from the royal throne into the womb of the Virgin; daily he comes to us in a *humble form*; daily he comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of the priest" (Adm 1:17-18). His thought echoes in the lines of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who wrote: "There is nothing profane here below for those who have eyes to see."⁸ To see the humility of God in the world is to live in the mystery of Christ, for Christ expresses the humility of God in the humble form of the flesh. It is the Spirit who lives in the hearts of those turned to God who enables believers to "see" or recognize the truth of God among us (Adm 1:6).

We can understand what the humility of God means for Francis more clearly in his Letter to the Entire Order where he contrasts humility with the sublimity of God. He writes:

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 humbled himself that for our salvation
 he hides himself under the little form of bread!
 Look, brothers, at the humility of God
 and pour out your hearts before Him!
 Humble yourselves, as well,
 that you may be exalted by Him.
 Therefore, hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves

so that he who gives himself totally to you
 may receive you totally (EpOrd 27-29).

Matura states that there is a startling contrast here between the "sublimity" of God, the awesome dignity of the Lord of the Universe who is God and Son of God, and the humility of God expressed in his insignificant presence in the very ordinary, everyday bread in which he is given to us.⁹ The phrase "God and Son of God" does not connote two Gods but one God, Father and Son, who "humbles himself for our salvation and "hides" his true glory from all our senses. God's humility is not a gesture of humiliation. Instead, God presents himself incognito, hidden. By highlighting the humility of God, Francis does not reduce God to a defenseless deity; rather he points to the profound theological mystery of God's appearance in the world in a new form, the form of the ordinary—in the Eucharist, in bread.

Indeed, the humility of God tells us something about God, namely, that God is turned towards us because the Father is turned towards the Son in an eternal act of love. While the Son shows his own humility, he also reveals that of the Father who is always united to the Son. That is, the Father loves us with the same enduring love with which he loves the Son. The mystery of holy transcendence, therefore, is the nearness of God. Humility is the direction of the Father's love towards us through the Son. The holy, ineffable, and incomprehensible Father is turned towards us in the Son and is immanent with the Son, hidden in the form of the ordinary, the flesh of a human and the bread of life.

Francis's notion of transcendence in light of the humility of God reflects a Christian understanding of God. His is not the God of the Greeks, the remote and distant God who has nothing in common with creation. Rather, God is a God of overflowing goodness who reveals himself as love in the poverty and humility of the Son. For Greek Fathers, such as Gregory of Nyssa, the transcendence of God underscored an infinite distance between God and creation. The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* meant there was an unbridgeable gap between the incomprehensible, transcendent God and the created world, a gap that ultimately could not be bridged even in the Incarnation.¹⁰ Rather, God (the Father) always remains distant and beyond.

While Francis acknowledges God the Father as holy, awesome, ineffable, incomprehensible, and transcendent, the Father is not distant and remote; rather, the Father is immanently near, hidden in the Son. The transcendence of God does not mean that God rules from a distant "place"; rather, transcendence for Francis means "holy other." God the Father is the "holy other" because God is ultimate goodness, perfect love. Transcendence, therefore, corresponds to divine nature not divine place. It is the Holy Other nearness of God by which God is present to the world as ultimate goodness. Only those

who have the Spirit of the Lord can discover this truth and penetrate the depths of created reality in which God is hidden in the world.

Francis and the Humility of God

While it seems paradoxical to speak of the holy transcendent God as a humble God, a God who is turned towards us and is intimately near us, such an understanding of God shifts our attention away from a God who “looms over us in judgement” to a God who is not only by our side but deep within us, present as holy mystery, calling us to become transcendent in love. Francis’s understanding of heaven is opening up to this holy transcendent God of love. Heaven is not a “place above” us; rather it is the place of the Spirit within us where the Love that moves “the sun and the other stars”¹¹ moves the flesh of our hands and feet to render us compassionate in love (ExPat 1-2).

The humility of God belies an understanding of God as a remote ruler or harsh judge, a disinterested God who has nothing in common with creation. Rather, this is a God of ultimate goodness who seeks to share goodness with another. While Francis views the Incarnation as a merciful act of God who reconciles sinful humanity to himself, salvation is really about the healing and wholeness of humanity, being restored in the fullness of God’s love. As Francis proclaims in his commentary on the “Our Father,” God dwells in those who attain perfect love (ExPat 2). The beauty of God’s transcendence for Francis is that God comes to meet us where we are, on the level of our fragile humanity, and loves us in and through the weaknesses of our human nature. Perhaps that is why Francis was attracted to the humility of God and sought to imitate this humility. He was simply captivated by the holy mystery of God and discovered the presence of this mystery in the person of Jesus Christ. The “Parchment Given to Brother Leo,” composed after he received the Stigmata on La Verna in 1224, reflects his mystical insight into the triune God present in the crucified Christ”

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.
You are three and one, Lord God of gods;
You are good, all good, the highest good,
Lord, God, living and true. . . .
You are our hope, You are our faith, You are our charity, You are all
our sweetness,
You are our eternal life:
Great and wonderful Lord,
God almighty, merciful Savior (LaudDei).

This prayer is a powerful testimony to Francis’s profound experience of God in union with Christ. Francis discovered the holy transcendent One, the Father of ultimate goodness, in the Son, particularly in the cross where the fullness of God as love was revealed. If humility is the turning of the Father towards the Son in an eternal act of love, in the cross the Son is turned towards the Father in love, imitating the humility of God and leaving us an example that we might follow in his footprints. Did Francis follow in the footprints of the humility of God? There is reason to believe that he not only searched out these footprints but saw them clearly in the mystery of the Eucharist and exhorted his brothers to follow this path. In his Letter to the Entire Order he writes: “Look, brothers, at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before Him. Humble yourselves, as well, that you may be exalted by Him. Therefore, hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves so that he who gives himself totally to you may receive you totally” (LOrd 28-29).

In Francis’s view, to be exalted by God does not mean to be raised up beyond this world; rather, it means to be turned towards God in love—like Christ—to “give oneself totally to God who has given himself totally to us.” In this way, to be turned towards God is not only an interior movement of deepening one’s life in God, but it is also the movement of being turned towards the world in which God is hidden. To become humble in love, in imitation of God, is to embrace the world. For Francis, to imitate the humility of God is another way of being minor, of being turned towards the other and subject to the other for God’s sake (RegNB 16:6). It is a way of meeting people where they are, on the level of personhood, and loving them by way of compassion. Thus, imitation of the humility of God provides for true unity in the face of diversity because the goodness of God knows no boundaries. Indeed, the humble love of God hides in the most unexpected forms. Francis, therefore, goes about following in the footprints of Christ because they are the footprints of divine humility. The all-powerful, supreme, and almighty God is hidden in the world, and the task of the Christian is to find him, for the one who finds God finds the source of happiness and peace.

If the humility of God is the way of meeting God in the world, it is also the way God interacts with the world. A humble God in Francis’s view is not a harsh judge but one who judges according to justice, that is, according to the law of love (OffPass). If power is the capacity to influence, Francis sees the power of God precisely in the freedom of God’s humble love. We are to tremble before the face of God, according to Francis, because God has ruled from a tree (OffPass, Ps VII). The omnipotence of God is crucified love which is divine capacity for love beyond all human comprehension. As Walter Kasper writes:

It requires omnipotence to be able to surrender oneself and give oneself away; and it requires omnipotence to be able to take oneself back in the giving and to preserve the independence and freedom of the recipient. Only an almighty love can give itself wholly to the other and be a helpless love.¹²

Perhaps what drew Francis to the cross of Jesus Christ was, indeed, the power of God—not the power of control but the power of helpless love revealed in the outstretched figure of the cross. What Francis discovered in the cross was the living God—not the God of human projections but the God who transforms by surrendering in love. If transcendence is the Holy Other nearness of God even in the midst of suffering and death, it is no wonder that Francis found sweetness in kissing the disfigured flesh of the leper (Test 3). God is an inexhaustible mystery of love and we are invited to share in this mystery but to do so we must become powerless, like God, to the point of surrendering in love.

Francis was free enough to let go, and in this freedom was born the seed of heaven deep within him. Freedom and the mystery of God's humility coinhere in Francis's thought for God's humble love is truly free. If we are attracted to Francis, perhaps we are attracted to his freedom to imitate the humility of God. Freedom and love are the two desires of the human heart that cling to happiness, and if we desire happiness, we must let go of the powers that imprison our inner selves and hold our happiness in the chains of self-centeredness. If we can become powerless in love, then we will find that heaven is not a place "above" but is hidden in our hearts and in the heart of the world, for the world itself is hidden deep within the infinite heart of God.

Endnotes

¹Thaddée Matura, *Francis of Assisi: The Message in His Writings*, trans. Paul Barrett (New York: The Franciscan Institute, 1997), 53.

²Thaddée Matura, "My Holy Father! God as Father in the Writings of Francis," trans. Cyprian Rosen, *Greyfriars Review* 1 (1987): 106.

³All translations of Francis's writings are taken from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis J. Armstrong and Ignatius C. Brady (New York: Paulist, 1982).

⁴Matura, *Francis of Assisi*, 57-8.

⁵Matura, *Francis of Assisi*, 82.

⁶See, for example, W. Viviani, *L'ermeneutica di Francesco d'Assisi. Indagine alla luce de Gv 13-17 nei suoi scritti* (Rome, 1983).

⁷Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 244.

⁸Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, trans. Rene Hague (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 66. Teilhard de Chardin writes: "By virtue of the creation and, still more, of the incarnation, *nothing* here below is *profane* for those who know how to see."

⁹Matura, *Francis of Assisi*, 72.

¹⁰Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: from Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 80-97. Louth states that Gregory's "understanding of the doctrine of creation out of nothing means that there is no point of contact between the soul and God, and so God is totally unknowable to the soul, and the soul can have no experience of God except insofar as God makes such experience possible" (p. 81).

¹¹Dante, *The Divine Comedy 3: Paradiso*, trans. John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 485.

¹²Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 194-95.

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Francis: Seal of the Living God Prophet, King, Priest

Paula Jean Miller, FSE

The three-fold *munera* of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King, into which each Christian is anointed and sealed at baptism, has emerged as a theme in the writings of Pope John Paul II. Since St. Francis is frequently lauded as one who most closely manifests the image of Christ in his own life, it follows that St. Francis must have lived this triple dynamic of Christian life in an exemplary way. This fact was not lost on St. Bonaventure, who refers to St. Francis as the one who carries the seal of the living God. In fact, he names Francis as the angel of the sixth seal in the Book of Revelation, the one designated by God to sign the foreheads of the servants of God with the Tau.¹

In his morning and evening sermons preached in Paris on October 4, 1267,² St. Bonaventure develops a sequence of thought which articulates characteristics in the life of St. Francis that capture the mystery of the triple office of Jesus Christ. In order to explicate these two sermons in accord with the model set forth by John Paul II, a brief summary of the theology of the *munera* will be given.

Pope John Paul bases his thought in the renewed call of Vatican Council II to the Church: every person is called by God to holiness. St. Peter tells us that we are "sharers in the divine nature"; St. Paul reminds us that God "chose us in him, before the foundation of the world to be holy"; and the book of Leviticus exhorts to "sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." Christ becomes human in order to show us the "way," to attain the very holiness of God. After being cleansed of sin, each Christian is anointed into the pattern of Christ and sent into the world as prophet, priest, and king.

Christ is the paradigm for these mysteries. As prophet, he was anointed to bear witness to the truth through his actions, his suffering and his death. Matthew portrays Christ as the messianic fulfillment of the Suffering Servant in the book of the prophet Isaiah (Mt. 3:16-17), while Luke opens the period of

Christ's public ministry by evoking this image: "The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for Yahweh has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18).

Like the priests of the Old Testament, Christ is anointed to offer sacrifice and incense, to make atonement for the sins of the people, and to exercise authority in judgments. While Christ deviates from the traditional priestly model by not belonging to a priesthood which derives from bodily descent from a tribe, he is acknowledged by the evangelists as priest in the line of Melchizedek, the King of Salem, who offers the sacrifice of bread and wine. Christ also reverses the model in a second way, for while in the Old Testament the priest is the man who serves God, in Jesus the priest is the Son of God who serves humankind.

Finally, Christ is anointed for kingship, for he is destined to both guide and represent the people of God. His destiny is foretold in the tidings of Gabriel: "The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end" (Lk. 1:32-33). This kingship is claimed by Christ at the end of his life when responding to Pontius Pilate: "Yes, I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice" (John 18:37).

How does all this apply to the life of the ordinary Christian, and more particularly, how is it embodied anew in the poor man of Assisi? Sharing in the three-fold service of Christ shapes the life of the Church in a fundamental way. As prophets within society, we are called like Christ to stand up for our convictions and for Truth and to live into the consequences. As members of the royal priesthood, we are to penetrate, transform, and perfect the world by "offering our bodies as a living sacrifice." Kingship, as indicated by Christ, is not a matter of exercising power over others, but rather of achieving self-mastery and dominion over nature's deepest impulses. Only then is it possible to guide others into the truth of the dignity and worth of each and every human person and the just distribution of goods.

Pope John Paul enlarges our understanding of this Christian mission to the world in many of his works, but particularly in *Redemptor Hominis* and in *Christifideles laici*. The Church as prophet is to be *totally engaged* in the world; it is to be a transforming leaven, an enhancing salt, a revealing light. Christians are to be *like* the world by assuming every profession and occupation and by living into all the ordinary circumstances of family life and personal friendships. But Christians are also to be *unlike* the world—to be a *sign of contradiction* to a secularized society—primarily by integrating their faith into their daily lifestyle. As priests, Christians are to indwell the world and animate it, as the soul does the body, and to offer their entire lives as a sacrifice of praise.

Holiness consists not primarily in heroic decisions, but rather in the giving of self in generous service in the ordinary activities of daily life. In Genesis, the divine mandate is to "subdue the earth and have dominion over it." When dominion is perverted into domination, the disordering of creation by personal sin requires reordering through the cross of Christ.

St. Bonaventure's Sermons on St. Francis

St. Bonaventure sets the theme for his sermons on St. Francis by referring to the Suffering Servant in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Behold my *servant* whom I *uphold*,
my *chosen* in whom my soul *delights*;
I have put my *spirit* upon him,
He will bring forth *justice* to the nations.

In these phrases, Bonaventure presents Francis as the image of Christ, prophet, king, and priest. Since Christ is the center person of the Trinity and the mediator between God and humanity, it is usually the center image that provides a key to Bonaventure's thought. It is well-tried virtue that constitutes the "kingly stature" of God's elect, characterizes Francis's "unique and perfect holiness," and makes him a proper guide and representative of God's people. While Bonaventure first lingers over the prophetic call of Francis—the one who comes as the new Elias³ in a fiery chariot, lays bare the consciences of his followers,⁴ and leads them out of Egypt by turning them to a life of penance—it is Francis, the chosen one of God, who transforms creation into a new garden of innocence. And while Francis denies himself the privilege of the ordained priesthood, preferring the life of the lesser brother, God himself in the end makes him the sacrament of Christ, priest and victim, and the *seal of the living God*.

Francis, the Prophet

For his word was like a blazing fire, reaching the deepest parts of the heart and filling the souls of all with wonder (LM 12).

In the Major Legend, Bonaventure designates Francis as a prophet anointed and sent by the Spirit of the Lord to be a sign of contradiction to worldly values. Bonaventure designates Francis as the *servant* whom God himself *upholds* by his three-fold mercy. Bonaventure acknowledges that the title of *servant* refers primarily to Jesus Christ; however "what is true of the head may be

applied to the members on account of their likeness and closeness to the head."⁵ While these words can be understood of any holy person, they highlight in a pre-eminent way the unique and perfect holiness of Francis with regard to its "root, its loftiness, and its radiance." The root of Francis's holiness is his prophetic spirit, exemplified in his humility—a sign of contradiction to both Church and society. The loftiness of his holiness is seen in relation to his domain, for through his poverty he possesses the whole of creation. Finally, the radiance of his holiness is manifested in his priestly vesting with the sign of the cross and his own passover.

The root of perfect holiness lies in deep humility, its loftiness in well tried virtue, and its radiance in consummate love. Endowed with deep humility we are sustained by God; by well tried virtue we are made pleasing to him; and in consummate love we are taken up to God and brought closer to our neighbor.⁶

Bonaventure concludes that the *perfect* saint is one endowed with deep humility, well tried virtue and consummate love. He finds these three qualities in Francis as the servant, the chosen, and the one who is spirit-marked.

Above all, it is the virtue of humility in St. Francis which is the sign of contradiction to a Church and a worldly society focused on wealth and power. Francis becomes this sign of contradiction in his living flesh. To make his point, Bonaventure presents Francis as the fulfillment of several scriptural figures. First, Francis is the new Zerubbabel: "I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, and make you like a seal, for I have chosen you." Zerubbabel was the one chosen to lead God's people out of Babylon and to rebuild the temple. Francis is made the seal of God through the marks of the passion impressed on his body; he is chosen by God to lead his people in a new exodus and to rebuild the Church. Bonaventure next compares Francis to Moses, the leader of the Exodus and the giver of the law. Like Moses, Francis leads his followers out of Egypt and gives them a rule of life. Imaging Moses, Francis prays and brings forth water from the rock for the thirsty to drink (LMin 5:3.)

In Trinitarian fashion, Bonaventure compares Francis to a prophetic figure of the Old Testament, to Paul in the New Testament, and finally to Christ. Francis was a servant, humble in his reverence for God, more humble still in caring for his neighbor, and most humble in despising himself. Francis, like God's servant Job, is humble, blameless, and upright, fears God, and turns away from evil. In all that he did as a true prophet, he suffered and praised God. As Job means "sorrowing," so Francis's life was filled with sorrow and he wept unceasingly for his sins and the sins of others. As Job had seven sons, Francis had seven friars. As Job had three daughters, Francis rebuilt three churches and brought into being three orders. Francis "was a humble servant

of God through the reverence he bore him.”⁷

Like Paul, Francis was more humble still, not only being the servant of God, but making himself the slave of all. “Our holy Father Francis became all things to all men and the servant of everybody.”⁸ Francis exemplifies this in his care for the lepers. It is his care for the lepers which leads Bonaventure to compare Francis to Christ himself who was the most humble, despising himself, and giving himself over to every kind of service—even washing the feet of his disciples. Christ reveals the root of wisdom in humbling himself. Francis begins with this root and changes his way of life so radically that townspeople throw stones at him and drag him naked through the mud.

Humility, the guardian and embellishment of all the virtues, had filled the man of God with abundance. In his own opinion he was nothing but a sinner, though in truth he was a mirror and the splendor of every kind of holiness. As he had learned from Christ, he strove to build himself upon this like a wise architect laying a foundation (LM 6).

As a humble servant of God, Francis is upheld by God’s three-fold mercy. Like Mary Magdalene, Francis wept unceasingly for his sins and was upheld by God’s forgiving mercy; like the servant in Isaiah, Francis sets his hand to the plough and does not look back, so he is upheld by the protecting mercy of the Just One; and because Francis revered God, he was sustained by God’s liberating mercy.

Francis the King

The entire fabric of the universe came to the service of the sanctified senses of the holy man (LM 5).

“Devotion lifted him up into God, compassion transformed him into Christ, self-emptying turned him to his neighbor, universal reconciliation with each thing refashioned him to the state of innocence” (LM 8). Francis is one *chosen* by God, elected to be raised high among all the virtuous, because of his perfect observance of the law and the gospel, his indomitable zeal for the Christian faith, and for his exceedingly fervent love for the crucified savior. He is the *delight* of God because of his unquestioning obedience, his passion for righteousness, and his devotion to God. Because of the “loftiness of his holiness,” Bonaventure sees Francis exercising perfect dominion over the whole created universe in the image of Christ the King.⁹ His dominion extends to the whole of creation because it begins first and foremost with himself.

As a loyal follower of the crucified Jesus, Francis, that man of God, crucified his flesh with its passions and desires from the very beginning of his conversion with such rigid discipline, and checked his sensual impulses according to such a strict law of moderation, that he would scarcely take what was necessary to sustain nature (LMin 3:1).

Francis is purified in the furnace of poverty, as is prophesied in the book of Isaiah: “Behold, I have refined you, but not like silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of poverty.”¹⁰ Voluntary poverty carries with it imitation of Christ and conformity to him; it is a poverty inseparable from the cross of discipleship. Francis is a man of well-tried virtue: his self-denial eradicates greed; purity, lust; simplicity, inquisitiveness; humility, pride; and kindness drives away anger. “By keeping these virtues, a person is a follower of the naked Christ in the furnace of poverty.”¹¹ And Bonaventure goes on to say that “Francis was like pure gold, refined in the furnace of poverty.” Then, like Paul, Francis was chosen by God because of his indomitable zeal for the Christian faith and his passion for righteousness. As Paul was called to carry the name of Christ to the gentiles, Francis carried that name to Spain, Morocco, and Egypt. Finally, Francis was like Christ in his zeal for souls, for as Christ condescended to incarnation, passion, and death for the salvation of all, so Francis “was transformed, even while still alive, into the Crucified.”¹² Bonaventure quietly concludes: “It is evident that Saint Francis was chosen by God. Let us ask God to hear our prayers.”¹³

Elsewhere, Bonaventure comments that Francis was a “truly outstanding and admirable man, for whom fire tempers its burning heat, water changes its taste, a rock provides abundant drink, inanimate things obey, wild animals become tame, and to whom irrational creatures direct their attention eagerly. In his benevolence, the Lord of all things listens to his prayer, as in his liberality he provides food, gives guidance by the brightness of light, so that every creature is subservient to him, as a man of extraordinary sanctity, and even the Creator of all condescends to him” (LMin 5:9). Why does even the Creator of all condescend to Francis? Because, as Bonaventure so aptly points out, he is the very image of Christ the Son.¹⁴

Francis the Priest

This proof of Christian wisdom ploughed into the dust of your flesh (LM 13).

In the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, Bonaventure examines the life of St. Francis within the Dionysian ladder of divinization: purification, enlightenment, perfection. Now in the Evening Sermon, Bonaventure commends Francis

for his consummate love, the sign of his perfection, and speaks of the ultimate seal of God who has put his "spirit upon him, [who] will bring forth justice to the nations." Like Ezechiel in the Old Testament, Francis must first be *purified* of all worldly desires: "The spirit lifted me and took me up and I went away in bitterness in the heat of my spirit." Fulfilling the words of Sirach, Francis is *enlightened* by wisdom: "In the midst of the Church wisdom shall open his mouth and fill him with the spirit of wisdom and understanding." Bonaventure notes that, though Francis is uneducated, he is both an expert preacher and teacher. And finally, the words of Paul are embodied in Francis: "God's love has been poured out into us through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Francis reaches *perfection* and becomes the angel of the sixth seal¹⁵: "Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God." Since Francis is now fixed to the cross in body and spirit through the stigmata, he is born aloft into God by the fire of seraphic love and simultaneously transfixed by zeal for the souls of others.¹⁶ God sends Francis to kindle their hearts with a divine flame of love and to seal their foreheads with the Tau.¹⁷

Bonaventure observes that Francis, "like a thoroughly burning coal seemed totally absorbed in the flame of divine love" (LM 9) and cries out like the beloved in the Song of Solomon: "Set me like a seal upon your heart!" Francis, in the priesthood conferred upon him by God, brings forth justice to the nations, that is, he *reorders* all creation and, as priest, offers it as a sacrifice of praise to the Father. Like a *watchman*, whose life is a sermon to everyone, Francis brings forth justice to the nations as a model of God-like virtue, in whom nothing is found blameworthy. He is without anger or deceit and proclaims the commands of God, his promises, and his judgment.

Like a true *merchant* who found the pearl of heavenly glory, Francis teaches us to purchase the pearl. The priesthood of Francis is captured in the image of the merchant, the man of God who is totally engaged in the world: both *like* and *unlike* it, he is able to transform world into kingdom. Francis, the poor man, builds upon David, the best of the *prophets*, and on Peter, the prince of the *apostles*. "One was a shepherd that he would pasture the synagogue, the flock God had led out of Egypt; the other was a fisherman that he would fill the net of the Church with many kinds of believers; the last was a *merchant* that he would *purchase the pearl* of the Gospel of life, *selling* and giving away *all he had* for the sake of Christ" (LM 11).

As the perfect image of Christ the priest, Francis,

because of his merits and his intercession, [by] the power of almighty God restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, walking to the lame, and feeling and movement to the para-

lyzed; he gave robust health, moreover, to those who were withered, shriveled, or ruptured, and effectively snatched away those who were in prison; he brought the shipwrecked to the safety of port, granted an easy delivery to those in danger during childbirth, and put demons to flight from those possessed. Finally, he restored those hemorrhaging and lepers to cleanliness, those mortally wounded to perfectly sound condition, and what is greater than all these, he restored the dead to life (LMin 7:7).

Thus, Francis—the Seal of the Living God as prophet, priest, and king—is a seal *refashioned, made new* through lament and sorrow for his past life. He is a seal *transformed* by the fire of love; a seal *imprinted* through being an example of perfect virtue; and finally a *declaratory seal* by his ardent desire for the salvation of others. Bonaventure personally addresses Francis, prophet, king, and priest, as the *other Angel ascending from the rising of the sun* who bears the three-fold sign of the living God:

Behold, you have arrived with seven apparitions of the cross of Christ wondrously apparent and visible in you or about you following an order of time, like six steps leading to the seventh where you finally found rest. For the cross of Christ, both offered and taken on by you at the beginning of your conversion and carried continuously from that moment throughout the course of your most proven life and giving example to others, shows with such clarity of certitude that you have finally reached the summit of Gospel perfection that no truly devout person can reject this proof of Christian wisdom ploughed into the dust of your flesh. No truly believing person can attack it, no truly humble person can belittle it, since it is truly divinely expressed and worthy of complete acceptance (LM 13).

Endnotes

¹Cf. Rev. 7:2-3. "Wait before you do any damage on land or at sea or to the trees, until we have put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of God."
²Bonaventure, "The Morning Sermon and The Evening Sermon on St. Francis," preached at Paris, October 4, 1267, in *Francis of Assisi, the Founder, Early Documents*, Vol. 2, ed. Regis Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William Short (New York, London, Manila: New City Press, 2000), 747-765. (All references to Bonaventure's Lives of Francis are also from this source.)
³"Inflamed totally by the fiery vigor of the Spirit of Christ, he began, as another Elias, to be a model of Truth. He also began to lead some to perfect righteousness and still others to penance. His statements were neither hollow nor ridiculous; they were instead, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, and they penetrated to the marrow of the heart" (LMin 2:2).
⁴"Shown to them by the Lord as one coming in the spirit and power of Elias, and as Israel's chariot and charioteer, he had been made leader for spiritual men" (LMin 2:6)
⁵Morning Sermon, 748.

⁶Morning Sermon, 748

⁷Morning Sermon, 750.

⁸Morning Sermon, 750.

⁹“Although he certainly possessed nothing of his own in this world, he seemed to possess all good things in the very Author of this world. With the steady gaze of the dove, that is, the simple application and pure consideration of the mind, he referred all things to the supreme Artisan and recognized, loved, and praised their Maker in all things. It came to pass, by a heavenly gift of kindness, that he possessed all things in God and God in all things. In consideration of the primal origin of all things, he would call all creatures, however insignificant, by the names of brother and sister since they came forth with him from the one source. He embraced those, however, more tenderly and passionately, who portray by a natural likeness the gracious gentleness of Christ and exemplify it in the Scriptures. Even inanimate things obeyed his command, as if this same holy man, so simple and upright, had already returned to the state of innocence” LMin 3:6.

¹⁰Morning Sermon, 755-756.

¹¹Morning Sermon, 755-756.

¹²It is interesting to note that this dimension of Francis's life is treated in the *third* chapter of the *Legenda Minor* by Bonaventure, a sign of trinitarian perfection.

¹³Morning Sermon, 758.

¹⁴“At that time when the servant of the Lord was preaching on the seashore at Gaeta, he wished to escape the adulation of the crowd, which in its devotion was rushing upon him. He jumped alone into a small boat that was drawn upon the shore. The boat, as though it was guided by an internal source of power, moved itself rather far from land without the help of any oars. All who were present saw this and marveled. When it had gone some distance into the deep water, it stood motionless among the waves as long as, with the crowd waiting on the shore, it pleased the man of God to preach” (LMin 5:4).

¹⁵“He understood, as the one whom he saw exteriorly taught him interiorly, that the weakness of suffering was in no way compatible with the immortality of the seraphic spirit; nevertheless, such a vision had been presented to his sight, so that this friend of Christ might learn in advance that he had to be transformed totally, not by a martyrdom of the flesh but by the enkindling of his soul, into the manifest likeness of Christ Jesus crucified. The vision, which disappeared after a secret and intimate conversation, inflamed him interiorly with a seraphic ardor and marked his flesh exteriorly with a likeness conformed to the Crucified; it was as if the liquefying power of fire preceded the impression of the seal” (LMin 6:2).

¹⁶“The man of God was now, fixed to the cross in both body and spirit. Just as he was being born aloft into God by the fire of seraphic love, he was also being transfigured by a fervid zeal for souls. He thirsted with the crucified Lord for the deliverance of those to be saved. Since he could not walk because of the nails protruding from his feet, he had his half-dead body carried through the towns and villages, so that like another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, he might kindle the hearts of the servants of God with a divine flame of fire, direct their feet into the way of peace, and seal their foreheads with the sign of the living God” (LMin 7:1).

¹⁷“The man of God venerated this symbol with great affection. He often spoke of it with eloquence and used it at the beginning of every action. In those letters which out of charity he sent, he signed it with his own hand. It was as if his whole desire were, according to the prophetic text, to *mark with a Tau the foreheads of those mourning and grieving*, of those truly converted to Christ” (LMin 2:9).

Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant us in our misery the grace to do for You alone what we know You want us to do, and always to desire what pleases You.
(Letter to the Entire Order 50)

Franciscan Spirituality and Excluded Persons

Séamus Mulholland, OFM

Excluded persons, whether migrant workers, refugees, or the socially and economically displaced, were a phenomenon in the time of Francis as much as they are today. We are often tempted to think solely of excluded persons in Francis's time simply as “the lepers” and to confine this term to those who were suffering from physical leprosy. This is too narrow a way of looking at Francis's experience. A re-reading of the Franciscan texts and sources, especially the hagiographic material, is needed so that we can come to a formulation of a “Franciscanological” approach to many of the social, environmental, cultural, and economic crises of our own day.

What then is the Franciscan approach? And most particularly, is there a foundation for our involvement in this issue of excluded persons in the Franciscan sources? It is not enough to simply say: “Jesus spent time with the outcast and the excluded person, so must we”; “Jesus came to save the outcast and excluded”; or even to say “Francis identified with the lepers, so must we as Franciscan.” It is not enough because none of these statements is true. Jesus may have had a special preference for the poor, yet he moved among the Pharisees, the Scribes, the Roman occupiers and persecutors. He spoke with some of the most powerful people in the country, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Simon the Pharisee. In the case of Francis, it is true that he spent time with the lepers—but he did not identify with them. In other words, in our reading of the scriptural sources and the Franciscan sources, we must be careful not to allow a romantic, naive idealism to be substituted for a radical reassessment of the character of St. Francis and how he moved among the excluded people of his own time. I would like to suggest that elements of this construction need to be deconstructed and a new, authentic approach to the life and human character of Francis taken. In this way we will come to see why it is crucial that Franciscans become radically involved in the issue of excluded persons.

The social and economic climate of Francis's time is well documented. Suffice it to say that it was a time of great economic change. And with these economic changes there came a new sense of identity and the possibility for the "ordinary" people to exercise power. The source of this power lay in "money." With the old feudal structures beginning to collapse, the barter culture was beginning to change to the money culture. The emerging petit bourgeoisie, to whom Francis's family belonged, realized the power that they possessed through their wealth and began to exercise that power. However, Francis's heart and sympathies were with the *minores*, with the lesser people.

Francis and The Leper: A New Approach

The group that most stands out in the Franciscan sources is, of course, the lepers. Francis's encounter with the leper has become one of the primary moments in Franciscan literary history. If the story of the embracing of the leper is true, then it represents one of the central defining moments not just in the life of Francis of Assisi, but in the Franciscan order. The lepers that Francis eventually found himself among were not exactly the "marginalized" because this term indicates the recognition of their existence. Yet, they did not "exist" in Francis's society. They did not benefit from the great social and economic changes that were going on. They had no share in the power structure; they did not participate in societal decision-making. When Francis said "after that I did not wait long until I left the world"—what was the "world" he left? The only world he knew was the world of Assisi. The world he left was the value system brought about by the new-found power and wealth of the rising middle classes. Francis did not just leave his family, he left everything that was familiar to him to go into a another world—a world of nothingness, not even promise. The lepers of Assisi lived outside "the world." They had no names; they had no society; they had no voice. Thus they were not just excluded persons—they were NO PERSONS. They did not exist. In this context, when Francis found himself among them, he did not exist himself. When he left the world of Assisian riches and power based value systems—John Baptist Bernadone ceased to exist. Someone new and different began to emerge.

I suggest that the involvement of Franciscans today with the "no people"—the refugee, the displaced, the dispossessed, the voiceless migrant—is exactly the same as the encounter Francis had with the lepers. I would further suggest that the embrace of the leper be read in a new way—as the "leper" embracing Francis. If this is assumed, then we can come to no other conclusion but that the founder of the Order is not Francis of Assisi—but the leper, the one with no power, no possessions, no existence. The Franciscan Movement was founded by a nobody. It calls others to become nobodies. Francis's time among the

lepers was his "formation." Yet eventually he left them, and there are few references to the lepers after his initial encounter with them.

So where do we Franciscans find our brief for being with the excluded and the "no people" of today? If Francis spent time with them and then left them, should we not do the same? To adopt this attitude is to miss the point of Francis being with the excluded. It was they who provided the locus for him to experience the presence of God in a radical metanoia for gospel living. The living of the Gospel in Franciscan spirituality is not contextualized by the "religious life" of the Church (we are "religious" in the strict sense of the term), but Franciscan life is not to live a rule; Franciscan life is to live the Gospel.

In the new global economic climate, where instant fortunes are made in an impersonal dot.com culture, what role does Franciscan spirituality have? In being brothers and sisters to the excluded, to the "no people" of today, to the refugees, to the migrants, to the immigrants legal or otherwise—surely this is to be what Francis was to the lepers of his time. Francis "did" nothing for them; in fact, the lepers did everything for him. They were his teachers and his mentors; it was they who showed him the true value of the Gospel. The Gospel was not announced to Francis in loud, ringing voices, but in seclusion and exclusion. The Gospel was not announced to the tax collectors and sinners with great noise and trumpets, but in the very fact of the presence of Jesus among them.

Excluded Persons and Franciscan Solidarity

The "no people" of Francis's time, the lepers and outcasts, did not benefit from the wealth and power that the new economic culture had brought with it. That culture did not even recognize their existence. Today, many refugees, migrants, and immigrants are seen to be drains on the economy and the welfare state. They are seen to be taking jobs and benefits from those in our own countries who need them most. They are seen to be a drain on resources, which leads to racism, xenophobia, and violence against persons.

Yet Francis brought to outcasts a recognition of their own true value as human persons. Franciscan spirituality today must embrace the lepers anew as brothers and sisters, must suffer the consequences of ministering to refugees and migrants and immigrants, and must do so free from racism, xenophobia, or nationalistic bigotry. Francis, in order to move among those who had no existence, had to leave behind everything that was close to him, everything that was familiar, secure, and safe. He had to embark on a road on which there were no signposts, no directions. It was a road that had been traveled only once before, in early Palestine. It was a road that Francis walked until he himself became a "no person." He truly had become a refugee.

Who Wrote the *Stabat Mater*?

V. Louise Katainen, PhD

Most references to the *Stabat Mater* bring to mind famous musical settings of this hymn, for example, those by Schubert, Rossini, and Verdi. However, long before the *Stabat Mater* was set to music, it existed as a hymn of personal devotion to the Virgin Mary. Authorship of this hymn is often assigned to the early Franciscan mystic, Jacopone da Todi, who died in 1306. But was Jacopone the man who penned this famous hymn?

Research reveals that the text of the *Stabat Mater* has been attributed to a surprising number of men of the Church, eight to be precise. In addition to Jacopone da Todi, the candidates are Popes John XXII, Innocent III, Boniface VIII, Gregory XI, and Gregory the Great; and Saints Bernard of Clairvaux and Bonaventure. A review of the circumstantial evidence surrounding this complicated authorship debate will lay out the major points of contention and argumentation.

What factors may be taken into consideration when evaluating the validity of any particular candidacy? Important clues as to the relative strength or weakness of a candidacy include

- the presence or absence of manuscripts or early texts that attribute authorship;
- the areas of expertise or special study of the candidate;
- the subject matter of the texts written by the candidate;
- the relative degree of importance that Mariology and the Passion held in the theology of the candidate.

Gregory the Great

The earliest attribution to the earliest candidate, Pope Gregory the Great, seems to have been made by the fourteenth-century Italian writer, Franco Sacchetti (1332-1400), famous for his *Trecento novelle*, a collection of three

Thus, a Franciscanology in working with excluded persons must be rooted in the Gospel and a radical re-reading of the Franciscan sources so as to identify the essence of what it means for each one of us to be a brother/sister. Franciscanology should also avail itself of the expertise of those whose areas of study are socio-economics, cultural studies, political theory. It is not enough for us to simply be engaged in some kind of philanthropic work. Our work needs to be solidly grounded on a firm intellectual base so that our dynamic gospel motivations can be seen to be abreast of current thinking. Francis's experience with the excluded people of his own time and culture was the foremost formative experience of his life. What he learned from the excluded people was real poverty, powerlessness, voicelessness, and dispossession.

Our experience today with excluded people will be the same. Frequently it will mean that the society in which we live will not comprehend the reasons for involvement in our solidarity with the excluded. But it is in this sense that we will truly become LESSER BROTHERS—those who, like Francis of Assisi, walk among the excluded, the powerless, the “no-people” of our own day. In that experience we will discover the true meaning of human dignity and the very essence of what Francis meant when he said that the life of the Lesser Brother was “to follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ”, he who, like the excluded of today, was not accepted in his own country, had nowhere to lay his head, and who died because of the message of hope he proclaimed.

Grasped by the hands of Christ Jesus,
wounded healer now touches my soul.

Unclenched hands offering no resistance,
piercing nails offering no escape.
His palms open and bare,
a total offering for all . . . for all.

And the little man did come and follow.
His hands pried open by force of grace.
A soul nearly bursting with longing,
water of passion only quenching such thirst.

And I do come after to follow.
Self-reproach makes a coarse and harsh path.
Daring to pray like the little man,
desiring to share the Master's suffering,
yearning to love with seed of love divine.

My grasp loses hold of such wonder
while saving solace is hands marked by love,
only this remains true and enduring,
Christ Jesus you have grasped me.

Jonathan St. André, TOR

Stigmata

hundred short stories imitative of Boccaccio. The only other ascription to Gregory I comes in the nineteenth century, when the French scholar I. Crasset makes the same attribution, citing early modern sources. Can the candidacy of Gregory as author of the *Stabat Mater* be seriously held? Despite the undeniable greatness of this early Church Father, his candidacy for authorship of this hymn seems doubtful on a couple of points. One of these is that, in the sixteenth-century, sequences such as the *Stabat Mater* were not yet in the liturgy. A second is that the oldest manuscript containing the *Stabat Mater* dates only to the fourteenth century. Hence, most scholars dismiss Gregory as a possible author of the *Stabat Mater*.¹

Bernard of Clairvaux

The next putative author of the *Stabat Mater* is the monastic theologian, Bernard of Clairvaux. Seemingly in Bernard's favor as the likely author is the fact that one fifteenth-century manuscript containing this text bears Bernard's name at the end of the hymn. Additionally in this candidate's favor stands the fact that Bernard wrote sermons in which the Virgin Mary figures importantly. Against his candidature is the fact that none of the most important editors of Bernard's works ascribed the hymn to him. The weight of the evidence would, therefore, tend to indicate that Bernard is not the author of the *Stabat Mater*.²

Innocent III

The earliest attribution of the *Stabat Mater* to Innocent III is made by another pope, Benedict XIV, renowned for his learning and patronage of the arts. Since hymnology was for Benedict an area of special intellectual interest, his judgment on this matter would appear to carry considerable weight. Benedict attributes the *Stabat Mater* to Innocent III in his 1758 study entitled *De festis Domini nostri Jesu Christi*. In the next century, hymnologist Ulisse Chevalier, in his 1894 *Repertorium hymnologicum*, leans cautiously, though by no means definitively, towards agreeing with Pope Benedict and attributing the *Stabat Mater* to Innocent III. The Italian philologist and literary historian Alessandro D'Ancona (d. 1914) also attributes the *Stabat Mater* to Pope Innocent III. Among nineteenth-century papal and church historians, Hugo von Hurter (1834-42) and Johann Netomucene Brischar(d) (1819-1897) also assign authorship of the *Stabat Mater* to Innocent, although a third historian, Ferdinand Gregorovius (1821-1891), judges this attribution to be baseless. The nineteenth-century Catholic historian, Franz Joseph Mone, whose research continues even today to be highly regarded, also ascribed the hymn to Innocent. James Mearns finds the likely attribution to Innocent of "Veni sancte spiritus

et emitte" compelling evidence that the *Stabat Mater* was also penned by him. Thus, the circumstantial evidence in favor of Pope Innocent III's candidacy appears strong. Against Innocent's candidature, on the other hand, stands the irrefutable fact that the principal editors of Innocent's texts do not place the *Stabat Mater* among them.³

Bonaventure

Three scholars, H. A. Daniel (d. 1871), J. Kayser (d. 1919), and Luigi Venturi (d. 1927), base their attribution of the *Stabat Mater* to Bonaventure on the hymn's similarity to another hymn, *Laudismus de sancta cruce*, which many believed Bonaventure wrote. Filippo Ermini, however, objects to the attribution of the *Stabat Mater* to Bonaventure on two grounds: first, because no ancient text supports this claim, and second, because the *Laudismus* itself, along with other *ritmi*, has subsequently been doubted to be of Bonaventurian composition. Further evidence against this ascription is the total lack of any reference to the *Stabat Mater* in early editions of the Bonaventurian texts, such as the 1599 edition of Rome, the 1609 edition of Magonza, and the 1678 edition of Lyon.⁴

Boniface VIII

The twentieth-century musicologist Hélène Nolphénus observes that for centuries a Roman tradition ascribed the hymn to our next candidate, Boniface VIII. Indeed, a late fourteenth-century manuscript now in the Bodleian Library alleges that Boniface was familiar with the hymn. Attribution to Boniface is also made by F. Demattio, in his 1871 *Lettere in Italia prima di Dante*, but apparently no other scholars have championed Boniface as author.⁵

Jacopone da Todi

A number of manuscripts, both early and late, name the early Franciscan Jacopone da Todi as author of the *Stabat Mater*, as does the important 1495 Brescia edition of Jacopone's texts. Basing their conclusions on strong manuscript tradition, stylistic analysis, and comparison with other Latin and/or vernacular texts, many experts of various branches of scholarship point to Jacopone as the author. For example, in his 1650 *Scriptores ordinis minorum*, the Franciscan historian and theologian Luke Wadding (1588-1657) claims Jacopone as the hymn's author. Also supportive of the Jacoponian attribution is Antoine Frédéric Ozanam, the nineteenth-century founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. In 1911 Monsignore Cesare Carbone conceded authorship to Jacopone in his four hundred-page study on the *Stabat Mater* and most literary experts

of the past two centuries assign authorship to Jacopone. George T. Peck, Jacopone's most recent English-language biographer, also shares this opinion. Thus, it is clear that Jacopone's candidacy for authorship of the *Stabat Mater* enjoys the support of numerous experts in a variety of fields.⁶

But support for Jacopone is by no means universal. Among those who remain skeptical of Jacopone's paternity of this hymn is the world's preeminent interpreter of Western mysticism, Bernard McGinn, who writes that "modern scholarship has rejected the traditional ascription to Jacopone of the famous hymn *Stabat mater dolorosa*." Likewise, Nolthénus rejects Jacopone as the putative author of the *Stabat Mater*, basing her judgment on a logical and objective analysis of the style of the text. Another detractor—a far less objective one in my view—is James Mearns, co-author of the article on the *Stabat Mater* in John Julian's important late nineteenth-century *Dictionary of Hymnology*. Despite his acknowledgment that "the evidence at first sight seems more probable," Mearns' rejection of the Jacoponian ascription reveals his own biases, as the following citation clearly shows:

As to the account of Jacopone given by Luke Wadding, . . . one must bear in mind that Wadding was an Irish Franciscan, and not unwilling to claim for his order at least all that was its due. And in fact Wadding's account is much more of the nature of a series of pious imaginations than of a sober record of actual facts.

Mearns concludes that it is more likely that the *Stabat Mater Speciosa* is authored by Jacopone "and that the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* is an earlier work."⁷

Comparisons of the *Stabat Mater* with Jacopone's most famous *lauda* in the Umbrian vernacular, "Donna del paradiso," have produced arguments both for and against Jacopone's candidature for authorship of the Latin hymn. In comparing the Latin sequence and the vernacular poem, scholars who find in favor of Jacopone as author of the *Stabat Mater* point to the obvious similarity of subject matter (i.e., the Passion), as well as both poems' focus on the figure of the grief-stricken mother. Critics who find against Jacopone as putative author of the Latin hymn opine that the author of such highly emotional vernacular *laude* could not possibly have penned a Latin hymn of the grandeur of the *Stabat Mater*. They also cite differences in the two poems, of tone, point of view, and scope, which certainly do exist.⁸

John XXII

The attribution of authorship of the *Stabat Mater* to John XXII dates back to the late fourteenth century. The Genoese chronicler Giorgio Stella narrates that in 1389 Genoa, then in the midst of serious civil discord, witnessed processions of penitents who recited "psalmos et devotos rhythmos." Among

these chants was the *Stabat Mater*. In his chronicle Stella ascribes the Latin hymn, albeit somewhat tentatively, to John XXII. Nolthénus also mentions the fourteenth-century belief that John XXII was the hymn's author. Ermini, while stoutly refuting John's claim of authorship, does note that such an early reference to the *Stabat Mater* validates the notion that the hymn was composed not earlier than the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁹

Gregory XI

The fifteenth-century Florentine historian and moralist Antonius (or Antoninus) (d. 1450), in writing of the Flagellant movement, makes the attribution to a certain Gregory. Later scholars believe this reference to have been to Gregory XI. By various accounts, Gregory XI had the virtue of being a sage and impartial judge, but the fact that his textual legacy consists of only a few letters on canonical and administrative matters casts doubt on the likelihood that he penned a hymn of such elegance as the *Stabat Mater*. According to Ermini, a variety of sequences and "cantic," including the *Stabat Mater*, were incorrectly attributed to Gregory.¹⁰

Further Arguments

Some scholars who have studied this debate do not make a single definitive attribution. Instead, they narrow the field of candidates down to groups of two or three. The most frequently cited groupings are Jacopone and Innocent III, Jacopone and Bonaventure, and Jacopone and Gregory I. Other scholars are content to limit the field to a historical period or a religious group. In these cases, the *Stabat Mater* is generally believed to have been written in the twelfth, thirteenth, or fourteenth centuries; or to have been composed within the Franciscan community of the high Middle Ages; or both of the above.

The commentary of John Moorman (d. 1989), a leading British historian of the Franciscan Order, capsulizes the argumentation in favor of the theory that the *Stabat Mater* was composed within the early Franciscan community:

Recollection of the part played by the Virgin and of her sufferings, inseparable from those of her Son, was an important element in the teaching of the friars; and, from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards, Mary is more and more honoured and appealed to in Christian literature. Typical of this later attitude was . . . the *Stabat mater dolorosa*, . . . a devotional poem, in the true Franciscan manner."¹¹

In an article published in *Franciscan Studies* in 1992, Richard O'Gorman

echoes this view: "What is beyond question, however, is that [this hymn] issued from a milieu steeped in Franciscan piety."¹²

Initial analysis of the data confirms the opinion shared by a number of critics, namely, that the two strongest candidates for authorship of the *Stabat Mater* are Innocent III and the early Franciscan Jacopone da Todi. Researchers tend to agree on only two points: first, that the attribution of this poem is uncertain; and second, that the hymn is probably of Franciscan origin. The likelihood that the *Stabat Mater* was born within the Franciscan community is bolstered by the fact that this hymn came into prominence during the Flagellant movement of the period. The faithful would march throughout central Italy singing praises to God and beating themselves with scourges, sometimes to the point of drawing blood, in the belief that such a practice would help expiate their sins and thus bring them closer to spiritual perfection. Indeed, it has been documented that the *Stabat Mater* was well known at least as early as 1390. Although it was not one of the four sequences accepted by the Council of Trent in the mid-sixteenth century, it was restored to the Mass in 1727. Thus, the *Stabat Mater* remains one of only five sequences used in the Roman liturgy today.¹³

Why So Many Candidates?

What factors caused so many candidatures for authorship of the *Stabat Mater* to be advanced? Experts have reached divergent conclusions in part because, deliberately or unconsciously, they have applied different sets of criteria to the problem. The discipline of the researcher making an attribution of authorship naturally influences the conclusion reached, as does the scholar's religious affiliation, even and perhaps especially within the Church. National pride and the Zeitgeist of the historical period in which the researcher worked also inevitably play an often unconscious role in the interpretative process. For example, during the Middle Ages, it was not uncommon to attribute important and/or famous texts to prominent personages, thus effectively eliminating from consideration more humble candidates for authorship.

Hans-George Gadamer has observed that "all understanding is historical—not only in the sense of being situated at a moment in historical time but also in the sense that historically inherited concepts are always at work in our understanding."¹⁴ In light of this hermeneutical truth, future studies of this complex historiographic problem must necessarily take into account factors—historical, social, political, religious, academic—that may have influenced scholarly interpretation. For example, future researchers may ask to what extent, if any, did Jacopone's notoriety as a "radical" within the Franciscan ranks influence earlier and later phases of the debate?¹⁵ Another pertinent question is

whether the Counter-reformation and the Council of Trent brought any pressure to bear on the question of the authorship of this famous hymn, which precisely at this point in time became part of the liturgy? Still another possible question is whether the numerous musical treatments of the *Stabat Mater* by major composers from Palestrina to Poulenc, including Mozart, Schubert, and Verdi, could possibly have made an impact on theories of authorship? In short, today's researcher must ask if the researcher of the past applied to this issue "the hermeneutics of empathy" or the "hermeneutics of suspicion"?¹⁶

Conclusion

The *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* adds great color and fiber to the tapestry of Western civilization. Even if no definitive solution to the authorship mystery is ever found, the deeply moving and powerful text of the *Stabat Mater* will continue to hold a position of importance in the history of music, in the evolution of western civilization, and in Roman Catholicism.

Endnotes

¹The early modern sources cited by Crasset are St. Antonino and Filippo da Bergamo. F. Ermini, *Lo Stabat mater e i pianti della Vergine nella lirica del medio evo* (Città del Castello, 1916), 8.

²The ms. in question is housed in the library of the Academy of Utrecht. The principal editors of Bernardine texts are Sbaralea, Oudin, Bonelli, Wurm, and Janauschek. Ermini, 4-5.

³James Mearns, "Stabat mater dolorosa," *Dictionary of Hymnology*, ed. John Julian (London, 1892) (Reprinted, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1985), 1082. P. Roche, "Gregorovius, Ferdinand," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 6, 765.

⁴H. A. Daniel, *Thesaurus hymnologicus*, 4 vols. (Halle, 1841-46), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968); (special edition for Sandpiper Books, Ltd., 1998), 268. Ermini, 5.

⁵Hélène Nolphénus, *Duecento: The Late Middle Ages in Italy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 364. The original is *Duecento: Zwerftocht Door Italie's Late Middeleeuwen* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1951). Mearns, 1082. F. Demattio, *Lettere in Italia prima di Dante* (Verona, 1871), 178.

⁶The Jacoponian early mss. are the fourteenth-century Ricciardiano 1049, the fourteenth-century ms. 559 in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and the ms. 194 of the Comune of Todi, which dates from the beginning of the fifteenth century and was discovered only in the nineteenth century. Luke Wadding, *Scriptores ordinis minori* (Romae, 1650). Frédéric Antoine Ozanam, *Les poètes franciscains in Italie au treizième siècle* (Paris: J. Lecoffre, 1852); English translation by A. E. Nellen and N. C. Craig, *Franciscan Poets of the Thirteenth Century*. (First published 1914; Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1969). C. Carbone, *L'inno del dolore mariano* (Roma, 1911). Gianfranco Contini, *Poeti del Duecento* (Florence, Sansoni, 1970), 62. George T. Peck, *The Fool of God* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1980), 195.

⁷Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200-1350)* Vol. III of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998), 385, note 83. Nolphénus, 212. Mearns, 1082.

⁸One brief review of these arguments may be found in F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Christian-*

Latin Poetry from the Beginning to the Close of the Middle Ages (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 436-440.

⁹Nolthénus, 252, note 54. Ermini, 3-4.

¹⁰W. Henry, "The Two Stabats," *American Catholic Quarterly Review* XXVIII (1903): 46-59. Ermini, 8.

¹¹Moorman, 268-69. Moorman goes on to note: "As one would expect in a Franciscan poem of this nature, it turns, after contemplating the sufferings of Mary, to a plea that the writer may share in them, stand with her by the cross, and feel, in his own heart, the sorrows which she endured."

¹²Richard O'Gorman, "The *Stabat Mater* in Middle French Verse: an Edition of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fr 24865," *Franciscan Studies* 52 (1992): 191.

¹³Mearns, 1082. L. E. Cuyler, "Stabat Mater," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 13, 625-626.

¹⁴Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1998), 167.

¹⁵Mearns' opinion that "Jacopone does not seem to have been capable of writing such a poem as the *Stabat mater dolorosa*" seems to be a clear example of a lack of understanding of both Jacopone's poetry and his mysticism. Mearns continues: "It is . . . difficult to see how any ordinary person could be supposed truly to pray to be allowed to pass through such an ordeal [as Jacopone frequently prayed for in his lauds]." Mearns, 1082.

¹⁶Various scholars have applied these phrases to Ricoeur's hermeneutical studies, especially his *De l'interprétation* (Paris: Sieul, 1965).

Beneath the Cross

Assemble and gather

Beneath the cross

Engulf and embark

The unbiased act

Of total surrender

Within the womb

Of precious grain

Concealment, enactment

Freedom and elasticity

Within divine stillness

Wrappings and blessings

Grace and momentum

Of the chosen hour

Dying and rising

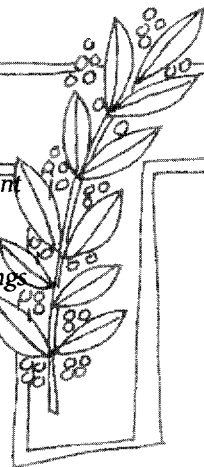
Giving and receiving

Precious the moment

Of bondage within

The chosen hour

"Of three"



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Adoration and solitude

Pervade the spot

Cobblestone essence

Secretes the pain

Love of stillness

Equates the act

Silence of thought

Gilds the grain

Nakedness and lowliness

Enflesh the womb

Anoint the wounds

Mystical awareness

Of Jesus Christ Crucified

Culminates the death

Of the spouse

And love of mine

Exactly at the hour

"Of three."

Mary Valenta Akalska, CSSF

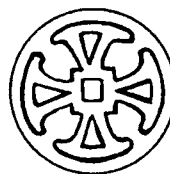
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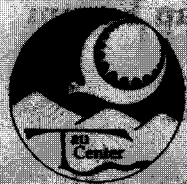
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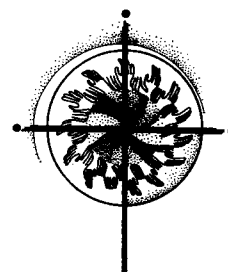
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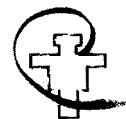
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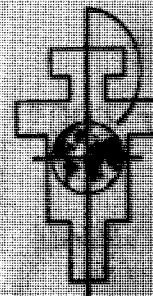
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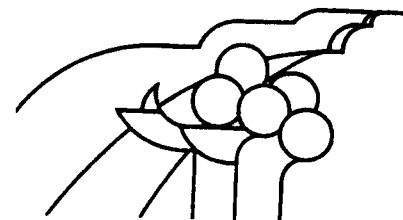
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Friday, April 27-Sunday, April 29

The Canticle of Conversion. At Franciscan Center, Andover, MA (see ad p. 103).

Monday, April 23-Monday, May 7

Franciscan Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs (see ad p. 98).

Friday, May 4-Sunday, May 6

The Canticle of Conversion. At Millvale Motherhouse, Pittsburgh, PA (see ad p. 103).

Friday, May 4-Saturday, May 12

The Soul's Journey into God. With Andre Cirino, OFM and Josef Raischl, SFO. Aston, PA (see ad p. 101).

Sunday, May 6-Friday, May 18

Franciscan Pilgrimages to Assisi and Rome. Contact Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs (see ad p. 98).

Friday, May 5-Sunday, May 27

The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. At Washington Theological Union (see ad p. 92).

Saturday, May 26-Sunday, June 10

Fourth Annual Franciscan Forum. In Colorado Springs (see ad p. 93).

Saturday, June 2-Friday, June 8

Franciscan Art and Spirituality Retreat. With Kay Francis Berger, OSF, Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF, Joe Rayes, OFM, Kathleen Hook, OSF, and Joy Sloan. Contact: Portiuncula Center for Prayer, 9263 W. St. Francis Road, Frankfort, IL 60423-8330, ph: 815-464-3880, fax: 815-469-4880, e-mail: portc4p@aol.com.

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Wednesday, June 13-Thursday, June 21

Praying with the Letters of Clare. With Ingrid Peterson, OSF. Aston, PA (see ad p. 101).

Wednesday, June 13-Tuesday, June 19

Let the Lord Lead. With Patrick Donahoe, TOR. \$300. Contact: Franciscan Retreat Center at Mt. St. Francis, 7740 Deer Hill Grove, Colorado Springs, CO 80919, ph. 719-598-5486, ext. 4143, www.franciscanretreatcenter.org.

Friday, June 22-Thursday, June 28

The Praxis of the Evangelical Life in Light of the Writings of Francis and the Tensions of Religious Life Today. With Regis Armstrong, OFMCap. Contact: Franciscan Retreat Center, Colorado Springs (see above).

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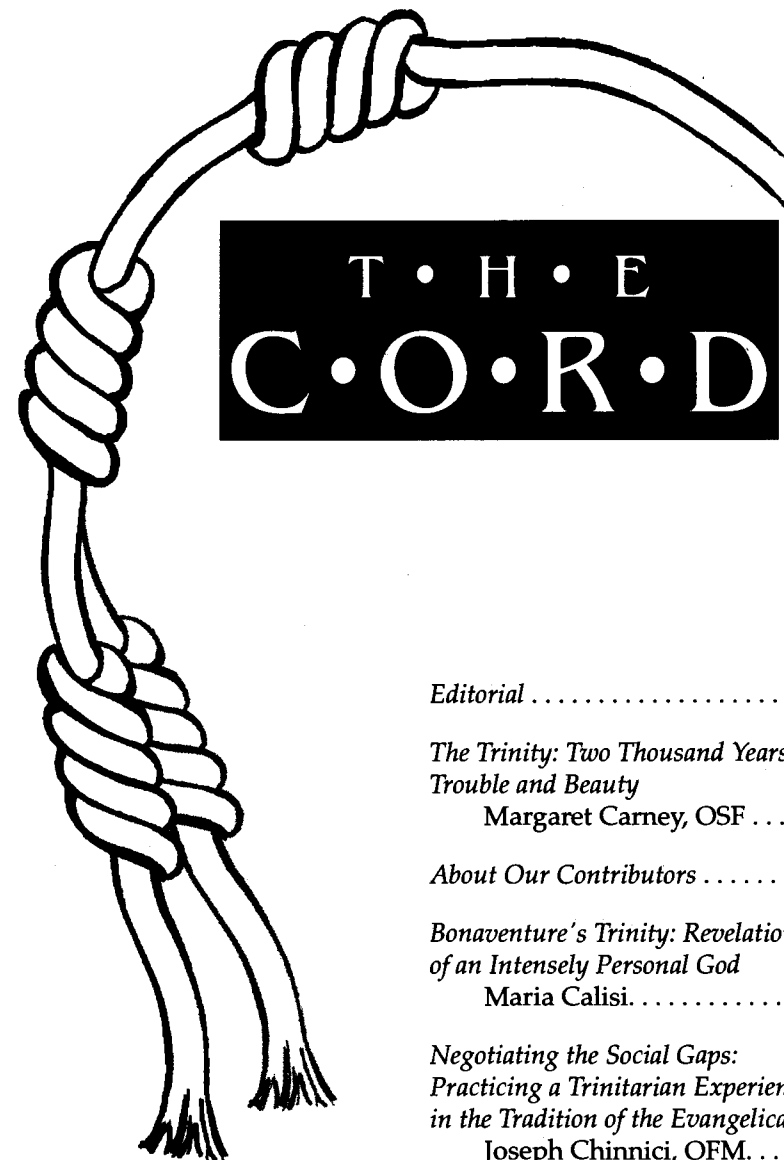


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THE CORD
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The Cord, 51.3 (2001)

Editorial

In chapter 16 of the Earlier Rule, Francis presents a little mini-sermon that can be used by the brothers who have been sent to "live spiritually among the Saracens and other nonbelievers." If the Spirit moves them, they are to "proclaim the word of God . . . so that [their listeners may] believe in the all-powerful God—Father and Son and Holy Spirit—the Creator of all, in the Son Who is the Redeemer and Savior, and that they be baptized and become Christians; because whoever has not been born again of water and the Holy Spirit cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (RegNB 16:5-7). In his writings, we see Francis "proclaim" over and over again, in many different ways, his faith in the Trinitarian God. While we think of his spirituality as Christocentric, Francis's grasp of Christ was always in the context of the Word's relationship with the Father and the Spirit.

The Trinitarian doctrine lies at the very heart of our Christian belief system. Unfortunately, we too often see this fundamental belief as some kind of Gordian knot, not only impossible for us to untie, but useless for us in any practical terms. It seems clear that Francis did not think this way. He experienced an intimate relationship with the Triune God. We discover in his writings surprisingly frequent references to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He never seems perplexed or paralyzed by some kind of irresolvable mathematical dilemma. He does not hesitate to advise his brothers to expressly invite unbelievers to share their faith in this marvelous reality—a God whose inner relationality matters to our own self-understanding and thus to our salvation.

The Franciscan Federation conference last August in Albuquerque, New Mexico, chose as its theme: *Overflowing Goodness: The Gift of the Trinity*. To plan an entire Franciscan conference around such a theme required a good deal of courage and hope. It assumed that there was a Franciscan "take" on this fundamental Christian mystery—that the Franciscan theological tradition and spiritual experience had something significant to offer that might really make a difference for Franciscans and for the Church in our times.

At the invitation of the Federation, Margaret Carney, OSF, Maria Calisi, and Joseph Chinnici, OFM, teamed up to present various aspects of this challenging teaching, especially as it has been mediated in the Franciscan tradition. I think you will agree that their reflections help us to see why this doctrine played such a significant role in Francis's own spiritual experience and how our own belief in a Trinitarian God has important and practical implications for an effective Gospel life and witness in our contemporary world.

Elise Saggau, OSF

**The Trinity:
Two Thousand Years of Trouble and Beauty**

Margaret Carney, OSF

[Presented at the Franciscan Federation, Albuquerque, NM, August 15, 2000]

Introduction

The purpose of this presentation was to provide a foundation for Dr. Maria Calisi's conference on Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology. (See page 125 of this issue.) My task was to review the history of the development of Trinitarian doctrine. I attempted to tackle this "mission impossible" by developing a broad survey in four segments. Each survey included a section on the "trouble" involved in understanding the labyrinthine arguments of various theologies and heresies and the "beauty" of the mystical and artistic expressions of Trinitarian faith found in every age. Thus I warn the reader that this article represents a further compression of a deliberately limited review of a complex topic.

What is Meant by "Trouble and Beauty"?

Throughout history the Church, individual men and women, some known to us, others lost in obscurity, have struggled to understand God with all the power of their intellect and to respond with all the devotion of their will and fervor of their affection. Theologians, apologists, bishops, martyrs, monks, matrons, deacons and virgins, mystics and activists—the list is a long one. Throughout this story we find the twin strands of trouble and beauty. The trouble arises around the fundamental theological task of faith seeking understanding. The beauty is obvious in the poetry, art, music, and all the metaphors by which we apprehend the ineffability of the divine, tenting with us in our world, our universe. Augustine, in the opening of *De Trinitate*, says:

May my reader, if he shares fully my certitude, walk with me; if he shares my doubts, may he search with me; if he finds the error is his, may he come to me; if he catches me in error, may he correct me. In this way we will advance together on the road of charity, toward him

of whom it is written: "Seek his face untiringly" (Ps. 104-105). That is the prayer, strong and sincere, which I would like to apply to all my readers and apropos of all my writings, but especially of those which treat of the unity of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is in fact no subject where error is more dangerous, investigation more laborious, discovery more fruitful.¹

I have used one word—trouble—to translate Augustine's "dangerous, . . . laborious, . . . fruitful." The trouble with the Trinity is found in the many forces conspiring to prevent our understanding, appreciation, and appropriation of this fundamental core of our lives as baptized women and men. What are some of these forces?

1. Our heritage of Greek and Latin terminology, of medieval scholastic formulae, which constitute the basis of classic formulations of Catholic doctrine. For example: *homoousion*, *filioque*, economic, immanent, *perichoresis*, *hypostasis*.
2. Our lack of preaching or prayer forms other than formulae that become routine through repeated use
3. A society that has been dominated by Protestant culture in its public expressions of religious/Christian belief. To the extent that modern Protestant theology is cut off from the rich traditions of medieval thought, we have been deprived of public language and symbols that adequately deal with this reality.
4. Separation of Eastern and Western ways of thinking and speaking about the Trinity. This division has deprived us of language and mental "furniture" with which to "sit down with the Trinity" let alone sit down with one another.
5. Our "Yankee pragmatism," which prevents us from being interested in exploring something that seems arcane, transcendent, and not terribly useful. Our Franciscan predilection for seeing ourselves walking in the footprints of Jesus may seem to be all the theological direction we need.

The possibility of seeing beauty in our endeavor to grasp the Trinity is reflected in an essay by Laurence Cantwell, SJ:

By an accident of history the Church's understanding of God's inner life has been expressed in terms that make it seem like an alien immigrant within the Christian scheme of things. The doctrine received its most precise and detailed formulation in a language which is neither our own nor that of the New Testament. It was formulated in order to rebuff a peculiarly scholarly and technical heresy. The piety

of Christians, in not wanting to disturb the fine balance achieved in the conciliar definition, has tended to revere rather than explore it.²

....
Some people are frightened off by the complexity and difficulty of the subject. The Trinity is a catchword for all that is most tortuous and abstruse in academic theology. Let it be said right at the beginning that the mystery of the Trinity is not a complicated thing. No special intelligence or aptitude or training is required to penetrate it. God has not revealed himself to philosophers only, and if the philosophers sometimes give that impression, they have distorted the truth they should have served. Clarity is from God; obscurity comes from human inadequacy. The simple radiance of God's light has been refracted to a bewildering spectrum of metaphysical distinctions. The colors of the rainbow may help us to understand and appreciate the beauty of light, but they should not blind us to the light itself.

If the mystery of the Blessed Trinity is difficult for us to understand, it is because it requires the death of pretentiousness, a new birth, the heart of a child. Such understanding can only be attempted within the context of a living faith. It demands that we do not even try to master the truth but to let the truth master us. We Christians are no longer servants; we have the run of the house. Our God has no secrets from us beyond those imposed by the limits of our understanding. He wants to share his glory with us, not to keep it private.³

How, then, shall we proceed? We will try to outline major moments in the story that Catherine Lacugna has called the "emergence and defeat of the doctrine of the Trinity."⁴

1. Examine the early centuries—the apostolic Church and the era of the first great ecumenical councils
2. Look at the environment of Trinitarian debate during the lifetime of Francis and Clare
3. Consider the legacy of the Protestant Reformation and modern critique of all forms of religious belief so prevalent in the West until very recently
4. Look at late twentieth-century theological models and their contribution

We will consider these aspects with the following question in mind: Are our contemporary struggles to re-define the meaning of life in community and to find adequate social models for this a reflection of our having suffered the disappearance of our theological root system—belief in and liturgical worship of the Triune God as our home, our origin, and our destiny?

The Struggles of the First Four Centuries

What are some of the questions that created the long exhilarating and agonizing debate? First, is the world really saved? Is human nature, our bodily existence really saved? Christians struggle to understand soteriology and make themselves understood in a climate of stoicism and cynicism. If Jesus the Christ is not equal to God, then the satisfaction made is not enough to save us. If Jesus the Christ is equal to God and actually is God, then the understanding handed down from Hebrew Scriptures is not adequate.

Second, how can we think, talk, imagine, live so as to find a resolution of this struggle that can satisfy the demands for intelligible teaching? How can a theological articulation of this belief satisfy philosophers in Athens and Alexandria as well as household slaves in Rome and Carthage?

Third, what did the Scriptures tell early Christians? The word "trinity" does not exist in the Scriptures. Christians of the first hundred years did not think of God as Trinity in the same way we do. The only direct statement and the major Trinitarian passage is Matthew 28: "Go therefore, make disciples. . . ." In the Gospel of John there are many references to God as Father and Jesus as Son. There are more references to the Spirit. John sees the Spirit as proceeding from Father and Son (15:26).

Liturgical practice in the early Church played an important role in developing understanding of this doctrine. We find expressions of this in professions of faith and in baptismal rites. While liturgical forms were developed in part as a response to heresies, they carried the deeper insight of the community into the cryptic assertions of the Gospels. Apostolic preaching demonstrates that the Trinitarian form of faith can be traced to Christ himself (cf. Acts 8:36-38, Acts 2:33). Preparation rituals for baptism "narrated the Trinity by proclaiming the Easter event, the action of the Trinity."⁵ Early creeds reflected the faith of the Apostles; they were used in professions that preceded baptism and repeated in the Easter Vigil. They witnessed to mystery proclaimed, mystery celebrated, mystery lived.

Early Christians experienced enormous confrontations with major elements of Jewish and Greek culture. The Jewish culture, so identified with monotheism, determined that the transcendence of Yahweh was being threatened by identification with a Nazarene who had been executed as blasphemer. Jewish piety had to defend itself from this attack on the utter "otherness" of the divinity.⁶

Christianity opposed Greek notions of time, of history, and of the human person's place in history with an idea of history as oriented to a future crowned with Paschal glory. Christianity saw a history in which the human being is enriched with the highest possible dignity.⁷

These early developments gave rise to a number of heresies, which required a response from Christian believers:

1. Gnosticism, which emphasized the unknowable depths of divinity.
2. Modalism, which saw Christ and the Spirit as mere modes of revelation of the one Person who is the Father. God has one substance, but three modes of operation. The only difference among three entities is in appearance and chronological location.
3. Monarchism, which held that there is one God who is a monarch existing above the world and not affected by it. This theory preserves the monarchy of God by denying the divinity of Christ. Jesus is merely an adopted Son who receives power at baptism. Prior to his baptism, he is like all other humans but completely virtuous.
4. Arianism, which was the most pervasive and "effective" heresy. It originated in the fourth century. Arius insisted on the complete, absolute transcendence of God. The Son must therefore be a creature, in this way of thinking. The Son as creature came into existence at a certain point in time. Therefore there was a time when he did not exist. The Son was subject to change, able to sin. The holy triad does not share essence. The Father existed alone prior to the Son's creation (subordinationism).

There are differing evaluations of Arius's thought and contribution. In his scheme, the Son cannot assure salvation for humanity. Some scholars argue that Arius was concerned with salvation and believed that complete obedience to the Father is what conferred divinity on the Son. This view preserves Arius's hope that what is required for salvation is possible for all people. In this view, however, the three hypostases are separate and unconnected. Arius's teaching was condemned in 325 at the first great ecumenical council at Nicaea.

Irenaeus, in the second century, had already developed an alternative description of salvation that was used in the fourth century by Athanasius to combat Arius. His view asserts that God became human so that humans might become God; this happened in the person of Jesus. Divine nature, joined to human nature, transfigured it. The story of the transfiguration is a source for this thinking (Cf. Mark 9:2-8; Matt. 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36). Transformation begins with the conferral of the Holy Spirit in baptism and continues through life in communion with the Church and God.

Athanasius was convinced that the Christ of Arius makes salvation uncertain, if not impossible. Athanasius requires a certainty vested in the divine nature possessed by Christ. The Son is *homoousios*, i.e. of the same essence as the Father, so as to assure salvation. We cannot become sons and daughters through the Son if the Son does not share the same nature as the Father. Con-

versely, we cannot be saved if Christ is not truly human. Only that which is assumed can be saved. Athanasius's concern for the salvation of the world drives his argument in defense of the *homoousion* of the Son and extends it to the Spirit as well.

The Cappadocian Fathers, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzus, were supporters of the *homoousian* position in the East. According to Alexander Schmemmann, they perfected the creation of a theological language, crystallized its concepts, and expressed all the profound significance of the orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity contained in *Abta Homoousion* and in the Nicene Creed. The description of the Spirit as "Lord and giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father" was their contribution.

What begins, then, as a problem of how salvation is possible in Jesus Christ results in this formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine begins with the salvation of the world as its goal and explains God in relation to the world, making salvation through participation possible.

Postscript of Beauty

The depth of these teachings and the legacy they are for us come up to meet us in the strangest places. We are probably not conscious that we are calling upon the debates of the great Fathers and Councils when we contemplate the images that come before us to warm and melt our hearts as we sing the *Veni Creator*. We do not recognize the implications of Trinitarian doctrine when we hear Sr. Helen Prejean, in *Dead Man Walking*, tell the condemned murderer that he is a son of God. When we hear the final song of *Les Misérables*, we are reminded that "to love another person is to see the face of God." Thomas Merton, when he stood at the corner of Fourth and Walnut Streets in Louisville, was transfixed by the vision of the absolute value of every person there because they were loved by God.

Then it was that I saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed. . . . I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other. But this cannot be seen, only believed and understood by a peculiar gift.⁸

The Time of Francis and Clare: A Minor Contribution

Some contemporary Franciscan scholars note the Trinitarian basis in the spirituality of Francis and Clare.⁹ We tend to assume a lack of theological

sophistication on their part. Current studies move between two poles. On the one hand, they demythologize the abilities of Francis and Clare and, on the other hand, they see new interpretations grounded in more detailed analysis of Francis and Clare's writings and the monastic milieu in which they lived.¹⁰ This makes it important to consider what was "in the air" in terms of discussion of the Trinity during the time of Francis and Clare. We find this in some of the declarations of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).

The Council was responding to the teachings of Joachim of Fiore, a twelfth-century Calabrian abbot and prophet, who wished to reduce the unity of the Godhead to that enjoyed by a human community or to the unity of believers in the Church. He asserted that all three Persons were identical with the divine essence. He believed that the real identity of the divine essence is with the Father who generates the Son, with the Son who is generated by the Father, and with the Holy Spirit who proceeds from both. This essence is absolute in character. There is no "quaternity" in God, but Joachim believed that this would be the case if there were a real distinction between the Persons and the divine essence. Joachim accused Peter Lombard of holding such a position. However, "the absolute essence is not really distinct from the Persons who are relative to and really distinct from one another."¹¹ Joachim had set out to transform the unity of God into a moral union of three gods, as if the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit were three individuals of the same genus "God." . . . Lateran IV recalled that "God is indivisible, one in three persons. . . . Intimately possessing one and the same divine nature."¹²

We must consider the impact on Francis and Clare of needing to uphold this conciliar affirmation. When we read the Trinitarian language in their writings, we can see real deliberation on their part. We have often stressed the fact that the writings of Francis and the work of the early movement were intended to counter the heresies of the Waldensians and Cathars. To what extent were these works consciously striving to preserve the Trinitarian doctrine from contamination as well?

The Teaching of Gregory Palamas in the Medieval Period

Several contemporary theologians in the West and important Eastern voices as well insist that one of the contributions we must recognize and recover is that of the fourteenth-century theologian, Gregory Palamas (1296-1359). Gregory was a monk of Mt. Athos and bishop of Thessalonika. His doctrine was rooted in his own mystical experiences (*hesychasm*)—a bodily experience of God's presence.

The doctrine of the divine energies distinguishes between the essence of who God is and the divine energies by which God acts upon and enters into creatures. Duncan Reid summarizes the distinction between Western and Eastern ways of thinking about God that were already crystallized by this time:

In the East the Trinitarian nature of God was taken for granted, and the task was to clarify the relationship between creator and creation. In the West the radical difference between creator and creation was taken for granted, and the task was to clarify how God could be Trinitarian."¹³

The energies are the communication of God to us through the Spirit (energy=grace). They are present in the whole creation from the beginning and in a new way after Pentecost. This makes the deification of creatures possible. The *hesychasts* claimed a vision of God's glory in prayer, a vision of the energies. They did not claim to see God's essence. These energies can be understood as an infinite path beyond knowledge and an existential communion. The doctrine of energies is an affirmation of the concrete, experiential beginning of the whole of reality. This teaching is a major contribution that has been lost to us as a result of the Great Schism.

We find a resonance of these ideas in Bonaventure. At Lyons in 1274, Bonaventure was working at reconciliation between thinkers from the East and from the West. At his funeral both Greeks and Latins followed his bier in tears.

Postscript of Beauty

We can hear the acclamations of Francis and Clare and see the intimate portrait of the human family and the divine family portrayed especially in the Letter to the Faithful. We can also see that simple people, far from the debates of patriarchs and cardinals, held to the truth of these ideas in the simplicity of each day's round of duty and task. This is especially evident in the prayers of Celtic lands as recorded in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales: "In the name of God, in the name of Jesus, in the name of the Spirit, the perfect Three of power. . ."

A voice in our own time, Annie Dillard, surveys the vast majesty, intricacy, and inscrutability of the natural world in her Pulitzer prize-winning work, *A Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, where we see vestiges of those divine energies that so fascinated Gregory Palamas:

I go my way and my left foot says "Glory," and my right foot says "Amen": in and out of Shadow Creek, upstream and down, exultant, in a daze, dancing, to the twin silver trumpets of praise.¹⁴

The Reformers and the Rationalists

The tendency in Protestant theology was to accept the Trinity as a doctrine of the Church and to use it to organize confessions and catechisms, but to ignore its original function as the doctrine that integrates other primary

doctrines, i.e., Christology and soteriology and the doctrine of God.¹⁵ Differences in describing the Trinity lead to differences in understanding salvation. After the reformation, there was an increasing belief in the West that the effects of salvation are mediated by assurance of faith, not by direct experience. The focus is on Christ and the work of salvation. The doctrine of the Trinity does not function as the central doctrine, but as one placed alongside doctrines of salvation and the work of Christ.

Luther's contribution was to a better understanding of the mission of the Spirit: there is no real presence of Christ except in and through the work of the Spirit. The Risen Christ is present and is a redemptive reality through the action of the Spirit. Otherwise Christ is reduced to an idea. The Spirit's means of action are word and sacrament. Luther rejects Trinitarian metaphysics, which deprives him of the riches of the medieval contribution. However, his contribution represents an advance deserving of the investigation it received at the Second Vatican Council and later.

For Calvin there is no expectation of salvation on earth. He does not consider that salvation might include more than humanity or that humanity might participate in sanctification before death. He writes that we should habituate ourselves to contempt of the present life so that we might thereby be excited to meditation on that which is to come.¹⁶

This shift deepened the problem. Since the seventeenth century, there has been a tendency to reduce the role of God in Western culture. Both Protestant and Catholic theologians developed systems of proofs for the existence of God based on medieval scholastic practice. Trinitarian speculation was a secondary theme in all of this. Deism in England called all speculative knowledge into question. The Enlightenment on the Continent combined with various forms of political suppression, closing or limiting the functions of seminaries and schools of theology. In the Enlightenment view, what was not demonstrable to reason was irrelevant. Kant concluded that there was nothing practical in the doctrine of the Trinity. Schleiermacher, the most influential nineteenth-century Protestant theologian on the Continent, relegated the doctrine of the Trinity to an appendix. Trinitarian dogma was viewed as pure speculation in the worst sense of that word.

A change began, however, in the early twentieth century,¹⁷ but two world wars delayed the real reintegration of this dogma until the time of the two Karls: Barth and Rahner. Both Catholic and Protestant theologies were deeply affected by World War II and its aftermath. Karl Barth's work can be seen as an effort to remove theology from the corrupting context of the world. In so doing, Barth limits the salvific action of God in the world to Jesus, and this is further limited to the elect. God's sovereign decision revealed in Jesus is to forgive rather than to punish. The Spirit does not come to transfigure the world but to witness to Jesus as Lord. However, thanks to Barth, Trinitarian

dogma was restored to Protestant dogmatics in the mid-twentieth century

Jurgen Moltmann did much to correct some of the weaknesses of Barth's approach. He restored an emphasis on a reciprocal relationship between God and the world so that the economic Trinity is the history of salvation. Time and change are at the heart of the universe and presumably at the heart of God as well. The problem with his position is that it does not make room for participation of the universe in salvation until the eschaton. This leads to devaluation of the world and reflects our consequent ecological crisis.

The World Council of Churches, on December 2, 1961, formulated a clear doctrinal mission statement:

The ecumenical Council of Churches is a fraternal association of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and do their utmost to respond together to their common vocation for the glory of the only God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹⁸

This declaration is very important. It implicitly rejects the Trinitarian nihilism that characterized modern liberalism at the beginning of the century. It is an advance and rectification of this unitarian tendency.

Meanwhile, in Roman Catholic theology, Karl Rahner made major contributions to resolving the ancient dilemmas concerning the identity of God in God's self (immanent Trinity) and the action of God in creation and redemption (economic Trinity). His work, along with that of other great theologians of his generation (Danielou, Congar, Lonergan, etc.), prepared and created a climate of searching for ecumenical common ground in a post-Vatican II Church.

The Declaration of the People of God by Paul VI (1968) is a summary, not a dogmatic definition, of the teaching that had been considered by the Council. New attempts, such as the Dutch Catechism, were wrestling anew with the questions of adequate language for the people of God in modern dress.

Trouble and Beauty at the Century's Close

What are the new questions and projects of Trinitarian theology? By way of answer we will look briefly at feminist, liberation, process, and ecumenical theologies.¹⁹

Liberation Theology and the Trinity

In order to move from a model of the Trinity that makes the Father a monarch and gives theoretical justification for subordination and oppression, Leonardo Boff emphasizes the concept of *perichoresis* (permeation of the three

divine Persons in one another without confusion) as a key to understanding the Trinity. Such a model provides characteristics that are envisioned by a just society—presence to one another, reciprocity, and immediacy. Trinitarian communion opposes individualism, isolationism, and asocial personhood. By use of this model, Boff criticizes all social structures that do not reflect this perfect mutuality of *perichoresis*: e.g., capitalism, socialism, and hierarchy in the Church. This work (which owes much to Moltmann) is rooted in and is reinterpreted as Absolute Communion.²⁰

Feminist Theology and the Trinity

Sally McFague provides a model for reflection rooted in women's experience of God and world. She perceives God as Mother, Lover, and Friend, each of these images supporting a feminist worldview.²¹ Catherine LaCugna, in *God For Us*, traces what she calls the emergence and defeat of the doctrine of the Trinity. She opens her introduction with these words: "The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life."²² She traces the history of the doctrine's emergence and ends that section with an investigation of the teaching of Gregory Palamas, regarded in the Orthodox tradition as the equal of Aquinas for teaching on the Trinity. His is a doctrine of divine essence and uncreated energies arising from his mystical experiences. His work is attracting renewed attention in recent decades.

LaCugna also offers a new conceptualization of doctrine that emphasizes persons in communion and asks us to study the Trinitarian life:

The mystery of divine-human communion calls for a Trinitarian theology in the mode of doxology. The vocabulary of Glory is well suited to theology. Glory is both the face of God that may not be seen, and the saving deed that is witnessed. Theology in the mode of doxology is situated in the liturgical life of the church; prayer and worship are the inner moment of all dogmatic statements.

Doxology actuates communication among persons. People who might not otherwise agree with each other or even like each other can be genuinely united with each other in the praise of God. In union with one another, our eyes are turned not towards each other but toward God in whom we together confess our faith. To praise God is to route all one's relationships through God and to open them up to [God's] future for them. Praise actualizes the true relationship between people as well as with God. By acknowledging our common ground we are given new eyes with which to see each other: the eyes of love and compassion. Because people otherwise alienated can together praise God, there is in Christianity an authentic basis for hope that differences or divisions can be overcome in the Spirit of God,

giving way to new bonds, new relationships, new joint commitments, new affections, a new future in the reign of God."²³

Elizabeth Johnson, in *She Who Is*, builds her model from the Wisdom tradition, which names God as Sophia. Development of new language and imagery breaks the hold of patriarchal paradigms. Her method is to gather assets from women's experience, Scripture and classical theology, which can serve to create emancipatory patterns of speech about God. Johnson tests the capacity of female images to bear and disclose what Christian truth testifies to as the blessed action of God in the world. The Divine Trinity, living being, and relation to the suffering world are searched for their emancipatory potential.²⁴ Trinity becomes a source of living that is mutual, connected, loving, and inclusive.

In the end, the Trinity provides a symbolic picture of totally shared life at the heart of the universe. . . . The Trinity as pure relationality, moreover, epitomizes the connectedness of all that exists in the universe. Relation encompasses and constitutes the web of reality and, when rightly ordered, forms the matrix for the flourishing of all creatures, both human beings and the earth.

If the image of God is the ultimate reference point for the values of a community, then the structure of the triune symbol stands as a profound critique, however little noticed, of patriarchal domination in church and society. . . . Yet the central notion of the divine Trinity, symbolizing not a monarch ruling from isolated splendor but the relational character of Holy Wisdom, points inevitably toward a community of equals related in mutuality. The mystery of Sophia-Trinity must be confessed as critical prophecy in the mist of patriarchal rule.²⁵

*Process Theology*²⁶

According to the philosophical method of Alfred North Whitehead, the world is a process of energy events constantly coming into being and perishing. This methodology depends on sources in contemporary, not Newtonian physics. It recognizes the identity of mass and energy in Einstein's teaching. The initial theory for this approach was developed by Wilhelm Ostwald in Leipzig in 1901. Reid speculates on the relationship of this theory to the thought of Palamas.²⁷ God is the source of vision and novelty of each energy event. God and the world require each other. Person and community also require each other. This results in a new valuation of community. It gives community ontological status, not just the individual. According to Bishop Kallistos:

A person cannot be a Christian alone, for to be a person is by definition to be internally related to other persons as the persons of the

Trinity are eternally, internally related to one another.²⁸

Ecumenical Theology: Dialogue between East and West

Duncan Reid's *Energies of the Spirit* has as its goal to create a context for conversation between Orthodox Trinitarian theology, especially the contribution of Palamas, and Western theology. Reid presents Western theology as concerned with the movement of God to the world in a trinity of mission. The identity principle in this way of thinking can be summarized as: God's being is revealed in works; God's eternal essence is revealed in revelation.

Orthodox theology, on the other hand, develops by way of doxology from world to God. It relies on the principle that the worshiper/theologian is aware of the difference between experienced revelation and the eternal essence of God or between experienced salvation and the eternal holiness of God.

Reid seeks common ground by relating the Palamite teaching of uncreated energies to the energies of the Holy Spirit or to the deeper dimension of the doctrine of charisms. The Palamite teaching has much to say about grace, viewing this as the constant accessibility of God in God's energetic emanations. Palamas emphasizes reaching out into the life of God, growing in relationship with God. Life becomes a pilgrimage of a practical, embodied, even political ascesis. It is a pilgrimage with the God of Israel to prepare the world for the reign of justice and peace.

Conclusions and Further Questions

Let us agree, then, not to be discouraged. Let us try to create a space in our theological learning and reflection, conscious that we seek a hidden well-spring of our existence as individual, free beings called to a community that stretches us beyond the dyadic community of marriage or exclusive friendship and partnering. As Catherine La Cugna says:

This doctrine succeeds when it illumines God's nearness to us in Christ and the Spirit. But it fails if the divine persons are imprisoned in an intradivine realm, or if the doctrine of the Trinity is relegated to a purely formal place in speculative theology. In the end God can seem farther away than ever. Preaching and pastoral practice will have to fight a constant battle to convince us, to provide assurances, to make the case that God is indeed present among us, does indeed care for us, will indeed hear our prayer, and will be lovingly disposed to respond. If, on the other hand, we affirm that the very nature of God is to seek out the deepest possible communion and friendship with every last creature, and if through the doctrine of the Trinity we do our best to articulate the mystery of God for us, then preaching and pastoral prac-

tice will fit naturally with the particulars of the Christian life. Ecclesial life, sacramental life, ethical life, and sexual life will be seen clearly as forms of Trinitarian life: living God's life with one another.²⁹

Can we call ourselves to invest in the work of reclaiming this teaching, this truth, this source? Can we look, for example, at the opening sections of *Vita Consecrata* and see the invitation to restore a lost theological vision of our lives as part of this great movement of God's energies in the world? Can we set about the recovery of this fundamental truth and this foundational immersion in divine grace in order to live into the sisterhood and brotherhood that is our evangelical birthright and destiny?

Endnotes

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³Cantwell, 10-11.

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⁵Bruno Forte, *The Trinity as History: Saga of the Christian God* (New York: Alba House, 1989).

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⁷Forte, 56.

⁸Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Image Books, 1968), 158.

⁹Cf. Regis Armstrong, OFMCap., Preface, *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

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¹²de Margerie, 139.

¹³Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology*, American Academy of Religion Academy Series, No. 96 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 21.

¹⁴Annie Dillard, *A Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (New York: Harper's, 1974), 271.

¹⁵Lynne Faber Lorenzen, *The College Student's Introduction to the Trinity* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 32.

¹⁶Lorenzen, 33.

¹⁷Cf. de Margerie, 212-21.

¹⁸de Margerie, 221.

¹⁹The reader will find another interesting survey of these topics in Jürgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), xi-xix.

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²¹Sally McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 78-87.

²²LaCugna, 1.

²³LaCugna, 367, 344.

²⁴Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 13.

²⁵Johnson, 222-23.

²⁶See Lorenzen, 81-92.

²⁷Reid, 107-108.

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²⁹La Cugna, 411.

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*Let all of us, wherever we are, in every place, at every hour, at every
time of day, every day and continually believe truly and humbly and
keep in our hearts and love, honor, adore, serve, praise, and bless,
glorify and exalt, magnify and give thanks to the most high and supreme
eternal God, Trinity and Unity,
the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Creator of all,
Savior of all who believe in Him and hope in Him and love Him.*

RegNB 23:11.

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Bonaventure's Trinity: Revelation of an Intensely Personal God

Maria Calisi

[Presented at the Franciscan Federation, Albuquerque, NM, August 15, 2000]

Introduction

Before I studied Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology, I understood the doctrine of the Trinity as the teaching about the inner life of God in splendid isolation. The traditional way of teaching the Trinity was an attempt to understand God apart from us, understanding God in Godself. There was an inordinate emphasis on understanding God in terms of "substance," not in terms of "personhood." I remember asking my professor for a synonym for the word "substance" and was offered terms like "reality" or "nature." In philosophical discourse, the word "substance" is defined as "a thing in itself" or "something that stands by itself," as opposed to "person" which is defined as "one toward another."¹ The result was an esoteric and very abstract approach to Trinitarian theology. I call it a "museum piece Trinity." It is the Trinity we could preserve in a museum, for it is valuable but untouchable; something only to be displayed, studied, even admired, but incapable of relationship with us; something out of the past, preserved, but essentially irrelevant to our Christian life and practice. Traditionally, all that we theology students had to remember about the Trinity is that God is five notions, four relations, three Persons, two processions, one substance (and, we added, NO sense!).²

It was not until I studied the writings of Bonaventure and of the late theologian Catherine LaCugna that I realized that the Trinity is, in simple terms, how God comes to us—through Christ and in the Spirit. God reaches out to us, reveals Godself, through the personal presence of Jesus and the Spirit, not through a "substance." St. Irenaeus calls the Son and Holy Spirit God's right and left hands that do God's work in creation.³ For Christians, the way to respond to God is the same way that God comes to us—through Christ and in the Spirit. We do not pray to the Trinitarian substance or to the divine nature, and traditionally, we do not even pray to the whole Trinity. Our liturgical collects end in "... we ask you this [Father,] through Jesus Christ who lives

and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.” The whole Eucharistic liturgy is an offering to the Father made possible through Christ in the power of the Spirit.

Our doctrine of the Trinity should be formulated on the basis of what we have been praying all along throughout the centuries and on the basis of God’s salvation through Christ and in the Spirit as we experience it in the sacraments, in the Scriptures, in the Christian community, and in works of charity and justice.

Bonaventure’s Trinity: Revelation of an Intensely Personal God

Bonaventure’s understanding of the revelation of the Trinity is that it is the revelation of the mystery of shared divine life. This revelation that divine life is shared life, that it is an intimate communion of distinct Persons, comes to us through the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the activity of the Holy Spirit. God is tri-personal, that is to say: at the very heart, God is relationality itself, because God is love. The doctrine of the Trinity should eschew any image of God as a solitary ruler or as isolated or self-contained. It does not assert that God is “a thing in itself,” for God has been historically involved in human life. “Because of God’s outreach to [us], God is said to be essentially relational, ecstatic, fecund, alive as passionate love.”⁴ This is what I mean by the title of my presentation—that Bonaventure’s unique understanding of God is “intensely personal.” According to Bonaventure, because God is Trinity or tri-personal, God is intensely relational, passionately loving, dynamically fecund, and boundlessly self-giving, within Godself and with us.

I agree whole-heartedly with Catherine LaCugna’s understanding of the Trinity, when she says: “The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately . . . a teaching not about the abstract nature of God, nor about God in isolation from everything other than God, but a teaching about God’s life with us and our life with each other.”⁵ This is the best statement I’ve ever heard about the Trinity: the Trinity is a teaching about God’s life with us and our life with each other.

A theology about the Trinity is coextensively a theology about the nature of personhood, about self-transcending relationality, mutual self-giving, life-giving communion, self-expression, and the discovery that self-emptying love is self-fulfilling.

Fecundity and the Self-diffusiveness of the Good in Bonaventure’s Trinity

Bonaventure’s approach to discussing the Trinity is to begin with the Person of the Father. This is the starting point of the Greek or Eastern Orthodox

Trinitarian doctrine, whereas, the point of departure of the Latin West is from the divine substance. Bonaventure is the only Latin theologian I know who begins his exposition on the Trinity with the Person of the Father, rather than with the divine substance. This was revolutionary in his day, because to “say that Person rather than substance is the cause and origin of everything that exists means that the ultimate source of all reality is not a [something] ‘by itself’ or ‘in itself’ but a person, [someone] toward-another.”⁶ God exists from all eternity in relation, in a communion of equal Persons.

The Father is the divine Person who does not originate from another. This distinguishing characteristic (property) is called “unbegottenness.” “Unbegottenness” denotes the utter lack of a source, and thus establishes the Father as primary, truly the First Person. The name also connotes for Bonaventure fecundity and establishes the Father as the sole Source of divine life. But the word “Source” does not fully express the absolute fecundity in divinity. The Father is so perfectly, infinitely, and absolutely fecund that Bonaventure calls the Father *Fontalis Plenitudo*, Fountain-fullness. It is the image of the moving, flowing, life-giving abundance of a spring. Its lapping sounds conveying a message of overflowing generosity. This paternal fecundity eternally generates the Son and breathes forth the Spirit. Bonaventure says:

... the Unbegotten One is called the First; and the First Person is the Cause producing the others; for this very reason the First Person is called “Fountain fullness” with regard to the production of Persons.⁷

Bonaventure uses a very important philosophical principle, which states that “the more primary a thing is, the more fecund it is, and therefore it is the origin [principle] of others.”⁸

To speak about the “primacy of the Father” grates on many people’s ears, especially those of us with feminist sensibilities. This is because it is associated with hierarchical thinking. Because “primacy” means “first,” it has come to signify first in rank, importance, honor, value, and power; it implies leadership and preeminence. How are we to understand this, especially with regard to the Trinity which is a communion of equal Persons-in-relation?

Let us start by saying that whatever we know about God the Father, we know through the Son and Spirit because God freely participates in human history. This statement suggests two points. One is that we should not divorce the Trinity from the history of salvation, which is made present today in the Church community, the Scriptures, and the sacraments. The second point is that we can know God only in history, only in time. God is eternal and eternity is not “unending time,” but the absence of time. There is no beginning and no end, no past and no future, but it has been said that there is an “ever present.” Therefore, there is no time sequence in eternity—the notion of “first, second, third,” is repugnant to God. In this sense, then, the Father, is not really “first”

at all. No divine Person has primacy. But since we are all time-bound beings, we can speak about eternal things only in sequence and only by using verbs in their present, past, or future tenses. We do not have an "eternal verb tense." Therefore, status, prestige, or prominence, which often accompany "the first" or "number one," have no reality in God.

What is meant by "primacy," then, is that there is a Parental Person who eternally produces a Filial Person and a Pneumatic Person. Bonaventure speaks of the Father as the "cause" of the Son and Spirit, but this should not imply the literal beginning of the Persons' existence: their existence is eternal. God was/is never without the divine Word and Spirit. Words like "cause," "source," and "origin" are necessary because we have to begin somewhere to speak about the Trinity.

What Bonaventure understands by divine primacy is fecundity. He maintains as fact the philosophical axiom that "the more primary a thing is, the more fecund it is." Unquestionably for Bonaventure, the Father's primacy means nothing other than this: an unfathomable fecundity of mind and heart; an unfetterable, boundless expression of self-diffusive goodness, a Fountainfulness of self-transcending, Trinity-producing love who willingly overflows to fill the bottomless chasm between time and eternity so that we may be created, sanctified, and divinized.

Besides the fecund, Fountain-fullness of the Father, another constitutive element for understanding Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology is the simple philosophical principle that the good is self-diffusive.⁹ The centrality of this principle cannot be over-estimated, for it is the foundation for understanding the tri-personal God. The principle of self-diffusive goodness is the jewel in the crown of Trinitarian speculation.

The nature of goodness is such that it must diffuse itself, that is, give of itself, share itself, go out of itself. Goodness must be fecund and productive, ecstatic and self-communicative, generous and self-expressive. Goodness is dynamic. It must "act," it cannot merely "be." For Bonaventure, of all things good, love is the best. For him goodness and love are interchangeable. The greatest good is love, but love requires personal relationships. No higher good can be conceived than interpersonal love.

In *The Soul's Journey into God*, Bonaventure conducts a meditation on God's highest name, which is Goodness.¹⁰ This is revealed in the Gospels in a verse in which Jesus says: "No one is good but God alone" (Lk. 18:19 and Mt. 19:17). Since goodness and love are convertible, the quotation from the First Letter of John, "God is love" (1Jn. 4:8 and 16) is also relevant. In fact, it may be argued that the message that God is love and goodness is in keeping with the spirit of the New Testament as a whole. Bonaventure unites the fullest revelation of God in Christ with the philosophical principle that the nature of the good is to be self-diffusive and concludes that there is a natural, fecund, and

eternal emanation of divine persons within the inner being of God. He puts forth the quintessential Trinitarian statement that sets him apart from any other theologian:

For goodness is said to be self-diffusive; therefore the highest good must be the most self-diffusive. . . . Therefore unless there were eternally in the highest good a production which is actual and consubstantial and . . . [a production of Persons] as noble as the producer . . . so that there would be a beloved and a cobeloved, the one generated and the other spirited, and this is the Father and Son and Holy Spirit—unless these were present, it would by no means be the highest good because it would not diffuse itself in the highest degree.¹¹

Since God is eternal, infinite, perfect, and absolute goodness, God *must*, by nature and necessity, diffuse Godself in an eternal, infinite, perfect, and absolute way. The Father must eternally beget the Son because God is love, and an interpersonal relationship is necessary for the perfection of love. In generating the Son, the Father withholds nothing in the perfect outpouring of Godself into the Son. All that the Father is—whatever the Father is—the Son is also, and thus they are one. The Son is even given the property of production, that is to say, the ability to breathe forth the Spirit, so that the Father and the Son together as one principle spirate the Holy Spirit. The Son is also called the Word and Image because the Filial Person expresses and reflects all that the Father infinitely is and returns the Father's love as only an infinite Person can. This reciprocated Love is also a Person, the Holy Spirit acting as the Gift and Bond between them. This is an eternal communion of total self-giving and self-receiving, the paradigm of love. It is a circular, ecstatic divine dance.

If love is such that it withholds absolutely nothing, then the Father, Son, and Spirit are perfectly, infinitely, eternally, and absolutely equal. If there were subordination within the relationships of the Trinity, then God's self-diffusion would not be of the highest order, a higher self-diffusion would be conceivable, and God's nature would remain unfulfilled. Persons worthy and capable of divine and mutual love must be equal to the Father. If the Son and Spirit were not absolutely all that the Father is, then the begetting would be defective; the production would be deficient; and the self-giving miserly. But because God is infinitely personal, the divine self-expression produces an eternal communion of equal Persons in loving relationship.

The term "Father," as used in Trinitarian discourse, is a *relational* term, which indicates that one Person comes forth from another. It is a personal relationship based on origin. It is not a proper name or a literal term designating that God is male. It is a metaphor, and familial metaphors express well how

the divine Persons are related to each other because they are personal, intimate, and disclose the eternal origin of one Person from another. It is precisely the eternal origin that distinguishes the Persons. I emphasize the word “eternal” because it “does not indicate priority of being, or time, or eminence.”¹² After a close examination of Bonaventure’s texts, I conclude that Bonaventure does not understand the term “Father” literally, that is to say, that God is male. Certainly, Bonaventure is conditioned by his medieval, patriarchal culture and by the Scriptural use of the term, but it is clear that he understands “Father” as a metaphor that indicates intimacy, mutuality, and relationality based on origin. The Father is the overflowing wellspring of divine generosity, which may be defined as the capacity and desire to share what one has; and what is shared, eternally and unreservedly, with the Son and Spirit is the Father’s own infinite Being. In Bonaventure’s union of Scriptural revelation and philosophical insight, we have a model of the Trinity in which the dynamism of divine life is about interpersonal self-emptying, self-giving, and self-transcending love. Herein lies a paradox with a practical lesson for us: self-emptying (in love) is self-fulfilling, and self-transcendence (in freedom) is self-defining.

There is no real sense of independence, self-sufficiency, or isolation in Bonaventure’s model of the Trinity, for that would connote a privation or a paucity of God’s love and would be viewed as a state of being which is static. Rather, Bonaventure’s Trinitarian understanding is dynamic because there is an unmistakable “sense of movement” in the descriptions of “giving,” “receiving,” and “returning” love, in the circular, ecstatic divine dance, and this movement results in interdependence, in intimacy, and in the overflowing abundance of divine life, all of which serve to unite the Three in one Being.

The Son as Word and Exemplar

So far, we have focused on Bonaventure’s understanding of the nature of relationality and of the essential equality of the three Persons. If the Son is all that the Father is, the Son is said to be the perfect expression or Word of the Father. Let us examine how Bonaventure understands the Son as the Word of God.

From all eternity the Son proceeds forth as the Logos, God’s Word from the divine intellect. The Greek term “logos” has many potent and related meanings. While it does mean “word,” it also means “thought,” a “word” is an “expressed thought.” It also means “plan,” “order,” “reason” and “idea.” “Logos” is an all-purpose Greek word, associated with the intellectual faculty.

The Logos is God’s thought; the Logos is the infinite divine ideas in the mind of God. In generating the Logos, all divine reality is eternally communicated within God’s Self, within the inner life of the Trinity. All of God’s infinite ideas, infinite love, God’s very being, are the perfect expression of God’s self-diffusive goodness within the Trinity. The Logos is all that God is and all

that God can do. But the Logos is a Person. The perfect, infinite Self-expression that comes forth from God is a Person, and therefore is the Son. The nature of personhood is to be in relation, is to love. And so the Son returns the Father’s love eternally and perfectly, as only an infinite Person can. And this Love is also a Person, the Spirit who is breathed forth as their mutual bond. At the center of this Trinitarian circle of boundless, unfettered self-giving and self-expression is the Son and Word, who is the divine idea through whom God creates the universe. In John’s Gospel we read:

In the beginning was the Word [the Logos], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (Jn. 1: 1-3, 14).

Bonaventure calls the Word the “Exemplar.” An exemplar is a pattern, a form, or an idea. For example, before anyone creates or constructs something, he or she has its form or idea in mind. The Son is the eternal Exemplar, the infinite collection of divine ideas of everything created and everything creatable in the mind of God. Through this personal Logos and Exemplar, God creates the universe as a superabundant, overflowing expression of God’s goodness. The emanation of Persons within the Trinity is eternal, infinite, perfect, and necessary, but the creation of the universe outside the Trinity is temporal, finite, imperfect, and freely willed.

Bonaventure sometimes discusses the mystery of inner Trinitarian life as though he were an observer of God’s private life. Although he speculates in depth about the fountain-full fecundity of the Father who generates the Son and Spirit, and about their communion of shared life and shared love, his Trinitarian theology does not become an exposition on the self-contained relations locked up within the Trinity. His Trinity is never completely divorced from the history of salvation or from our life with God and with each other. His doctrine about the holy mystery we call the Trinity would be inordinately abstract and utterly esoteric if it were not grounded in the historical Christ and the activity of the Spirit. The Franciscan tradition grounds Bonaventure’s dynamic understanding of the Trinity in the historical revelation of Jesus of Nazareth, in the uniquely Franciscan devotion to Christ’s humanity, in His death and Resurrection, and in an authentic imitation of His life.

In Bonaventure’s overall theology, the Word is the Expressed Thought of the divine mind, the divine ideas of everything ever created and creatable, but Bonaventure never loses sight of the historical fact that the Word is also the One who truly assumed a human body and soul, the babe in Mary’s arms dependent on her love and care. The Word is Jesus, who lived a fully human—though sinless—life, Jesus who truly suffered and died, but rose to new life.

Because Jesus is, even now, the eternal Word immanent in history, his death and Resurrection are salvific for all people at all times. Christ is the center of all history, of all time, and of all humanity. As the Word is the medium of creation, so also the Word made flesh is the medium of salvation, that is our divinization: the Word became human so that humans might become divine.

Exemplarity

Although God is perfectly fulfilled within the dynamic love of the Trinity, God freely chooses to create outside the Trinity to share divine goodness. All creation is an expression of God's goodness; and just like a work of art is an expression of the artist, God expresses Godself as Trinity in the universe. Bonaventure calls this doctrine "exemplarity." Exemplarity allows us to encounter God in a Trinitarian Self-expression in created things, including human beings, and this encounter leads us in an ascent back to the Creator. Exemplarity is the belief (for Bonaventure it is the genuine experience) that the Trinity is manifested in the world, and it is a concept that expresses God's closeness to creation. By the contemplation of created things, says Bonaventure, we are led back to the Creator, who is God the Father, and to the Exemplar, who is God the Son and through whom the Father created, and to the Sanctifier, who is God the Holy Spirit in whom we have our being.

In the light of faith, Bonaventure sees traces of the Trinity in every creature. Created things are what he calls "vestiges" of the Trinity because they reflect the Father, Son, and Spirit in their power, wisdom, and goodness. Power is correlated to the Father as Creator who has brought all things into being. Wisdom is correlated to the Son or Logos through whom God creates and orders all things wisely; it is associated with the intellectual faculty. And goodness is correlated to the Holy Spirit, the ever-present Sanctifier.

Humans are vestiges of the Trinity, but they are much more. They are Trinitarian images of God. We mirror or reflect God in our capacity for, and function of, memory, intellect, and will, as correlated to the Father, Son, and Spirit. In *The Soul's Journey* Bonaventure leads the reader in a contemplation of God in the depths of the soul:

See, therefore, how close the soul is to God, and how in their operations, the memory leads to eternity, the understanding to truth and the power of choice to the highest good.

These powers lead us to the most blessed Trinity itself in view of their order, origin and interrelatedness. From memory, intelligence comes forth as its offspring. . . . From memory and intellect love is breathed forth as their mutual bond. These three—the generating mind, the word and love—are in the soul as memory, understanding and will, which are consubstantial, coequal . . . and interpenetrate each other.

If, then, God is a perfect spirit, he has memory, understanding and will; and he has the Word generated and Love breathed forth, which are necessarily distinct since one is produced by the other.¹³

For Bonaventure memory is synonymous with "consciousness" and is primary for it generates the offspring of thought; and together consciousness and thought breathe forth the will. These three—memory, intellect, and will—are coextensive and interpenetrate. For example, you will to know and you know what you will, and neither intellect nor will can function without memory. You know what you remember, and you remember what you know. And you will to remember, and you remember what you will. They are distinct but never separated. They are united but unconfused. This is the same formula that is used to describe our understanding of the Trinitarian Persons: distinct but inseparable, united but unconfused. You have a direct experience of how three are one, how three faculties are one soul. This is an imperfect analogy of how the three divine Persons are one God, and how they interpenetrate or mutually indwell, inseparably in one another.

The Holy Spirit: the Bond of Love and Gift of the Father and the Son

In order for the highest self-diffusion to exist in God, it must be perfect, i.e., it must fulfill all possibilities. While the Son is the natural and necessary eternal emanation, the Spirit is the voluntary and free emanation. Just as the Son proceeds as the Word, the expression of God's mind, so the Spirit proceeds as Love,¹⁴ the expression of God's will. The Third Person or the Pneumatic Person completes the infinite circle of love.

Bonaventure's understanding of the nature of love is such that even a mutual love between two should overflow endlessly to another. Even a mutually fulfilling love is not perfect unless it transcends the possible "egoism between two" and desires this same perfectly mutual love for another, so that, as Bonaventure says in the *Soul's Journey*, there may be a Beloved and a Co-Beloved.¹⁵ Bonaventure is wise and highly insightful to observe that self-love is good. "Mutual love is more perfect than self-love, and a mutual love that is also shared with a third is better than an unshared love."¹⁶ Here Bonaventure is following Richard of St. Victor, who, in his treatise on the Trinity, asks: if there is a perfect realization of the mutual love between the Father and the Son, why is there a third Person in the Trinity? He arrives at an astonishing insight:

In true charity supreme excellence means that we wish another to be loved as ourselves. In mutual love which burns intensely, nothing is

rarer, nothing more admirable than to wish another to be equally loved by the one whom you supremely love and by whom you are supremely loved. The proof of mature charity is the desire to share the love that has been given to you.¹⁷

Shared love is properly said to exist when a third person is loved by two persons harmoniously and in community.¹⁸

Supreme love is not realized in the mutual love of two persons, but in the love generously shared with a third. This is self-transcending love which is fulfilled in the mutual love of three Persons-in-community.

The Holy Spirit is called Love, Bond, and Gift. The Spirit as Love may be understood in three related ways: first, the Spirit is Love insofar as the Spirit is God who is essentially Love. Second the Spirit is also the Love who proceeds from the divine will. Lastly, the Love with which the Father loves the Son and with which the Son loves the Father is also Person, namely the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ In this sense the Pneumatic Person unites the Father and Son, and so is called their Bond. Bonaventure writes that it is the unique personal title of the Holy Spirit to be called Gift, the One Given par excellence.²⁰

The Divine Unity of the Trinity

Bonaventure shows concern for securing the divine unity of the Trinity throughout his works; it is a coextensive concern with that of the divine interpersonal relationships. Bonaventure grounds the oneness of God in the single divine substance,²¹ the one divine nature, but unlike any other Latin theologian, Bonaventure's model of the Trinity is also united by *perichoresis*. *Perichoresis* refers to the mutual indwelling of the Trinitarian Persons, as it is revealed by Christ's words: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (Jn. 14:11). In Latin the word Bonaventure uses is "circumincession,"²² literally rendered as "to move around in." This is a faithful translation of the original dynamic sense of *perichoresis*, which may suggest a "circular divine dance."²³ *Perichoresis* is from the Greek word *choreo*, a dance. (Think of the English word "choreographer.") Thus, Bonaventure's understanding of the mutual indwelling of the divine Persons is dynamic, consonant with eternal self-giving, self-emptying, self-transcending love; and yet they are one God, one intellect, one will, one activity.

The Trinity and Our Life with Each Other

In my introduction to this presentation I said the Trinity is a teaching about God's life with us and our life with each other. "God's life with us" refers to how God comes to us, how God is in relationship with us, how God saves and divinizes us, namely through the Person of Christ and in the power of the

Holy Spirit. How, then is the Trinity a teaching about our life with each other?

What is revealed in the Trinity is the mystery of God's relationality, because God is love and goodness. We, as human beings, are images of the triune God in our personhood. To be a person is to be capable of personal relationships, the capacity to know and to love. Catherine LaCugna explains the connection between the Trinity and our life with each other when she says that "Trinitarian theology could be described as par excellence a theology of relationship, which explores the mysteries of love, relationship, personhood and communion within the framework of God's self-revelation in the person of Christ and the activity of the Spirit."²⁴

Along with many modern theologians, I accept the proposition that "the structure of [inner] divine life [may become] a pattern to be reproduced among human persons,"²⁵ so that we as divine images may conform ourselves ever more to the divine Original. Traditionally, our understanding of personhood, what it means to be a human being, has included the values of independence, self-sufficiency, and autonomy. These are still our values. But personhood does not entail *only* these qualities. Personhood, whether divine or human, whether within the Trinity or in the world, is oriented "toward another." Feminist theory, for example, has helped to bring out personal values that have been under-represented. It views people as inter-relational and interdependent. Bonaventure's model of the Trinity offers us values that are indispensable to authentic human community: for example, equality and non-subordination, reciprocity, interdependence, inclusivity, generosity, mutual self-donation, and dynamic productivity.

Is God a Male Person?

So far I have discussed God as personal, interpersonal, tri-personal, intensely personal. *But is God a male person?* Feminist Christians have critiqued the exclusive use of male metaphors and images for God, especially "Father" and "Son," because they give the impression that God is male. I enter this feminist dialogue about the Trinitarian names of God with the assumption that the male metaphors in and of themselves need not be patriarchal or oppressive to women. There are two levels of thought in understanding the doctrine of the Trinity. One is the immediate, superficial image that male images or metaphors evoke in the mind. The other is the deeper, underlying level of meaning that the images or metaphors mediate about the incomprehensible Holy Mystery who is God.

When we critically correlate Bonaventure's unique and invaluable Trinitarian insights with Christian feminist theory, we get a model of the Trinity that is free from a literal and patriarchal captivity and that depicts God as tri-personal, relational, self-diffusively good, essentially equal, absolutely loving, and dynamically self-emptying. Feminist Christians should not decline a

Trinitarian theology in which the Father must, by nature and by necessity, empty Himself so fully, so infinitely, so unreservedly in love in order to be fulfilled, in order to be God. This is what I call "the kenosis of the Father." For Bonaventure, the metaphor of Father mediates important connotations such as a loving relationship based on origin.

Bonaventure's depiction of God as Father does not even remotely resemble the image of a male ruling figure, the patriarch. He depicts the Father as the *Fontalis Plenitudo*, the inexhaustible, overflowing fountain of divine life. The names he uses do not indicate rule, dominance, self-sufficiency, or preeminence, but rather relationality, ecstatic communication, and the impetus to share Being. Even when he discusses the Father's primacy in the Trinity, Bonaventure understands it only as the "unbegotten Source" and therefore as nothing other than the Father's kenotic fecundity. In his discussions, Bonaventure is adamant that the Father and Son and Spirit are absolutely equal. If there were any subordination within the Trinity, then it would not be the highest and most perfect Self-diffusion of the good.

The image of God as the ruling male monarch is not consonant with Bonaventure's understanding of Fatherhood, primarily because he never gives even the slightest indication that he thinks it is a literal name. Secondly, a patriarchal interpretation is not consonant with his understanding of Fatherhood because Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology is anchored in salvation history. The patriarchal figure is antithetical and repugnant to God's Self-revelation in Christ. According to the reign preached by Jesus Christ, patriarchy is not God's *arche*; that is to say, "the [*arche* or] rule of the male is not rule of God."²⁶ The God of Jesus Christ is the Father of the prodigal son (Lk. 15: 11-32); the one who knows how to give good things to all who ask (Mt. 7:11); who makes the sun rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Mt. 5:43); who is the Font of life and raises Jesus from the dead and who is the Wellspring overflowing with mercy and justice. Fatherhood must be interpreted faithfully according to the revelation in Jesus, and that is, in non-literal and non-patriarchal ways.

In conclusion, if the Trinity is the teaching about God's life with us and our life with each other, then patriarchy, all forms of oppression, and all forms of unjust relationships are unequivocally antithetical to an authentic understanding of a God who is community. The strongest possible defense against dehumanizing or unjust relationships is to argue, as LaCugna does, that "... the [very] being of God is utterly antithetical to every kind of subordination and subservience."²⁷ This has been the revelation of the mystery of the Trinity—God is Self-diffusive Goodness who dwells in eternal ecstatic relationships and whose passionate love overflows to us through the Persons of Christ and the Spirit. The Trinity is the revelation of an intensely personal God.

Endnotes

¹Catherine Mowry Lacugna, *God for Us: the Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 14.

²A "notion" is what distinguishes the Father, Son, and Spirit from each other: ingenerateness (innascibility), fatherhood (paternity), sonship (filiation), active spiration and passive spiration. The relations are father to son, son to father, spiration, and procession. The Persons are the Father, Son, and Spirit, and the processions are being begotten and being spirated. God's substance is the one divine nature.

³Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV, pref., 4; also V, 6.1. In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. I, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985).

⁴LaCugna, *God For Us*, 1.

⁵LaCugna, *God For Us*, 1.

⁶LaCugna, *God For Us*, 14.

⁷I Sent., d.27, p.1, a.u., q.2, ad 3. The quotations and references from the *Commentarius in librum sententiarum* I-IV are from the critical text for the works of Bonaventure: *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, Edita studio et cura pp. Collegii a S. Bonaventura X volumina. (Quaracchi, Italy: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1920). All translations from the Latin texts are my own.

⁸I Sent., d. 27, p. 1, a.u., q. 2, ad 3.

⁹The philosophical principle of the self-diffusive nature of goodness is from the neo-Platonic philosophy of the Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, IV. 1, and *On the Divine Names*, IV. 1, 20. In *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid. The Classics of Western Spirituality Series (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

¹⁰Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, chs. 6.1 and 2, trans. Ewert Cousins, The Classics of Western Spirituality Series (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

¹¹*Soul's Journey*, 6.2.

¹²LaCugna, *God For Us*, 245.

¹³*Soul's Journey*, 3.4-5.

¹⁴I Sent., d.6, a.u., q.3, conclu.

¹⁵*Soul's Journey*, 6.2.

¹⁶I Sent., d.10, a.1, q.1, fund. 1.

¹⁷Richard of St. Victor, *The Trinity*, 3. 15, as translated by Ewert Cousins in "A Theology of Interpersonal Relations," *Thought*, 45 (1970): 77.

¹⁸Richard of St. Victor, *The Trinity*, 3.15 trans. Grover Zinn, Classics of Western Spirituality Series (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

¹⁹Bonaventure, *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity. The Works of St. Bonaventure*. Vol. III. Ed. George Marcil, trans. Zachary Hayes (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1979), 55.

²⁰Bonaventure, *The Breviloquium*, 1.3.9, in *The Works of Bonaventure*, vol. II, trans. Jose de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963).

²¹It must be stated that Bonaventure alone among Western theologians grounds the unity of the Trinity in the *monarchia* of the Father. The Father is the unifying principle. As the unoriginate Origin, the Father is the unifying Source of the Trinity. But Bonaventure also grounds the unity of the Trinity in the single divine substance/nature, in *perichoresis* (mutual indwelling), in the Son as the *Persona Media*, and in the Holy Spirit as the Bond of Love.

²²I Sent., d. 19, p. 1, a.u., q.4, conclu.

²³LaCugna, *God For Us*, 272-3.

²⁴LaCugna, *God For Us*, 1.

²⁵LaCugna, *God For Us*, 281.

²⁶LaCugna, *God For Us*, 394.

²⁷LaCugna, *God For Us*, 287. Emphasis by LaCugna.

Negotiating the Social Gaps: Practicing a Trinitarian Experience in the Tradition of the Evangelical Life

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What might it mean to practice the Trinitarian life in our contemporary world? I will try to indicate what I think are some specific dimensions of our tradition that touch most deeply our contemporary experience as it confronts religious life. In part one we will look at the cultural demand and how it affects our naming and practicing. In part two we will consider the evangelical experience of God.

From a Spirituality of Dwelling to a Spirituality of Seeking

It takes a long time for a clear image of God to emerge from the depths of the revelation imbedded in our hearts to take shape in images and practices. Culture, our experience of God, and our speech about this interchange tend to intertwine and play off one another. As a starting point for our reflections let me make a few points about how our image of God has changed dramatically in the last fifty years and why there is today a cultural demand for a religious practice that we Franciscans are now naming "Trinitarian." Perhaps this short overview will help us establish some connections, provide us with perspective, or break open our speech about God and allow it to interchange with our real experience of life with others.

Robert Wuthnow in a recent work has described the huge shift in American religious experience from the 1950s to the 1990s.¹ He characterizes it as a cultural movement from a "spirituality of dwelling" to a "spirituality of seeking." We are familiar with the characteristics from the course of our own religious life as Franciscans, our journey from 1950 to 2000. This journey has influenced our imaging of God and it currently shapes our Trinitarian quest. How? A "spirituality of dwelling" is marked by the habitation of God in a

definite place, a sacred space, a eucharistic presence, a heaven above or a heaven below with identifiable boundaries, creedal and constitutional definitions, policies of exclusion. Its symbols are the enclosure, the dress code, the monastic horarium, the structured schedule, participation in the common rituals of the sacraments and breviary. Its social foundation is a family life with clearly marked occupational differences between men and women, the "domestic" arrangements themselves being defined as "sacred." Institutionally, dwelling in a sacred social space is communicated through hierarchical structures of obedience (those in charge communicate to us the "will of God"), large buildings that demand organization and an accompanying bureaucracy, sharply defined roles, a common mission, a novitiate or motherhouse. Such a world argues for security, order, a systematic understanding of life. Here individuals experience themselves as belonging to a much larger whole. Their personal uniqueness is subsumed, to some extent, in a larger sense of mission and identity. This "spirituality of dwelling" works well in certain situations. It gets things done efficiently and has a strong public presence. It symbolizes unity and commonality and communicates peace and stability. Those of us who experienced it, remember it well.

The respected historical theologian Yves Congar has argued for a strong connection between this type of social experience and its congruent focus on an image of God that emphasizes unity, absoluteness, immutability, and paternal authority. Here, God is triune, as we profess, but the social and political circumstances encourage the move away from an emphasis on the diversity of persons in the one God. Unity is here achieved not by examining the density of the relationships but by emphasizing the one life, the one essence, the oneness of being and mission which people share. Congar would argue that this type of perspective is symbolically aligned with patriarchy and a certain form of communal structure in both Church and society. He notes that it has manifested itself in the Church's way of speaking about God from the time of Leo XIII until the Second Vatican Council.²

We know that in this country during the 1960s we moved away from the type of social experience and religious imaging which marked the "spirituality of dwelling." We need not detail the atmosphere of the civil rights movement, the heady experience of the sister formation movement, the Second Vatican Council, the assimilation of humanistic psychology into our formation programs and self-imaging, or our growing awareness of gender inequalities. All these trends had been developing since the early 1940s.

Recently, I examined a large body of renewal documents written by members of the Franciscan family between 1966 and 1968. I found them filled with emphasis on the following values: personal experience, the dignity of the individual, conscience and freedom, adaptation and flexibility, collegiality,

subsidiarity, participative government, pluralism of ministerial expressions, personal spiritual integration, and a cultural option for the poor and those suffering discrimination. In fact, almost all these documents refer primarily to those conciliar statements that reinforced these religious and cultural values: *Gaudium et Spes*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Dignitatis Humanae Personae*. Generally speaking, *Perfectate caritatis*, which in some respects presupposed a "spirituality of dwelling," was referred to only tangentially and only inasmuch as it coincided with these other dominant values. Sometimes we forget we have been witnesses to one of those sea changes in religious sensibility that occur only very rarely. Such a shift happened in the thirteenth, sixteenth, and eighteenth centuries, and now again in the twentieth century.

Not surprisingly, in the early 1980s, just fifteen years after the cultural and conciliar changes, Andrew Greeley identified a corresponding change in the way believers imaged God. Naming the older way of describing God as cognitive and rationalistic, Greeley argued for the re-emergence of the Catholic imagination. He wrote:

Religion exists in experience, imagination and story before it begins to be articulated in doctrine, catechism, creed, philosophy and theology. Thus, the apostles first of all experienced the risen Jesus; then they retained those images in their memories encoded in the symbols of their religious heritage, such as king, lord, prophet, messiah, son of man, son of God, although in applying these images to Jesus the images themselves were transformed; then they told stories about their experience of Jesus both before and after the resurrection to those whom they wished to follow after them.³

Using four scales of measurement (mother/father, spouse/ master, friend/ king, judge/lover) Greeley noted: "Something seems to have happened in the last twenty years which notably affected the religious imagination of Catholics in a more benign and gracious direction. . . . [These images and stories will have a] profound influence on how people live their lives and are likely to have an even more profound influence in years to come."⁴ His study was followed up by a taskforce established by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in 1985 to examine people's religious experience. The sharing that took place all over the country in nine focus groups of ten people each came up with a number of commonalities. The groups were composed of married, single, and religious women. We note a dramatic change in the image of God.

- The following terms were used to describe the characteristics of God working in us: alive, supportive, power of the Spirit, ultimate sort of love, gift, need-filler, joy, peace, cosmic Christ, awe, wonder, laughs, caring, nurturing.
- The following areas were identified as places where God comes to us: in

nature—sunset, flowers, spring, new life, awesomeness, newborn animals, creation, ocean, rainbow, frost; in relationships—love of children, love, friendship, people, birth of baby, love of parents, caring of others, community, group sharing, dying, Eucharist; in individual lives—solitude, intuition, dreams, prayer, everyday crises, ineffability, surprise, the unexpected, the written word, music, differing cultures, pain, anxiety, fear, life experience, decisions, insoluble problems; in religious practices—processions, benediction, symbols, rituals.

- The following describe what God does in us: behavioral change, conversion, transformation, faith, trust, direction in life, call to service, self-sufficiency, need to share, growth, growth in love, self-acceptance, a sense of incompleteness, peace, calm, freedom, joy, challenge (gentle shoving), oneness with earth and God, acceptance of reality, acceptance of feminine self, God's love for me, sorrow turned to joy. . . .⁵

Listening to this compiled list, we see that the post-conciliar period moved us to a new image of God. In this new image, personal experience, relationality, companionship, participation, and compassion are key areas of concern. Nowhere is God named as a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. How could God be named this way? We associated Trinity with the social complex of the "spirituality of dwelling."

This movement towards a new image and experience of God coincided with a new social profile for ourselves as Franciscan religious. We found ourselves experiencing the loss of an environmental support in Church and society, declining numbers, vocational difficulties, challenges about economic issues of support that led to the closure of small houses, departures from parishes, schools, and hospitals, long-held sacred places. We experienced the sale of properties and the movement of resources to an aging population. All this amounted to the loss of our ancestral home. Clearly, some new social and theological frontier was emerging, a territory with which we were unfamiliar, coming as we did from a spirituality of dwelling. Could we name this new terrain in terms of the triune God? Not yet.

Wuthnow identifies this change, in its larger cultural context, as part of a broad social movement towards a "spirituality of seeking." Applying his analysis to our experience of religious life in this recent period, we see that our spirituality became marked by negotiation, the search for sacred moments, and the exploration of new personal experiences. Its symbol emerged as the traveler, the process person, the eclectic entrepreneur, moving from flower to flower, or institution to institution, in search of honey or team, or support and validation. Its social-psychological corollary became the dysfunctional family marked by temporary and changing commitments, the experience of an abusive and demeaning authority relationship in family or Church, the critical alienation from external systems, frustration and anger at the failure of institu-

tions to change. In this situation, negotiating a sacred experience was achieved through the adoption of therapeutic techniques, an investment in support networks, a search for intimate relationships, a cafeteria selection of spiritual foods, a conversion experience that remained intensely private and achieved its baptism in selective spiritual direction or personal projects of social justice with a small group of the chosen, a privatized survival strategy in the midst of congregational alienation, and the loss of the ability to name our search for God in any common way.

An institutionalized "spirituality of seeking" is what the current commentators on religious life find so disturbing. Doris Gottemoeller, RSM, raises the question of how we actually live community life, not how we talk about it, and what type of theology or talk about God we use to support what we actually do.⁶ Mary Johnson applies to the current profile of religious life Robert Putnam's analysis of American society as in the midst of a "crisis in social capital." Putnam defines social capital as those "features of a social organization, such as networks, norms, and social trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit." According to Putnam, the following features identify the quality of social capital:

- (1) the acceptance of norms governing generalized reciprocity and exchange between people;
- (2) the encouragement of social trust;
- (3) the facilitation of coordination and cooperation;
- (4) the amplification of personal reputation;
- (5) the liveliness of the memory of past successes of collaboration.⁷

Mary Johnson looks at this cultural trend and makes some disturbing observations. After conducting a national survey she notes that 49% of the local houses of religious have one occupant; 20% have two; 9% have three.⁸ Is the art of community life, on the local, provincial, and national levels, being lost? We could ask ourselves some penetrating questions:

- Are we religious becoming a society of "loose connections," participating in groups only inasmuch as these groups meet our personal needs, present at chapters and congregational gatherings so as to console ourselves with an illusion of belonging, living alone while internally and psychologically migrating away from the structures surrounding us, be they Church or congregation?
- Are we religious reflecting the deep-seated currents in our own culture, its loss of "social capital," its wholesale adoption of a transient, individually focused "spirituality of seeking"?
- Are we doing all this precisely at the same time that a younger generation is calling for expressed bonds of "social capital" (i.e. religious prac-

tices): dialogue, shared prayer, ritual, participation in a larger whole, common mission, clear public meaning structures, allegiance to a tradition, all those things that Patricia Wittberg might call an organizational complex of ideology and meaning?⁹

And so we find ourselves today caught in a confluence of cultural and religious changes from a "spirituality of dwelling" to a "spirituality of seeking." It is an uncomfortable situation, complex and challenging. And we have no unifying image of God to help us handle it. The problem has to do with *naming* and *practicing*. How can we name our God as triune, conditioned as we are to associate a trinitarian God with the "spirituality of dwelling," its profile of uniformity, its paternalism, its hierarchical understanding of unity, its implications for gender, and its justification of relationships of inequality? How can we describe our experience of God in these terms when we have come to value both socially and theologically personal dignity, equality, participation, companionship, and compassion?

In fact, has not our God become a mosaic of personal choices, as we engage in struggles over naming God in our prayer, talking about God publicly, searching for God in communal discernment, finding God in the Eucharist and in the Church, making room for God present in other cultures, or experiencing God in small extra-ecclesial groupings? We are comfortable with Spirit, a rather vague term, but are we comfortable with Father and Son? In such an historical situation, there are areas that we tend to write off or neglect. Some of us refuse to use traditional language and images of God because of their inherited political, social, or gender connotations. Others use the images but without examination, reducing them to mere formulas. If we got particular about our naming of God and the reality of triune relationships, it might become too painful and require too many choices, cutting to the bone of our social dissolution. What exactly do we mean when we pray: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit"? On some level, wouldn't it be better not to find out?

So much for *naming*. As for *practicing*, we face another communal challenge in a society of loose connections. Wuthnow and many others believe that one way out of our cultural and religious blockage is to establish a middle road between the values of a "spirituality of dwelling" and a "spirituality of seeking." He argues persuasively that what we need to rediscover are "spiritual practices," clusters of "intentional activities concerned with relating to the sacred."¹⁰ These are behavioral and marked by (1) deliberate effort; (2) personal discernment based on knowledge of the interior self; (3) a reward that inspires motivation; (4) embeddedness in a social institution and adherence to a specific tradition of wisdom; (5) commitment to activities which carry moral demands: the containment of behavior by following a set of rules, the accep-

and stands at the head of the Third Order Regular Rule. According to this document, what dimensions of the triune God are embedded in the religious experience of Francis?

a) We note first of all that, in this document, Francis is sharing something of himself and what he has discovered about God. The exhortation is addressed to “all those who love the Lord,” to “all men and women,” “to all those whom these words reach” (lines 1. 1, 5, 2.19). Line eight begins with “we” and repeats that identification twice more: *we* are spouses, *we* are brothers, *we* are mothers.” Here is a mission that begins with sharing a religious experience on the horizontal level of communion. There is a bridge of common human identity and heart-felt aspirations for dignity, equality, and participation between Francis and his listeners. He wishes to open up to them new depths hidden in their own humanity. He wants to show them a way that will bind them to God and to each other, a way that will break down their society of loose connections and violent reprisals. It is almost as if he were applying to himself, in relationship to God, the very words that Jesus speaks in relationship to his Creator and Father: “The words *that you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and have believed in truth that I have come from you and they have known that you have sent me*” (15). Francis is taking to heart and urging his listeners to take to heart the simple Gospel injunction: “The gift you have received, give as a gift” (Mt. 10.8). The gift he has received is new life in the experience of the Trinity, and this reception imposes on him an ethical demand: sharing.

b) Francis next identifies some practices which mark participants in this new life: They will love the Lord with their *whole heart, with their whole soul, with their whole strength*. They will love their neighbor as themselves. They will hate their bodies with their vices and sins. They will receive the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, they will produce fruits worthy of penance.

c) Francis simultaneously promises to these very men and women that embedded in their practice will be the joy and blessing of a religious experience *named* as trinitarian.

O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them, because *the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make Its home and dwelling place among them, and they are children of the heavenly Father Whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father who is in heaven. We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere con-*

science and give birth to him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others. (5-10)

What is happening in these three steps of identification, religious experience within practice, and trinitarian naming? How do they fit together? What do they mean for our vision and project in society?

First, precisely because the revelation of the Word of God is the starting point, new vistas emerge on the playing field of history and society—vistas beyond the human imagination. Francis is here using revelation as expressed in certain biblical passages to interpret human existence, its dignity, its possibilities, its joys, its ethical project.

- Its prophetic possibilities are outlined in Isaiah 11:2: “The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding . . .,” and in Isaiah 61:1: “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. . .,” a text which in Luke 4:18 Jesus applies to his whole life’s work.
- An identity and work which people are called to share is seen in Romans 8:9: “You are not in the flesh; you are in the spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you” and “All of us gazing on the Lord’s glory with unveiled faces, are being transformed from glory to glory into his very image by the Lord who is Spirit” (2Cor. 3:18).
- This action of God enters into us, joining God’s life and our life: “. . . in him you are being built into this temple, to become a dwelling place for God in the spirit” (Eph. 2:22) and “Anyone who loves me, will be true to my word, and my Father will love her; we will come to her and make our dwelling place with her” (John 14:22).
- It creates the new family, where there does not exist either “Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). “Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to me” (Mt. 12:50; cf. Lk. 8:20-21).

Second, and more practically, Francis proclaims the immediacy of God’s presence to all, the dignity of the person, the agency of people in the proclamation of the Gospel, and the role of men and women together in the formation of a new community. He does this in the fractious and destructive society of Assisi, where the very terms *father, mother, brother, sister, and spouse* carry the ambiguities of civil violence and domestic suspicions, where the complicity of the Church in the immoral political and social culture of its day obscures its true identity as the Body of Christ, where God is distant and where suffering is omnipresent.¹⁵ Francis’s project is the re-valuation of human relationships in the light of God’s self-revelation as “Our most holy Father, our Creator, Redeemer, Consoler, and Savior” (ExPat 1); it is the recognition that what it truly

means to be "brother" is carried by our Brother Christ (2EpFid 56); it is the dignity of a human agency which models itself on the disciple Mary, God's mother on earth (SalBVM).¹⁶ Francis argues for the reality of an in-Spirited and relational community of brothers and sisters, a new Gospel family, who in practicing a way of life centered on the Great Commandment experience themselves as making the very life of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in all its joy and blessing, visible in the world. His practice is to make available for others a new cultural option, an option which blesses human life and transforms what it means to be father, mother, brother, sister, spouse, each to the other and to Christ, the Son of the living God.

Third, in this way of life, God-imaged practices and institutional embodiments address the fundamental desires and needs of a people to belong, to love and be loved, to be significant, to share, to create and make. What is held out is hardly a society of "loose connections," without social capital, relational definition, common mission, or structured disciplines. It is not a society of vague and unrewarding formal practices, where institutional expressions and personal fulfillments stand on separate cliffs yelling at each other across the deep impassable gorges forged by the raging waters of history. It is a society with ethical demands which move from the most general—love of God and neighbor—through the rejection of the "body" of violence and privatized survival strategies to the most particular—the assimilation into the Body of the Lord so that one becomes present in the world as God is present, present for others as nourishment and food. "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally" (EpOrd 29). It is hardly a society characterized by a nameless God made to the likeness of each person. Rather, this is a society which chooses to proclaim God as a common good precisely because Goodness has revealed itself within human experience as adoptive and generating (Father/daughter/son), as compacting with and joining others to Its very self (Spirit/spouse), as muffling the orphaned wail of absence by making a "dwelling place" with people, as inviting human beings as equals into a society of persons while giving them the privilege of being spouses, brothers, and mothers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Practices of this type of life are anything which make this triune God available to people.

Fourth, the fundamental expressions of this evangelical experience of God, as simple and general as they sound, are all identifying signs that cut against a society of loose connections and vague practices. For example, the sign of the cross: "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit"; the recitation of the "Glory to the Father"; participating in the Eucharist; praising the Trinity through the rhythm of the liturgical year; devotion to Mary; personally acting on words of Scripture; using the disciplines of life (feasting and fasting, solitude, penance) as tools to discover, to acknowledge, and to celebrate the presence of God in self, others, and the world; seeking the companionship of

friends; assuming responsibility for the neighbor by bearing fruits worthy of penance. "The seeds on good ground are those who hear the word in a spirit of openness, retain it, and bear fruit through perseverance" (Lk. 8:15, Lk. 3:18). It is to the lasting credit of Bonaventure that, thirty years after Francis's death, he was able to translate much of this religious experience into a pedagogy of formation with its accompanying disciplines.¹⁷ As he phrases it, does the fruit of our trees become the medicine of the nations? (Apoc. 22:2).¹⁸

Lastly, and most importantly, what Francis is doing here is inviting others into the graced dialogue of his own religious experience. His is an act of enthusiasm and his vantage point is that of a participant in beauty. As he says to the brothers and sisters:

O how glorious it is to have a holy and great Father in heaven! O how holy, consoling to have such a beautiful and wonderful Spouse! O how holy and how loving, gratifying, humbling, peace-giving, sweet, worthy of love, and, above all things, desirable: to have such a Brother and such a Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who laid down His life for His sheep and prayed to His Father. . . (1EpFid 11-13).

Francis's practice and knowledge of the Trinitarian life began when an act of God's grace moved him through desire or compassion or sorrow for his sins to embrace a suffering human being, the leper, who in turn placed upon him an ethical demand of "mercy" and solidarity (Test 1-3, 1Cel 17). He knew in this encounter a religious experience, an epiphany, a revelation of the Most High, a "sweetness from above." In the medieval lexicon of religious experience, "sweetness" (*dulcis, dulcedo, suavis, suavitas*) was a synonym for the "sweet name of the Father" who is Good, or for "the sweetness of the Word" who redeems, or for "the very sweetness of God" who is the indwelling Holy Spirit.¹⁹ By turning to his suffering neighbor, Francis experienced the creature as carrying an epiphany in human form of God's goodness and presence. It was overwhelming, an insight that would broaden and develop over time.

Francis had the same type of epiphany, an experience of transfiguration, in his encounter with Clare, who moved him to joy (cf. Testament of Clare). She too, through her practice, had made herself a child of the Most High King, a spouse of the Holy Spirit (cf. her Form of Life). Seeing this in her, Francis made an ethical response of "care and solicitude." He no longer became the judge of the woman, who embodied Eve, but now became her fellow participant in God's life. The same experience happened when he encountered the sinful priest, saw in him "glory" (another way the Most High Son of God came into the world), and offered him "fear, love, and honor" (Test 10). A similar structure of encounter, a revelation of how deeply the Trinity is involved in existence, ethical demand, and response, underlay his contact with

the birds. For them he felt "much sweetness"; they, in turn, "filled him with joy" and he exhorted them "to praise and love the Creator, because daily, invoking the name of the Savior, he observed their obedience in his own experience" (1Cel 58). Symbolically, the birds are nothing more or less than the carrion, hawks, crows, predators, and sparrows of human society.²⁰

In other words, the place where the Trinity came alive for Francis was not in speculation or philosophical reflection or logical dialectic, but in his own experience of life in this world—in its beauty, its sin, and its challenges. His openness to engage the world with faith and commitment made it the terrain where God—Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier—is present. His practice was animated by a trinitarian faith—"the apprehension of the beauty of the created life in its sacramental revelation of the divine life."²¹ There is no division here between experience, apprehension, revelation, and ethical practice.²²

In contemporary terms, practicing the evangelical trinitarian life for Francis means taking the graced dialogue of this religious experience seriously and inviting others into it. His graced dialogue may be defined as a dialogue which "turns toward the other." It knows the sight, language, embrace, discourse, and life of the other as revealing Beauty—a beauty which in turn elicits from him service, compassion, courtesy, gentleness, affirmation of dignity, and acts of justice. It is from this experience that Francis sees people, the world, the Church, and the human community. Celano puts it very well:

Who could ever express the deep affection he bore for all things that belong to God? Or who would be able to tell of the sweet tenderness he enjoyed while contemplating in creatures the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator? (1Cel 80).

This type of religious dialogue is the opposite of violence, which refuses relationship by reducing it to oneself. It is the opposite of the kind of religious ecstasy that seeks a personal utopia (perfection) without responsibility for and engagement with the real world of things and people. It is the opposite of monologue, which sees the other as only an extension of oneself.²³ This dialogue is rather a response to the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier as the divine life plays, like "shining from shook foil," in the field of the world and in the lives of human beings. Such an experience forces one to seek communion with the other. We ourselves have been invited by our actions to become the co-workers of God-in-the-world!

Endnotes

¹See Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). The general categories are Wuthnow's but the application to religious life is my own.

²For examples illustrating this congruence see: Yves Congar, OP, "Le monothéisme politique et le Dieu Trinité," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 113 (Janvier-Février, 1981): 3-17; David Nichols, "Images of God and the State: Political Analogy and Religious Discourse," *Theological Studies* 42.2 (June, 1981): 195-215; Anne Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery. A Development in Recent Catholic Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 168, where she speaks about Jurgen Moltmann's link between monarchical monotheism, metaphysics of substance, and patriarchal theology.

³Andrew Greeley, *American Catholics Since the Council: An Unauthorized Report* (Chicago: The Thomas More Press, 1985), 199-200.

⁴Greeley, 203.

⁵See results in Women's Spirituality Task Force, "Women's Spiritual Experience" (4/86), CLWC, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁶See Doris Gottemoeller, "Community Living: Beginning the Conversation," *Review for Religious* 58.2 (March-April, 1999): 137-149.

⁷See Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6.1 (January, 1995): 65-78, definition from page 67; Robert N. Bellah, "Religion and the Shape of National Culture," *America*, 181.3 (July 31-August 7, 1999): 9-14. See also Bellah's *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, updated edition with a new introduction (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); *The Good Society* (New York: Knopf, 1991).

⁸Mary Johnson, "Bowling Alone, Living Alone: Current Social Contexts for Living the Vows," *Review for Religious*, 59.2 (March-April 2000): 118-130.

⁹See Patricia Wittberg, *The Rise and Fall of Catholic Religious Orders: A Social Movement Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); *Pathways to Re-creating Religious Communities* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996).

¹⁰Wuthnow, *After Heaven*, 169.

¹¹Wuthnow, *After Heaven*, 16. The characteristics of "religious practices," with my own adaptation, are taken from chapter 7. For a more theological approach see Donna Teevan, "Meaning and Praxis in History: Lonergan Perspectives," in Gary Macy, ed., *Theology and the New Histories* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 150-164; David M. Hammond, ed., *Theology and Lived Christianity* (Mystic, CT.: Twenty-Third Publications, 2000), Annual Publication of the College Theology Society, Volume 45.

¹²As cited in Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ, *The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality and Moral Living According to John Duns Scotus* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996), 132, with reference to *Ordinatio* III, 28, unica (Vives 15.378b).

¹³Martin Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism* (New York: Horizon Press, 1960), 63.

¹⁴For text of Francis's writings see Regis J. Armstrong, OFMConv., J. A. Wayne Hellmann, OFMConv., William J. Short, OFM, eds., *Francis of Assisi. Early Documents, I* (New York: New City Press, 1999). For thoughtful studies of the *Exhortation* document see Enrico Menesto, "Per Una Rilettura della Epistola ad Fideles di San Francesco d'Assisi," in Lino Temperini, ed., *Santi e Santità nel Movimento Penitenziale Francescano dal Duecento al Cinquecento* (Roma: Editrice Analecta TOR, 1998), 9-23; Optatus van Asseldonk, *Maria Francesco e Chiara* (Roma, 1989), 84-113.

¹⁵See for this interpretation the important indicators in Lauro Martinez, "Political Violence in the Thirteenth Century," in Martinez, ed., *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities 1200-1500* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 331-353; Janet L. Nelson, "Society, Theodicy and the Origins of Heresy: Towards a Reassessment of the Medieval Evidence," in Derek Baker, ed., *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), 65-77.

¹⁶For a theological elaboration of these themes, see: Norbert Nguyen-Van-Khanh, OFM, *The Teacher of His Heart: Jesus Christ in the Thought and Writings of St. Francis* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994); Thadée Matura, OFM, *Francis of Assisi, The Message in His Writings* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1997).

¹⁷See as a beginning point Bonaventure's "Five Feasts of the Child Jesus," in Timothy J.

Johnson, *Bonaventure: Mystic of God's Word* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999), 137-152. The treatise begins by describing the conception of the trinitarian life in the person and concludes with the consummation of human life within the Trinity itself. The whole process is placed within a liturgical and cosmic structure and enables the person to "recognize what is native to his/her nature" (2.1). See on a more theoretical level Thomas A. Shannon, "Human Dignity in the Theology of St. Bonaventure," in Anthony Carrozzo, OFM, Vincent Cushing, OFM, Kenneth Himes, OFM, eds., *Franciscan Leadership in Ministry, Foundations in History, Theology, and Spirituality*, Spirit and Life Series 7 (1997), 59-77; Ilia Delio, OSF, "Bonaventure and Bernard: On Human Image and Mystical Union," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 34.2 (1999): 251-263.

¹⁸See Bonaventure's *Tree of Life* in Ewert Cousins, *Bonaventure. The Soul's Journey into God, the Tree of Life, the Life of St. Francis* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

¹⁹See Edith Scholl, OCSO, "The Sweetness of the Lord: *Dulcis and Suavis*," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 27.4 (1992): 359-366; Franz Posset, "Christi Dulcedo, The 'Sweetness of Christ' in Western Christian Spirituality," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 30.3 (1995): 245-265.

²⁰See Chiara Frugoni, *Francesco e L'Invenzione della Stimmate. Una Storia per parole e Immagini fino a Bonaventura e Giotto* (Torino: Einaudi, 1993) and her *Francis of Assisi* (London: SCM Press, 1998), 83-88.

²¹This definition of Franciscan "mysticism" is taken from Cuthbert Hess and is cited in Octavian Schmucki, "The Mysticism of St. Francis in the Light of His Writings," *Greyfriars Review*, 3.3 (December, 1989): 241-266. See Hess, "The Mysticism of St. Francis of Assisi. His Sacramental View of the Visible World," *American Ecclesiastical Review*, VII (LXXXVII), (September, 1932): 225-237.

²²For the unity of these three terms in medieval religious experience see Pierre Miquel, *La Vocabulaire latin de L'Expérience Spirituelle dans la tradition monastique et canoniale de 1050 à 1250* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989).

²³This definition is influenced a great deal by the Jewish philosophers, Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. See Buber, *Between Man and Man* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 22; Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 6, where "violence is to be found in any action in which one acts as if one were alone to act: as if the rest of the universe were there only to receive the action; violence is consequently also any action which we endure without at every point collaborating in it."

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st francis is trying to get to church
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the church keeps receding the more he sees
he stops to listen bless and give away
his sandals then his habit and cord and
now he stops speaks to a woman growing
through the cracks in the sidewalk leading from
the church he thought he was walking toward that
has become the homeless the weeds the rats
cats and branchless birds he's taking time to
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as he centers on faces hands feet of
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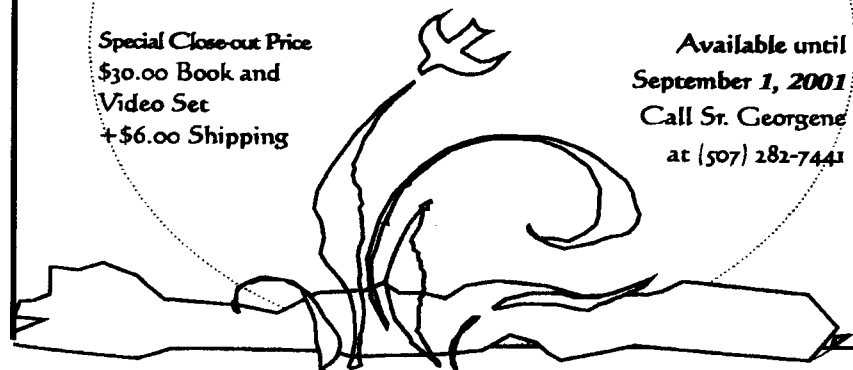


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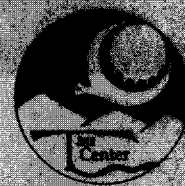


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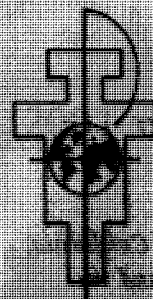
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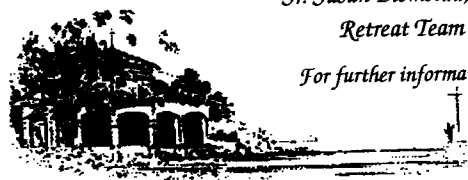
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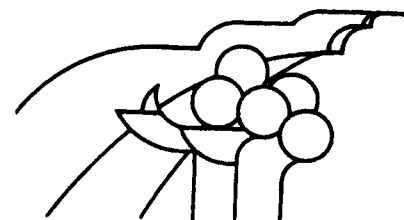
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The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. At Washington Theological Union. Contact: Kathy Grey, 6896 Laurel St., NW, Washington, DC 20012; ph. 202-541-5233.

Saturday, May 26-Tuesday, May 29

The Truly Human is Truly Holy. Fourth Franciscan Networking Seminar. With Ramona Miller, OSF, and Thomas Hartle, OFM. At Tau Center, Winona. Contact: Dolores Cook, OSF, 2810 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14214-1706; email: franbuff@aol.com

Saturday, June 2-Friday, June 8

Franciscan Art and Spirituality Retreat. With Kay Francis Berger, OSF, Mary Elizabeth Immler, OSF, Joe Rayes, OFM, Kathleen Hook, OSF, and Joy Sloan. Contact: Portiuncula Center for Prayer, 9263 W. St. Francis Road, Frankfort, IL 60423-8330, ph: 815-464-3880, fax: 815-469-4880, e-mail: portc4p@aol.com.

Tuesday, June 5-Sunday, June 10

Fourth Annual Franciscan Forum. In Colorado Springs. (See ad p. 155).

Sunday, June 10-Sunday, June 24

Franciscan Italy: in Footsteps of Francis and Clare. Pilgrimage sponsored by Washington Theological Union. Contact: Ilia Delio, OSF, WTU, 6896 Laurel St. NW, Washington, DC 20012; ph. 202-541-5242; fax: 202-726-1716.

Wednesday, June 13-Thursday, June 21

Praying with the Letters of Clare. With Ingrid Peterson, OSF, Aston, PA. Contact: Franciscan Spiritual Center, 609 S. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014; ph. 610-558-6152.

Wednesday, June 13-Tuesday, June 19

Let the Lord Lead. With Patrick Donahoe, TOR. \$300. Contact: Franciscan Retreat Center at Mt. St. Francis, 7740 Deer Hill Grove, Colorado Springs, CO 80919, ph. 719-598-5486, ext. 4143, www.franciscanretreatcenter.org.

Friday, June 22-Thursday, June 28

The Praxis of the Evangelical Life in Light of the Writings of Francis and the Tensions of Religious Life Today. With Regis Armstrong, OFMCap. Contact: Franciscan Retreat Center, Colorado Springs (see above).

Thursday, July 20-Sunday, July 22

Incarnation and the Universe: Matter Matters. With William Short, OFM. Cost: \$175. At Tau Center. (See ad, p. 159.)

Thursday, July 20-Sunday, July 22

Franciscan Seeds for Fertile Fields 2001: A Gathering of Post-Vatican II Franciscan Women Seeking Connection and Identity. With Nancy Schreck, OSF. Sponsored by member congregations of the upper Midwest Common Franciscan Novitiate. At Viterbo University, LaCrosse, WI. Cost \$115. Contact Sue Ernster, FSPA, 1321 Main St., LaCrosse, WI 54601-4263; ph: 608-785-1470; email: smernster@mail.viterbo.edu

Friday, August 3-Saturday, August 11

The Soul's Journey into God. With André Cirino, OFM, and Joseph Raischl, SFO. At Tau Center. (See ad, p. 159.)

Sunday, August 5-Saturday, August 11

Reweaving the World. With Gabriele Uhlein, OSF. At Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora, NY. Contact: Concetta DeFelice, FMDC at 716-632-3144; fax: 716-626-1332.

Writings of Saint Francis

| | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| Adm | Admonitions | ExPat | 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 |
| 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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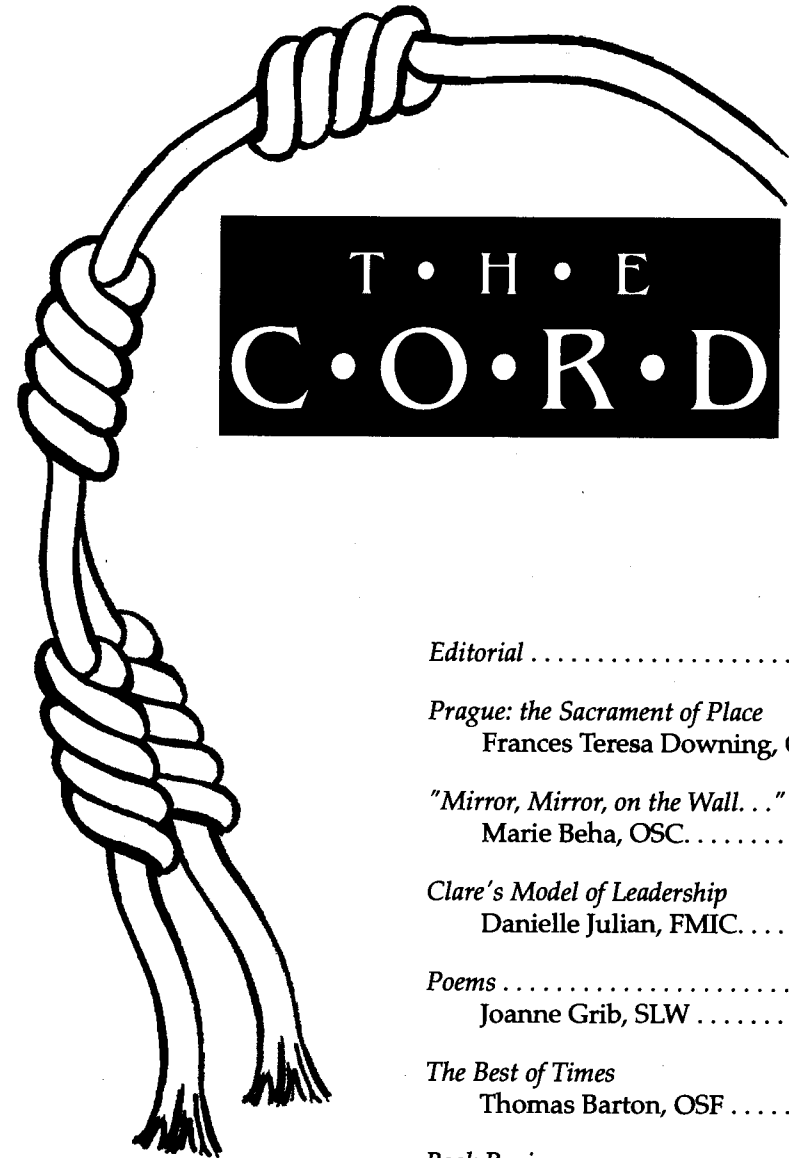
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1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be 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, 51.4 (2001)

Editorial

Recently an article in a popular magazine decried the loss of the art of letter-writing. With telephones and e-mail so very fast and convenient, it becomes less and less common for any of us to write thoughtful and well-crafted letters. It is difficult to put a value judgment on this loss in a world and culture where instantaneous and telegraphic communication is such a high priority. However, in our Christian and Franciscan tradition, we recognize that it was often in beautiful and well-developed letters that the sacred word, the blessed "good news," was disseminated and then passed down from generation to generation. While we have received from our tradition four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelation, twenty-one of the writings that carry the gospel message in the New Testament collection are in the form of letters. And in the early Franciscan movement, while the actual writings of Francis are relatively few, quite a large proportion of them are letters, which Francis clearly wanted copied and distributed widely.

Clare of Assisi, too, from the narrow confines of her cloistered community at San Damiano, reached out to distant places through her letters, carried by the itinerant friars as they journeyed across Europe. Only five of her letters survive—four to Agnes of Prague and one to Ermentrude of Bruges (possibly a composite of two letters).¹

For us, their followers, these letters of Francis and Clare have become precious documents. They represent first-hand witness to the thought, inspiration, aspiration, and spiritual wisdom of our founders. They are sources of spiritual direction for us today as they were for the people of the thirteenth century, who sought, as we do, an authentic and orthodox way to live the Christian, gospel life with a single heart, mind, and spirit.

This July/August issue of *The Cord* focuses, as usual, on Clare and her particular tradition and wisdom. How blessed we are to have such a mother and sister, from whose simple and few writings we are still harvesting spiritual treasure for ourselves and for our world.

Elise Saggau, OSF

¹Cf. Clare of Assisi: Early Documents, ed. Regis Armstrong (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1993), 53.

Prague: the Sacrament of Place

Frances Teresa Downing, OSC

Pilgrims in Prague

On July 1-9 in the millennium year, a small, international group of people gathered in Prague Airport and made their way to the St. Ludmilla Hostel. From there, we looked across Prague to the Hradčana on the hill top, the great castle where Agnes's family had lived both when she was a child and later after she had become a sister to Clare of Assisi. That castle, brilliantly illuminated at night, and Agnes's monastery were to become familiar places to us over the next eight days, symbolizing two significant aspects of her life.

During those eight days, walking daily through the streets of Prague, learning to find our way on the Metro, learning to shop without knowing the language, we discovered again the international power of the smile. As we did so, we began to realize what a powerful and ever-present reality Agnes is for the Czech people of today. They may know little of her faith or even of her story, but there is no doubt that she is still the Mother of the Czech nation. It seemed to us, as we attended Mass in various churches of the city and as we walked around the streets, that Agnes still has a task to perform for her people. The work she has to do in her land is essentially the same as the work that Clare did for her when she guided her forward into the fullness of God's light.

A small incident revealed how necessary this work still is. One day Ramona Miller and I set out to find any traces of the friary that had, originally, been attached to the monastery. We finally tracked it down, disguised as a very up-market hotel. Talking to a young waiter, we learned that one whole wall of the hotel was thirteenth century and that various arches and doorways had been retained in the careful restoration. In the hall was a small ceramic. "I don't know what that is," the waiter said, "but I know it came from the monastery." It was a charming mother and child in terracotta, possibly later than Agnes's time, but very simple and lovely. "I don't know what that is but I know it came

from the monastery"—such a simple statement, so evocative of present-day Prague, where gifts from Agnes lie scattered round. The people know it, but have no idea of their true meaning. This is the major task that Agnes has now to do for her people.

Agnes's Prague

All this became even clearer when we visited the castle, massive and extensive rather than elegant and fairytale. We walked through chambers where Agnes must have walked, entered the Benedictine chapel where she and her family had prayed, and saw the secular pomp which she had renounced, symbolized by photos of the State Jewels of Bohemia. From the high window we looked down, as she must have done, onto Prague and the broad Vltava River flowing peacefully under lovely bridges. All this was old Prague, which in Agnes's time was quite small. Later the city spread onto other hills and is still spreading. We soon realized, too, that we were in the heartland of Gothic art, with crucifixes of great pathos and pain, and wooden, once painted, statues of Mother and Child. In many—if not most—of these statues, the figures are smiling or laughing at each other in a moment of intimate delight. Seeing these artifacts humanized our experience of the castle, which had been designed as a symbol of power. It was also, we suspected, an extremely cold place, so we were comforted by the sight of a massive ceramic stove in one of the rooms.

Thanks to the generosity of the Czech State officials, we were able to spend four mornings in Agnes's own monastery. In recent years, the Czech government has made the building a national monument, restoring it and using it as the National Gallery. The restoration has been done with love and historical accuracy and the fabric receives constant care. Being pilgrims, we experienced the usual setbacks. On the day we arrived at the monastery, in spite of all the long-term preparations on the part of the pilgrimage team (Ramona Miller, OSF, John Wojtowicz, OFM, André Cirino, OFM and Vit Fiala, OFM), it appeared that we would not be able to enter because the building was closed for yet more restoration. What would we have done without Vit, himself a Czech, who negotiated tirelessly and gently, smoothing difficulties and building many bridges for future pilgrimages? As a result of his work, we ended up even better off! We were allowed in for four mornings. Not only were there no tourists (because of the restoration), but the historian in charge came along on two national holidays and gave us freely of her time and expertise. She showed us around and told us about the various places. Each day, André Cirino spoke on the content and meaning of the letters, and, after a break, Ramona Miller explored the spiritual message of each letter. We had these talks in a small room that was, it is thought, in the general area where people would have come for help, material or spiritual.

Imagine what it meant to us Poor Clares to listen to Clare's letters being read, commented on, and discussed, there where they had been heard for the first time. We also had ample time to roam around, to become familiar with the building and garden, to feel—for a moment—almost like a member of Agnes's own community. Imagine sitting in the garden and looking at it with the eyes of people who themselves live in enclosure and are well aware of the implications of, for instance, the extremely high surrounding walls, the four wells within the enclosure, or the enormous bread oven outside the refectory. Here bread had been baked for the community and for the huge numbers of poor persons who came to the house. I sat often by this great bread oven. It seemed such a powerful symbol of the way Agnes nurtured her people, of the way she was accessible to the poor and the needy. In this she was greatly influenced by the life of her cousin St. Elizabeth of Hungary. St. Hedwig was another saintly ancestor and further back, St. Wenceslaus (+905) and St. Ludmilla. Margareta Dagmar, who figures so largely in Danish folklore, was Agnes's step-sister, daughter of her father's first wife.

It quickly became apparent that Agnes's way of life was different from Clare's in some respects. For example, the whole place was a royal foundation. This meant that the chapel was built to be a royal burial place, similar to La Sainte Chapelle in Paris (designed for the same purpose). Again, the property and its land were made a kind of protectorate by King Wenceslaus, Agnes's brother, and the police had no jurisdiction there. So the monastery became a place of sanctuary and later, when the country was occupied by the Hapsburgs, perhaps even a focus of nationalist resistance. This would seem indicated since, at the time that Agnes died, the Bishop of Prague had allied himself with the invading power and felt it was not a good career move for him to bury her. As a result, she lay unburied for two whole weeks until the Provincial could come from Germany to officiate.

These facts all highlight her public stature. There was no secret escape in the middle of the night for Agnes. With twelve other noble women, she entered the monastery she herself had built in a ceremony attended by the King and Queen, the Queen Mother, seven bishops, the court, and a blaze of publicity. Before she was even professed, Gregory IX had appointed her abbess. Did he realize that in the matter of poverty she would prove as stubborn, intransigent, and uncooperative as the abbess of San Damiano? Clare was important to Gregory because of her holiness, her connections with Francis, and her immense personal authority among her contemporaries. Agnes was important because she was a daughter of a significant royal house, for Bohemia was at the peak of its golden age and offered a valuable alliance for any European crown.

During the pilgrimage, we were frequently struck by the fact that the many artistic representations of Agnes all showed her dressed as a Poor Clare, but

nearly always wearing her crown and with a building nearby. She was and is a Princess of the Czech people, a builder of the nation in more senses than one. Later, like Clare, she became significant because of her holiness, because she was another key figure in the struggle for the privilege of poverty and because she kept faith long after the death of Clare. In spite of all that, Agnes never lost her particular role with regard to her own people. Yet by a curious irony, her place of burial is unknown. When the sisters fled during the Hussite Wars of the fifteenth century, they exhumed Agnes's body from the church and reburied it in the garden in an unmarked grave. By the time they returned, nobody could remember exactly where she lay. To this day her body has not been found.

One day we had Mass in the chapel of St. Francis, where it is thought Agnes received the habit from the friars and made her profession. This was almost certainly the occasion when Clare sent her that first letter and those four gifts—a veil, a small wooden bowl, a crucifix, and some prayer beads. Did Agnes bring them to the ceremony in this very chapel? All these questions were profoundly moving to us, bringing Agnes to life in an intense way. During the penitential rite of our Mass, we each touched the stones of that sacred place, seeming to sense a thirst, mysteriously arising from the stones themselves, to hear again the voice of prayer and praise.

Present at the Mass were two Secular Franciscan leaders, one of whom had been imprisoned under communism for disseminating Christian and Franciscan literature. At the end he spoke a few words, saying that to be present at this Mass in this particular chapel was like a miracle. It was two hundred and fifty years, we reckoned, since Mass had last been celebrated there. At this moment, for me, Agnes ceased to be simply the person to whom Clare wrote those marvelous letters and became a woman with a story not yet completely told, a woman of character and strength as enduring as the stones of the chapel. Agnes was as thoroughly of her time and place as Clare was of hers—a woman to be learned and learned from.

Each day we had a pilgrimage Mass in a different church of the city. One day we went to (yet another) Church of St. Francis, where a young man was acting as sacristan. It emerged that he belonged to the Order that Agnes had founded to attend to the sick in her hospice/hospital, the Order of the Cross and Red Star or the Croziers of the Red Star. Under communism their numbers had dropped to eight, but now there are thirteen young men in formation. This was a total surprise since nobody had realized the Order was still in existence. What other surprises did Prague hold, we wondered? For instance, Agnes's monastery had had a very competent scriptorium, work from which is still extant, known and available at least to scholars. Joan Mueller, OSF, whose notes on Clare's letters formed the basis of André Cirino's pilgrimage talks, is currently studying the correspondence between Agnes's family and Gregory

IX; and this is probably only the tip of the iceberg.

On several occasions we walked through Wenceslaus Square, so familiar to some of us from pictures of the Prague Spring and the fall of the communist government in 1989. We saw the huge and very beautiful statue of Agnes with other saintly royal women around their King, Wenceslaus, sitting astride his horse. Nearby stands a small memorial to the two young men who had torched themselves in protest at the communist regime. Fresh flowers are placed there still.

There had long been a tradition that, when Agnes was canonized, the nation would be freed. Refused permission by the Czech government to canonize her in Prague (as he had wished), Pope John Paul II held the ceremony in Rome on November 12, 1989. As many people as were able attended from the Czech Republic. Meanwhile, crowds were demonstrating daily in Wenceslaus Square against the government. As the pilgrims returned from Rome, filled with the euphoria of the canonization, they came streaming from the station into the Square singing songs in honor of their saint. The next day communism fell. The impact of this on the Czech people is incalculable. As a result of years of atheistic communism, there is extreme ignorance about Christ and Christianity, but all the people know that Agnes was holy, that Agnes is the protector of the people, especially of the poor, that Agnes was a builder, and that Agnes is theirs!

Fruits of the Pilgrimage

For me personally, the most profound fruits of this pilgrimage were twofold. First, I have an enhanced sense of Agnes herself. Clearly she was much more involved in State affairs than I had realized, particularly when her beloved brother Wenceslaus was King, but later too when her less competent nephew, Ottokar II, succeeded him. In her monastery, Agnes held sway. She set up God's Kingdom in which she was the magistrate applying God's justice. In this way the land—perhaps just over two acres—became a place of sanctuary and refuge. Huge numbers of poor came there to be fed, while those fleeing from justice, or injustice, knew that it was a safe place of refuge. More important than that, however, Agnes lived Clare's ideals with a commitment as intense as that of the sisters at San Damiano, though with a different articulation. Just as today, when every Poor Clare house is different but manifestly Poor Clare, so Prague is not San Damiano but was truly a Poor Clare house.

I also gained a sense of Agnes as very clear-headed, very strong, living an intense life of prayer and well able to enter into all that Clare recommended to her. I suspect she was to Clare a peer, a companion in the spirit, a true sister, one who not only shared Clare's ideals but also shared her greatness. Greatness can be a lonely place, and as the conflicts among the friars grew, Clare's

path became increasingly isolated. It is good to realize that in Prague she found someone of comparable stature, whom she had no need to shield or to protect, one who was truly the "half of her soul."

The second fruit of this pilgrimage is a new awareness of the power of place to speak truths of the spirit. There is something about these sacred places of our heritage that speaks to our spirit at a profound, pre-verbal level. We may never be able to articulate adequately what has been said to us, but stones do indeed cry out. Because their communication is deep, their message will work on us almost without our knowing. I have come to think that the spirituality of the Franciscan Order is deprived of a certain nourishment when that particular kind of communication is lacking. Just as we are molded by our birthplace and by the land in which we matured, so the spirit of our vocation is molded by the place in which it developed. In that place we can be nourished subliminally by the original vision. A pilgrimage is a call from God to open ourselves to the sacrament of place. There we can taste something of what our leaders in the Spirit tasted; this is their gift to us, mediated through place. It is mediated in many other ways too, of course. But there is one particular articulation of that original grace that is mediated only through place, and we receive it when we go there as pilgrims and mendicants.

Eighteen of us went on this pilgrimage. Some of us were Poor Clares, some Franciscans, some lovers of Francis and Clare, and some of Czech background visiting the "old country." It was a good group, small enough for us to bond and share. Through our shared experiences, I became convinced that in an ideal world, every Poor Clare would gain profound insights into her vocation by having the privilege of visiting both Assisi and Prague. Some of us believe we have been called to forfeit this privilege by entering the enclosure; others view it differently. This echoes the way in which there were differences of expression between Prague and San Damiano, but great mutual respect. And there is no question but that Agnes was a wonderful Poor Lady.

*I have resolved, as best I can, to beg your excellency and your holiness
by my humble prayers in the mercy of Christ,
to be strengthened in His holy service and to progress
from good to better, from virtue to virtue,
that He Whom you serve with the total desire of your soul
may bestow on you the reward for which you so long. . . .
Farewell in the Lord. And pray for me.*

(First Letter of Clare to Agnes of Prague, 31-35)

"Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall..."

Marie Beha, OSC

The summer after my graduation from eighth grade marked a time of transition in my life. The security of a small grade school was over; high school loomed large ahead. I was scared and eager in equal proportions. Even my body felt strange that summer as I both lengthened and filled out. Nothing seemed the same.

My parents marked this season of adolescence by asking: "Would you like a room of your own? You could have the back bedroom." I jumped at the chance—a room of my own, space to be, to sort things out. Never mind that the furnishings were sparse: nothing but a double bed and a huge, old chest of drawers. Later on I learned that the latter was a valuable antique; at the time my interest centered on a very large mirror set in its center.

During that summer's long days, I spent untold amounts of time just gazing at myself in that mirror and wondering: Who am I? What would I become? Maybe, if I looked long enough, hard enough, I could catch a glimpse of the woman that must be hiding somewhere inside. Perhaps you have your own stories of mirror gazing. Perhaps Clare of Assisi did.

In the Mirror That Was Clare

Medieval people, both men and women, were fascinated by mirrors, so much so that they used them in the title of more than one hundred and fifty works from the period. It is not surprising then that Clare of Assisi repeated the mirror image in her writing, especially in her correspondence with Agnes of Bohemia. Perhaps the fact that they were both women had something to do with this; also that they both came from castle homes which could afford the luxury of such nonessential items as mirrors!

In her second letter to Agnes, Clare uses this symbol to suggest a methodology of prayer in the succinct phrasing of "gaze, consider, contemplate, as you desire to imitate" (2LAg 20). Begin by focusing your attention on Jesus,

that mirror image of the Father—look long and hard, take in details; "gaze"; let what you see absorb your full attention. Then "consider"—allow your mind to work with what you see, remembering the gospel passages that describe this Jesus on whom you gaze; then let your imagination work with what you "see" till it becomes your own. But don't stop there. Keep looking until your heart is touched and what you "contemplate" changes not only how you see but who you are, until living and looking become one, as you imitate Christ in your everyday life. This is what Clare experienced and what she invited Agnes—and us—to discover.

In a later letter Clare summarizes the same process: "Place your mind before the mirror of eternity and transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead itself through contemplation" (3LAg 12,13). Though this is work for a lifetime, the process is as practical and daily as each morning's beginnings. Taking a long look in the mirror of what matters eternally puts daily reality into perspective. What seems so important today may fade into insignificance tomorrow and what is barely noticed now may prove solid investment for the future. Present failure may merit eternal reward; the hardships of poverty may ultimately enrich. Such transformation is a matter of changed attitude, of putting on the "mind of Christ" (1Cor. 2:16). Over time, this forms those who look into the likeness of what they see.

For Clare, Jesus himself was the mirror, always turned toward the Father, reflecting back to us in human words and ways the mystery of the God whom we cannot see. The lineaments of Jesus are described in detail in the gospel, and it was this "form of life" that Francis and Clare made their own. Shaped by the gospel, they desired to image Jesus in the same way that Jesus mirrored the Father.

What gospel events are especially revelatory of God's eternal love for us? Clare's heart was most attracted to the crib and the cross. She invited Agnes to

look at the border of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him Who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. . . . Then at the surface of the mirror, consider the holy humility, the blessed poverty, the untold labors and burdens that he endured for the redemption of the whole human race. Then, in the depth of this same mirror, contemplate the ineffable charity that led Him to suffer on the wood of the cross and to die there the most shameful kind of death. Therefore, that Mirror, suspended on the wood of the Cross, urged those who passed by to consider, saying: all you who pass by the way, look and see if there is any suffering like my suffering (4LAg 19-24).

Only a long, loving look could have seen so much and so deeply. But Clare knew that the same transforming experience is possible for all who are willing to become practiced in the art of mirror gazing. Incarnation, passion, Eucharist,

all image self-emptying love expressed in the familiar terms of birth, death and sharing food. Small wonder that both Clare and Francis came to view a life of God-centered poverty as eternal riches.

Looking into the mirror that is Jesus, Clare saw, not only the eternal Son of God, the perfect reflection of God made visible for us; she also saw herself. As she advises Agnes:

Gaze upon that mirror each day, O Queen and Spouse of Jesus Christ, and continually study your face within it that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes, covered, as is becoming the daughter and most chaste bride of the Most High King with the flowers and garments of all the virtues (4LAg. 15).

Here Clare's womanly intuition takes mirror gazing a step further. She knows what we see when we look in a mirror—ourselves, just as we are at that moment with all the flaws and faults critical gazing discovers so easily. But Clare suggests another vision. Look into the mirror that is Jesus and see yourself as you are in him. How do you look in Jesus? How do you look *to* Jesus? In this mirror, each of us is transformed—we see ourselves as we really are. Even our faults, failings, and sins are redeemable, and so they are potential adornments. Writing to the royal Agnes, Clare suggests that only the most splendid of clothes will do to set off the beauty of someone who sees herself as daughter of God and Spouse of the most high King. Perhaps Clare is borrowing Pauline imagery, suggesting that Agnes clothe herself “with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (Col. 3:12). How appealing, inspiring, and positive an examen of consciousness.

But Clare is still not finished with her use of the mirror image. In her Testament, written towards the end of her life, she carries the analogy one step further, seeing the Sisters themselves as mirrors.

For the Lord Himself has placed us not only as a form for others in being an example and mirror, but even for our sisters whom the Lord has called to our way of life as well, that they in turn might be a mirror and example to those living in the world. Since the Lord has called us to such great things that those who are to be mirror and example to others may be reflected in us, we are greatly bound to bless and praise God and be all the more strengthened to do good in the Lord (19-22).

Just as Jesus mirrors the Father to us, so too, we are to mirror Jesus to others. When others look at us they are to see Jesus incarnate in our being, living in the circumstances of our days, dying in our daily deaths, rising in our

coming to new life. In seeing us, they are to discover Jesus today.

In the same way, when we look at others, we are to see them in Jesus, behold in them Jesus present among us here and now. What a “correction” for our too often faulty vision. Seeing each other in the mirror that is Jesus, we perceive that all of us are “maturing in Christ” (Col. 1:28), perhaps not there yet, but on the way.

Sharing such a vision is contagious, as Clare knew. How we see ourselves becomes the way we see others. The way we see others inspires their vision of themselves, and so we all grow together. It was Clare's hope that within the close quarters of a contemplative community, such “contagion” would spread rapidly. She believed it would change the picture not only for the Sisters themselves but for those outside the monastery, who would begin to see Jesus mirrored in the lives of the nuns with whom they came into contact. These in turn would reflect their own reformed perception to still others. All it takes is a change of vision.

Beginning to See

As we have just observed, Clare began by looking at Jesus. And she never stopped doing so. It is where we too must begin and end. “Keep you eyes fixed on Jesus” was Clare's mantra, and it must become the direction of all our gazing. How? When we want to see something, we begin by looking at it, giving it not just a casual glance but a long, hard look. If we perceive that the object of our attention is worthwhile, we give it at least a second searching look. If we judge it to be precious, we continue gazing until all its details are imprinted on our mind's eye.

“Gazing” at Jesus begins with the discipline of that repeated, long, loving look. Sometimes we start with a gospel scene, “considering” what it says about the God we call “Father,” about Jesus, about our own need for conversion. We continue to think about what we have seen, letting it challenge us to more.

At other times, “seeing Jesus” so captivates our hearts that we cannot take our eyes off him. We look in silence, letting what we see change us in ways that we cannot begin to understand, much less observe. In either case, we see not only Jesus but also ourselves in Jesus. It is this vision that is transforming.

In Jesus, I begin to discover the truth about myself, my true identity, my real relationships with others. Like Jesus, I am a beloved son or daughter, someone with whom the Father is well pleased! Unbelievable! Well, almost! We are so accustomed to seeing ourselves in the harsh light of our own lack of true self love that we are badly in need of vision correction. Even when we fail, sin, or make colossal mistakes, we are still lovable and lovely because we are loved (as the psalmist prays: “In your love make Zion lovely” [Ps. 51]). Seeing

us in Jesus, the Father looks on us as sisters, brothers, family of the Beloved Son. In Jesus we are already forgiven, healed, called to new life. We are already a “new creation” (2Cor. 5: 17).

Seeing Deeper, Moved to Transformation

Secure in a basic sense of our identity “in Christ Jesus,” we can risk the second look that measures our redeemed self against what is still needed if we are to grow into the full stature of Christ (Eph. 4: 13). Even though we realize how unfinished we really are, we are not diminished by this, only challenged to grow. Like children who delight in stretching their small hands against their father’s greater size, we are encouraged by the promise that someday we will be like God for we will see God as God really is (1Jn. 32).

But that is eternity’s vision. For now, the call is to continued growth. Our looking at Jesus gives us direction. We don’t have to speculate in the abstract about the basic lineaments of Christian living. The gospel provides form and shape for our imaginings, preventing us from settling for an image that is limited to our own smallness of vision. We are called to be human, yes, but also to be more than human. Neither is easy. As we look at Jesus, we discover that to be truly human is to become divine because in Jesus we see what is godly revealed in human form. We see God in a way that we can recognize and so can imitate.

This imitation is not an exterior putting on of something that is too big for us. Rather, it is an incremental growth from within. It is the Spirit moving our spirit that forms us in likeness to the divine. On a day to day basis we may not see much difference in ourselves, but over time changes do occur. Like an old video that recalls the way we used to be in contrast with the way we are now, when we see ourselves against the backdrop of a familiar setting, we perceive how different we have become. Something that used to be conflictual is so no longer. What once was beyond us has become part of our customary response. We have changed; or, more accurately, we have been changed. What we could never do by ourselves (and we have had repeated experience of this truth) has now been done in us. And we give thanks.

An Ongoing Experience

But we also see how much more there is to do. The mirror that is Jesus reflects to us not only the major areas that still need to be “conformed” to Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:29), but also and increasingly the details. We discover ever more specifically how unChristlike we still are in so much of our thinking, our acting, our reacting. Yet we are not surprised, much less discouraged. Actually, we are not even particularly interested, because the focus of our care and concern is more on “seeing Jesus.” This brings us back to where we started.

We look at Jesus; we see our self in Jesus; more and more our looking is directed back to Jesus. Mirror gazing has become a habit, even a virtue.

We also see others in this same perspective and discover how beautiful they are. It is rather like seeing a newborn through the eyes of its parents in contrast to the more objective view of a disinterested neighbor. We are caught up in potential rather than limited by obvious incapacity. Looking at others with the eyes of Jesus, we grow in patient understanding; we accept the present, while expecting the future. We don’t gloss over the other’s mistakes, but neither do we dwell on them. “Has no one condemned you? Neither do I” (Jn. 8: 10).

In the mirror that is Jesus, we see every other person as united to us. Nothing is outside this frame of reference, for “all things have been created through him and for him” (Col. 1: 16). The young and the old, the wealthy and the poor, the liberal and the conservative, the friend and the enemy—“all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). We see this, not in the abstract, but in the specifics of those around us who are immediate neighbors, those with whom we live, work, worship, in the present moment of our lives. But we also become aware that the truth of our relationships in Christ Jesus overflows the boundaries of those whom we know personally, reaching back beyond our memories into the past of all our human beginnings, as well as stretching ahead into the still unfolding future, including communion with all the saints. All our relationships are rooted in Christ and grow in Christ.

Our relationships with other human persons, as well as with all creation, will be framed in the same mirror that is Christ Jesus. Created “through him and for him and with him,” all reality gives us glimpses of the one who is “first born” (Col. 1: 15). From the smallest of particles to the most splendid of natural wonders, all reveal something of the Father’s love for the Son, their own loveliness reflecting divine light and life.

Sometimes our long loving look at Jesus allows us to experience something of this glory, and our spontaneous response will be reverence and awe. Just as often, maybe oftener, we will fall back into our own myopic vision, seeing creation primarily in relation to ourselves. Then we view it as useful to us, economically feasible, something we like or don’t like. Even when this happens, if we have been faithful to our mirror gazing, we may be able to recall a truer, more inclusive vision and be changed by it. At least we can realize that we have a choice, if not of what we see, then surely of how we see it.

Only Jesus

Gazing on Jesus, discovering how we as well as others look in Christ Jesus, brings us into the larger truth that we all exist in the unity of “one body” (1Cor. 12:12). Our form and function will necessarily be different, since our union is not the mechanical uniformity of perfectly fitted pieces, but the dynamic

interaction of a living whole where each member is equally a contributor, even though each contributes uniquely and thus differently. Gazing into the mirror that is Jesus shows us that the whole of creation is greater than the sum of its unequal parts because that total is the whole Christ.

The longer we look into this mirror the more we see the grace of this unity of all reality in Christ Jesus; but increasingly we also perceive "only Jesus." As our vision becomes more inclusive, we not only see everything in Jesus but we also behold Jesus in everything. As the so called Breastplate of St. Patrick phrases it: "Christ be beside me; Christ be behind me; . . . Christ be the vision in eyes that see me; in ears that hear me, Christ ever be." No matter what happens, what we do or fail to do, see or do not see, in Jesus nothing is lost, nothing is useless, wasted; everything is redemptive; everything gives cause for thanksgiving.

As a consequence of this change of vision, we come to see who we are on the deepest and most personal of levels. Created in the image of God, we mirror the Word of God made flesh. This is what it means for us to exist. We are Christians; our true identity is rooted in Christ.

But this identity, given us from the beginning, must also be chosen—or rejected—by each of us. And even this basic acceptance must be repeated over and over at ever deeper levels until we no longer live in "the flesh" (Gal. 2:21), that is, in the ways that previously have given meaning to our lives. Then we can begin to realize with Paul that "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Conclusion

In the end, what we believe and increasingly live out of is the reality that we are Christ's body. Our life embodies Christ in the world of today; we give flesh, our flesh, to continuing the incarnation. Christ continues to proclaim good news in our words; in our deeds the Father continues to be revealed. The mercy of God is manifest in our mercy; God's peace comes into our troubled world as we live in peace within ourselves and so bring peace to others. In us, the healing power of Jesus again touches those who are sick in body or spirit. In us, the will of the Father is again embraced in total surrender. Because we are "alive together with Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5), the work of redemption continues in the particular patterns that shape our world.

This identification of ourselves with Jesus is not something we deserve or earn. It is given, rather like our membership in our birth family. It is as basic to our identity as what we express when we say we are a "Jones" or a "Smith," something not to be questioned but simply recognized and accepted. Yet each of us knows that even though baptism has ensured our identity as Christians,

we are still far from living out this reality in the whole of our lives. It is a call we are still trying to answer. Our response can range from whole-hearted desire to foot-dragging reluctance. Like adolescents who question family values, we too can leave home, go our own way, even deny who we really are. Or, perhaps, we continue to live "at home" as Christians, but also explore alternative lifestyles. This spiritual adolescence of ours may go on our whole life long. If we never discover whose we are or where we belong, we will always be seeking to find our way home. When asked "who are you?" we will only be able to give our own name.

In contrast, someone who is coming closer to maturity in Christ Jesus says: I am not myself; I am more than I appear to be. I am not so much independent as dependent in the most radical of ways. Without Christ I am nothing. But in Christ I am my truest self; in Christ I am both called and sent. I am called to be Jesus today; I am sent to bring Jesus to the world in which I live. Both my vocation and my mission are unique. No one else can answer my call, say "present" to my name. And no one else can enunciate the good news in the syllables of my life. If I don't say and do this here and now, it won't be done. The world will be poorer, the body of Christ handicapped, the gospel incomplete. But if I continue to live out my identity as a Christian, as Christ today, then the coming of the kingdom will be hastened. The Father's glory, "reflected on the face of Christ" (2Cor. 4:6), will be mirrored in my person. Just as those who saw Jesus saw the Father, so too, in some small way, those who see me will see Jesus mirrored in me.

*Gaze into the mirror
Of your soul
And see reflected back
His image.*

*Gaze into the Mirror
Gaze into the Mirror*

*Study closely each feature
Of God's face.
Imprint it deeply
Upon your open heart.*

Joanne Grib, SLW

*Copy over each line,
Each stroke
Until the mirror's image
Becomes your own.*

Clare's Model of Leadership

Danielle Julien, FMIC

Religious life in the Church often takes its pattern of leadership and government from common practice in society. This pattern of necessary exercise of authority in a given group, whether it be monarchical, dictatorial, or democratic, is, generally speaking, a hierarchical and paternalistic model. It is a "male" design, which has been indiscriminately applied to both men and women religious and accepted most of the time without questioning its relevance, especially for women.

An authoritarian form of leadership and government is a form of power exercised over people. As a consequence, it often keeps them dependent instead of strengthening the power flowing within and from the group. It is a model that does not encourage members to reflect and question, because decisions are made by those who are believed to know what is best for the group. In such a model, leaders may be seen as part of an elite, a privileged class, at a distance from the "ordinary" members of the group. They are perceived as people to be pleased or feared, which may lead to the inhibition of honesty and trust.¹

Clare of Assisi freely and resolutely opted for a creative and alternative form of leadership, which is reflected in her structures of government. She preferred a much more participative, egalitarian, and empowering framework in organizing her life with the Sisters in the monastery of San Damiano. Clare was an innovator, creating a new form of religious life, not only *for*, but also more especially *with* her sisters. All of them, inspired by Clare's vision, took an active part in creating the life they shared.

Franciscan women today are rediscovering Clare as a source of inspiration for their own attempt to formulate new avenues for the exercise of leadership in religious life. I must say that at first, I didn't feel comfortable turning to Clare as a model. After all, we are followers of Francis rather than Clare. It seemed to me, however, that both Francis and Clare should be considered founders of the Franciscan movement. Clare considered herself a follower of Francis, "his little plant." Some call her "the first Franciscan woman." Never-

theless, I still felt reluctant to look at her as our potential model. In addition, I wondered how the life she experienced in an enclosed monastery of about fifty sisters could inspire an apostolic institute of over four hundred members. So I chose to embark upon this journey, to find elements of her form of leadership and way of governance that might enlighten all of us on our journey.

In our institute, there has been a clearly expressed desire for a renewed model of leadership, a new form of governance, and new structures of government. The 1995 Chapter Statement called for a restructuring in order to meet the challenges involved in reclaiming the missionary dimension of our charism and to be prepared to make the necessary and courageous choices involved. The statement asked for a review of the present government structures in order to move towards restructuring the Institute in a way that is more faithful to living our charism and mission. The Statement also called us to raise our consciousness and understanding of our particular style of servant leadership, our particular style of shared responsibility, and the role of the local minister in the context of shared responsibility.

Restructuring means to look at the structures in the light of the principles underlying them and see if 1) the structures are life-giving, embodying those principles; 2) the structures serve our needs for the community and for the mission; and 3) our principles are Gospel based and Franciscan, as exemplified in Clare. If our structures and principles do not meet these standards, we should consider changing them. Steps have already been taken in this direction, but much is still to be done. The practicalities of the new vision are still to be born, and giving birth is always a painful experience.

We chose Clare of Assisi as our focal point of reference, because she embodies the Franciscan principles of leadership and governance in a feminine way. Clare was a creative leader. Creative leadership "points a finger at the future rather than shakes a finger at the past."² The creative leader is responsible for creating and maintaining an atmosphere in which each sister can realize her potential to the fullness. To follow the logical consequences of creativity and intuition would enable us to develop a feminine model of leadership. Clare developed this model in her way of relating with others in the monastery as a servant, a sister, and a mother. In this paper, Clare's concept of authority will be considered, as well as her leadership and way of governance. I hope to offer out of these considerations some guidelines and suggestions for the future in our pursuit of a feminine Franciscan model of leadership and government.

Clare's Concept of Authority

Our way of governance and leadership needs to be one with our charism as Franciscan women. The basic Franciscan characteristic of this charism is a life according to the form of the holy Gospel. This element is present at the

beginning of all four Franciscan Rules: of the Friars Minor (Rule of 1223), of the Poor Ladies (Rule of Clare 1253), of the Secular Franciscan Order (1978) and of the Third Order Regular (1982). All specify that our rule and/or form of life is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

This Gospel life originates from one's own personal *experience of God*; it flows from a continuous *contemplation* of Jesus Christ; it is expressed in a life of *penance*, which means ongoing conversion; and it aims towards a loving and transforming *union* in and with God. It is a life of *love*—love of God, of Jesus, of the brothers and sisters, and of all creation. It is a life that is highly relational: one cannot be a Franciscan if he or she is not part of some sort of intimate and often quite complex network of relationships. "Loving one another is the heart of the gospel project as Francis and Clare understood it."³

As we are searching for our feminine Franciscan way of governance, there are some elements in Clare which can inform our search: a) authority rooted in love of Christ; b) balance between strength and tenderness; c) exemplarism as an expression of authority; d) three feminine images of authority.

An Authority Rooted in Love of Christ

"The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters that Blessed Francis established is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity" (RCl 1: 1-2). Clare had one single motivation for her life: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. From the day she was received by Francis at the Portiuncola in 1212 to the day of her death at San Damiano in 1253, that was her *leitmotif*, her dynamism, her determination from which no one, even a pope, would ever be able to distract her. "Strong and passionate love of Christ animated her entire being. This profound and fundamental motive was basic to the whole of Clare's life."⁴ This focus is the source of her authority, an inner power that has no need of any external use of force to lead others. Having Christ as her own focus, Clare followed his example, and like him became other-centered rather than self-centered. Relationship was so important for Clare that it made her reluctant to give commands to her sisters—she would rather do something herself than command another to do it (Proc 1:10).

Clare's loving relationship with Christ is best expressed in her Letters to Agnes of Prague. Although the entire passages should be taken into consideration, the following excerpts illustrate this love:

You took a spouse of a more noble lineage, the Lord Jesus Christ. *In Whose embrace* You are already caught up (1LAg 7:10).

As a poor virgin, *embrace the poor Christ*. Look upon Him . . . , and follow Him, who became the lowest of men, despised, struck, amid the sufferings of the Cross. . . (2LAg 18-20).

So that you too may feel what His friends feel as they taste the hidden sweetness that God Himself has reserved from the beginning for those who *love Him*. And, after all . . . have been completely sent away, *you may totally love Him* Who gave Himself totally for your love. . . (3LAg 14-15).

Happy, indeed, is she to whom it is given to share in this sacred banquet so that she might cling with all her heart to Him. . . . As you further contemplate His ineffable delights, eternal riches and honors, and sigh for them in the great desire and love of your heart, may you cry out: 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 9:30-32).

"Embrace the poor Christ and love Him totally" sums up Clare's lifelong motivation. It was a fire consuming her. She was "burning with love of God" (Proc 11:5), and she first taught her sisters "to love God above all else and always have the Lord's passion in their memory" (Proc 11:2). The heart of Clare's life is this loving embrace of the poor and suffering Christ. She says to Agnes in her third Letter: if you are to be united to Christ, this is the pathway, going deeper and deeper into woundedness, staying at the foot of the cross like another Mary and sharing in the fruit of salvation. "All her powers of affection were absorbed in this love. She loved Christ with her whole heart. It is this integration of her affectivity that made her so ardent in serving and imitating her Beloved. This passion entirely devoured her."⁵ This passion drew sisters after her, and they were enabled to obey out of that same love. "Moved by her [the abbess's] example, the sisters may obey her more out of love than out of fear" (RCl 4: 9).

A Balanced Authority: Tenderness and Strength

Jean-François Godet gives us an excellent insight into the balance between tenderness and strength. He demonstrates how any human being is intrinsically both male and female in the image of God, according to Genesis 1:27, and that such a reality God sees as VERY good. Therefore, says Godet,

femininity is not a monopoly of women, nor is masculinity a monopoly of men. To be truly and fully human is to accept and respect the difference, to communicate with, admire, marvel at, and make an alliance with the masculinity and the femininity within oneself and with others. "Both are necessary for anyone who wishes to be truly human, that is, to be in the image of God."⁶

In their friendship, Francis and Clare were able to reveal to one another the inner complementary of their being. Francis accepted the feminine part of himself, his tenderness, recognizing it in Clare; and Clare acknowledged the masculine element of her nature, her strength, seeing it in Francis. Thus, both of them became fully human in the image of God.

Clare acknowledged her physical weakness and frailty (TestCl 27-29; 3LAg 38-39) and took it into account, going to the proper source of strength, the service of Christ (1LAg 31-32), finding in Him the source of the virtues and of real power and strength. "For Clare, the man Christ, Whom . . . she loved fervently, symbolized and gave strength."⁷ Strength finds its source in the core values one embodies and then it impregnates a person's authority and leadership.

In her concept of authority as expressed in her Rule, Clare shows an amazing balance between strength and tenderness. She keeps some elements from the Benedictine Rule, which was imposed on her in 1216; she does not mitigate the essentials. She does not hesitate to change the Rule and adapt it where it seems too harsh for the relational aspect of Franciscan life. For example, look at her prescriptions about silence: "They may speak discreetly at all times for the recreation and service of those who are sick," and "they can communicate always and everywhere whatever is necessary" (RCl 5:3-4). Regarding enclosure, Clare writes: "She may not go outside the monastery except for a useful, reasonable, evident, and approved purpose" (RCl 2:12). There is a balance between acceptance of the norms fixed by the Rule and flexibility in Franciscan freedom. Clare is also able to stand her ground firmly, especially on what is particularly dear to her—holy poverty as the way to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The chapter dealing with poverty is the kernel of Clare's Rule, and she inserts it at the heart of the text, in Chapter 6. Like a weaver, she places the most beautiful, precious, and unique threads at the center.⁸

Exemplarism as an Expression of Authority

Clare was a reluctant abbess. "Three years after her conversion, declining the name and office of Abbess, she wished in her humility to be placed under others rather than above them and, among the servants of Christ, to serve more willingly than to be served" (CL 12; see also Proc 3:9). When she commanded, she did so with great fear and humility, wishing to do herself what she had commanded to others (Proc 1:10). She only accepted the direction and

government of the sisters at the prayers and insistence of St. Francis (Proc 1:6). But Clare was careful to insert in her Rule that the Abbess should live in equality with her sisters, preserving the common life in everything (RCl 4:13).

Her means of authority was to be the servant of all the sisters (cf. RCl 10:5; TestCl 65-66). Her principle of authority was to be an example for others to follow (cf. RCl 4:9; CL 12). Her model was Jesus, the Servant, washing the feet of his disciples (Jn. 13:1-15), who said: "The one who rules should be like the one who serves. I am among you as one who serves (Lk. 22: 26-27). . . . "Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:44-45).

Clare strove to give an example by going first, confessing her faults at the weekly chapter (cf. RCl 4:15-16), washing the feet of her sisters (Proc 1:12; 2:1.3; 3:9; 6:7; 7:5; 10:6), and placing herself in front of her sisters before the Saracens, ready to lay down her life as their ransom in imitation of Jesus (CL 21; Proc 3:18; 4:14; other witnesses also relate this event.) "This is a summarizing image of Clare the leader—in front, yes, but for the sake of serving, giving life, to those who were her sisters."⁹

Three Feminine Images of Authority

Clare exercised authority as a *servant*, she remained a *sister*, and she cared for her sisters as a *mother*.¹⁰ It is interesting that all these feminine images of authority found in Clare have to do with *relationships*. It is also noticeable that they are Franciscan images, having an echo in Francis's own writings and life.

The Servant

Clare rarely called herself "Abbess." The term she prefers is the Latin word *ancilla* (cf. RCl 1:3; 6:6; 10:4), an affectionate term used for the beloved servant of a master, one in a close relationship with the master. Rooted in contemplation of Christ, Clare gazed upon Jesus as Servant and gave heed to his teachings on servanthood. It is noteworthy that all these teachings are related to the Passion, and this is not without influence in the form of life Clare chose as *the* way to follow Christ.

When she was asked to assume the role of Abbess of San Damiano in 1216, Clare found in the image of the Suffering Servant the way God chose to display his power (cf. the Songs of the Servant in Is. 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11 and Ph. 2:5-8). Clare saw herself as serving the leadership in the sisters. Bearing in mind Jesus in his Passion, Clare put on the attitudes of the obedient Servant, listening to the call of the Father in the depths of her being, remaining docile to the Spirit at work in the community, responding to the needs of the sisters.¹¹

Reluctant in becoming Abbess, Clare never despised the most menial and even risky tasks of service. She was eager to clean the mattresses of the sick sisters (Proc 2:1; 6:7). By so doing she possibly exposed herself to the fleas that transmitted plague, thus performing an act of laying down her life for her sisters, risking her own safety and health, ready to lay down her life as did the Suffering Servant, Jesus.¹² Clare's humble service to her sisters, in its various expressions, flowed from the focus of her life: the imitation of her Beloved, Jesus Christ.

Foot-washing is another service performed by Clare to which many of the witnesses at the Process of Canonization refer. It was a gesture invested with symbolic meaning. For Clare, as for Jesus, it anticipated the ultimate service of the passion and death. It set a pattern of relationships far from a hierarchical one, abolishing ranks and inequality. Foot-washing is a call to a life of service and of self-giving for another's good.¹³ This gesture also calls others to do the same; thus the one performing it is an example. Jesus said: "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you" (Jn. 13: 15). Foot-washing as a model of servanthood calls for many other aspects, as can also be seen in the writings of Francis, especially Adm 13 (patience) and Adm 19 (humility).

The Sister

Clare fulfilled the duties of the Abbess, but devoted her life to being a Sister. Writing about the Abbess's role in the community, she insists that she be one among equals, a sister rather than a superior. She is compelled to preserve common life with the others (RCl 4:13) and in all decisions to consult the sisters: "I, together *with* my sisters" (RCl 6:10) or "the Abbess *and* the sisters" (RCl 1:9; 4:20; 6:11; 9:5) or "the Abbess *and* the Vicarress" (RCl 5:8), or "the Abbess or her Vicarress *with* the discreets" (RCl 7:5; 8:11; 9:18). We shall return to this in the next section of this paper when we look at mutual responsibility.

Clare views herself and any succeeding Abbess as on the same level as the rest of the community,¹⁴ and the image of the Sister conveys this horizontal structure of relationships between the members of the community. The image includes ideas of equality, calls forth mutual sharing and support, requires reverence for the other, and finally aims towards harmony and unity.

The Mother

Instead of calling herself "abbess," Clare uses the term "mother," and it is an image she applies to the Abbess in her Rule. The image is very Franciscan.

It conveys the idea of security, understanding, and loving care that Francis himself expresses in his writings (e.g. the Letter to Brother Leo and the Rule for Hermitages). The image has two main dimensions: motherhood and nurturing care.

Motherhood is a powerful and recurrent theme in early Franciscan thinking about the spiritual life. It refers to the ongoing and painful process of giving life. It is nothing like a "wishy-washy" ideal of mothering, nor does it encourage a leader to become a target for the brothers and sisters' hang-ups about their birth mothers. The birthing Francis has in mind is described in Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior*:

While her servant Francis was living in the church of the Virgin Mother of God, he prayed to her who had conceived the Word full of grace and truth, imploring her with continuous sighs to become his advocate. Through the merits of the Mother of Mercy, *he conceived and brought to birth the spirit of the truth of the Gospel* (LM 3:1).

The Birthing Dimension

There is indeed a birthing dimension in Franciscan spirituality. In our tradition, bringing to birth is a process of giving life to the Gospel and thus to Jesus who is the Word incarnate expressed in the text of the Gospel. Franciscans, like Mary, are to bear this Word in their flesh, to embody it, and to bring it forth to the world, to bring it to life. They are to do this in themselves and to encourage it in others: "We are mothers, when we carry Him in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and when we *give birth to him* through His holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an *example*" (1EpFid 1:10). This "Holy manner of working shining as an example" is the life of the Gospel, the evangelical way of life professed by the Franciscans of all branches. Its principle is the Holy Spirit, the One who came upon Mary, so that she conceived the Word from her own flesh (Lk. 1:35), and the One whom all the brothers and sisters should desire above all things (cf. RegB 10:8; RCl 10:9; Rule of TOR 32). Its Way is the imitation of Christ, especially through his Passion, for the Crucified is the only way to enter into life, as Bonaventure says at the beginning of The Tree of Life:

The true worshiper of God and disciple of Christ, who desires to conform perfectly to the Savior of all men crucified for him, should, above all, strive with an earnest endeavor of soul to *carry* about continuously, *both in his soul and in his flesh, the cross of Christ* (Prologue 1).

The other aspect of the image of the mother is that of nurturing care. We find it echoed in both Francis and Clare, the latter taking the words from the former: "If a mother has such care and love for her [child] born according to the flesh, should not someone love and care for his brother [or sister] according to the Spirit even more diligently [or lovingly]?" (Cf. RegB 6:7; RCI 8:16). We see again in this passage the role of the Spirit as the One through whom someone is born. Nurturing care has the same root as spiritual motherhood—it is a way of being one with Jesus Christ, the firstborn of the Spirit.

For Godet, femininity is chiefly characterized by nurturing and tender care. To care, to nurture, to make life grow is to be fully human in the image and likeness of God, and this again is for all human beings, men and women. Godet presents three aspects in which Clare's femininity is fully developed: nurturing the body, nurturing the heart, and nurturing the spirit. In nurturing the body, Clare had a maternal and loving concern for the welfare and needs of her sisters (RCI 2:15-16, 22; 8:9-16; TestCl 63-64); in nurturing the heart, she wanted the Abbess to be a haven for the sisters, compassionate, welcoming, and accessible to all (RCI 4:11-12; TestCl 65-66; Proc 3:3,7; 6:2,4; 8:3; 10:5); in nurturing the spirit, Clare was a skilled teacher (Proc 11:2; 14:9; 18:5), inspiring, counseling, and conversing with the sisters, correcting them with humility and love when necessary (RCI 10:1).

Clare, in seeing herself as "the little plant" of Francis, acknowledges in him the nurturing care which is so characteristic of a mother, for if she is his little plant, then he is the gardener, an image which evokes the patient and careful attention of a nurturing person.¹⁵ In the Form of Life he gave to the first Poor Ladies, Francis resolved and promised for himself and for his brothers to have that same loving care and special solicitude for them as he had for his brethren. There are, therefore, signs of a nurturing relationship between Francis and Clare, a relationship with a mutual component. Francis had meetings with Clare to help her find her way according to the insight they both shared about Gospel life. He received her at the Portiuncola and made her fully a member of the young Franciscan movement, eventually establishing her in San Damiano. Clare also helped Francis find his way when he was confused about the orientation of his life, and she most certainly cared for him whenever he stayed at San Damiano, especially during the years of turmoil surrounding the stigmata.

In addition to what she says in her Rule, Clare describes in her Testament what she envisions as the nurturing care of the Abbess—kindness and compassion, offering a shelter and bringing consolation to her sisters (TestCl 4-9). She is a caring person, concerned, discreet, kind, familiar, friendly, never cold

or unapproachable, providing for the needs of each (TestCl 64), especially concerned for the sick (RCI 8:12-16) and the afflicted (RCI 4:11-12), offering them guidance, sympathy, and support.¹⁶

The words spoken by Clare on her death bed show us the source of her motherly love for her sisters: "Go calmly in peace, for you will have a good escort, because He Who created you has sent you the Holy Sprit and has always guarded you *as a mother does her child* who loves her" (Proc 3:20). It is in the image of God caring for us as a mother that Clare found the source for her own maternal attitudes towards her sisters.¹⁷

These three feminine images color Clare's concept of authority. They say something about why she did not find it easy to issue orders, why she assigned tasks with shyness and humility, why she reserved the lowliest and most unpleasant tasks for herself, why she rarely gave orders in obedience. She placed humility above obedience,¹⁸ because that is how she found her way to follow in the footsteps of Christ and imitate Him.

Clare's Leadership—Concept of Governance

What I have said about Clare's concept of authority lays the foundation for her leadership and concept of governance. Her unswerving love of God and her unwavering adherence to God's will led her to follow in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ through example, especially conforming herself to the Suffering Servant. Imitating his humility, she strove to bring him to birth in herself and in others. As a sister among equals, she guided them with strength and tenderness, a fully human being in the image of God. Two aspects of her leadership derive from these characteristics: a) fostering unity in reverence for each sister and in personal responsibility; b) mutual responsibility among mature women.

Fostering Unity

"Let the sisters be always eager to preserve among themselves the unity of mutual love which is the bond of perfection" (RCI 10:7; cf. Jn. 17:22-23). Unity is the evangelical foundation of the community of sisters, because the same essential love reigned in the heart of each one. The basis, the root of their common ideal, was an "absolute adherence to Jesus Christ and a readiness to endure anything to follow him."¹⁹ Each sister knew *why* and *for whom* she was living—the Lord Jesus Christ. This was their bond of unity, which Clare herself lived first and taught them.

Each sister could look at the heart of the other and find there the same profound and dedicated love for Christ that she herself experienced. Because of this, there had to be a deep reverence for the mystery of each other, as each

one was personally called to follow in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ in a very personal and unique manner in the midst of the community. In this regard, Clare is definitely speaking to the best in each person.

It is the responsibility of the Abbess to preserve the unity of mutual love and peace (RCl 4:22). This unity in mutual charity is the expression of each sister's union with God. Any sister can claim to be in union with God only insofar as she is acting charitably with her sisters (Jm. 2:14-17; 3:13-16; 1Jn. 4:20-21). Mutual charity is to love the other as Christ loves her. External deeds are the measure of the love within the heart; however there are some deeds that can destroy charity.²⁰ Clare warns against the anger and disturbance that one may feel at the sin of a sister (RCl 9:5) and calls for reconciliation among the sisters whenever a word or a gesture causes one to be troubled by another (RCl 9: 6-10).

Clare seems to be well aware of difficulties that, like field mines, endanger common life in the enclosure. She writes her Rule out of a long experience: "I admonish and exhort the sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ to beware of all pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, care and anxiety about this world, detraction and murmuring, dissension and division" (RCl 10:6). All of these situations must have occurred in the monastery of San Damiano for Clare to feel a need to write about them in her Rule, because all her words are weighed when she writes. She is clearly attempting to uproot all sources of discord that cloud the unity of the sisters' life of mutual love.

Mutual Responsibility among Mature Women

The basis of the common ideal provides the foundation for mutuality in the community. It is because each sister is totally dedicated to the love of Christ as the very core dimension of her life that all of them and together are responsible for the welfare of the group. Each sister stands before God, having surrendered her own will and freedom for the love of God (RCl 10:2). In their obedience the sisters seek to fulfill God's will.

Each sister is bound to the others in affection and tenderness (RCl 8:16). Clare provides many openings for respect, trust, openness, creating a climate of mutual listening through dialogue, calling for an obedience that is far from passive. The sisters are to inquire about the needs of the sick (RCl 8:14), share confidently their needs with one another (RCl 8:15), and meet together weekly (RCl 4:15-18) to make any decisions that pertain to the good of their common commitment to the Gospel form of life, which they have professed and which they daily live.

Clare expresses mutual and caring solicitude by using a metaphor in her Testament—the sisters are like mirrors for one another, revealing in reciprocity the image to which the Lord has called them to be in fullness of life.

For the Lord Himself has placed us not only as a form for others in being an example and mirror, but even for our sisters whom the Lord has called to our way of life as well, that they in turn might be a mirror and example to those living in the world. Since the Lord has called us to such great things that *those who are to be a mirror and example to others may be reflected in us*, we are greatly bound to bless and praise God and be all the more strengthened to do good in the Lord (TestCl 19-22).

The weekly chapter emphasizes the shared responsibility in the community's life for growth and development. The Abbess consults with all her sisters concerning whatever pertains to the welfare and good of the monastery, for the Lord frequently reveals what is best to the least among them (RCl 4: 17-18). It is the sisters' shared responsibility to elect an Abbess. It is their responsibility, as well, to replace an Abbess who is not competent for their service and common welfare or any other official in the community if it seems necessary (RCl 4:7,24). All who hold offices in the monastery are chosen by the common consent of all the sisters to preserve the unity of mutual love and peace (RCl 4: 22). The Abbess is helped in her office by eight sisters elected by all (RCl 4:23).

Decision-making in collegiality and consultation requires a good deal of discernment and maturity. Each sister's intelligence, will, and heart have a part in the process of reflection, critical judgment, decision-making, and common action.²¹ The Rule of Clare provides inner space for judgment and discernment. It requires trust in the individual good will and prudence of the sisters. Clare acts as a facilitator and active listener in the midst of her sisters. She believes that the Spirit may speak through any of the sisters, even the least (RCl 4:18). Listening to the Spirit speaking to each one and to the group is a process that needs time. It is counter-cultural in our society of immediacy. Our experience of communal decision-making shows that it is a process in which we often have disagreements. To listen to the Spirit is to allow disagreements to be expressed and heard: the Spirit may be saying something to us in the very midst of our disagreements. We must therefore pay attention to them, continuing to ask ourselves: What is the Spirit trying to say to us now?

Some Elements of Feminine Franciscan Governance

Clare's goal was to achieve an evangelical fraternity like that of the friars,²² but in a totally different context—that of an enclosed group comprised of many women (sometimes as many as fifty). Her principles need to be enfolded in our Third Order Regular way of life. From this study of Clare's authority and leadership, we are now able to draw some principles for a feminine Franciscan leadership.

1. Feminine Franciscan leadership resides in each sister's *personal inner authority rooted in deep love of Christ*. This love is fed and nourished by prayer and *contemplation of the Suffering Servant as our model*. Such inner authority calls for *discernment*, listening to the Spirit first in oneself and then in the group. In turn, discernment brings forth *collegiality* in decision-making, each one being involved in an ongoing process of personal and communal discernment through constant attentiveness, openness, and readiness before the Spirit.

2. *Relational structures of equality* among sisters freed from a dominant exercise of power are the direct consequence of each sister's rootedness in a deep love of Christ. Clare instructed her sisters constantly to remember, embrace, and love totally the poor Christ, especially in his Passion. She chose His way of exercising authority through *servanthood*. With this in mind, we ask ourselves if the Suffering Servant is really the center of our lives and if we are ready to serve and lay down our life for any sister.

3. Looking at Clare, each one of us, in developing our personal inner authority, is also called to become fully human, a *balanced* person, acknowledging our strengths and weaknesses, mutually helping one another to grow in awareness towards *wholeness*. Like Clare, we are invited to use our feminine and masculine components, the strength and the tenderness in us, holding firm to what is essential to our Franciscan way of life and showing motherly care and solicitude for our sisters.

4. Inner authority is the source of each sister's leadership. One way of expressing this reality is *exemplarism*, taking again Christ the Servant as the model, following his command: As I have done for you, so shall you do for others. Exemplarism, rooted in Jesus' teaching on *servanthood*, sets an *egalitarian pattern of relationships* as the foundation for renewed structures of government and way of governance. Setting a way of life to follow, exemplarism calls every sister to become a mirror for others, revealing herself as who she is called to be, bringing to light her potential.

5. The leadership in each sister is also a capacity to *give birth to the Word*, in herself and in others, through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Hence the importance Clare puts on each sister's capacity for *discernment* and responsibility to strive to *listen to the Spirit* Who can reveal to the least what is best for the community. It is only in listening to the Spirit that Christ can be formed in our hearts and brought to birth in our own lives first and then in the lives of others. And this *birthing process*, this spiritual *motherhood*, calls for *nurturing care*, as expressed repeatedly by Clare in *mutual solicitude* for one another and in *collegial decision-making* for the welfare of all in the monastery.

6. In Clare's vision, each sister's love of God is the root of *unity* to be fostered among the sisters, in deep *reverence* for the mystery of each one's personal call to union with God. Anything that impedes unity among the sisters can be a hindrance to union with God. Therefore it must be uprooted. In love of God, each sister becomes accountable before the others, all being *bound* to one another in *mutual* love, *life-giving* care, and *shared* responsibility.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this reflection, I recalled the two-fold desire for new structures of government and a renewed concept of governance. We want these to be Franciscan and feminine, knowing that we must remain focused on new life and new ways of living the charism *for the sake of mission*. Clare teaches us to begin with a personal, essential, and fundamental element—our rootedness in love of God. Each sister's personal experience of God, each sister's personal call to union with God is the source of her inner authority and leadership. This gives her a profound freedom in which all are bound in mutuality for the sake of God's love.

Each sister's inner authority and leadership constitutes the starting point from which a renewed form of leadership and new structures of government will spring. Instead of falling into the trap of beginning at the top with new structures, we need a process that starts at the bottom with an examination of the underlying principles of our current structures—confronting them with the six elements I have drawn from Clare.

Although the vision presented here is a difficult and challenging ideal to attain, Clare's steadfastness inspires us not to give up. Just as her Rule was approved as she lay on her deathbed, so our ideal might not be attained until the end of our lives. May we take to heart these words of Francis on his death bed: "Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord God, for up to now we have made little or no progress" (1Cel 103).

Endnotes

¹Madge Karecki, SSJTOSE, "Clare of Assisi: An Enabling Leader," *The Cord*, 37.7 (1987): 197-198.

²Mary Francis, PCC, "Creative Spiritual Leadership," *Communion and Communication*, No. 14, (Roswell, 1992), 8.

³Dorothy McCormack, OSF, "The Essential Elements of the Evangelical Life of Franciscans," *The Cord*, 38.8 (1988): 243.

⁴René-Charles Dhont, *Clare Among Her Sisters* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1987), 24.

⁵Dhont, 29.

⁶Jean-François Godet, "Clare, the Woman, as Seen in Her Writings," *Greyfriars Review*, 4.3 (1990): 14.

⁷Godet, 17.

⁸Margaret Carney, OSF, *The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and Her Form of Life* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 261.

⁹Marie Beha, OSC, "Clare's Charism," *The Cord* 46.4 (1996): 188.

¹⁰Beha, 187.

¹¹Charlene Toups, OSC, "Following the Footsteps of Christ," *The Cord*, 35.7 (1985): 215.

¹²Ingrid Peterson, OSF, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 143-144.

¹³Peterson, 145-154.

¹⁴Marianne Schlosser, "Mother, Sister, Bride: The Spirituality of St. Clare," *Greyfriars Review*, 5.2, (1991): 239.

¹⁵Godet, 24.

¹⁶Schlosser, 236-237.

¹⁷Schlosser, 237.

¹⁸Schlosser, 235.

¹⁹Dhont, 107.

²⁰Dhont, 111; cf. also RCI 10:6.

²¹Dhont, 126.

²²Dhont, 127.

*Clare, solitary morning star of the sleeping cosmos,
Wake my soul to songs of praise and thanksgiving.
Teach me how to radiate goodness to my little world today.*

*Clare, brilliant light of the noonday sun,
Brighten my day with the warmth of your love.
Fill me to overflow with charity and simplicity.*

*Clare, gentle light of the late afternoon,
Coax me along ways of peace and justice.
Make me a lover of souls, just like you.*

*Clare, fair light of the fading day at twilight,
Bring me to a contemplation of the Crucified.
Help me realize the depth of God's love for me.*

*Clare, quiet light at the end of a busy day,
Give rest to my weary soul.*

Blanket it with the mantle of your mercy. Amen

Clare Prayer

Joanne Grib, SLW

The Cord, 51.4 (2001)

The Best of Times

Thomas Barton, OSF

"It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." With these words Charles Dickens began his novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. These same words could have applied centuries earlier. The year was A.D. 1197. The place, Assisi, Italy. For the Lady Clare of Favarone de Offreduccio, 1197 would be the best of times as she fled with her family from Assisi to take refuge in the city of Perugia. For most of her family, however, literally running from the crowd of democracy-seeking merchants, 1197 would prove to be the worst of times.

In that year, Clare was a mere child among the ranks of displaced political refugees, experiencing all the chaos, uncertainty, and financial insecurity that such a situation entailed. She learned, however, the value and security that nobility and wealth can provide during changing times. Fortunately for Clare, the family's place of refuge was Perugia.

Though we do not know the exact time, it is certain that Clare encountered a group of penitents in the city of Perugia. All indications are that she became well acquainted with them and began to imitate their lifestyle. In 1204 she returned to Assisi with a desire to live a penitential life.

In Perugia, penitents gathered in associations or fraternities. In Assisi, however, penitents tended to be solitaires. As recluses, sometimes under the direction of a priest, most continued to live with their respective families. The one known exception in the area of Assisi was at the Monastery of Sant Angelo in Panzo, where a group of penitents lived in seclusion together. We know that Clare spent some time there before she settled down at San Damiano.

The sources for the life of Clare, meager as they are, do give hints about her lifestyle, both before and after her conversion. As a young girl she was devout. Using pebbles, she would keep track of her prayers. Under the careful supervision of her pious mother, Ortolana, Clare early on developed a spirit of prayer and devotion.

Although a known beauty and a wealthy one, she stayed out of the public eye. After her return to Assisi, Clare lived as a recluse within her parental

home. While she did not cut off her hair as a penitent might, we know that under all her finery she wore a pighide hairshirt with the bristles turned inward. She fasted discreetly for the sake of others. She often took her choice and specially prepared dishes and sent them to the poor. She willingly gave alms from her own resources when there was need. Once, at least, these alms found their way to San Damiano for Francis and his associates. Among her friends she was known as someone capable of giving direction. The Lady Bona testified in the Process of Canonization that Clare had sent her on pilgrimage to Rome during Lent 1212.

It seems that Clare had decided to remain in her own home as a penitent, promising virginal chastity to the Lord. Having made this decision, she was willing to do whatever was necessary to deflect her uncle Monaldo's plans for a well-arranged marriage.

No doubt Francis of Assisi was a surprise for Clare. She was obviously aware of Francis. Her family and other nobles of the town considered him mad, describing him as a fool. Her cousin Rufino, however, had abandoned everything, including his knighthood, to become a companion of Francis, a move which understandably upset the family. Francis, having heard about Clare, desired to rescue her from the world.

Her conversion was effected, simply and directly, through Francis's preaching. In the power of the Spirit, Clare left all things to follow Christ as a pilgrim and stranger. That she lived as a penitent is clear; that she did so within the context of a community of penitential women gathered at San Damiano and following the example of Francis is also clear.

In her first letter to Agnes of Prague, Clare praised the royal princess's decision to follow Christ as a Poor Lady with these words:

What a great and praiseworthy exchange: to leave the things of time for those of eternity, to choose the things of heaven for the goods of earth, to receive the hundredfold in place of one, and to possess a blessed eternal life (30).

A.D. 1197, was the best of times, a year that put Clare on the road from Assisi to San Damiano, via Perugia. Who can fathom the ways of the Lord?

**The Son of God has been made for us the Way,
which our blessed father Francis,
His true lover and imitator,
has shown and taught us by word and example.
(TestCl 5)**

Clothed in Gladness: The Story of St. Clare. Sister Mary St. Paul. Our Sunday Visitor Press, 2000.

This book is a many-faceted gem. Practically every Catholic and many persons of other persuasions have heard of St. Francis of Assisi. Fewer know his first woman follower, the one, who in a very special way, sustained the movement of the early Franciscans. Francis was the mentor who attracted Clare to his journey of spiritual poverty. Later, he gained consolation knowing that this woman was a pillar of prayer solidly supporting him and the brothers. As Benedict Groeschel says in the fine foreword to this book: "Clare really went all the way along the road to perfection with St. Francis." More people need to become acquainted with the spiritual journey of St. Clare.

The author is well qualified to write on the subject. A Poor Clare herself for over forty years, she has served as novice director and general superior in a monastery in Ohio. In a very skillful way, she has designed each chapter around a short theme that can be read and meditated on in one sitting. Followed this way the book can be completed in a week or two. I found it convenient to treat each chapter as a window of the spirit to be read and savored. In the sixth chapter, for example, one becomes aware of Clare's longsuffering and fierce dedication to a life of poverty. At times the Franciscan friars tried to temper her fasts, which had weakened her body. But overall her fortitude in the spiritual life became stronger than ever. In chapter ten we learn how she endured real infirmities with joy and peace. Earlier sections of the book describe how she became the focus of a tug of war between her family and her call to this new way of religious life, a contest that her family lost. Soon, two of her blood sisters joined her. When it comes to inner strength, Clare is a shining example for her times and for all ages. Here is the story of a saint and how she progressively empties herself to receive the grace of the Lord.

This is a book for anyone interested in the contemplative life. It is strongly recommended to members of the Franciscan family, but could be useful to any religious. It would be helpful, also, for lay people yearning to grow in holiness. It is hard to picture the Franciscan movement growing to its present proportions without the prayerful groundwork led by Clare and her followers.

Each section of the book has a simple drawing, which I found helpful as a kind of graphic connection to the words on the pages. An epilogue articulates the relevance of St. Clare for our modern times when many people are spiritually exploring. She is a mentor pointing the way towards satisfying the hunger and thirst for God experienced by our contemporary distracted world. As a

young noble woman of the thirteenth century, Clare had all that society could offer. But deep down she felt a great emptiness. When she heard the call of the Spirit of God, she started to fill this void with wisdom and love. In the end, she was bursting with the presence of the Immortal One. What a life!

Richard Hurzeler, SFO

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Joanne Grib, SLW, a Sister of the Living Word residing in Arlington Heights, Illinois, claims a Franciscan heart. With a Master's Degree in Chemistry and Education, she recently retired from the Nalco Chemical Company where she had worked as a researcher and computer specialist for twenty years. Her post-retirement ministry is teaching computer skills to battered women in her area.

Richard P. Hurzeler, SFO, a professed Secular Franciscan since 1984, taught Anthropology and Sociology at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, for twenty-nine years (1971-2000). He is now retired in Tyler, Texas, where he lives with his wife Carol, daughter Debbie, and granddaughter Christine.

Danielle Julian, FMIC, a Missionary Franciscan Sister of the Immaculate Conception, lives in Montréal, Québec, Canada. She has a B.A. in Biblical and Pastoral studies from the Faculté de Théologie, University of Montréal, and a certificate in Franciscan Formation and Spiritual Direction from the Franciscan Study Centre in Canterbury, England. After six years in catechist formation ministry in Chad, Africa, (1992-1998) she returned to Canada and now writes extensively for the Franciscan Family of Québec province.

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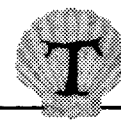
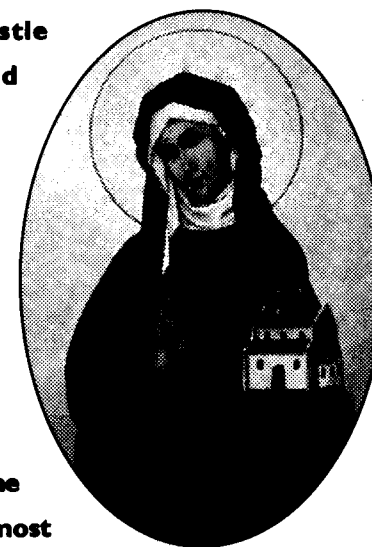
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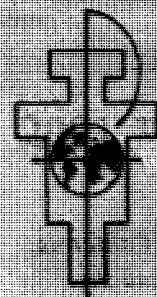
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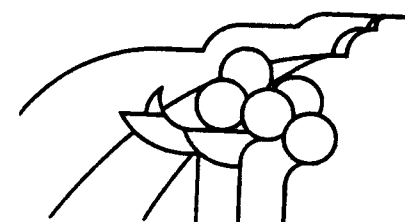
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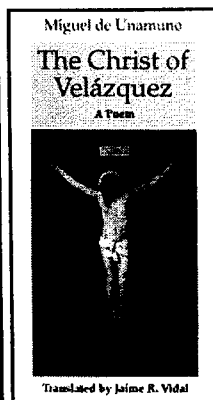
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Friday, August 3-Saturday, August 11

The Soul's Journey into God. With André Cirino, OFM, and Joseph Raischl, SFO. At Tau Center. Contact: Susan Althoff, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993; fax: 507-453-0910; email: taucentr@luminet.net

Sunday, August 5-Saturday, August 11

Reweaving the World: When Nature and Spirit Meet. With Gabriele Uhlein, OSF. At Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora, NY. Contact: Concetta DeFelice, FMDC at 716-632-3144; fax: 716-626-1332.

Monday, August 20-Thursday, August 23

36th Franciscan Federation Conference. With Roland Faley, TOR, and Nancy Schreck, OSF. At Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel. (See ad, p. 210.)

Friday, September 21-Sunday, September 23

The Cantic of Conversion. At Holy Spirit Center, San Antonio, TX. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 211.)

Friday, October 5-Sunday, October 7

The Cantic of Conversion. At Franciscan Center, Tampa, FL. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 211.)

Saturday, October 13

Following Christ in an Evolutionary World: The Franciscan Vocation Today. With Ilia Delio, OSF. At Felician College Lecture Hall, Lodi, NJ. Sponsored by Region I, Franciscan Federation. Contact: Lorraine Campanelli, OSF, Immaculate Conception Motherhouse, 49 Jackson Ave., Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706.

Friday, November 2-Sunday, November 4

The Cantic of Conversion. At Center of Renewal, Stella Niagara, NY. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 211.)

Friday, November 2-Sunday, November 4

Franciscanism: Medieval Story and Postmodern Promises. With Margaret Carney, OSF. At Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340; ph. 412-881-9207; email: fslccom@aol.com

Sunday, November 11-Friday, December 21

40-Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat. At the Portiuncula Center for Prayer, 9263 W. St. Francis Road, Frankfort, IL 60423-8330; ph. 815-464-3880; fax: 815-469-4880; email: portc4p@aol.com

Friday, November 30-Sunday, December 2

The Cantic of Conversion. At Avila Retreat Center, Durham, NC. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 211.)

Writings of Saint Francis

| | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| Adm | Admonitions | ExPat | 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 | Cantic 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 |
| L3S | Legend of the Three Companions |
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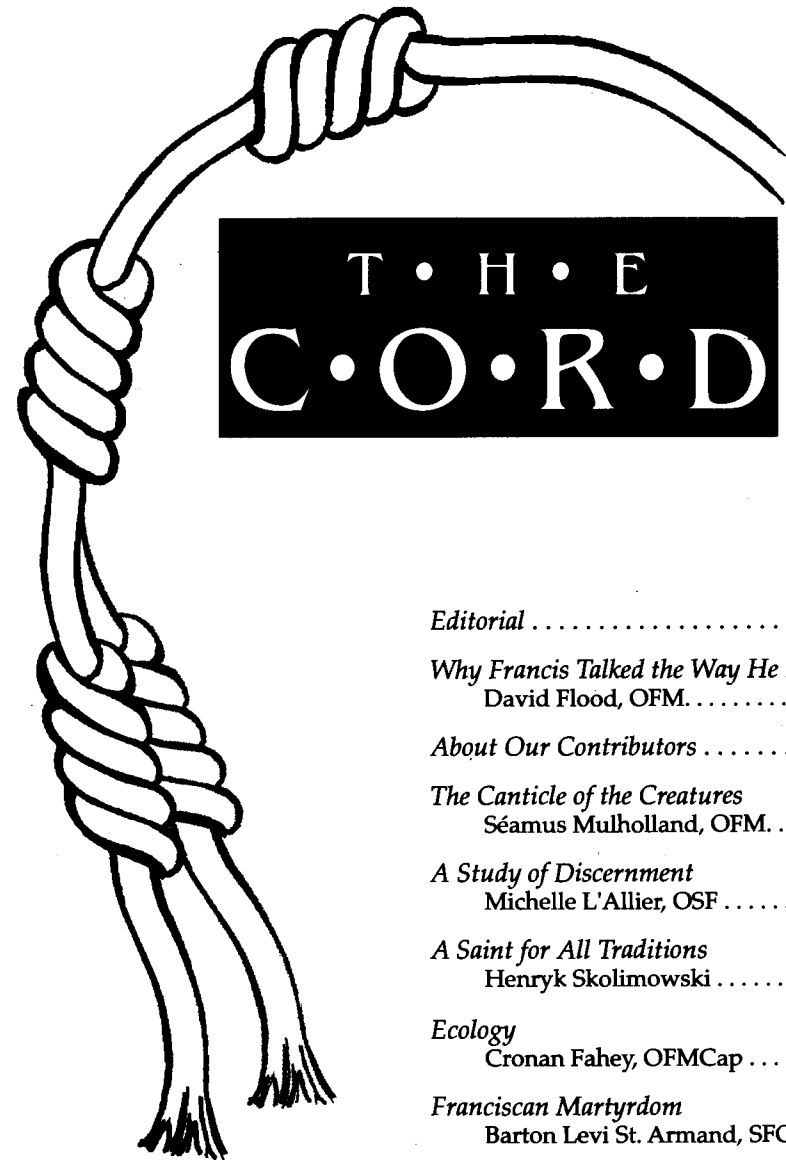


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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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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 location of the Franciscan sources used should be noted in the first reference in a mss.

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Editorial

As the fall season begins, Franciscan hearts turn naturally to remembering our Father and Founder, Francis of Assisi. The Feast of the Stigmata on September 17 and the Feast of Francis on October 4, invite us to contemplate in our prayers and liturgical celebrations this little poor man, who, for some mysterious reason, has made and continues to make such an impact on our Church and on our world. Post-modern Christians, even Franciscans, wonder how the life of this thirteenth-century Italian mystic can possibly be a continuing source of life and energy today. There is no easy answer to this wonderment. We are like the puzzled friar who asked Francis why the "whole world" seemed to be running after him. Francis's answer, out of the depth of his humility and self-knowledge, did not really explain the peculiar attraction.

Of course, such an attraction is not so much to be found in this remote figure of the distant past as in the Spirit that keeps alive in the Church and in the world a compelling desire for the transcendent experience promised in the gospel life of Jesus Christ. When someone really seems to understand this Spirit and allows him or herself to be transformed by It, such a one continues to shine and to mediate the amazing energy, hope, and joy of this experience far beyond his or her own limited and incarnated situation. So it was with Francis. Somehow, he "got it right." It mattered in the thirteenth century and it matters now. His words and deeds live on and inspire all who find in him a sense of kinship—a shared yearning for and openness to that complete transformation that makes us indistinguishable from the beloved Son of God.

In this issue of *The Cord*, we are happy to offer a number of reflections on how Francis's unique "take" on the gospel life continues to provide for us today Spirit and Life.

Elise Saggau, OSF

[Apology: In the July issue of *The Cord*, we misspelled the name of Danielle Julien, FMIC, both on the cover page and on page 202. Danielle was the author of "Clare's Model of Leadership" (pp.184-198)]

Men ran, women also ran, clerics hurried, and religious rushed to see and hear the holy one of God, who seemed to everyone a person of another age. People of all ages and both sexes hurried to behold the wonders which the Lord worked anew in the world through his servant [Francis] (1Cel 36)

Why Francis Talked the Way He Did The Sources and Purposes of Franciscan Discourse

David Flood, OFM

We can raise and discuss the question of Franciscan language and Franciscan culture in different ways and with a variety of texts. Here we will use two admonitions. They serve the purpose very well.

Blessed the religious who has no joy and delight save in the most holy words and works of the Lord and in such joy and gladness leads others to love of God. Woe to the religious who enjoys himself with vain and idle words and in this way provokes others to laughter (Adm 20).

Blessed the servant who, when speaking, begins slowly and does not say all he knows in hope of gain; who wisely foresees what and how to answer. Woe to the religious who, instead of holding back in his heart the good things which the Lord has shown him, sharing them with others by the way he lives, longs to explain them to others as a sort of reward. He takes his pay and those who hear him profit little (Adm 21).

The first of these two admonitions offers a simple definition of Franciscan discourse, whereas the second looks at it more subjectively. The second admonition reinforces the first. It portrays a wise use of words, on the one hand, and, on the other, shows how words can be wasted. We have to do here with a discrimination central to Franciscan life.

A Franciscan Lexicon

These two admonitions (Admonitions 20 and 21 as they have come down to us) use several words and expressions that have their origins in early Franciscan life. Francis (supposing he is the author) says them, using the vocabulary common to him and his brothers, and he had every right to use those

words. He played a central role in developing the language of the brotherhood. All the same, he depended for his terminology both on the action in which the brothers engaged and on the terms with which they described and reflected on that action. He could not speak the way he did here in these two admonitions unless the brothers had all brought themselves to the point where these words made sense to them, given the course of their lives.

Among those terms, *opera Domini*, the works of the Lord, has a central place. It has that place in part because of its role in one of the key passages in the early Franciscan writings. In the Words of Recall and Exhortation (Letter to the Faithful), after describing in some detail the Franciscan way, Francis launches into a description of the religious experience of the movement. (See Words of Recall and Exhortation, verses 48ff.) He was answering a question that intrigued those fascinated by the honesty and exuberance of the early movement. They wanted to know how the Franciscans, who lacked the means of a comfortable life, exuded such an infectious *joie de vivre*. Francis was saying, in effect, that the Spirit of the Lord so inspired their action that the men and women who traveled the Franciscan way were doing the works of the Father. The term then had its distinctively Franciscan meaning. Franciscan action, in sum, was the work of the Spirit of the Lord in people. Insofar as that was truly the case, and the early Franciscans and Francis in particular were convinced it was, they needed a way of putting it into words. They had to express and confirm their understanding of what was going on. By putting into words what was taking place within and among them, they made their unique experience socially real.

In Admonitions 20 and 21, Francis also uses easily the expression "the good things the Lord has shown him." He uses the term *bona*, good things, as if his brothers had no difficulty grasping what he meant. And, in truth, that was the case. They had become used to the role played by "good things" and "the good things shown one by the Lord" in their conversations. Insofar as we consider the Admonitions a consciously ordered sequence of sayings, Francis had just referred to the good things of life and their circulation in Admonition 18. Then, later, the expression "the good things" shown one lies at the very heart of Admonition 28. The expression figures as well in several key passages of the early writings. The term "good things" arises within the jubilation expressed at the end of Chapter 17 in the Early Rule and at the end of the long development on religious experience in the Words of Recall and Exhortation. It also helps us understand the activist celebration in the Proclamation of 1220 (Early Rule 23). The term pervades the early Franciscan writings. That suffices to tell us that it says something central about early Franciscan life.

These terms had other meanings in Assisi. They belonged to a different sign system. The good people of Assisi had no difficulty recognizing the words

in themselves. *Dominus* means the Lord, *opus* and *opera* mean work and works, *bona* means good things (material possessions first of all). In the Assisian documents that have come down to us, *bona* frequently means property or properties. Nor would the people of Assisi have had difficulty recognizing the term as meaning joy and delight and inner peace. But they did not feel and understand joy and delight the way the brothers did. Those terms designated an emotional state distinct in origin and intensity from the ebullient spirit of Franciscans. Nor did they grasp what exactly the whole band was doing, which Francis dared call "the works of the Lord." They understood the words without understanding the works. That is one rationale for Francis's Words of Recall and Exhortation, in which text at one moment he tried to explain the celebration and even the delight in doing "the works of the Lord." With some explanation the Assisians could be brought to understand the expression "works of the Lord" as a reference to their Christian duties, which somehow did not immediately fill them with joy and delight and inner peace. They did justice to those duties, more or less, and then found their joy elsewhere. For some among the Assisians, "the works of the Lord" might even bring to mind the duties they owed the wealthy lord on whom they depended.

Two cultural anthropologists, Sapir and Whorf, proposed (in the late 1930s) that we see the world, material and social, in terms of the language within which we grow up. That is commonly called the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. In our application, the Franciscans were forging a new outlook on life as they developed the Early Rule. When we look at the proposals of Sapir and Whorf today, we can take their hypothesis as an early phase of cultural history. Cultural history examines the system of meanings within which we act and live.

Although such proposals have led the cultural philosopher Fredric Jameson to speak about "the prison-house of language," we readily walk out of the prison. Language is a social acquisition. We learn language by interacting with others; and if we change our social location, we begin changing our speech. That is how activist nuns of the '70s learned how to swear. Francis and his initial associates put themselves in different social conditions when they walked out of Assisi and committed themselves to purposes foreign to the city. They got rid of their property; they broke off relationships with others in which they had grown up and in which, prior to the reorganization of their lives, they had gotten along more or less successfully. Their way of talking began to be different from that of the influential citizens of Assisi, for they no longer worried about their possessions and their status. Francis and his brothers told one another what they were going to do, set out to do it, and, in discussions, monitored and corrected and confirmed the results. Out of that sequence arose Franciscan language, the system that allowed Francis to circulate uniquely Franciscan admonitions. Whereas many of the words the brothers used had a

static, moral meaning within the Christian culture of Assisi, among the brothers these words served the development of the Franciscan mind.

The Early Rule fairly chronicles the development of the movement's linguistic culture. It is the lexicon to consult when figuring out subsequent writings from the early years. Soon after beginning and working to meet needs and live honestly, the brothers took time to define what they understood as work. The word work, or labor, does not simply designate a purposeful process of physical exertion in production or in service. It designates that activity's role in the economic system whereby a society like Assisi sees to its needs. If the brothers did not redefine work, they would, by their good work, put themselves back into the Assisian world they had so resolutely left. They were doing something different; but unless they named their practice, consciously distinguishing it from the Assisian practice of work, they would not be able to abide by it. They would not have the means to recall and confirm their own notion of labor, while, at the same time, the Assisian vocabulary of labor would reeducate them every day and eventually reintern them in the prison of Assisi's economic language. We can see in Chapter 7 of the Early Rule how they gave hard thought to what exactly distinguished their labor from that of those among whom they worked. Whereas Assisians understood work as a limited set of roles whereby one acquired a share of Assisi's goods, Francis and his friends meant work as participation in producing and sharing the good things of life (*bona*). Claims of ownership were inimical to the process.

Given their notion of work, Francis and his friends could and did define money in a way that refused it any role in their lives. They also extended their notion of work to cover care for lepers. Care for lepers was classified as charity in Assisi, not work. Then, for their service to lepers, the brothers expected some income and made their expectations known. When refused by Assisi, they justified their appeal. To bolster their justification, they drew on the new arguments of canonists for distributive justice, whereby they put the canonists' teachings into the practical terms of their evolving life.

We can pursue this further and forcefully with the Salutation of the Virtues. Francis celebrates the difficulty that people outside the movement have in understanding what he and his friends are saying. He plays off a list of Franciscan words against a list of Assisian words, claiming victory for the reality content of his terms.

In Chapter 8 of the Early Rule, the brothers agreed that they would recur to money when the dire circumstances of lepers required it. The context of Chapter 8, in its latter part, helps us understand how the line arose. The brothers who worked in the leprosaria of Assisi's countryside, as well as elsewhere, had developed a sense of solidarity with the lepers. From the early days on, the term leper had a resonance among Franciscans that recalled their brief history

and gave the lepers a privileged place in their life and the term leper a positive spin. Francis opened his Testament, which served to help his brothers understand the Rule of 1223, by recalling that history. He said the word leper as a call to the Franciscan conscience.

Admonitions

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, M. Bakhtin underlines the importance of context. He explains that “the speech of another, once enclosed in a context,” undergoes semantic changes. (See *The Bakhtin Reader*, 1994, 78.) No matter if words are accurately quoted, the purpose of the larger text infiltrates and modifies the terms of the quoted passage, turning it into a supportive part of the whole. With the appropriate context, we can even redefine a short text into a genre at odds with its origins and original meaning. But if, on the other hand, we give the speech of another its original context, we can take it on its own terms, even if it intends to correct and modify the larger discourse to which it belongs. We also get a better sense of its speech genre. Francis’s words, as addressed to his brothers, continue the exchange that first resulted in the Early Rule. The Early Rule lays out the terms of Franciscan life. Inevitably, then, that written agreement supplies us the meaning and the prompting needed to understand the continuation of that dialog. With this in mind, we can take Admonitions 20 and 21 as warnings and clarifications issued in the struggle between the Franciscans and their surroundings. They have “the words and works of the Lord” in mind. We can describe that struggle more concretely, but that would lead us too far afield.

Given the observation of Bakhtin referred to above, we can improve our reading of the Admonitions if we pause for a moment at the question of their genre. The Admonitions arose in early Franciscan history as a form congenial to Francis and as a message useful to the movement. I propose that they came about in the following way. Given the fact that the early Franciscans did not have a rule (a rule as an ordered collection of regulations governing behavior) but a plan of action (commonly agreed upon and called *vita*, the life), Francis and his brothers depended on experience and discussion and written explication to make their plan of action work. We can see that in the history of which the Early Rule is a verbal relict, an eloquent verbal relict. For example, when we look at the Early Rule, we have no trouble understanding how Chapter 10 (on the sick brother) came about and why it found that place in the text.

Given the dynamics of the life as well as its broad ambitions, Francis and his brothers had to handle a good number of questions. The questions could not all wait for a general chapter for treatment and hope for mention in the movement’s basic document. So Francis took to issuing counsel and correc-

tion in brief formulations. (I do not raise the question whether he wrote them or some of them in 1224-1226, after the Rule of 1223.) In the context of the life as proposed in the Early Rule, they focused on sensitive details, as, for example, on speech, and thus we have Admonitions 20 and 21. Francis handles speech differently in these two paragraphs than Benedict does in his rule. The urban context differs from the monastic context. Francis’s Admonitions are brief, given their relation to the movement’s basic document (Early Rule). They focus on movement action. In Admonition 21, the brother speaks as one who lends his voice to “the holy words and works of the Lord” (Admonition 20). Understandably, the Admonitions depend on prior agreements and consequently use the language of those agreements. The admonition is a speech genre particular to the Franciscan movement. It depends both on Francis’s gift and role as well as on the movement’s need and attention.

In the second of the two admonitions under study, the word *merces*, reward or pay or salary, stands out. It defines the brief saying, so much so that we can distinguish between the two by taking the first admonition as setting apart genuine speech and idle speech, and the second as showing how good speech can go wrong. It goes wrong when it is motivated by “hope of gain.” The term *merces*, as used here, first appears in Chapter 17 of the Early Rule: “They have received their reward.” The term seals a mode of behavior that has been set aside, which is the way the term functions in Admonition 21. Given what is going on in Chapter 17, we can say precisely what *merces* means here.

In the second part of Chapter 17 (10-16), Francis draws a contrast between the ways of the spirit of the world (10-13) and the ways of the Spirit of the Lord (14-16). By the time Chapter 17 was drawn up, the brothers had won a name for themselves in different sectors of the Assisian population. Although people did not understand the brothers at first, with time many came to look on them as good men, men of service to the needy, honest workers, cheerful brothers as well as holy. Inevitably, then, Assisi as a whole had begun including them as normal figures on the daily scene. Assisi was including the brothers in its business, offering them respect and honor, given the usefulness and the exemplarity of their lives. We can easily imagine that some city fathers even wished for more hard and quiet laborers who took little as pay, who also took care of the outcast, who even exercised a good or at least a restraining influence on the riff-raff. When people reacted to the brothers this way, they were identifying them as good Christians, as exemplary men, a tribute to their Christian city.

There we have the point of contrast between the two spirits. Francis says that the spirit of the world is not at all interested in true religion but in Assisi’s good fortune. That spirit uses the good brothers as proof of God’s blessing on the way of Assisi’s world. Anyone who is satisfied with the role of exemplary

Assisian belongs to the world of Assisi and, as an admired man of religion, has already had his reward (*merces*). The Spirit of the Lord suffuses a brother with a different sense of self, leading him to pursue something other than Assisi's wealth and honor. Francis and his brothers go on to specify that the Spirit of the Lord, spirit of true peace, drives them to the return of all good things (*bona*) to God (Early Rule 17:17).

Having checked on the meaning of *merces* in the Early Rule, we have no difficulty seeing what is going on in Admonition 21. A good brother is passing on the good news to others. He is sharing with them the sort of experience and counsel that we find in the Words of Recall and Exhortation. However, instead of giving his audience enough instruction and then consigning them to the illumination of the Spirit as they observe the way Franciscans live, himself included, the good brother readily sees himself as a wise purveyor of the movement's message. He goes on. He even tosses in a few confidential words he has directly from his good friend, Brother Francis himself. Alas, he has slipped into the role and the identity foresworn by Francis and his brothers in Chapter 17 of the Early Rule (10-13). He has acted as the holy brother, revered by the good Christians listening to him. And he has had his reward—the attention and the esteem of his audience. Given his desire to please, such a brother easily falls further. He becomes entertaining and soon finds himself playing the role of a fool, as does the religious censured in Admonition 20.

The "holy words of the Lord" go no further than what strengthens the witness and the service of the movement. The brother speaks as the voice of the Spirit of the Lord. In that role, he has much to say. If a brother of his falters, he says words that cheer up his companion. He offers words of comfort to people bending under life's burdens. Should he be asked for counsel, he speaks counsel, and no more than needed by the counselee. His homilies, gauging well the allotted time, do no more than pry the community open to the motion of God's grace. He has a good sense of the purposes pursued by the brotherhood, and these his words serve. As a consequence he finds himself where the brothers put themselves in Chapter 17 of the Early Rule. He finds himself open to the Spirit of the Lord; and with his brothers he has begun to sing, just as they do at the end of Chapter 17 and just as Admonition 20 describes.

As for the brother who talks on and on, he has neglected, according to Admonition 21, to deliver the message "by the way he lives." The Latin *per operationem* is an activist form of *opera*. We have to do again with "the works of the Lord" and the term deserves a little more attention. So, we return to Chapter 17 of the Early Rule.

Without going into an analysis of the whole chapter and its role in the Early Rule, which would contextualize these remarks, I quote one line (17:3):

"All the brothers should preach by the way they live." *Operibus praedicent* is the operative phrase, and it is customarily understood as preaching by good example. That is not what the phrase means. It is not the good example of the individual brother that delivers a message, but the mode of life of the brotherhood and of the movement. A single action needs context for its meaning; and a Franciscan deed needs the Franciscan context (well evoked by the Early Rule) for its meaning.

The deed means something else in Assisian terms. In Assisian terms, it manifests and sanctions the worldly religion excoriated in the Early Rule 17:12. Verse 6 of Chapter 17 confirms this reading of *operibus praedicent*. It counsels the brothers not to take satisfaction in what God is working through them. The "good deed" (*bona opera*) that God brings about (*operatur*) through them we must ascribe to the Spirit of the Lord. All good comes from God and, by our service, returns to him. To ourselves belong the complications and the blockages by which we hinder the work of the Spirit of the Lord in the world. And the two admonitions under study give us good examples of how that transpires. They tell us, as well, how by his words a brother practices openings for the Spirit in the lives of those who listen to him. "The way he lives" of Admonition 21 belongs with these and similar expressions in the early writings and first of all in the Early Rule.

The Life

Franciscan culture is the meaning intrinsic to Franciscan practices. It did not begin with the scriptural passages quoted in Chapter 1 of the Early Rule; it began with their practical interpretation. By agreeing on what they would do together and then by monitoring and developing their life in common, the early brothers, with Francis as their very vocal center, developed a language adequate to their practices. It gave form and substance to their *vita*, a script for a life that corresponded to their desires and their hopes. We cannot read Chapter 23 of the Early Rule and not conclude that these "minor brothers, useless servants," were persuaded that they had got things right. Francis was convinced that they had opened up among the people of their day a new sphere of life, where young people, such as he was when he set out on his quest, could find their way out of doubt into right action. (Well, and old people, too, as they said explicitly in Chapter 23.)

We can understand then that Francis urged his brothers, as he himself intended to do, to hold onto and live further "the life." He put that into writing in the cover letter with which he sent forth one revision of the movement's basic text. It has come down to us as Chapter 24 of the Early Rule. There he urges his brothers to read and ponder, to study and discuss, to immerse themselves, in sum, in Franciscan culture.

The document that Francis recommends to them so warmly he calls a *vita*, the life described in the foregoing pages. Thus he ties the preceding chapters into a whole introduced by the prolog, where he says: "This is the life which Brother Francis asked the lord pope to grant him." (There is no reference to "the gospel of Jesus Christ" in the prolog, after the word life. That was added by Angelus Clarenus, as the manuscripts so clearly demonstrate.) Nor were the brothers to have any other rule, as Francis concludes. (The Franciscans were not the first ones to call their textual guide a *vita*. Stephen of Tournai wrote on the rule of Grandmont: "They call their written text [*libellus*] with its constitutions a *vita* and not a *regula*.")

Francis insists that his brothers examine and study the text, discuss and explain it. More precisely, he wants them to go over it and do it. He presses them to keep that basic practice going whereby they lived the life and saw to its development. He does not want them to remove anything or to add anything. But if they follow the ways which got them to the present point, they would develop the text to stabilize and promote movement action; they would formulate further admonitions to support it; and they would do that without abandoning or diluting the words and ways which had gotten them to where they were. Words of intent, of correction, of rededication give rise to further words so that the original words stay alive. And so the Franciscans constantly added to their words, and Brother Francis knew it and did it and was doing it at that very moment, so that we have no trouble grasping what he meant here.

There was as well a criterion for critiquing inspiration. There had to be a criterion, for not every brother consulted the same spirit. We see that in the admonitions we have been examining. We see it especially in the rules for getting the ship back on course, when influential brothers would steer it astray. Early Rule 5:1-8 has behind it the conflicts at chapter and events prior to the chapter, when some brothers were falling back into the ways of the world. Francis told his brothers both to talk and to get things right. Yet there was no way for him to make sure they held onto and developed further what they already had. The text was a site of contest, and Francis had to contend with other powerful voices, not all of which had submitted themselves successfully to the school of the *vita*, the life.

When Hugh of Digne set out in 1253 to explain the Rule of 1223, he faced the injunction of Francis's Testament not to gloss the rule, but to take it purely and simply as written. In glossing the proscription of all gloss, Hugh quoted Chapter 24 of the Early Rule, the cover letter that we are discussing. There, Hugh usefully recalls, Francis blessed those who studied and discussed the rule. Gloss then meant a distortion of the rule; it did not at all mean simple explanation and well-intentioned resolution of unclear passages in the rule, such as Hugh had in mind. And so he set out to deploy an ascetical reading of

the rule. There is no pure and simple meaning. There is the text and there is a multitude of minds. Francis wanted his brothers to involve themselves in what they all had said and done up to that moment, well reported in the Early Rule. Such involvement was an integral part of Franciscan life. And Francis gave his brothers a brace of admonitions (20 and 21) to help them do it.

About Our Contributors

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The Canticle of the Creatures: A Reflection on Creative and Artistic Influences

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A great deal of scholarly work has gone into a thorough and exhaustive examination of the importance of the Canticle as the apex of Francis's spiritual-mystical life. Whole books deal with the Canticle as expressive of God's covenant relationship with all creation; books and articles explore the meaning of the prepositions, the verbs, and the adjectives. Debate engages in what is meant by *per*, and in-depth research situates ideas within the Canticle in relation to the events of Francis's life. But as yet there has been little or nothing on the literary and cultural influences that may have affected the manner in which the Canticle was styled.

Perhaps the first question that needs to be asked about the Canticle is: what is it? Is it a prayer, a poem, a song, a psalm styled along the basis of Psalm 8? In a sense it is all of these and none of them because the Canticle cannot be definitively described as being this and not that. At the surface level the Canticle is not about the life of Francis; it is about four things: the COSMIC, the OTHER, the PHYSICAL (World), the RELATIONAL. In this regard, it is like the Letter to a Minister or the Testament. It is one of those writings in which one can really examine and explore in depth the literary textual challenges, whether they be through close investigation of the prepositions or the adjectives or the grammatical constructions or the vocabulary. But in a real sense such an investigation is the end of a whole process that does not begin with the writing itself. It begins with the creative and literary influences on the mind and heart of the young John Bernadone.

The Canticle itself is the summation of Francis of Assisi's whole human endeavor. It represents the apex of his experientially reflective spirituality.

Whatever we finally determine the Canticle to be for us personally, it is interesting to note that the finest part of it was written two years before he died while he was undergoing great physical suffering. He had received the Stigmata with all its physical impact; he was suffering from stomach trouble; he was undernourished from fasting excessively; and he was blind. The most incredible thing is that he survived another two years after the major part of the Canticle was written.

The verses that speak of bearing suffering and welcoming Sister death (10-13) are the finest because they reflect that intense involvement in the human project that was his own life. They reflect, also, his own struggle to come to terms with his physical illnesses. So the Canticle is a song, a prayer, a poem, a psalm, a remarkable mystical insight. However, I would like to speak of the Canticle in another way, without necessarily highlighting the spirituality or the prayerfulness and praise within it. For the moment, let us leave the Canticle and return to the young John Bernadone. I have spoken elsewhere of the less attractive characteristics of the young John, but these aside, we must also acknowledge that he had an openness and receptivity to those new forms of cultural creativity that were sweeping through Europe, embodied particularly in the Troubadour tradition.

The Troubadour Tradition

I am convinced after years of study and research into the subject that the new forms of cultural creativity emerging during the period in which Francis lived have not been explored as much as might be. There were powerful influences at work on John Bernadone. There was that whole movement in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries in which Jongleurs were much in evidence. The Northern French Lyrical School, made up of the Trouvères, was beginning to make an impact. The Trouvères were somewhat elitist and very conscious of themselves until the Troubadours arrived on the scene.

Francis was called a "Troubadour" of God. This is an interesting use of the term, because it does not demonstrate any real understanding of what it actually meant. A Troubadour was neither a wandering minstrel nor a starry-eyed singer of early romantic ballads. The Troubadour tradition represented one of the great moments in European cultural and creative history, because Medieval Europe was turned on its head by the art and influence of the Troubadours. Those influences continue even to the present day.

The Troubadours introduced a whole new form of lyric poetry and music that the Church did not take kindly to, even though many Troubadours were monks, nuns, and priests. Principally what the Troubadours did was idealize Love and Woman, and they did that within the context of some wonderful, beautiful, and highly charged erotic poems. In that context, Love was seen to

be free; it did not depend on the marriage relationship. In fact, the Troubadour loved a lady who was married—an unobtainable goal to be pursued unceasingly. It is no accident that some of the early Franciscan works use the Troubadour form to explore the relationship between Francis and Lady Poverty. The *Sacrum Commmercium*, one of the finest early Franciscan texts, is a sustained reflection on this relationship, and it is without doubt a courtly love novella with all the characteristics of such works.

The Troubadours began to flood Europe with these poem-songs that celebrate love and the sexual relationship as an archetypal idealism of the female form, both physically and metaphysically. Much of the development of medieval Marianism is a result of direct opposition on the part of the Church to the Troubadour art of the Feminine Ideal. In the poem-songs of the Troubadours, the lover is always a knight, so knighthood is idealized as a courtly perfection. This is also the period of the Crusades, so there are a number of things happening at different levels. The secular war machine was mobilized and commissioned for the defense of the Church knighthood. Knighthood, itself, already possessed a framework in which it could manifest itself and give expression to its *raison d'être*, and that was the feudal system. So we have knighthood being confirmed within the feudal society as an extension of the power of the feudal lord and then being sacralized as a vocation because of the Crusades. Knights even become monks, taking vows on the one hand and taking up the sword on the other (e.g. the Knights Templar).

Then we have the Troubadours, some of whom traveled to the Crusades and there discovered new forms of musical and poetic creativity in Islamic literary art. But the Troubadours were more ecumenical than the Crusaders. They were not interested in politics; they were not interested in the Church's approval. They were interested only in poetry, music, and striving for ever more perfect forms of expression. For them, art was supreme.

The key to understanding the Troubadour lyric is that it had to be about Love. If a poem did not speak about Love ten times at least it was not a Troubadour art form. Also it had to be in French. Not only did it have to be in French, but it also had to be in the French dialect of the Languedoc region of Provence in southern France. This is a very specific art form that has material ready made for it—the idealizing of Love and Woman, the sacralizing of knighthood, and the *Chansons de Gestes* (Songs of Heroic Deeds, mainly about Charlemagne, the ideal Christian king, and Roland, the perfect Christian knight).

During the Albigensian persecutions, the Troubadours flooded into Northern Italy to escape this home-based Crusade by the Church. The Italians welcomed them because the Northern Italians, especially of Perugia and Umbria, already possessed a romantic openness. The newly emerging city-states were

ripe for such a powerful, creative impact—an impact on medieval society that cannot be underestimated.

John Bernadone was already artistically and creatively receptive. He was, no doubt, familiar with the *Chansons de Gestes* and some of the courtly love literature. It is inconceivable that in a major city-state like Assisi he would not have come into contact with these new art forms. We also know that Francis spoke French, although the debate as to where he learned French is still continuing. Celano tells us that when Francis wanted to praise his Lord, he sang in French. Why not his native tongue? Because the dominant music form was the *Ars Nova*, which, while creative, was still heavily influenced by plain chant. But when the Troubadours arrived on the scene, the *Ars Nova* was temporarily forgotten. Given this we can make a few observations about the young John Bernadone. We know that he was sensitive, that he had a poetic receptivity, that he was acquainted with the *Chansons de Gestes* and the *Song of Roland*, and that he was familiar with the chivalric ballads. We know he could speak French, though not how fluent he was. Some level of fluency has to be presupposed for singing. What was he singing? It is highly unlikely that he was singing liturgical plain chant in French!! It is more likely that he was singing Troubadour songs, or at least using Troubadour melodies and substituting his own lyrical compositions for the secular lyrics.

He knew how medieval instruments were played. A famous Celano description tells of Francis laying a stick across his arm and drawing another stick over it pretending to play a rebec (not a violin, which had not yet been invented!) (1Cel 127). The rebec had four strings. It was laid across the forearm from hand to elbow and a bow was drawn across it to sound arpeggio chords (the diatonic scale not yet having been fully developed). Troubadour melodies had a quick moving tempo. So where did Francis get this idea, if not from having seen it on the streets of Assisi? Perhaps this was where the notion of the glory and honor of knighthood came from. Such glory and honor was to win a lady's favor by becoming ennobled on the battlefield carrying out his own great deeds. This is the whole point of the chivalric ideal with all its *courtois* and *largesse* and *gentillesse*.

The Composition of the Canticle

If all this is put together, the Canticle begins to take on a slightly different perspective (without prejudice to its prayerfulness). There is something else present in the Canticle. We know that Francis sang the Canticle and that parts of it, written earlier, were well known. Thus it must have had an established melody, though we do not know what it consisted of. The section on peace and reconciliation was written spontaneously, set to the melody, and taught to the friars, who were directed to perform it before the mayor and bishop of

Assisi to help resolve their conflict. This demonstrates a pragmatic dimension to lyric poetry that was also written to effect some kind of change.

The melody must have been easy to remember. Those sections dealing with suffering and death had the melody applied to them and Francis asked the friars to sing it just before he died. It seems we are dealing with a melody that was well known and easy to learn and remember. The diction, tone, style, and literary construct of the Canticum would have required a light melody—not the heavy musicality of plain chant. Given what we know about Francis, his poetic temperament, and his creative receptivity, the style of melody would have been one with which he was most familiar: that of the Troubadour.

There is also an influence of chivalric literature in the Canticum that marks it as a true Troubadour song. What convinces me of this is that the Canticum is written in a native dialect, not in formal Italian; and even though its theme is “religious,” it praises intimate Love, personalized in a linguistic form. Further, it is a song full of archetypal ideals. While Woman is not the subject of this particular archetypal idealization, the work is nevertheless a song in praise of Love, so that we might structure those fourfold themes mentioned at the beginning this paper in this way:

| COSMIC | OTHER | PHYSICAL | RELATIONAL |
|--------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| All [praise] | Yours My Lord | Sun [strong etc.] | Brother |
| All [praise] | Yours My Lord | Moon [gentle etc.] | Sister |
| All [praise] | Yours My Lord | Water [useful etc.] | Sister |
| All [praise] | Yours My Lord | Wind [serene] | Brother |
| All [praise] | Yours My Lord | Fire [robust] | Brother |
| All [praise] | Yours My Lord | Death [no escape] | Sister |
| All [praise] | Yours My Lord | Earth [sustains] | Sister/Mother |

If the Canticum is studied in this way, there is a perfect balance of the *animus* and *anima*; also there is a tremendous sense of *courtois*. This, however, is not equivalent to our English word “courtesy” (good manners), but means “courtly” (adopting the attitude proper to a knight). In the Canticum, Francis adopts the attitude of a courtly lover. There is in every true sense an archetypalization happening. The Cosmos is idealized in the word “All”; the Other is acknowledged in “Yours my Lord”; the Physical provides the locus for praising the transcendent Sun, Moon, Stars, Wind, Earth, Water, Fire; and *courtois* is the Relationship that binds them as Brothers, Sisters, Mother.

The style of the adjectives reflects this profound *courtois*: “gentle,” “serene,” “humble,” “strong,” “robust,” “radiant,” “precious.” These were the attitudes and values that the knight was to hold. Even death itself is personal-

ized as gentle and serene in service to the great feudal Lord. What is also noticeable is that the medieval understanding of the constitutive elements of life itself is celebrated: Earth, Wind [air], Fire, Water. Each of these is nurturing and life giving and possesses its own unique way of being and communicating. Thus there is a creative, innovative use of older ideas: feudal relationships, courtly love, chivalric knighthood. So here is a whole dynamic movement in the universality of the word “All,” which manifests the universality of Sun, Moon, Stars, Water, Earth, Fire in the existential physicality of the world of matter, and it is celebrated with verve, enthusiasm, joy, and love.

But there is another relational dimension in the Canticum that can escape us in both its recitation or singing. The whole of the Canticum is not held together by prepositions or adjectives, but by two words that express the intimacy of relationships: YOURS [LORD] and MY. Francis personalizes the entirety of the creation by naming God personally and intimately in the word “yours,” but further personalizes it even more intimately in the personal genitive: “my.” This is more than a prayer, more than a song, more than a Troubadour style form piece. This is an intensely personal statement of an experience of life, which even in the depths of the most intense human suffering can still be celebrated for all its goodness. The largesse of God in the vision of Francis is the largesse of the perfect knight: kind, gentle, and humble.

In all respects, therefore, this is both a Troubadour lyric and a courtly novella about the wide range of God’s loving creative activity. It praises and glorifies God in the embrace of the physical world of loved matter. It is not a celebration of Agape, but a celebration of a form of Eros. Francis celebrates the place of his experience of love—namely, the whole of the cosmos. This lyric then is more than a celebration of the creativity of God; it is also a celebration of Franciscan life, the universality of which is drawn and held together by the intimate use of the word “MY”—My God, My All, My Lord.

Given what we know of Francis’s health at this point in his life this was a remarkable document, not just from a poetic-prayer point of view, but also from the point of view of the experience of human life. Francis had to rely on his memory. What was it like when I could see the sun, the moon, the stars, the flowing water and touch my Mother Earth? And nowhere in the Canticum is there one word of bitterness, resentment, anger, or regret. It is a vibrant, dynamic celebration and joyful effusion of the experience of a life lived in passionate intensity. In the Stigmata and the Canticum everything begun in those heady, enthusiastic days of gospel embrace came to an end. Following these events there is nowhere left for Francis to go except into the loving embrace of Sister Death. The Canticum then is undoubtedly an intimate, personal love song written by a true Troubadour, that is, one who could celebrate the perfection of Love.

A Study of Discernment in the Writings of Francis of Assisi

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In the long and colorful history of our Franciscan tradition, we are privileged to live in a time of unprecedented opportunity. Due to the advances of recent scholarship, we now have available to us English translations of early Franciscan documents that are based on critical editions of the texts. Thus, in light of current literary criticism we are able to further mine the riches of Francis of Assisi's simple vision of Gospel life as revealed through his own writings.

This article explores the theme of discernment as expressed in the writings of Francis. We begin by considering the meaning of discernment itself, followed by an inquiry into Francis's understanding of Gospel life. Then we investigate various dimensions of discernment as revealed in several of Francis's writings. We conclude with summary remarks drawn from the preceding study.

Discernment of Spirits

The word "discernment" signifies "the act or process of exhibiting keen insight and good judgement" or "keenness of insight and judgement."¹ Etymologically, "to discern" in Latin derives from *discernere*, to separate: *dis*- (apart)+ *cernere*, (to perceive).² Referring to a Christian context, Michael J. Buckley speaks of discernment as:

Both a charismatic gift given by the Spirit of God for the common good of the whole community and a developed Christian capacity to discriminate among the various spiritual states that are being experienced—the "spirits"—in order to determine which lead toward God and which lead away from God. . . . The goal of discernment is "God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden" to which a person comes, for "we have

not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given us by God" (1Cor. 2:7,12).³

Evaristo Acosta Maestre in "The Discernment of Spirits According to St. Francis of Assisi," further specifies the value of discernment:

We must, then, distinguish the impulses of the Spirit, which are contrary to the impulses of the flesh (see Rom. 8: 5ff), and we must practice with simplicity and purity that discernment of spirits which is indispensable if we are to respond freely to the operation of the Spirit (see Gal. 5: 16-26).⁴

Referring to Francis's discernment of spirits, Maestre notes it "was the result of a long ripening process, an exodus, a liberation" in which his freedom "was the result of his confrontation with the Word of God and with God Himself."⁵

In purity of heart, Francis put into practice the discernment of spirits, first correcting the spiritual vices. As regards members of his fraternity, he wanted each one to open himself up to the creator and to creatures with a clean heart and pure mind.⁶

Francis intuited that all good belongs to God, Who alone is good and Who alone does all good in and through us. This insight was born out of his living the Gospel in word and deed and served as the basis for his practice of the discernment of spirits.⁷

The Life of the Gospel

Francis rediscovered the simplicity of the Gospel in the early thirteenth century. In his Testament, written during the last days of his life, Francis attributed his conversion, faith, words, and even his brothers to God's inspiration (Test 1, 2, 4, 6, 14, 23, 39).⁸ Furthermore, he attests: "No one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel" (Test 14). Francis is remarkably consistent in his insistence that the life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is his point of reference and fundamental orientation. The Earlier Rule is a document that evolved out of the simple form of life that Pope Innocent III had orally approved in 1209 or 1210 and which was brought to completion at the brothers' Chapter in 1221. In this document we read: "The rule and life of the brothers is this, namely: to live in obedience, in chastity and without anything of their own, and to follow the teaching and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ" (RegNB 1:1).

The Rule of 1223 is more concise and contains a juridical tone not present in the Earlier Rule. It is a synthesis of the earlier document and also responds to the growing complexity of experience and structures of the brothers.⁹ Here we find “the Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of one’s own, and in chastity” (RegB 1:1). The life of the Gospel as interpreted by Francis was a creative integration of prayer and action. In “The Spirit of Prayer and the Active Life According to the Mind of St. Francis,” Octavian Schmucki addresses the relationship of inner prayer life and its outer expression in the world.¹⁰ Quoting the Later Rule, he highlights the primacy of prayer as a basic value stressed by Francis:

Moreover, I admonish and exhort the brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ to beware of all pride, vainglory, envy and greed, of care and solicitude for the things of this world (cf. Mt. 13:22; Lk. 12:15), of detraction and murmuring. Let those who are illiterate not be anxious to learn, but let them attend to what they must desire above all else: to have the Spirit and Its holy manner of working, to pray always to Him with a pure heart.¹¹

This holy working of the Spirit warrants our attention.

The Spirit of the Lord and the Spirit of the Flesh

Our exploration of what it means to discern between the Spirit of the Lord and the spirit of the flesh begins through the lens of the Admonitions. In medieval times, an admonition was a teaching tool “in which a biblical passage or image was presented, and in light of it, a practical application was made.”¹² Insight into Francis’s biblical thought and how this was applied in daily life can be gleaned by looking at these Admonitions. Maestre states:

The key to understanding and interpreting the Admonitions is interior poverty, a virtue which enables us to understand everything. . . . By divine grace, humility is possible if it is built upon the Gospel foundation of interior poverty, which is the central theme of the Admonitions.¹³

Cajetan Esser writes that Admonition 12 specifically addresses “how to discern whether one has the Spirit of the Lord.”¹⁴ The Admonition reads:

A servant of God can be known to have the Spirit of the Lord in this way: if when the Lord performs some good through him, his flesh does not therefore exalt itself, because it is always opposed to every

good. Instead, he regards himself the more worthless and esteems himself less than all others (Adm 12).

In this Admonition, we find listed three signs by which we can distinguish whether we are living in the Spirit of the Lord or in the spirit of the flesh. According to Admonition 12, the first sign that we are living in the Spirit of the Lord is interior poverty, a poverty of spirit that sees all as gift and gives gratitude to God.¹⁵ The last verse indicates the second and third signs. The second is humility—the humble person lives in “continuous gratitude to the bountiful Lord. . . . Pride is already overcome.”¹⁶ Honest self-knowledge, or minority, is the third sign that the Spirit of the Lord guides us.¹⁷

Returning to Francis’s basic principle for discernment that all good belongs to God and that God alone is good, one recognizes that “the instinct for acquisition comes from the flesh or, rather, from selfish tendencies, whereas the Spirit of the Lord moves us to live selflessly, in purity and simplicity.”¹⁸ The flesh “means the whole complex of elements which, in man’s daily life, offer resistance to the invasion of the Spirit. Francis sees this egocentrism, this principle of opposition to God, as ‘the spirit of the flesh.’”¹⁹ In his Letter to the Romans, Paul expresses the distinction in this way:

Those who live according to the flesh are intent on the things of the flesh, those who live according to the spirit, on those of the spirit. The tendency of the flesh is toward death but that of the spirit toward life and peace (Rom. 8:5-6).

The opposition between the Spirit of the Lord and the spirit of the flesh is given a more extended treatment in the Earlier Rule 17. Optatus van Asseldonk explains that in this chapter Francis intends to provide all the brothers “with a program for Gospel living—one that is always and everywhere valid for each brother—by indicating the spirit that should animate them in every situation.”²⁰ Francis continues by exhorting all the brothers to “preach by their deeds” (RegNB 17:3). They should

strive to humble themselves in everything, not to boast or delight in themselves or inwardly exalt themselves because of the good works or deeds or, for that matter, because of any good that God sometimes says or does or works in and through them. . . . Because the spirit of the flesh very much desires and strives to have the words but cares little for the activity; it does not seek a religion and a holiness in an interior spirit, but wants and desires to have a religion and holiness outwardly apparent to people (RegNB 17:5-12).

Hence, for Francis the spirit of the flesh “interiorizes and spiritualizes the concepts of sin and vice, placing them within the human spirit, the impure and selfish heart.”²¹ The Spirit of the Lord, by contrast, considers the flesh to be “of little worth” (RegNB 17:14).

It strives for humility and patience, the poor, simple and true peace of the spirit. Above all, it desires the divine fear, the divine wisdom and the divine love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (RegNB 17:15,16).

Referring to the Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful 45-46, van Asseldonk expands his treatment of the Spirit of the Lord, specifying that “the flesh is to be mortified so as to be able to receive the Spirit of the Lord: ‘we must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh; rather, we must be simple, humble and pure. . . .’”²²

In summary, the Spirit of the Lord “produces the virtues” and “puts to death” the spirit of the flesh.²³ Francis sees to the heart of the matter and exhorts: “Let us refer all good to the Lord, God Almighty and Most High, acknowledge that every good is His, and thank Him, From Whom all good comes, for everything” (RegNB 17:17).

Discernment in Action

Knowing that all good comes from God is not enough when living the Gospel life. Admonition 7, also entitled “Let Good Action Follow Knowledge,” describes “the opposition between the letter (or flesh, which appropriates good to itself) and the Spirit, Who gives the true life hidden in the letter and makes us refer all good to God.”²⁴ Francis quotes Paul: “The letter kills, but the spirit gives life” (2Cor. 3:6). He then explains:

Those people are put to death by the letter who only wish to know the words alone, that they may be esteemed wiser than others and be able to acquire great riches to give to their relatives and friends . . . [who] wish only to know the words and interpret them for others. And those people are brought to life by the spirit of the divine letter who . . . by word and example, return them [their knowledge] to the most high Lord God to Whom every good belongs (Adm 7).

This Admonition gives insight as to what it means that the letter kills and the spirit gives life; it “deals with right hearing, with listening and obeying.”²⁵

From another perspective, the Later Rule addresses “The Manner of Working.” It begins:

Those brothers to whom the Lord has given the grace of working may work faithfully and devotedly so that, while avoiding idleness,

the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all temporal things must contribute (RegB 5:1-2).

Here Francis gives guidance to those who have been given the grace of working; any “work, study or preaching must contribute (*deservire*) to this spirit of prayer, they must be its servant.”²⁶ Incorporating a key passage from chapter ten of the Later Rule, which had previously been written regarding manual work, Francis writes a letter regarding the manner of teaching and study of theology. In His Letter to Brother Anthony of Padua, he writes:

I am pleased that you teach sacred theology to the brothers providing that, as is contained in the Rule, you “do not extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion” during study of this kind (EpAnt 2. See also RegB 5:1-2).

Francis exhorts that the Spirit of prayer not be extinguished in study or in work.

In the Later Rule, Francis urges: “Let them pay attention to what they must desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity, to pray always to Him with a pure heart (RegB 10:8-9). Maestre refers to this desire as the “supreme rule of life” which Francis presented to his friars; it is the spirit of love; it is the way of discernment of spirits.²⁷ Chapter 10 further addresses concerns of obedience and correction, admonishing the brothers to remember that for God’s sake they have renounced their own wills, while also reminding the ministers to be charitable for they are the servants of all the brothers (RegB 10).

A strong testimony to Francis’s own practice of this familiar and compassionate care for the brothers is found in his Letter to Brother Leo. Addressing Leo “as a mother would,” he affirms his implicit faith in Leo’s judgment and the practice of discernment. Francis advises Leo:

In whatever way it seems better to you to please the Lord God and to follow His footprint and poverty, do it with the blessing of God and my obedience. And if you need and want to come to me for the sake of your soul or for some consolation, Leo, come (EpLeo 3,4).

This letter, written with tender care, reveals Francis’s “perceptions not only of gospel life but also of the responsible freedom that comes with maturity in struggling to live it authentically.”²⁸ The letter is a comfort, a challenge to responsibility, and a call to listen for divine inspiration.

The Rule for Hermitages, written for those drawn to the eremitical expression of the brothers’ shared life, reveals yet another dimension to the clear guidance Francis offers. In the spirit of Martha and Mary, there are to be two

“mothers” and one or two “sons.” The mothers and sons may exchange roles, “taking turns for a time as they have mutually decided” (RegEr 10).²⁹ The rhythm of this interchange is to be mutually discerned between mothers and sons; furthermore, the sons have the freedom “when it pleases them” to beg alms “as poor little ones out of the love of the Lord God” (RegEr 5). Schmucki observes

It is noteworthy that he [Francis] did not regard the “Mary” function as a fixed duty. That is to say, the completely contemplative life did not form a permanent state in the Franciscan vocation but was changed when fraternal charity required it. . . . Inner poverty demanded that no friar should retain for himself any mission whatsoever, be it preaching or contemplative prayer.³⁰

Thus to live in a discerning way is to be attentive in prayer, open to change, and ready to respond faithfully in action.

Conclusion

The discernment of spirits as witnessed to us through the writings of Francis is an inspiring combination of God’s initiative and our careful listening and active response. Learning to discern between the Spirit of the Lord and the spirit of the flesh requires that we be rooted in humility, honest self-knowledge, and purity of heart. When we live in gratitude, aware that all good belongs to God, we are able to enter into the art of discernment. We can conclude that Francis himself was a master in discerning the ways of the Lord, as well as in guiding others to such freedom of spirit. Francis encourages us to dance with God, to desire above all else the holy activity of the Spirit of the Lord. Applying the wisdom learned from Francis, the practice of the discernment of spirits will support each individual and community in maturing and flourishing in the Gospel life.

Endnotes

¹*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed., [book on-line] (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000, accessed 18 May 2001); available from <http://www.bartleby.com/61/42/DO254200.html>; Internet.

²*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*

³Michael J. Buckley, SJ, “Discernment of Spirits,” in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 277-78.

⁴Evaristo Acosta Maestre, OFMCap., “The Discernment of Spirits According to St. Francis of Assisi,” trans. Paul Barrett, OFMCap., *Greyfriars Review*, 2.1 (1988): 49.

⁵Maestre, 49-50.

⁶Maestre, 50.

⁷Maestre, 53.

⁸Unless otherwise noted, all citations from the writings of Francis are taken from: Regis J. Armstrong, OFMCap., J. A. Wayne Hellmann, OFMConv., and William J. Short, OFM, eds., *The Saint*, vol. 1, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York: New City Press, 1999). See also Maestre, “Discernment of Spirits,” 63.

⁹*The Saint*, 99.

¹⁰Oktavian Schmucki, OFMCap., “The Spirit of Prayer and the Active Life According to the Mind of St. Francis,” trans. Paul Barrett, OFMCap., *Greyfriars Review*, 8.1 (1994): 33.

¹¹RegB 10:7-9. As quoted by Schmucki, “The Spirit of Prayer,” 33.

¹²*The Saint*, 128.

¹³Maestre, “The Discernment of Spirits,” 55-56.

¹⁴Cajetan Esser, OFM, “Meditations on *The Admonitions* of St. Francis of Assisi,” trans. M. Belane Apel, OSF, *Greyfriars Review*, 6. Supplement (1992): 71.

¹⁵Maestre, “The Discernment of Spirits,” 57-58.

¹⁶Esser, “Meditations on *The Admonitions*,” 73.

¹⁷Esser, “Meditations on *The Admonitions*,” 74. See also Maestre, “The Discernment of Spirits,” 61-62.

¹⁸Maestre, “The Discernment of Spirits,” 57.

¹⁹Maestre, “The Discernment of Spirits,” 58.

²⁰Optatus van Asseldonk, OFMCap., “The Spirit of the Lord and Its Holy Activity in the Writings of Francis,” trans. Edward Hagman, OFMCap., *Greyfriars Review*, 5.1 (1991): 125.

²¹van Asseldonk, “The Spirit of the Lord,” 127.

²²van Asseldonk, “The Spirit of the Lord,” 129. See also 2EpFid 45-46.

²³van Asseldonk, “The Spirit of the Lord,” 130.

²⁴van Asseldonk, “The Spirit of the Lord,” 150.

²⁵Esser, “Meditations on *The Admonitions*,” 45.

²⁶van Asseldonk, “The Spirit of the Lord,” 121.

²⁷Maestre, “The Discernment of Spirits,” 66.

²⁸Regis Armstrong, OFMCap., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings for a Gospel Life* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1994), 226.

²⁹This imagery is based on the story of Martha and Mary found in Lk. 10:38-42.

³⁰Schmucki, “The Spirit of Prayer,” 36.

Praised be You, my Lord,
with all Your creatures.

... Praise and bless
my Lord
and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great
humility.





Henryk Skolimowski

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Christianity has been in crisis for a number of centuries—at least since Luther. Its acute crisis started in the industrial age and has accelerated in the technological age. Faced with the cornucopia of technological abundance that promises salvation through consumption, the Christian churches have shrunk in their reach and responsibility. They have been unable to meet the challenge of growing materialism that emerged in the wake of the triumphant technological world view—which itself declared the world to be a machine manipulated by technological devices to [the hu] man's advantage.

On another level, the churches have been able to meet the moral challenges of cynicism, nihilism, and the value vacuum, which have crept in as the companions of material affluence. The overall malaise of the Christian churches has been deepened by the ecological crisis. The simple truth is that Christian teaching is ecologically insensitive. Moreover, some have found the Bible to be a blueprint for ecological destruction.

Within the body of Christian teaching, the Franciscan perspective has been profoundly neglected. St. Francis has always been a source of sustaining power within Christianity, a good shepherd who makes us aware of the power of simplicity. I will attempt to show here that the Franciscan teaching has survived much better than the teaching of orthodox Christianity simply because St. Francis's vision is deeper and more universal than the one officially followed by the church. A return to the Franciscan vision may be a salvation for the Christian churches.

Let me first briefly outline Francis's life and thought. He was born in Assisi in 1182, died in 1226. Thus he lived for only forty-four years. As a young

man, Francis was ambitious. He dreamed of fame and honor but without any definite idea how fame was to come to him. He enlisted as a voluntary soldier for the war that was being fought at the time between the Papal armies and the German armies on the islands of Sicily in the years 1200-1202. While on the way to the battlefield, he heard strange voices during his sleep, calling him to serve the lord. He heard the same voice the next day, this time being only half-asleep. The voice urged him to return "to the land of his birth." And so he did. This was the end of his military career and the beginning of his spiritual quest.

After months of lonely struggles with his soul, while continually praying and often weeping at the Etruscan tombs outside the town of Assisi, he spent a day at St. Peter's church in Rome as a beggar in beggar's clothes with his hand outstretched for alms. Through this experience he found a kinship with the poor. He embraced Lady Poverty.

Now, on the slope of the hill outside the city of Assisi, there stood the little church of San Damiano. Francis took a liking to it. The church was in a sorry state of disrepair. One day while praying there, he heard a voice, "Francis, repair my church." He returned to his father's house, packed a big load of finest cloth, loaded it on the finest horse his father possessed, and went to the market. He sold the cloth and the horse and brought a considerable amount of money to the priest of San Damiano.

The poor vicar was too frightened to accept the money after he heard the whole story. So Francis left an urn with the money on a windowsill. Upon returning to Assisi after his journey, Francis's father Pietro Bernadone learned about his son's "theft." He got furious. He decided to try Francis before the magistrate of Assisi. Francis refused the summons, declaring that being a man dedicated to religion, he was not subject to the civic authorities but only to the bishop.

Thus, Bishop Guido was to preside over the trial of Francis in the cathedral of Assisi. On the day of the trial, Francis duly appeared. When remonstrated by the bishop to return the money to his father, Francis said: "My Lord, I will gladly give back to him not only his money, but all my clothes I have had of him." Then he took off all the clothes he wore. Stark naked, he put his clothes in front of the bishop.

This act required more than courage. This was an extraordinary act of confronting wealth and authority with one's naked body in the middle of a cathedral. This was an act declaring: Here I am at God's tribunal, and may frail human justice tremble in the face of deeds done on behalf of the needy and the oppressed—even if they violate the existing legal codes. The rest of Francis's life was a continuation of the dramatic encounter at Assisi cathedral. The essence of the Franciscan legacy can be expressed simply:

- Confront injustice and human misery directly. He who does not speak on behalf of the oppressed, contributes to the crime.
- Redistribution of wealth is our responsibility. The unjustified accumulation of wealth by some is the root cause of miseries of others.
- We stand before God's tribunal, which ultimately means the tribunal of our conscience. To this tribunal of our conscience we are ultimately responsible, particularly as the existing laws so often protect and favor the rich at the expense of the poor.
- Have the courage of being naked. Ultimately you are naked. No garment should muffle the voice of your conscience.
- Have the courage of simplicity. For this simplicity can release from within you great spiritual powers which are numbed by your slavery to mindless over-consumption.

There is no question that Francis was in advance of his age, as he anticipated all that is liberal and sympathetic in modern times: the love of nature, the love of animals, the sense of social compassion, the sense of the spiritual dangers of affluence. Of various aspects of his important legacy, the most important for us is the Franciscan ecological or ecological-spiritual legacy. The worship of nature was for Francis a part of the overall ecological spirituality. We thus hear these incantations expressed in "The Canticle of Brother Sun":

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water,
 who is very useful and humble and precious and pure.
 Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
 in the heavens you formed them clear and precious
 and beautiful.
 Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Wind
 and through Air and Cloud and fair and all Weather,
 by which you nourish all that you have made.
 Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
 by whom you light up the night;
 he is beautiful and merry and vigorous and strong.
 Be praised, my Lord, with all your creatures,
 especially Sir Brother Sun,
 who is day and by him you shed light upon us.
 He is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
 of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Because of his extraordinary sense of empathy with all creation, because of his gaiety, romantic imagination and universal camaraderie, not only Christians but people of all religions who are acquainted with his teachings are drawn to St. Francis.

St. Francis's discourses were not numerous, not elaborate, let alone learned. He did not produce anything comparable to the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas. He did not produce any systematic theology. His was the vision of the heart, speaking directly to the heart of others.

Francis was not the first man to make voluntary poverty an enormous shining virtue. The Buddha embraced the same ideal eighteen hundred years before Francis. He too renounced all the riches of earthly splendor; abandoned his palace, his wife, his son, and in beggar's clothes went to seek salvation and redemption. In our century, Mahatma Gandhi, inspired by Hindu ideals, followed a path of simplicity very similar to that of Francis. Those saints of other religions do not diminish Francis. On the contrary, in their company Francis shines as a universal being, as a cosmic being. For the ideals he proclaimed ring true in all major spiritual traditions of humanity; Francis is the saint for all religions. Among Christian saints, Francis is the most popular and most liked.

It was a misfortune for Western culture and Western Christianity that it chose the path of St. Thomas Aquinas and not the path of St. Francis. From the beginning, St. Francis was an extraordinary challenge to the Roman Church and an extraordinary inspiration to simple Christians. He was on the verge of being excommunicated more than once. He was canonized very soon after his death—in order to avoid a split within the Church. To co-opt him as a saint was a way of blunting the poignancy of his message—that the life of a Christian should be one following Christ's simplicity.

For a couple of centuries after his death, the Franciscan way was alive and vibrant, if only among ordinary people. Then came Martin Luther with his challenge. And then came the Council of Trent of 1545-1563, which tried to find a radical and satisfactory response to Luther. Since the Trent Council, Thomist Christianity has prevailed, and the Franciscan vision has been pushed aside. Why? The reason is not a direct one.

It was not the case that the Bishops of Trent loved Aquinas more than Francis. The great problem of the time was how to contain Luther. There were many tricky and muddled theological problems, and Aquinas was so clear in spelling out the Christian doctrines. His vision of Christianity won.

The power to define is the power to control. Thomist Christianity is based on the power of the word, which is the power of the mind. Franciscan Christianity, on the other hand, is based on the power of love, which is the power of the heart. Within the Christian tradition, the mind has prevailed over the heart. And Christianity has become brainy, abstract, wordy—and void of heart. This is our dilemma nowadays, of the whole Western civilization: we are clever and brainy. But our hearts have atrophied.

The mystical approaches to Christianity were flourishing until the time of St. Thomas Aquinas. However, as time passed, the rational attitude began to

prevail. Aristotle replaced Plato as the foundation of Christianity. Thomist theology is Aristotelian through and through.

Thus Christianity repeats the road of ancient Greek philosophy. But we need to remember that earlier Greek philosophies, including that of Socrates and Plato, reveled in holism and bathed in the all-pervading sense of mystery surrounding us. Before Aristotle's time, the *logos* of Pythagoras and Plato was all encompassing, was in fact a total divine matrix for deciphering the meaning of the cosmic laws. We should be aware that for the Pythagoreans mathematics was suffused in divinity.

With Aristotle we begin the quest for analytical clarity. For the sake of this clarity, things are cut up and parceled off. Rational justification and analytical definitions are arrived at at the expense of depth, mystery, and wholeness.

In the early Middle Ages, mystical interpretations of Christianity abound. The twelfth and thirteenth century mystics have left quite an inspiring and important legacy. Many of these mystics were excommunicated and officially condemned by the proclamations of the Vatican.

St. Francis was one of the mystics. He recognized that the power of the heart is greater than the power of the mind, that the power of things unseen is greater than that of things seen, that the power of simplicity, of frugality, of giving is more significant than the capacity for acquiring and luxuriating in earthly splendor.

Franciscan powers are exactly those preached by Jesus Christ. Thus Francis will always remain relevant, appealing, and inspiring to those who take the teaching of Jesus seriously. Francis will continually remain a challenge, if not a thorn, to the institution of the Church, particularly when this institution insists on the primacy of doctrine over the understanding of the heart.

The attitude toward mysticism in the Western world is thoroughly ambiguous. We are uneasy with mystics. They are just not "rational" enough. Our whole culture has been sanitized by rationality. Anything holistic, deep, mysterious, let alone mystical, is often condemned as irrational. We need to remind ourselves again of what Albert Einstein says about the mysterious: "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious."

We have found of late that rationality is a poor substitute for spirituality. So the great question that confronts us is: was the Western mind so made that it had to develop its discursive *logos* with a distinctive, hard-cutting rationality? Or is this rationality the result of following Aristotle and not Plato? And later that we followed Thomas Aquinas and not Francis? I believe that the latter is the case. Whom we follow has enormous consequences for our lives.

Had we followed the Franciscan way, the devastations of nature would not have occurred, and the devastations of our individual lives would not have

happened—the two are aspects of the same phenomenon. The Franciscan teaching that all beings in creation are our brothers and sisters is a very powerful and inspiring guide of how to treat nature.

This is what the Native American Indian cultures have believed and followed to the benefit of ecological systems for millennia, until they were ravaged by European diseases and settlers. It may be said that Native Americans were good Franciscans; or that St. Francis was a good Native American. How we treat nature is ultimately a religious matter. How we treat animals is ultimately a religious matter. How we treat each other is ultimately a religious matter.

The way of the heart, within which all creatures are sacred and are our brothers and sisters in creation, would have enabled Christianity to extend justice to all beings in the universe. The Franciscan way would have precluded the destruction of nature from the onset, for nature is not a thing "out there" given to us for our use, but a part of our outer self. The Franciscan way would have brought with it a different form of perception, a different form of thinking (which I call reverential thinking) and consequently different paradigms of what is good and effective action.

In 1979, Pope John Paul II proclaimed St. Francis the Patron Saint of Ecologists. This was very nice, but more a gesture than the beginning of a substantive change in the policy and teaching of the Church. As I have already mentioned, Francis was canonized very soon after his death. One suspects a similar thing happened when Francis was proclaimed patron saint of ecologists. The Vatican seems to be saying: "You have now got St. Francis as your patron. You should regard this as an indication that the Church cares for ecology." However, in order to make Francis a part of the living Christian liturgy and a part of the actual lives of actual Christians, much more is needed than making him the patron saint of ecologists.

For the main problem still remains. This is the problem of elevating the human person above all other creatures and giving humans dominion over every living thing that creeps on this Earth. If we are to acquire ecological consciousness we need to alter fundamentally the nature of this teaching. We need much more than the conviction of the sacredness of the human person. Unless this sacredness is extended to other creatures, the gulf will always remain between us and the rest of creation.

There is no easy way to translate the ethics based on the Ten Commandments into meaningful ecological action as long as the human being is on the pedestal. In these reinterpretations, St. Francis should be our guide. He represents a new promise for Christianity. It was not only possible for him but indeed inevitable to celebrate the sacredness of the human and the sacredness of all other beings.

From his visions and views concerning the oneness and the sacredness of all creation we can derive new, ecologically sound Christian ethics. A new encyclical should be introduced by the Pope proclaiming that all creatures are sacred. We should all work towards this end—by making the Church aware that unless all nature and its creatures are declared sacred, we do not have a solid ethical basis for a radical healing of the planet. Nor is there a basis for eliminating environmental pollution—which is now a more serious threat to the future of human kind than the possibility of a nuclear holocaust.

If we lose the environment, we lose God.

ECOLOGY

Cronan Fahey, OFMCap.

"He embraced all things with his silent devotion, speaking to them about the Lord and exhorting them to praise him." (Said of St. Francis of Assisi)

Great and wonderful God of all Creation,
I praise you for everything we have upon the earth:
The rivers and oceans, the trees and plants,
The rocks and hills, birds and beasts.

God of Infinite Variety, how wonderful and varied
Are the gifts you have given us!
The earth is full of things you have made.
How precious are the presents you present to us!
Yet, how fragile, frail, and feeble they become
As they groan under our overpowering and abusive treatment!
See how we have polluted the outer world
With our arrogant and careless behavior,
A sign of the greater pollution that is taking place in our spirit!
God my Creator, forgive me for my crimes against your creation.
Where I have disdainfully trampled it underfoot;
Treated it as a cruel master might treat a submissive slave.
God of all Gentleness and Respect,
Give me a gentle and respectful spirit,
Which will prevent me from treating things outside and around me
As subordinates, and not as equals.
For am I not related to the whole of creation?
Are we not, in truth, brothers and sisters,
Having you as our common Creator?
You have given me power over the earth,
But only so that I can be its servant, its protector.
Let me humbly embrace all things with silent devotion,
Speaking to them about you, exhorting them to praise you.

"The earth is full of things you have made, O God. You give breath, fresh life begins,
and you keep renewing the world" (Ps. 104:24-30).

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Franciscan Martyrdom: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Barton Levi St. Armand, SFO

[This presentation was given as part of a celebration of the Martyrs of China who were canonized on October 1, 2000, among them numerous Franciscans, lay and religious. The celebration was held at the St. Francis Chapel in Providence, Rhode Island, on October 2, 2000. See Editor's Note, page 253, for some details about this celebration.]

The author wishes to dedicate this article to
Sister Alma Dufault, FMM, for all the selfless service
and inspiring spiritual leadership she has given to the St. Clare of Assisi
Fraternity of the Secular Franciscans in North Providence, RI,
of which Dr. St. Armand is a member.

On this occasion of the commemoration of a great individual and group martyrdom, it is interesting to remember that St. Francis himself once actively sought to become a martyr. In a famous incident, while preaching Christianity to the Saracens, he challenged their religious leaders to walk through fire to prove the power and efficacy of his faith, but his hope for a miraculous conversion was ultimately frustrated. Francis was not denied, however, a kind of martyrdom and even the classic experience of its searing flames. We often say that "so and so is a martyr to this or that illness." Francis endured major illnesses during his lifetime, undergoing a blisteringly painful treatment for his late blindness, which involved a cauterization of his head with a red-hot iron. It was typical of him, however, that he should personify and even attempt to make friends with this pain—become a missionary to it, as it were—by saying: "Brother Fire, who art nobler and more useful than most other creatures, I have always been good to you and always will be so for the love of him who created you. Now show yourself gentle and courteous with me and do not burn me more than I can stand." And it is reported that when the treatment was over, Francis said to the doctors: "If that is not enough burning, then burn it again, for I have not felt the least pain."

Franciscans today, unlike those who have just been canonized, are not often actually called to offer our bodies to be beaten or our heads to be severed as a testimony to our faith. But like Francis himself, we are called to be missionaries to pain and suffering of all kinds—physical, spiritual, and psychological. Ours is a duty, and sometimes even a minor personal martyrdom, to what the old prayerbooks used to call “the troublesome”—the pebbles that lodge in the shoes of daily life.

While such missionary activity can never match the sacrifice of canonized saints, it can hold its own in recognizing burning embers and devouring flames as minor brothers, and—as Francis does in *The Cantic of the Sun*—even go so far as to embrace death as a sister when it rescues someone we love from intolerable and incremental agonies. When we think of the many modern cures that, like Francis’s cauterization, may finally seem worse than the affliction itself—cruel surgeries, shattering radiation treatments, debilitating chemotherapies—just to endure, stand, witness, confront and in some way comfort such private physical martyrdoms is itself a martyrdom of the spirit. This is because we are forced to do something that our minds and bodies naturally shrink from, as Francis no doubt shrank from the fire of his treatment, ordered as it was by higher authorities. Francis knew he owed a debt to fire and, taking his cue from Christ’s worldly-wise parable of the unjust steward, he made his bargain with reality and wooed his divine master by appealing to a truly elemental generosity of spirit.

It is this generosity of spirit, framed by the increasingly demanding velocities of everyday life, that I think is the hallmark of the so-called Third Order. To exercise such generosity means going out of your way to call someone brother or sister and to act upon that prescribed fraternity and sorority. It is one of the paradoxes of our age that, as things become more instantaneous and speedy, in proportion our tempers become shorter and the roots of our discontent more inaccessible. We can call up information on the internet with a few double-clicks of a mouse, but assessing deep internal glitches becomes much more obscure and difficult. So the Franciscan martyrs become important precisely because they make us think of a world beyond the TVs, computers, and multiplex screens of media illusion. It is a truly awful thing to feel fire and to spill blood, yet this is happening to our neighbors, our friends, our relatives—to the beloved as well to the troublesome—every day of our lives. Projected on the nightly news, these kinds of suffering seem remote and exotic—just as do the sacrifices of the new Franciscan martyrs in the context of the nationalist mania of the Boxer Rebellion.

Yet when we return to Francis again, we can see that he also made provision for this, since the two poles of Franciscan life are a pushing out and a pulling back—a sally into the world and a retreat inward into contemplation. Francis

knew that we should be up and doing, but he also realized that it was necessary at times also to become very still and very quiet—and the fresh fact of this canonization should provide us with a sacred leisure, apart from the world in which we find our main secular vocation, to meditate on how exceptional violence can be transmuted into extraordinary transcendence. Drawing on examples from the secular world, the American poet Emily Dickinson wrote:

The Martyr Poets did not tell,
But wrought their pang in syllable,—
That when their mortal fame be numb
Their mortal fate encourage some.

The Martyr Painters never spoke,
Bequeathing rather to their work,—
That when their conscious fingers cease
Some seek in Art the Art of Peace.¹

And that is just what a meditation on this martyrdom should leave us with—the encouragement and bequest of a work and an art of peace—a slow, quiet fire of renewed commitment and silent dedication.

Finally, we again turn back to Francis, especially as we look forward to the celebration of his own transitus to eternal rest and activity with God and to his great feast day on October 4. Besides ministering to the martyrdom of everyday life and taking time out to pursue an interior art of peace, we should remember that Francis believed it was Christ himself who was and is not only our brother but Christianity’s first martyr. And who was more troublesome than Christ? He challenged the rich and powerful, he beat the Pharisees at their own game of religious one-upsmanship, he threw the money-changers out of the temple, and he kept silent before Pilate rather than defend himself with all the skill and rhetorical brilliance that he had displayed throughout the gospels. As Francis exclaims in his *Letter to All the Faithful*:

How holy and beloved, how pleasing and lowly, how peaceful, delightful, lovable and desirable in all things is it to have a Brother like this, who laid down his life for his sheep, and prayed to his Father for us, saying: Holy Father, in your name keep those whom you have given me. Father, all those whom you gave me in the world were yours and you gave them to me. And the words you have given me, I have given to them. And they have received them and have known truly that I have come from you, and they have believed that you have sent me. I am praying for them, not for the world: Bless and sanctify them. And for them I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified in their

unity, just as we are. And, Father, I wish that where I am, they also may be with me, that they may see my splendor in your kingdom (2EpFid 54-60).

Here we have instructions from the Lord himself, passed on to Francis and then down to us, about our duty to pray for others. This, of course, is precisely what all the new martyrs are and will be doing with all the saints—praying for us—for they are being given to us, formally presented as it were, by John Paul's act of canonization, just as we are being given to them. So ultimately this occasion is a wonderful exchange of gifts, a little Christmas of the gifts of martyrdom. For martyrdom can be a gift. It was, after all, something Francis prayed for and was denied. He received it, however, in the particular tribulations suffered by that poor donkey, his body, until he was granted the miraculous final blessing of the stigmata during his retreat to Mount Laverna.

A Jewish scholar once told me that in its original Hebrew context, the concept of a blessing does not only involve receiving a grace from God. Once asked for and granted, a blessing imposes both a burden and a responsibility. It is yet another debt to be paid to the eternal origins of spiritual fire. It is for this reason that we should think two or three times at least before asking for a blessing; and we should make such a thought exponential in the case of seeking martyrdom. Indeed, the life of Francis proves, as do these new martyrs, that martyrdom should be practiced at home before we dare to seek it abroad. It may find us, if that is our sacred destiny, in extraordinary forms like Francis's own visionary crucified Seraph or like the Chinese martyrs' simple, direct fidelity to their beliefs. But many ordinary mortals and believers want to be a little more than ordinary in the practice of their Christianity (I think particularly of Secular Franciscans). These are obliged to seek as well as to find the gift of what might be called natural martyrdom in the abiding presence of the troublesome addict, the bereaved neighbor, the cancer patient next door.

Once given such sanctifying occasions, we are obliged to accept them with a minimum of sanctimony. We can perhaps glimpse a little of the splendor of the kingdom by giving and receiving as generously as did Francis, who commended his entire Order to God by saying: "I bless them as much as I can and more than I can" (Test 41). In the mystical gift of those gentle and courteous words, may we find the hope and joy of true unity and fellowship with all of our martyred friends, brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers, yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Endnote

¹"The Martyr Poets," *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1944), 387.

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Editor's Note

On October 1, 2000, Pope John Paul II canonized one hundred and twenty Martyrs of China. Among them were seven Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, killed during the Boxer Rebellion on July 9, 1900. They had been in China for just over a year when they were imprisoned and put to death. Their names were: Mary Hermine of Jesus (Beaume, France), Mary Adolphine (Ossendrecht, Netherlands), Maria Chiara (Ponte Maddalena, Italy), Mary of Peace (Aquila, Italy), Mary Amandine (Herck-la-ville, Belgium), Mary of St. Just (La Faye, France), Mary of St. Nathalie (Belle-Isle-en-Terre, France). A survivor reported that these sisters went to their death singing *Te Deum Laudamus*. (From a brochure prepared by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Central Falls, RI, for the canonization celebration.)

Book Reviews

Clare's Letters to Agnes: Text and Sources by Joan Mueller. St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2000. 269 pages.

Hopefully, it is a sign of the development of Clare studies that at last we have moved beyond retelling her life, and scholars are now working in-depth on specific areas. Joan Mueller's book is a case in point. In it, she picks up three specific sources lying behind the four letters of Clare to Agnes of Prague and considers them in some detail. The essays are preceded by a short account of the manuscript tradition that came to a climax with the discovery by Dr. Achille Ratti (later Pius XI) of the early fourteenth-century copy that is now the basis for our translations. One of Joan Mueller's gifts is to make complicated matters clear, and we see it at work throughout this book, particularly when she describes the numerous transactions with Gregory IX about the monastery in Prague. There Agnes longed for the Rule as observed at San Damiano and petitioned ceaselessly for the Privilege of Poverty, which she eventually received in spite of papal reluctance. When he supported Agnes's entry into religious life, Gregory can have had no idea that she would be almost as troublesome as Clare of Assisi!

This book contains a new translation of Clare's four letters to Agnes of Prague, followed by three essays, each considering different source material for Clare's letters. We are offered a detailed discussion of the relevant texts and a clear demonstration of their influence on Clare's letters to Agnes.

The study of the Legend of Agnes of Rome is a close textual comparison, too detailed and repetitive to make easy, simple reading but invaluable for

reference. In addition, the whole Legend of St. Agnes the Roman Martyr is given in full, as far as I know for the first time. This is a very useful resource, since most of us only know bits of it from the breviary and (unlike Clare) have not had access to the whole Legend. The texts being compared are studied closely, and their parallels with liturgical sources noted, enabling the conclusion that the liturgy was not Clare's only source for this story, so popular in the Middle Ages. The library at San Damiano is always a topic of great interest, so clues as to source-material other than liturgical are always welcome, though they must not be rated beyond their significance or beyond the evidence. The Legend of Agnes of Rome was so widely known that we cannot assume it had a place on the shelves; we can only acknowledge that Clare knew it—and note her assumption that Agnes would also know about her principal patron.

The next essay is particularly interesting since it breaks new ground and backs up its conclusion with an notable knowledge of Franciscan texts. This is the study entitled: "The Primitive Franciscan Climate as Source." Here we see Clare the Franciscan. Like many of us, Joan Mueller leans heavily on the groundwork done by Giovanni Boccali, especially his Concordance of the writings of Francis and Clare and the Porziuncula edition of the *Fontes Francescani*. What emerges from this essay is the extent of what we might call "Franciscan language." Every group has its beloved phrases and, to some extent, its "in" language, and here we can pick it up among those early Franciscans. Many of their loved phrases were scripture passages dear to Francis or texts which held a central place in their thinking. Clare's writings are compared with the other early sources, so that we can track a phrase or an idea through Celano and the others down to Bonaventure and the next generation of Franciscan thinkers and writers. This process also gives us key words which highlight their primary theological concerns, not as the subject of academic studies but as pointers to the way they sought to live. Examples of such phrases, to pick a couple almost at random, would be "the poverty and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ" or "the most high King." Another is the phrase *soror/sponsa/mater* (sister/spouse/mother) which Clare uses, as does Francis in his Letter to all the Faithful. We meet the triad again in the antiphon to our Lady in the Office of the Passion, reminding us of the Trinitarian dimension of their thinking about our Lady and of their own relationship with God. Finally, we have the highly charged and significant phrase of *cum nudo* and the theme of nakedness which had so many rich meanings for those first Franciscans. These meanings were to do with entering through the narrow gate and even more with wrestling naked with the naked enemy, as Clare said to Agnes and Celano said of the dying Francis (1Cel 15:6). This essay amply repays study and reflection. For me, it was the heart of the book, the longest and most fascinating section.

The final essay deals with the Privilege of Poverty as source material for Clare's letters. It deals almost entirely with the Privilege of Gregory IX in 1228. While it was not within the remit of this book to tackle the matter of the Testament's authenticity, some acknowledgement of the problem would have been timely. It is possible that Mueller's silence about the Privilege of Innocent III is its own message—certainly the issue is too big simply to ignore. In the essay, the eschatological dimension of Clare's thought is well brought out and a number of interesting themes are addressed, including the innovative nature of Clare's way of life when compared to the traditional monastic way. There is also some fascinating new material arising from the correspondence between the Premislays (Agnes's family) and the Holy See. Agnes also wanted to live by the Privilege of Poverty, and in this essay we see some of the political manoeuvres that went on between Gregory IX and King Wenceslaus and how Gregory was sometimes trapped between his desire to

place Agnes' monastery securely under the umbrella of his Order of Enclosed Nuns who followed the Rule of Saint Benedict with his Hugolinian constitutions. On the other hand, he could not politically tolerate a breach with the king of Bohemia (p. 218).

Bear in mind, too, that this same king of Bohemia was Agnes's much-loved brother who had already written to the Holy See suggesting that his loyal support would be more manifest if the Holy See would accede to the wishes of Agnes!

There is great clarity of thought in this book, apparent throughout but especially in the translation of Clare's letters. This is accurate and readable and flows easily so that it is not painfully like a translation but more like a letter, albeit one from a very different culture with a far more formal approach to correspondence. The numerous references are well annotated, a major task since Clare rarely quotes directly but makes innumerable allusions and has a rich internal texture of echoes. Clare's Latin was not simple like Francis's and her sentences tend to be long and complex, but the translation picks its way neatly through all this. There were one or two places which read strangely to an English ear but that is no new experience! The letters would read out well, I suspect, which is the sterling test. And there is one passage in particular, in the Fourth Letter, where the translation strikes me as particularly happy. This is the passage about the mirror and its difficult-to-translate use of the words *principium, medio, fine*. Joan Mueller interprets these on the time-line of Christ's life, and thus brings the whole meaning of the passage into sharp focus:

Look closely, I say, to the **beginning of the life** of this admired one, indeed at the poverty of him who was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger. . . . Consider also the **midst of his life**, his humility, or at least his blessed poverty. . . . Indeed, ponder the **final days** of this mirrored one. . . .

All in all, this book is a good buy. The format is attractive, the print large, notes are at the end of each essay rather than lost at the back of the book. I thought the typeface could have come down two points, thereby reducing the number of pages and the price with it—always a consideration for most people. It is not an easy book to read in the train or to give new inquirers about Clare. Rather it is for those who are willing to study texts and words, to compare nuances and overtones, to give time and effort to understanding the inner subtleties of Clare's mind, the rich complexity of her thought within the astounding simplicity of her vision.

Frances Teresa Downing, OSC

Leonardo Boff. *The Prayer of St. Francis*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000. 118 pages.

We are living at a time when many human hearts are afflicted with horrible violence; and those of us who strive for peace are ever hungering for more. But at the present time dozens of wars are being waged, which I see as a ripple effect from the trigger points of our personal lives. Yet, in our churches and homes, at the peace tables and marches, we generally continue to profess a desire for peace.

Leonardo Boff, the great Brazilian liberation theologian with a genuine Franciscan heart, gives us much food for thought in his reflections on the basic formula for personal and social peace. Between the introduction and the close his little book on the so-called "Prayer of St. Francis," Boff really addresses the peace within each of our hearts, the place where true peace begins. The prayer known as the "Peace Prayer of St. Francis" holds much of that universal charism of the "Christ of Umbria," St. Francis of Assisi, whom many people admire and seek to imitate. Regardless of the anonymous history of the prayer, our human need for peace, reconciliation, and God's tender mercy remains constant.

Boff explores this in an organized series of easily read, but terribly difficult to live, reflections, which progressively convey the message of the "Peace Prayer," so loved and frequently recited the world over. It is possibly the most ecumenical prayer used. The book deserves thoughtful reading. The heart of

each reflection is concluded with a genuinely simple and heartfelt prayer. It is an excellent road map for the journey toward inner peace, a fine statement on the essence of peace spirituality.

This little book contains a profound message not only for the vast family of Franciscans but for people of most creeds and traditions. It is an encouragement and a guide for those who are spiritually hungry and desire to surrender themselves more fully to the touch of God's love in their lives. There is creative energy in contrasting pairs of human experiences, like chaos vis-à-vis harmony forever aborning in our universe and in all of nature. The prayer itself contains these contrasts as does Boff's book. He demonstrates a fine ability to link all of this to Scripture, Franciscan sources, and our social situation from a personal to a global standpoint. The book is very challenging and would be a valuable tool for group discussions as well as private retreats. Surely we all hunger for that rainbow of perpetual peace to embrace us in cosmic communion. We are each forever in the process of this mysterious unfolding. This book helps illuminate and give meaning to our fears and to the suffering and death experiences of our lives, while we seek the "tranquillity of order," as Augustine defines peace.

Peace invites us to the great dynamic of continual conversion and to the work of justice on a personal and global scale. True peace is love without borders and boundaries, and therefore without enemies. It inevitably builds a new social energy. Peace transforms us into beatitude people and every day fosters intense joy in living. We do become instruments of peace, vital peace energy centers, when we embody this hope and are so permeated with peace that we do not even think about it. To borrow Boff's own text "We radiate peace and good will, we communicate kindness and a loving attitude because God's peace becomes flesh of our flesh" (p. 51). What else is awaiting us but supreme fulfillment! Leonardo Boff deserves our applause for this fine little statement on peace.

Roberta Cusack, OSF

A seraph flames whirl red at morning's edge,
a woman sits beneath the springtime tree.
With offertory-open hands she prays
the fire's blessing into bread and wine.

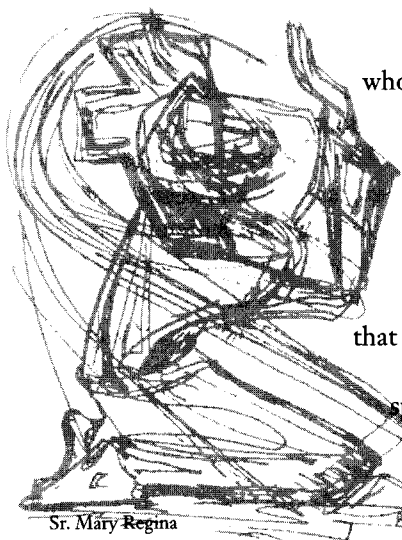
Offertory Prayer

Claudia Leopold, OSF

Encircled by a triple-knotted rope,
her calm belies a passion centered deep
that rises from the altar stone of earth,
reflects in stained glass dancing blaze, and will
not be extinguished by the water poured:
at once, eternal prayer and gift anew.

Pondering Francis

Claudia Leopold, OSF



Today, I am hyperventilating,
pondering Francis and somehow
feeling close the time
to kneel in San Damiano.
Pushing dread with longing,
I strain to reply to the one
whose voice crushes my heart in embrace
with talk of building up this church.

I feel some strength of body yet
and look around at crumbling walls
with no fear of picking pieces up
and cementing them together.
It is only my heart that is panicked,
that beats furiously against a fortress chest
to get out, to get out—
spill over into the pervading winter air,
change it to urgent spring—
to breathe life into these old stones,
scattered on the hillside,
that they might rise up and dance.

Open, like ground prepared
to receive seed, an earth
being converted, I am
one follower in the row
of the little, poor brother.
With a stance of awe even for clods
of clay, I gaze at the sun
whose hot, bright rays cause me
to sweat sorrow, bend low,
bury bare feet in dirt, cry
tears of joy.
Turning soil, I know
the faithfulness of God
growing things from deep within.

Turning Soil

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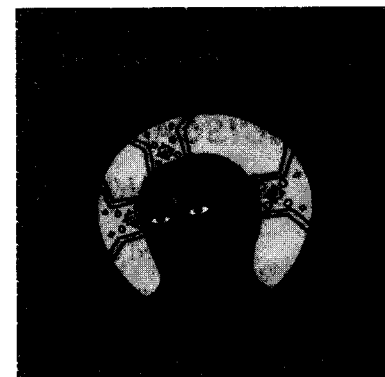
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by Joan Mueller

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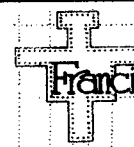
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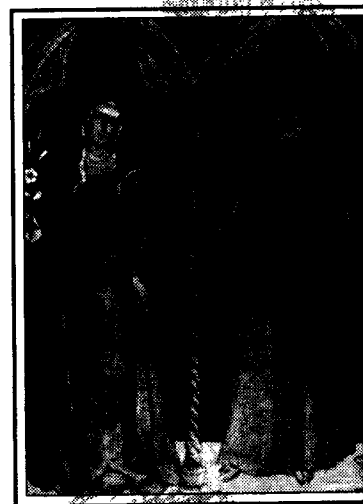
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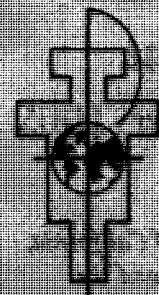
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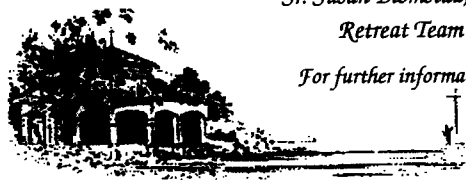
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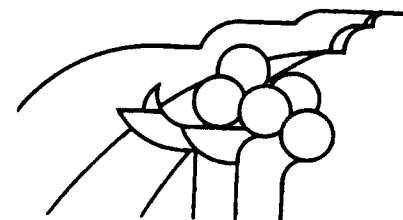
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Friday, October 5-Sunday, October 7

The Canticle of Conversion. At Franciscan Center, Tampa, FL. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 267.)

Saturday, October 13

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Wednesday, November 7-Sunday, November 18

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Friday, November 2-Sunday, November 4

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Writings of Saint Francis

| | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| Adm | Admonitions | ExPat | 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 Commmercium |
| SP | Mirror of Perfection |

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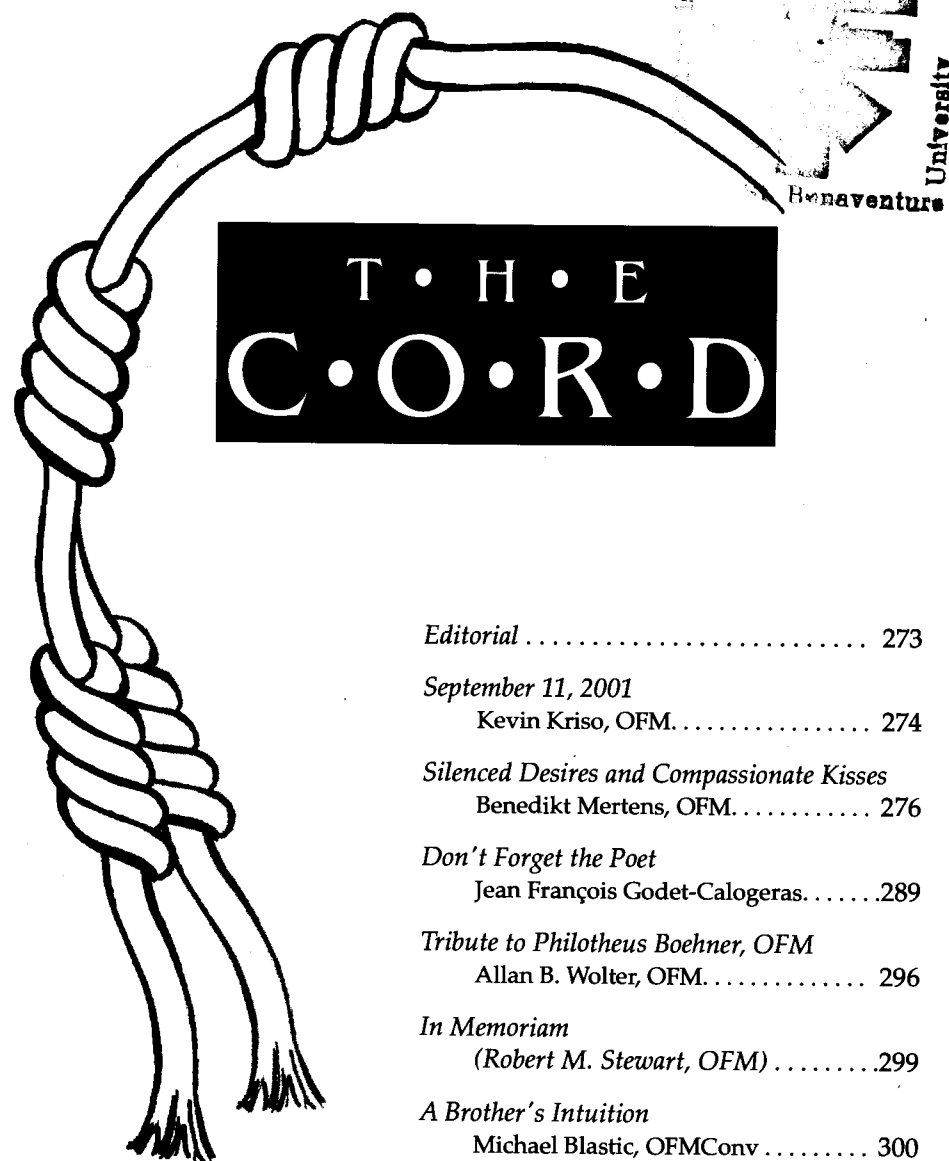
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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
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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).

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, 51.6 (2001)

Editorial

At this time of year, the northern regions of the earth experience the reliable phenomenon of the hours of daylight diminishing and the hours of darkness increasing. Deep within us, archetypal images, represented by this shift in the sun's position relative to the earth, stir to life, and we reflect on what light and darkness mean to us. No doubt our primitive ancestors endured the long and often frigid nights with some anxiety, as this reality constituted a definite threat to their survival. When we feel secure, well fed, and warmly housed, the long cold nights are not explicitly frightening. In fact, there is comfort in the coziness associated with warm hearths, lamp light, wooly clothes and coverings, and loving persons around us.

This year, however, the archetypal imagery that equates darkness with something threatening seems particularly relevant. Since September 11, we find ourselves face to face with the shocking reality of evil in our midst and very close to home. As we each make the effort to act and feel "normal," we are beset with the frightening suspicion that this event will have immeasurable repercussions for years to come. We are confronted with how profoundly related we are to one another, not only in goodness and love, but also in evil and destruction. We look to our faith to give us some wisdom and insight as we struggle to understand. But there is little to comfort us, beset as we are with the nagging suspicion that somehow we are involved in the "reason" for it all.

In the face of great evil and in the face of death, we humans do come up against the existential questions that, at one level, can never be answered. While Bible sales soar, one suspects that the most careful reading of this holy book will not reveal any statements that allow us to say: "Aha! This is the reason. This is how it works. If we do the 'right' thing now, everything will be o.k."

We Franciscans search our own tradition for some comfort, some direction, some answer. Didn't Francis and Clare and the many great lights that followed them teach us anything that might be helpful now? Doesn't the peace that is associated with our way of life somehow find a clear avenue into the fear and chaos, allowing us to relativize the situation and provide the assurance we need?

In a sense there are no "answers" and little "comfort." But there is the witness of those whose lives testify to something greater than ourselves at work among us; to some One who is with us in the darkness. In this issue of *The Cord*, we hear, as usual, some Franciscan reflections that inspire our faith. And we also look at some Franciscan lives lived in such a way that they move us to believe that light is always greater than darkness, love always greater than hate, goodness always greater than evil, and that life will always prevail over death.

Elise Saggau, OSF

September 11, 2001

Kevin Kriso, OFM

My first memory of Mychal Judge, OFM, was that each morning he got down on his knees to pray. We shared a room during a retreat which took place right before I entered novitiate twelve years ago. I felt like Bernard of Assisi who secretly observed Francis praying in the night. Over the years I often heard Mychal speak about these morning conversations he had "with the Lord." There was no doubt in his mind who gave him the strength to do his daily duties as a friar minor, priest, and fire department chaplain. Mychal was a real character, beloved by many. Over and over again people at the wake and funeral spoke about how Mychal made them feel they were his best friend and how, when he was with them, there was no one else in the world. A holy fire burned in him which provided light and warmth for the bereaved, the sick, the fearful, the doubtful, the lost and forgotten. This fire was fueled by his prayer life.

As the planes found their targets with deadly precision, the friars in my house made a grim joke that Mychal was certainly in the middle of things at the World Trade Center. How right we were. At 4:00 p.m. word came to us that Mychal was dead. The next day a picture of his dead body being carried away from the scene by rescue workers was in newspapers around the world. Stunned silence fell on the friary. This was real and it had come right to our doorstep.

The flash of light from the vengeful explosions lit up the dark corners of my heart. There in stark relief were powerful feelings of hatred, rage, revenge, prejudice. I knew these were not Franciscan feelings, much less Christian ones. But they were honest ones and needed to be dealt with first so as not to perpetuate violence. But how to deal with them? Through prayer. These feelings were too strong for me to free myself from.

New York was a war zone. On the drive up to the funeral we observed the altered skyline and the plume of smoke still coming from "Ground Zero." There were police at each toll booth looking into each car before it was allowed to proceed into the tunnel. American flags were everywhere as were tears, car searches, and posters put up by frantic family members: "Have you seen. . . ?" There were piles of bottled water and provisions at the Convention Center, the rescue staging area. In the midst of all this action, the city was uncharacteristically quiet.

At the wake, rescue workers with work clothes and boots still covered by cement dust came to pay their respects before heading back to their jobs. Several of the honor guard from the fire department had black eyes and bruises on their faces. Like at any good Irish wake, the priests, politicians, police, and people were all there; and bagpipers were at the funeral. Mychal would have been very proud.

Mychal was a fire chaplain doing his job. The holy fire of service was burning bright in him that day and, when he was hit by falling rubble, the fire was not put out. On the contrary, the fire broke into a million burning embers, which scattered to light new fires. Many people were moved to try to follow Mychal's example more closely and work for good and not for evil.

Francis visited the Sultan. He brought about a reconciliation between the bishop and podestà in Assisi and warned the knights of Perugia that their pride would bring about their downfall. It is difficult to be a Christian and follower of Francis in times like these. Only prayer can help.

Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out Your holy and true command (OrCruc).

I hope my most enduring memory of Mychal will be that each morning he got down on his knees to pray.

Silenced Desires and Compassionate Kisses: Contemplation and Compassion in the Franciscan Tradition

Benedikt Mertens, OFM

Introduction

The fabric of our lives is knit together by manifold threads, which we perceive at times as even contradictory. It is our deep longing to get into the realm of the One who can enlighten the twilight of our torn existence. For us, Christian spirituality is awareness of "the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (RegB 10: 8).¹ Our life-task as Christians is to open ourselves to this Spirit, who draws us in praise and adoration to God, who makes us accept the truth of our lives, and who humanizes our relationships. Christian spirituality thus embraces the whole of our lives in order to bring us to integrity.

Yet, the Christian tradition has tended to see opposition between a so-called *contemplative* life and an *active* life, inspired by a questionable reading of the gospel story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42.² One chose the good, the other the better part. Whereas Martha represents the toilsome existence of the *homo viator*, Mary's rest foreshadows future permanent oneness with the transcendent and impassable God. In a good neo-platonic way, the surest way to contemplative growth is to leave behind as much as possible the material and sensual world in order to immerse oneself in the world of the spirit. Since all authentic Christian spiritualities must be rooted in the Sacred Scriptures, let us examine some biblical passages that might give us a reliable description of Christian contemplation.

Contemplation in the Scriptures

Moses before the Mystery of God (Ex. 3:1-15)

Who is the God we contemplate? The famous narrative describing Moses before the burning bush gives us an amazing, twofold answer. Moses had prob-

ably not at all planned that day to go and investigate God's nature. Rather he was just fulfilling his daily duties as a shepherd. It was God who attracted Moses's attention through a strange phenomenon that was a visual image of God's very being and a revelation of God's name: "I am who I am" (3:14)³ (thus, the one who doesn't know decay, the absolute non-contingent being). Moses saw himself engaged in a conversation with the totally other, the non-available, the hidden one. That is why he couldn't advance, being "on holy ground" (3:6). That is why he didn't dare look at God, who is mystery.⁴

But God does look at Moses. The distant God turns into the God who is near, the one who devotes Himself to this world by a covenant with His people (2:24). Subsequently, God sees and hears; He comes down to rescue; He is aware of His people's needs (3:7-8); and He assures Moses of His presence: "I shall be with you" (3: 12). By this affirmation God exegetes His own name and reveals Himself not as the self-sufficient one, but as "the one, who is with us," the compassionate one. Therefore, the scholarly discussion of Ex. 3:14-15 shows that God's name shouldn't be understood in terms of "pure being in a philosophical sense," but as "active being" in terms of revelation" and salvation.⁵ Further, this unique moment of truth leads Moses also to a new disclosure of what his own life is about. He becomes the commissioner of this God, collaborating with Him in His work on earth.

In some myths, characters are afraid to give away the secret of their names because, once their names are revealed, others can exercise power over them. In the biblical tradition, however, we are invited to contemplate the One whose "code" has been entrusted to us: "This is my name for all time; by this name I shall be invoked for all generations to come" (3:15).

The Longing of a Small Man (Luke 19:1-10)

Let us now turn to the New Testament. I would like to propose the rich tax collector, Zacchaeus, as another image of what contemplation is about. Unlike Moses, he intentionally sets out to see and to get to know Jesus. Of course, he doesn't yet know that Jesus is the ultimate mediator of God's love and compassion.

Sitting in a sycamore tree, in and yet above the noisy crowd, he becomes a contemplative. He has done what was possible. Now he can't do anything but wait and look. His desire is fulfilled when finally his eyes encounter the eyes of another: not those of a God who has "come down" (Ex. 3:8), but of one who "looks up" (Luke 19:5) to him! Here we might find the very heart of the message of contemplation—expose yourself to God's presence, symbolized in the eyes that rest compassionately on the small man just as they rest on Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), on the rich young man (Mark 10:21), or on Peter (Luke 22:61).

This decisive encounter with the Lord becomes a moment of truth for Zacchaeus and sheds light both on himself and on Jesus. He is a sinner, but a sinner called to enter into the realm of God's salvific healing. Jesus is revealed as the one who has been given the power to convey God's salvation here and now. His mission to save the ones who are lost (19:10) doesn't allow any delay. It urges Zacchaeus to action "today" and "quickly" (19:5.9).

Jesus doesn't even wait to be invited. It is up to Zacchaeus to accept and to respond in the only way possible: through conversion. As Jesus brings Zacchaeus back to his house and to his world, the tax collector intuitively does the right thing. He doesn't promise to make important donations to the Temple or to commit himself to a life of worship, but rather he admits publicly his guilt, shows concretely and generously his repentance, and thus offers his readiness to restore authentic human relationships that had been damaged by exploitation. Isn't that a concrete sign of the connectedness of all the children of Abraham?

A small man grew tremendously while looking at Jesus and being exposed to Jesus' salvific gaze. He would never forget his moment of contemplation in the tree, but the lasting consequences would have to be proved down on earth.

A New Perspective on the Human Condition (2Cor. 5:14-20)

A glance at the apostle Paul completes our short biblical survey. Our chosen passage might be apt to show how his contemplation refers not only to Christ but also to all creation and therefore determines his "contemplative approach" to human beings.

The Greeks understood contemplation (*theoria*) basically as "consideration of truth." In this sense of the word, we find Paul in 5:14 contemplating, since he is reflecting on the redemptive meaning and universal impact of Christ's death and resurrection, using the verb *krinein* that means "to judge," "to consider."

This consideration provides the key for a totally new way of understanding humanity, for which human standards, obscured by sin (5: 16, *kata sarka*), are now no longer appropriate (5: 16, *num*). Paul sees, yes, he knows (5: 16, *eidenai* means "to know," "to recognize," "to understand") that creation has potentially come to its final end in every person. He understands this final end means to be "in Christ" (5:17). This conviction urges him to show others the path to newness of life that can be obtained by way of reconciliation with God.

Contemplation thus can become an attitude that looks at human life in the perspective of God's salvific plan for creation. We could say that the contemplative person sees further and is not content with the image and meaning of reality as it appears on the surface of things. The example of Paul's penetrating and insightful look might lead us to an affirmative pastoral approach by

which we discover and challenge in every person the grandeur of his or her divine vocation, be it in fragility or in achievement.

Conclusion

This short consideration of contemplation in the Scriptures has given us an idea of how it was experienced by people who were moved by the desire to come into the realm of the living God. Contemplation does not necessarily require withdrawal, but rather, a focused look. It might be described best in terms of an encounter, in which God appears not as an abstract formula but as one who turns to us with longing care and invites us to enter into a loving mutual fellowship.

Attention is our own contribution in this moment, rather than gestures and words. Also, courage is needed to face a disclosure that points not only to God and ourselves but to the greater context of creation as such. Contemplation, in a biblical sense, frees people from illusions and becomes an attitude that transforms their approach to reality. The awareness of God's compassionate love for all of creation gives birth to a new sense of common belonging and releases new possibilities to love and to serve. This perspective thus rejects every attempt to dichotomize the world and God, contemplation and action.

Contemplation and Compassion in the Franciscan Tradition

This biblical approach has found a rich echo and an amazing historical development in the Franciscan and Clarian tradition. The Franciscan way of life is profoundly evangelical; it consists in following "the teachings and the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ" (RegNB 1:1) because "the Son of God has been made for us the Way" (TestC1 5).⁶ From a Franciscan perspective, the imitation of Christ shapes the dynamic of the follower's life. The Christ-likeness of Franciscans is best shown by the way they understand their own lives and how they reach out to God and to neighbor. Seeing the human condition as basically being in relationship makes Francis acknowledge on the one hand that "what a man is before God, that he is and nothing more" (Adm 19:2) and on the other hand that a person is blessed "who bears with his neighbor in his weaknesses" (Adm 28:1). This double movement comes from the heart and engages the whole person. "Therefore, hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves so that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally" (EpOrd 29). Following the same logic, Bonaventure says of Francis that "to beggars he wished to give not only his possessions but his very self" (1Bon 1:6).

Contemplation and compassion might thus be suggested as the two metaphors that, being distinct and yet undivided, define the space in which the Franciscan person is being shaped.

Contemplating God, for Francis, was to "make a home and a dwelling place for Him Who is the Lord God Almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit" (RegNB 22:27); or, in other words, to enter ever more deeply into the love that reigns in the relationship between the divine persons. Giles of Assisi insists on this centeredness for a good reason: "Unless a man provides a room for God inside himself, he will not find lodging or peace among God's creatures."⁷ In fact, Francis provides room for his friars in eremitical solitude in order that they might relocate themselves and adjust their lives to the model of divine love. Thus, they will be able to seek "first of all the kingdom of God and His justice" (RegEr 3) as did Jesus whom they follow into the desert (LM 9:2).⁸ The eremitical experience is far from being an escape from the ordinary challenges of human life, that is, to bear the frailty of one's own human condition and to reach out compassionately to one another. For the sake of the authenticity of the contemplative life, Francis won't allow a frustrated minister to go for an "eremitical break" (see EpMin).⁹ The Rule for Hermitages wisely includes the genuine experience of brotherly love, by which the friars reveal to each other their needs (see RegEr 4-5 and RegB 6:7-9). This might be the desire to share the overwhelming goodness of the Lord or the need to be consoled and supported in the drama of human fragility and temptation that strikes especially solitary persons in their concentrated and defenseless lives.

Yet, who is the God we contemplate and how do we relate to Him? We have seen earlier that the neo-platonic tendency in Christian spirituality stressed a rather bodiless theoretical speculation about the eternal and unchangeable God. Bonaventure, in his unique attempt to systematize theologically the Franciscan way of life, was influenced by his familiarity with the customary description of the *via mystica*, including the stages of the spiritual life that see the spiritual person ascend to God through the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways (see his *De triplici via*). In the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, he describes six levels of illumination and three movements (outside, inside, above), by which the contemplative soul finally reaches "mystical ecstasy," peace, and rest. Yet, "no one can enter the heavenly Jerusalem by contemplation unless he enter through the blood of the Lamb as through a door" (Itin. Prol. 3). Franciscan contemplation sees, beholds, and tends with body and mind toward Jesus Christ particularly at the moments when His human frailty is most revealed. "See, now, my soul, how He who is God blessed above all things, is totally submerged in the waters of suffering from the sole of the foot to the top of the head" (ArVit 26).

Francis himself, overwhelmed by contemplating the Eucharistic mystery, exclaims: "Look, brothers, at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before Him" (EpOrd 27). Clare might complete this picture with her perspec-

tive of "the God Who was placed poor in the crib, lived poor in the world, and remained naked on the cross" (TestC1 45). Franciscan contemplation is, as these few passages already indicate, highly visual and affective. Clare's gaze upon the Lord's passion is described as follows: "The tears of the suffering Christ made her quite inebriated and her memory continually pictured Him Whom love had profoundly impressed upon her heart" (LegC1 30). And again Bonaventure concludes in a more systematic way that on our spiritual journey priority has to be given to affectivity over isolated intellectual efforts.¹⁰

Finally, if the aim of contemplation is union with God, the Franciscan way differs decisively from a more traditional understanding that sought unification on an ontological, sterile basis. This latter doesn't leave room for human nature, neither ours nor that of Jesus. Yet, Francis, who by the impression of the stigmata on La Verna became "an example of perfect contemplation" (Itin. 7:3), was "by his sweet compassion . . . being transformed into him who chose to be crucified because of the excess of his love" (LM 13:3).¹¹ Paradoxically, God is ultimately found where eternity and history meet, that is at the cross—this farthest point from divinity. The soul that has followed the footsteps of the Lord until the cross can "breathe in peace now" (ArVit 27). Compassion becomes the locus and the way of contemplation!

"What you are under suffering, that you are in God's sight":¹²
Accepting the Truth of our Lives

In the biblical section we saw that contemplation sheds light on ourselves, confronting us with the truth about ourselves. Accordingly, in the Franciscan tradition, the contemplative-compassionate gaze at Christ reflects our own lives, as Bonaventure shows in his *Arbor Vitae*. Under the cross, Mary's gaze of bodily and mental eyes meets the eyes of the Son who looks upon her. Suffering merges in suffering (see ArVit 28). Compassion encounters compassion. It is now the task of those "who did not merit to be present at these events in the body" (ArVit 32) to bring Christ from Calvary into their own lives by embracing their own human frailty and limitation. Francis teaches out of his own experience that the confrontation with Jesus Christ shows us who we are and that our lives should display who Jesus is, because "He created you and formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body." Therefore, "we can glory in our infirmities and in bearing daily the holy cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Adm 5:8). In other words, we can become like Jesus just by accepting what we have in common with him: our humanity. The human person becomes the point of convergence where Christ and human meet. The surest ascension to God thus seems to be a life lived as close as possible to Jesus Christ, sharing his descent into the frailty of the human flesh, It is to become

poor "for love of Him who was born poor, lived poor in this world, and remained naked and poor on the cross" (L3S 22).¹³

Mirrors and Examples for Each Other: Humanizing our Relationships

Having discovered in the human condition the bond which makes us Christ-like, we will naturally tend to reach out in compassion and solidarity to all those who share the same joys and struggles of being human. Clare sees Francis moved by compassion for the sisters because, "although we were physically weak and frail, we did not shirk deprivation, poverty, hard work, trial, or the shame or contempt of the world" (TestCl 27). Clare sees the sisters, in their extreme poverty, mutually administering Christ as they are "called . . . to be a mirror and example to others" (TestCl 21). It is important for her always to focus on the particular needs of every sister (TestCl 63-66). It is in fact our attention to the particular and concrete that shapes respectful relationships;¹⁴ true sympathy and compassion are exchanged from heart to heart. ¹⁵ Francis therefore tells us to "love our neighbors as ourselves by drawing them all with our whole strength to [God's] love by rejoicing in the good fortunes of others as well as our own and by sympathizing with the misfortunes of others and by giving offense to no one" (ExPat 5). In the same way Giles admonishes us to "care about and rejoice in the good of another," or to "grieve and sympathize with his misfortune and trouble."¹⁶

Francis gives particular attention to the lepers. In encountering them, the meaning of a compassionate outreach reveals its deepest truth. He recalls in his Testament: "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" (Test 1-3). He became "such a friend to the lepers that . . . he lived with them and served them with longing eagerness" (L3S 11).¹⁷ It is in them that Francis sees "Christ crucified, who . . . was despised as a leper" (LM 1:6). The poor Christ is revealed when a poor person embraces another poor person, as Francis says: "When you see a poor man, my brother, an image of the Lord and his poor mother is being placed before you. Likewise in the case of the sick, consider the physical weakness which the Lord took upon himself." And Bonaventure adds: "That most Christian pauper saw Christ's image in all the poor" (LM 8:5).¹⁸ In this perspective, feelings and attitudes are transformed: The bitterness of human frailty becomes sweetness of soul and body, crucifixion becomes beauty (L3S 69), and deprivation becomes delight (TestCl 127-8). Christ shines forth in human poverty. Once again, we are confronted with the paradox of "savoring God" (Itin. Prol. 4) within the absolutely unromantic hardships of the human condition. When Bernard of Clairvaux com-

mented on the Song of Songs, he had a very different book of experience in mind:

"Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth" [Song 1:1]. Those to whom it is given to utter these words sincerely are comparatively few, but anyone who has received this mystical kiss from the mouth of Christ at least once, seeks again that intimate experience, and eagerly looks for its frequent renewal."¹⁹

The Franciscan contemplative "peak-experience" is perhaps less realized in a *tête-à-tête* intimacy with God than in the horizontal experience of one who follows in the footsteps of the Lord, seeking compassionate authentic human relationships. Franciscans desire to imitate Francis, "the lover of complete humility," who, having met a man "whose mouth and cheek were being eaten away by a certain horrible disease, . . . kissed the mouth of the one who wished to kiss his feet" (LM 2:6).

Therefore, Brother Giles, an eminent example of early Franciscan eremitism, has the inner freedom to say: "This is the kind of teacher and lord that I love: if I am in the friary, he lives with me; if I retire to a hermitage, he accompanies me; whether I go through cities or forests, he follows me everywhere."²⁰ The two metaphors of contemplation and compassion cannot be schematically attached to distinct geographical or biographical situations. Giles can leave the hermitage and set out to the marketplace to find God. Clare stays in her cloister. But when she contemplates those aspects of Jesus' life that most reveal God's humility (birth, Eucharist, passion), she gets ecstatically out of herself and embraces Christ. The very focus of her devotion connects her compassionately with the surrounding churches, with the friars, with the people of Assisi, and of the neighborhood, as well as with her sisters.²¹ A "true worshiper of God and a disciple of Christ" (ArVit, prol. 1), the Franciscan-Clarian brother or sister will see Christ "in every place, at every hour, at every time of day" (RegNB 23:11), but especially when compassionately staying with each other's frailty and accepting the human condition as "little poor ones" (RegEr 5).

Franciscan Perspectives and African Realities

The Franciscan life of contemplation in compassion offers a specific spirituality based on the humanity of Christ and on the human condition. It sees basic human frailty and is realized in authentic, compassionate relationships. Some conclusive considerations show how this perspective finds fertile ground in the reality of African culture.²²

"I am because we are; we are because I am."²³ The rich tradition of African sayings describes the human being as a person essentially and necessarily in relationship. In order to develop the full potential of his or her humanness, the

person has to reach out and cross the boundary of self, because "relationship is in the soles of the feet,"²⁴ or, in the words of another saying: "The person whose feet feel the morning dew is better than the person who remains at the fireplace."²⁵ Correct relationships maintain peace and cosmic harmony; whereas troubled or envious relationships (witchcraft) are often seen as a source for individual illness. The frugality of rural life in many parts of Africa contributed much to a high quality of hospitality and high esteem for intensive relationships. These attitudes were born out of the experience of interdependency. Leonie Kindiki, speaking of the African challenges for religious life, comments: "Our vow of poverty thus builds up relationships, because the more one has, the less one has the need to interact with others."²⁶ Here we are at the heart of the Franciscan and Clarian way of life, which also sees in poverty (as non-appropriation) the condition which best facilitates fraternal love.²⁷

The community-centered everyday life becomes the space where God is revealed and worshipped:

For an African, religion and daily life are one and the same reality. The marketplace can be a place of worship. Bearing one another's burdens and enjoying life together, both are expressions of faith. Working together, sharing, dancing together—everything is meant to transform this earth into a place where God is present among his people.²⁸

Religion is therefore "not so much a matter of reflection about God as a life to be lived. This is a practical faith in which there is no line between religious and secular matters. All reality is one."²⁹ It is especially the reality of belonging that shapes the religious experience, as Kindiki recalls:

Not to be disturbed by the troubles, pains and sufferings of other people in the community was the highest form of deprivation-destitution-poverty. To be rich and fully alive was to share in the flow of life, which had its mainstream in the community. The source of this life was God on whom everyone depended for life and well-being.³⁰

Suffering and bearing are the central realities that led Francis deeper into himself, Christ, and neighbor, as we have seen. Studies show that African proverbs focus on dependence, suffering, weakness, and disability.³¹ "Let the rain come, then we shall see who keeps out of the rain!" The meaning is that people show their true character in times of trial. Special crosses and crucial events are a great test of the capability of a person or a group.³² It has been said that the Africans' ability to endure adversity with great patience displays a spirit of fatalism. Yet, locally developed liturgies in many Christian communities show

the ability of Africans to see in the wounds that strike their continent, the wounds of Christ. An African way of the cross with stations held at places of suffering brings the cross of Jesus Christ literally into the lives of the faithful. Such prayer practices become "powerful examples of the suffering Christ in the market-place."³³ Sidbe Semporé comments:

In Africa popular piety is attracted to those devotions in which Jesus appears in a state of weakness or of solidarity with the human condition—the infant Jesus, the nativity, the *via crucis*, the face of Christ, the Sacred Heart, and, of course, Jesus on the cross. The humiliation of Christ, his sufferings, and the unjust fate that befell him elicit a very special response in the hearts of African Christians who can empathize easily with a destiny so close to their own. This piety, that seems to emphasize suffering, that vibrates when evoking the leper-servant in Isaiah 53 or the suffering Christ of Calvary, is an instinctive attempt to find a way out for human suffering and to escape the dilemma of helpless revolt and of annihilating fatalism.³⁴

The dominant feature of suffering in many parts of the black continent leads to a

contemporary ministry of accompaniment. . . . In prayer, in simple life-style and in justice and peace advocacy, many people in Africa accompany their brothers and sisters caught in civil wars, tribal clashes and other forms of discrimination. Here the theologies of inculturation and liberation come together.³⁵

Accompaniment stands for a person-centered ministry that humbly prefers the witness of a "compassionate presence" to financial large-scale projects.³⁶ In fact, "in the midst of the daily struggles of life, a frequent request from the local people to missionaries and pastoral workers is 'Just be there with Us.'"³⁷

Francis chose the same way. He could have found his way into the manuals of Christian spirituality by becoming the great fund-raiser and organizer of charity toward the lepers and poor of his time. Yet, instead of becoming a functionary of charity, he just stayed with them, "with great compassion" kissing "their hands and their mouth" (LM 1:6) and contemplating in them the "sublime lowliness" of God (EpOrd 27).³⁸ Francis and our African brothers and sisters both tell us that ours is a "mission of vulnerability," a mission that is "one beggar telling another beggar where the bread is."³⁹

¹References to the writings of Francis and Clare follow Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady (trans.), *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist, 1982). Additionally, the following abbreviations are used: Itin. (Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*) and ArVit (Bonaventure, *Arbor Vitae*).

²See, for example, Augustine's *Sermones* 103.104 in Edmund Hill (trans.), *Works of Augustine: Sermons III/4 (44 A-147A)* (New York: New City Press, 1997), 76-87.

³All Scripture quotations follow the text given in *The Jerusalem Bible*.

⁴Surprisingly, the "mountain of God" didn't play an important role in the later history of Israel. See R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 63: "Sinai could therefore be said, in modern terminology, not so much to be God's mountain as to become God's mountain, because of what He did and said there: this is a dynamic and not a static concept. God, in early years, might be worshipped at any place where He had appeared (Ex. 20:24) and Sinai is yet another example of this." Thus we could conclude: contemplation is not so much dependent on "holy places" but can make every place religiously meaningful as it refers to an experience of God's presence.

⁵Cole, 70.

⁶References to the Testament and Legend of Clare follow Regis Armstrong (ed. and trans.), *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, revised and expanded (St. Bonaventure NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1993).

⁷Giles of Assisi, *Golden Words: The Sayings of Brother Giles of Assisi*, trans. Ivo O'Sullivan (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966), 67.

⁸References to the works of Bonaventure are from Ewert Cousins (trans.), *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God. The Tree of Life. The Life of St. Francis* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

⁹Francis also has to unmask the demon that suggests to brother Rufino that an anchoritic life would be "safer" than ministry among the lepers: *Vita fratris Rufini*, PP. Collegii S. Bonaventura (eds.), *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis Minorum Chronica XXIV [Annales Francescani III]* (Quaracchi: St. Bonaventure College, 1897), 49.

¹⁰See Itin. Prol. 4, p. 55, where he opposes unction, devotion, wonder, joy, love, and humility to reading, speculation, investigation, observation, knowledge, and understanding. The whole middle part of his treatise, *Arbor Vita* (On the Mystery of His Passion [pp. 140-158]) is the best example of gazing at Christ's passion, using all human affective faculties.

¹¹The same thought is expressed in LM 8:1; L3S 14, 69; LegCl 32. If not otherwise indicated, references to the Legend of the Three Companions are from Marion Habig, ed., *English Omnibus of Sources, St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).

¹²Giles of Assisi, *Golden Words*, 142.

¹³The Latin original (Menestò, p. 1395) differs. It shows Jesus naked and poor under the yoke and buried in another's tomb.

¹⁴In human encounters, we don't meet humanness as such, but the mystery of an individual. God didn't want to create humanity as such, but persons who in their particularity are God's image. The Franciscan, John Duns Scotus, crafted the word *haecceitas* to name this principle of individuation.

¹⁵Many are moved in their hearts when seeing the Christ-likeness of Francis (L3S 70): "multorum corda . . . sunt mutanta," Menestò, p. 1442; his powerful words penetrate his listeners' hearts (L3S 25): "verba . . . cordis medullas penetrantia", Menestò p. 1399).

¹⁶Rosalind Brooke, ed. and trans., *Scripta Leonis, Rufini et Angeli Sociorum S. Francisci* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 319.

¹⁷According to Bonaventure, Francis served the lepers "with human concern and devoted kindness" (LM 1:6). The Three Companions see Francis's love and compassion for the poor coming from deep within: "pauperes quoque intime diligebat eis viscerose compatiens," (L3S 57), (Menestò, p. 1429).

¹⁸This idea of the leper and the poor as icon of Christ is in line with the concept of *contuitio*, which Bonaventure stresses in his *Itinerarium*: The creatures are the "vestiges, representations, spectacles proposed to us and signs divinely given so that we can see God" (Itin. II:II, p. 76). Contuitio is to be understood as a mediated, participative knowledge of the presence of the infinite being in and through the finite being.

¹⁹Sermon 3, Kilian Walsh and M. Corneille Halfants, trans., *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux. Volume Two: On the Song of Songs I*, Cistercian Fathers Series, 4 (Kalamazoo MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 16.

²⁰Giles of Assisi, *Golden Words*, 146.

²¹See the passages in TestCl 28-35, which are situated exactly at the center of the whole *Legenda*.

²²For an overview of the resemblances between Franciscan and African thought see Anton Rotzetter, "Zwischen Afrika und Europa: Franz von Assisi. Gemeinsamkeiten, Alternativen, Chancen," *Wissenschaft und Weisheit*, 39 (1976): 42-61. He stresses points such as respect for life, brotherhood and sisterhood, and symbolism. According to Rotzetter, Francis's whole way of thought and expression is related to the African mind. Like Africans, Francis's thought embraces the whole of its object by inner participation. Therefore, he thinks associatively, not logically; intuitively, not analytically; ecstatically, not speculatively.

²³A fundamental African proverb quoted in Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 83. See also 114: "It takes a whole village to raise a child." The African local Churches made the enlarged family and the rural village-community models for their small Christian Communities (parish-subdivisions) and the Church at large as "Church-as-Family."

²⁴Healey and Sybertz, 345-346.

²⁵Healey and Sybertz, 338.

²⁶Leonie Kindiki, LSOSF, "Religious Poverty from the African Perspective," *The Cord* 47 (1997): 272.

²⁷This inner connection is best shown in RegB 6 and throughout the TestCl. Alfonso Pompei, in "La fraternità negli scritti di San Francesco e nel primo secolo francescano," *Miscellanea Franciscana*, 93 (1993): 3-63, argues that the initial Franciscan fraternal life suffered enormously from the special privileges of learned friars and the privatization of financially independent friars in the process of the conventualization of the Order in the early fourteenth century: "The decadence of fraternal life in certain areas of the Franciscan Order went along with the decadence of poverty, which probably was its principal cause (p. 55, trans.). There was no more common ground for community as "a direct and total confrontation of human identities in which something common to all and basic to humanity is shared," as Aylward Shorter names it from an African perspective. Cf. *African Culture and the Christian Church* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1974), 202.

²⁸Healey and Sybertz, 192.

²⁹Charles Bundu, cited in Healey and Sybertz, 295.

³⁰Kindiki, 271.

³¹Healey and Sybertz, 251, note 36.

³²Healey and Sybertz, 240.

³³Healey and Sybertz, 224. The authors present as an example an impressive "AIDS Way of the Cross" (cf. pp. 327-329).

³⁴"Popular Christianity in Africa," in William Jenkinson and Helene O'Sullivan, eds., *Trends in Mission: Toward the Third Millennium* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 101. In many African churches, women break out in spontaneous mourning at the foot of the cross during the Good Friday liturgy. In songs and litanies, the life and especially the suffering of Christ are recalled and confronted with the actual suffering of the people. It reminds one of the emotional scenery of Bonaventure's *Arbor Vitae*.

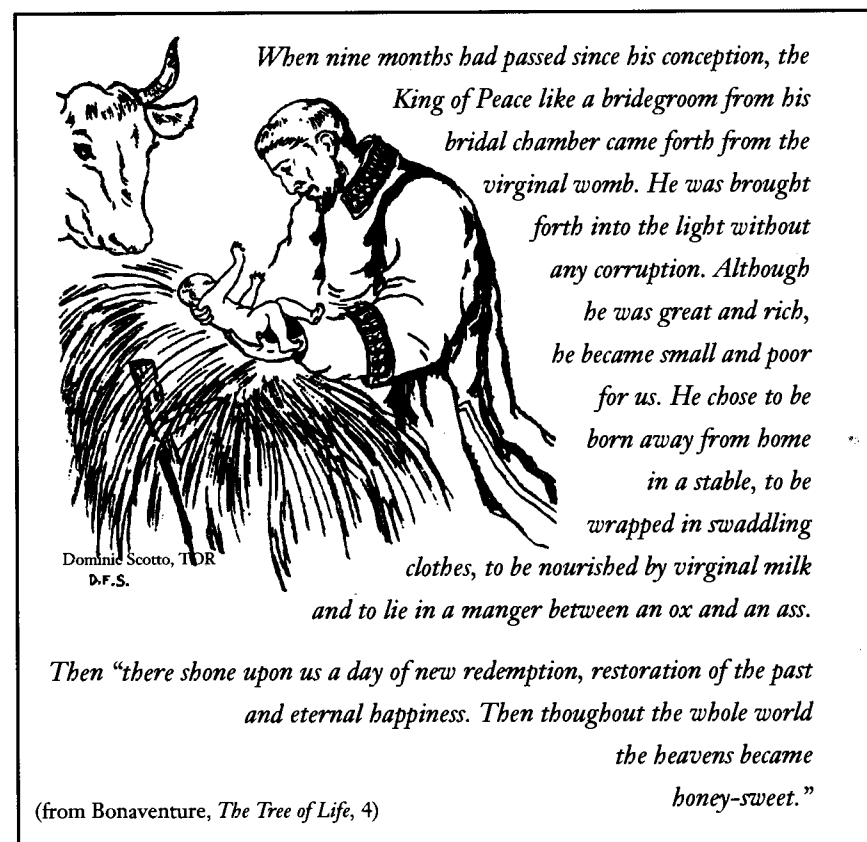
³⁵Healey and Sybertz, 194.

³⁶See Kofi Appiah-Kubi, cited in Healey and Sybertz, 116: "For an African the centre of life is not achievement but participation."

³⁷Healey and Sybertz, 122-123.

³⁸"The prayer becomes thus a vital drama: It is poverty in the contemplation of the poor Christ and in the welcome of the poor, with whom the Friar Minor approaches Christ and reaches God. The poor person is the sacrament of the nearness of God in Christ" (trans. from Benjamin Tapia, "Dimension contemplativa de la vida franciscana en America Latina," *Cuadernos Franciscanos* 27 (1993): 229).

³⁹Healey and Sybertz, 357, 347.



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Don't Forget the Poet

Jean Francois Godet-Calogeras

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One of the reasons I love to write articles on Franciscan history is that it gives me—and hopefully you too—some relief from the mad and unhappy wisdom of this world by refreshing my memories of Francis and Clare. How crazy they were, like Jesus was crazy, the craziness of living and loving wholly, fully, no matter what.

This time our trip will even be crazier than usual, since I have decided to unleash my poetic muse. Perhaps, before coming along you should put on some music, possibly something from those medieval ages. While I am writing, I am listening to Altramar's *Saint Francis and the Minstrels of God*, beautiful music from the *Laudario Cortonese*, a thirteenth-century collection (Dorian Discovery DIS-80143). Whatever the music, play it softly, like a whisper, so that you can still hear the wind blowing, birds singing, or children playing. Later, when you are finished with the reading, you can play the music again, louder—and happily drown in it.

I believe that history and poetry can get along very well. Of course, not if you only consider history as rational and logical, and poetry as fantasy and imagination. History has to tell the truth about what really happened in the past. Poetry is no less bound to the truth, but writes things differently, in a different perspective. Poetry makes new links and connections between things to create new images that will encourage us to see reality differently. Poetry does not create another reality; it does not change reality; it reveals it better.

A legend can tell the truth better than a detailed dead report. Remember the *Sacrum commercium sancti Francisci cum domina Paupertate* (cf. *Haversack* XIX 4, 3-7). That important piece of Franciscan poetry tells us more about Francis and his movement than many official documents. Although it contains neither dates nor places, it tells the truth about the identity of the Franciscan inspiration.

Half a decade ago, I received as a gift from several friends—a little book written in French by a poet and simply entitled *Le Très-Bas*, “The Most Low.” Once I started reading it, I understood why my friends had sent it to me. In just about a hundred pages, that book told the truth about Francis, his soul, his spirit, and about me, a human being in tune with that man of Assisi. Again, no dates, no critical arguments about documents, simply naked truth. I could feel it. Good things come in small packages.

The poetic language of *Le Très-Bas* made me think that it would never be translated into English, that it could not be. I was wrong, and I am glad I was. It is now available to English-speaking people as *The Secret of Francis of Assisi—A Meditation*, by Christian Bobin (Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1997). I decided that I would share this book as one shares food and drink with companions on the journey.

“The Secret of Francis of Assisi.” It is an old story, I know; you probably have heard it already. But isn’t it a story worth another hearing, with new ears? Isn’t it the kind of story we like to hear again, like children who never get tired of hearing the same stories simply because they love them? I think it is, definitely. So let’s go.

It begins with a simple sentence from the Bible: “The child left with the angel, and the dog followed behind.” It is in the book of Tobit (6:1), one of the most beautiful books of the Bible, a song to loving and caring relationships. Why that sentence? Not because of the angel, not because of the child, but because of the dog. A dog nothing is said about, but a dog we can easily imagine playing around the two, walking, jumping ahead, coming back, smelling around, a real rover. Like Francis. Not Saint Francis of Assisi, but the dog Francis of Assisi. (Unfortunately, not everything can be translated. The poet plays in French with *saint* and *chien*, dog; in French the words sound alike.)

We actually do not know much about Saint Francis of Assisi. His life is much bigger than all the documents, all the books about him. But a poet can truly imagine the dog Francis of Assisi. What we imagine is much more alive than what we think we know. Too often, knowledge is the death of learning.

Where does that dog come from? Where does Francis come from? Where do we come from? The thirteenth and the twentieth centuries have very different responses to that fundamental and difficult question. The late twentieth century is smart, very smart: we all come from an ovum fecundated by a spermatozoon. Easy; it can even be done in a test tube in a laboratory. Francis’s times had a longer answer: the thousands of pages of stories in the Bible, telling one story, that is, God’s love, before, now, always. In the thirteenth century, as in the Bible, it is clear that a person comes from God and returns to God. What if you don’t believe in God? “It is not necessary to believe in God to be brought to life by His breath” (p. 8). So, Francis came from God.

What is the world Francis came into? It was made of three sounds and one silence. The three sounds are the merchant, the warrior, and the priest. The sound of money, of weapons, and of prayers. But there is a silence, a silence that those sounds exploit: the poor. Francis will refuse to be a merchant, a soldier, or a priest. He will decide to be poor with the poor. And he will give the poor a sound. And the poor will give Francis a face. This is not only poetic and spiritual. It is highly political. It is a breakthrough in society, a revolution.

The child and the angel departed from Assisi without anyone noticing them. A dog followed them, three steps behind (p. 10).

Francis had a father, a businessman in charge of the family, in charge of the society, in charge of a business, always busy, as it too often happens. It seems that Francis’s mother was simply in charge of love, another way of saying, in charge of God. She must have been beautiful. All mothers are beautiful. Love makes them beautiful. And what makes love is attention, attention to simple, humble life. Francis’s mother was from Provence, the region of southern France that invented courtly love.

Francis was first named John by his mother. John, like in the Bible. One John opens the New Testament, the other closes it—John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. But the father, who of course was on a business trip at the time of the birth, came back and named John, Francis—Francis of Provence, France. *Giovanni Francesco*, “the evangelist and the troubadour, the apostle and the lover” (p. 19).

Francis’s childhood. Childhood is so important for a life. In the thirteenth century, children did not count much, but they were taken care of. In the twentieth century, children seem to count more and to have more power, but they are also too often lost, because the adults are tired and lost. Francis grew up, but the documents say nothing of his childhood: first words, first steps, first wonders, first laughter, and first tears, nothing. We have to look at the adult to discover the child that was Francis. “Francis, the servant and friend of the Most Low, lived in sweetness until the age of nearly twenty years” (p. 27).

Francis is now a grownup. He has become a salesman like his dad—a good and attractive salesman. He is twenty years old, enjoying life: friends, pretty young women, and parties. “Twenty years and some dust. The twenty years are the body’s, the dust is the soul’s” (p. 28). Not too much interest in the soul yet, although he is sensitive, like a connoisseur attentive to quality. Like a unicorn, Francis is attracted by what is unspoiled, untouched, pure, virgin. He is also attracted by fire like a salamander; he runs on fire, he is fire himself. Thinking of his future, he knows he will be great, a great knight.

In 1202 Assisi and Perugia are at war. This must be the time. Francis is in the battle, but the glory does not come. Instead, he is captured and spends a year in prison. He comes back sick. He has lost his health, but not his joy. He

is still singing, because he is still hoping. He does not know what he is hoping for, but he is hope-full and he sings it. Francis is turning into a cricket now: "The nature of the cricket is to love its song and to take so much pleasure in it that it does not look for food and dies singing" (p. 34).

Francis is ill. He has a fever. Part of it is the year in prison, part of it the uncertainty about the future, not seeing the road. Something must change; we are afraid of change. We are willing to have a new life, but without losing the old one. The old life has to die. That is what makes Francis sick.

In 1205 comes another war. A holy one this time, since it involves the pope; for isn't he God's lieutenant? The pope needs help in his fight against the emperor. Let's go back to war, with God on our side now.

Francis will never reach the battlefield. God is truly on his side and whispers to him in a dream: Serve the master, not the servant! But where is the master? Francis must find the master. He first looks in churches. Some really need repair. Francis rolls his sleeves up and restores. But the house of God is not really in those churches.

Francis goes to Rome. That is THE Church. What actually draws his attention there is a group of beggars. He mingles with them. He had never been in such company before. Nobody would believe it in Assisi: Francis among beggars! He who was looking for the high is now attracted by the low. It is not poverty that attracts him, but something, some truth that poverty gives and money can't buy. He knows, he feels that he is getting closer.

One more step. Get out of yourself, Francis, step on your shadow. Back in Assisi, he does it, the unthinkable: he goes to the lepers, those excluded, those ugly things, the most low you can get. Silence. What could you say? Please, don't talk, certainly not of God. Do something. Caring gestures. Embraces. Is this love? This is the master's house. "He now knows where the Most Low dwells: down at the level where the worldly light shines, where life does without everything, where life is life at its crudest—an elemental wonder, a destitute miracle" (p. 43).

Now is the time to follow life, that is, the time to leave. Francis's father is fed up with his son's madness—being crazy is one thing, but spending the business's money, no way! He sues Francis, really, and his words sting. Francis says nothing, but a gesture says it all. He gives back to his father all his clothes. He can't give more than that. The rest is his. And he is free. He's got a new father: the one who runs the largest business ever, the whole world. He's got a new mother: the one who nurtures everyone, the earth. Away with the world's money and its iniquitous laws. Away with the fear it generates. Francis is leaving for the best business: he is going "to deal with the eternal without a middleman" (p. 49). He is going to invest everything he is, and he is going to be rich with the whole creation, with all the love in the world, with all the life in the

world. "The world of the spirit is just the material world finally set right" (p. 50).

No sooner said than done, Francis leaves Assisi for the *contado*, the country. He has joined the Bible now, has become a descendant of Abraham who left first. He has joined the singing King David. He has joined the prophet Isaiah, who has the voice of God. Francis is irradiated by that voice. He wants to transmit it. So he begins to talk in the calm and soft voice of the Most Low. He attracts the poor people. He talks to God about human beings.

Francis now lives in nature. He is surrounded by nature. His companions are animals, lots of birds. So he begins to talk to them. In the Bible, God created the animals, but never talked to them. God did not even give them names. Adam, the first human being, gave the animals names. But in doing so, Adam captured the animals into human history. In his crazy love, Francis addresses the whole universe. He talks to the animals about God, turning them back to their creator. He liberates them. Francis even has an animal with him all the time—an ass, his body. "Brother Ass," as he called his body, is his companion on his journey to heaven. The road is long and steep, full of stones. We do need an ass to carry us to the summit.

"Men follow the animals to Francis's side" (p. 71). But Francis does not want to be the master of a new institution. Francis and his brothers want to live in the world and in the Church like travelers, like strangers and pilgrims.

Something is still missing, somebody: a woman—"she who, in carrying out the task of a mother, completes and perfects the work of God" (p. 72). But there is a fear of women in men. A fear that comes from far away—fear of their bodies, fear of their faces, fear of their hearts. There is also fear of life and fear of God, because women, life, and God are in the same camp, the camp where you can hear the laughter of God. In their mistrust and ignorance of women and of God, men seek to get beyond their fear—they try to seduce, they make war, they work hard, they establish rules, but they hardly know love.

"The difference between men and women is not a difference of sex but of place" (p. 75-76). Men can get rid of their fear. All they have to do is to jump into the camp of women, leave the camp of hierarchies, duties, laws, and regulations for the camp of God's laughter. Jesus did. Francis did it too and met his sister, a loving woman whose name says it all: *Chiara*, Clare, the clear one. Francis and Clare love the same way. They understand the same way. They have the same fire.

He will die before her, and this is of no importance, because from the moment it first arrived, from the moment of its first thrill, love abolished the ancient decrees of time, did away with the distinctions of before and after, and maintained only the eternal today of the living, the tender today of love (p. 80).

Francis had a wonderful voice, an enchanting voice that attracted animals and human beings. But his voice is gone, we can't hear it anymore. All that remains is what he sang, the light of his life, the light of our lives today, the same light, the same name, that old thing that burns like a candle in the darkness, God. But we don't need a candle anymore, we know better nowadays. We have dropped religions when they stopped being reassuring. Now "we believe in sex, in the economy, in culture, and in death" (p. 84).

Francis believes in that little candle, he is in love with that "poor thing, God" (p. 85). He loves that lightness of God. All his writings, repeating the Bible, talk of that light, of that love. He is like a child playing endlessly the same game, throwing the ball against the wall: I love you, I don't love enough, sorry I don't love better, teach me how to love. And the light grows. Because God is with the children, the poor, the simple, like a little sparrow in their naked hands. But serious adults have no time to waste with birds.

Francis is free as a bird. His world is not limited to Assisi, to Italy, not even to Europe. He flies to the Middle East, to the so-called Holy Land (there is no such thing, the whole earth is holy). They are making war again—Christians against Muslims. God, aren't they both descendent of Abraham? They are full of religion and full of hatred, trying to outdo each other. Francis sings them his song: Love, not weapons, will set you free; look at each other's faces, listen to each other's voices, we are all brothers and sisters.

Wonderful, but no success. Francis stays there for a while, then the news comes: he's got to go back to Europe. Thousands have come who want to play Francis's game, but they want to change the rules. The game is too strict for the ones, too loose for the others. Francis insists on carefree love, unconditional love, forgetful of itself. But the institution is already there "with libraries for Franciscan studies" and "theologians ruminating on the notion of poverty, turning the milk into ink, giving their parchments the care they refuse to people" (p. 92).

Love is awakening all the time, making every day new. But the world wants to sleep and repeat the same thing on and on. You must leave, leave again, always leave and start over. On the road again.

Now things happen fast. Along the road Francis writes down his form of life again: "rejoice the soul, be carefree about tomorrow, give your full attention to all living things. It is the happiness of not holding on to anything, the wonder of all presences" (p. 95). Joy, always joy. And gratitude, thankfulness for everything, the elements, the universe, even for death, that mysterious passage from life to life. Now there is no more shadow between Francis and "God the Most Low, suddenly the Most High" (p. 98).

And here we are, almost eight hundred years later. Francis is long gone. We even got used to it, didn't we? Of course, we remember the story, we even

tell it now and then. But we are not Francis. That's right, we are not Francis. And the times are different. True, the times are different. At Francis's time there were the merchants, the soldiers, and the priests, remember? Nowadays, there are only the merchants. They are everywhere with their money. "They are in their shops like priests in their churches. They are in their factories like soldiers in their barracks" (p. 99). Their image is everywhere, image to flatter, image to sell. Everywhere, on paper, on screen. The whole world is now a market. The merchants sell everything, what is in the newspaper, what is in the shopping bag, everything. They own the place.

Talking about newspaper, perhaps you read that article not long ago about one of those families of beggars that are currently infesting our cities, living on the contents of garbage cans. The article suggests that the cities should really cleanse themselves of those disposable people. Then you saw the photograph showing that family: father and mother, ten children with happy faces. Happy faces. You could not resist, you clipped the picture and kept it somewhere.

It was after several days that you finally noticed the angel behind the group of children, a little masked by them, doubtless unperceived by the photographer. It was necessary almost to close your eyes, to create a very fine line of vision in order to see him in the shadow of the children. He is too busy, leaning as he is over a garbage can, rummaging in it to see if by chance something more can be salvaged, one more throwaway. And the other one—you discovered him at the same time. At that moment almost invisible, relegated to the background, to the misty distances of the image, three steps to the rear, nonchalant, following the trail of the children, the cart, and the angel. You saw the other one, Tobias's dog, with the joy in his gait, that crazy joy—the opposite of mercantile cheerfulness.

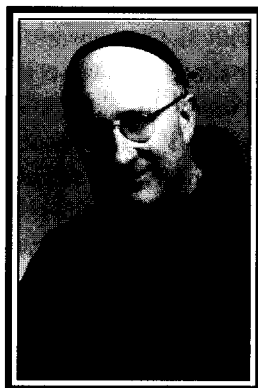
It was at that very moment that you understood what you were in the presence of. It was in seeing the joy of that mangy dog that you knew you were in the presence of what is called a holy image (p. 102).

Now, play the music louder. And, please, let's dance it all over again.

[Francis] considered anyone his brother who loved the crucified Jesus. He proved that by dialoguing with Malik al-Kamil about Christianity and Islam. The prophet Muhammad speaks with very great reverence of Jesus Christ in the Koran. He didn't think he was the Son of God, but nevertheless he traced him in the line of Abraham and the prophets of Israel. But maybe St. Francis knew that Islam did to that degree respect our Lord and saw this as the basis of a dialogue.

(Eric Doyle, OFM, "A Church in Ruins," The Cord, 48.6 [Nov/Dec, 1998]: 278-9.)

**Tribute to Philotheus
Boehner, OFM,
on the occasion of
celebrating his
one hundredth
anniversary of birth**



Allan B. Wolter, OFM

[This talk was given at St. Bonaventure University on September 6, 2001, at a Eucharistic celebration honoring the one hundredth anniversary year of the birth of Philotheus Boehner, OFM, (b. Feb., 1901). Boehner was instrumental in the founding of The Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. He was also the founder of *The Cord*. His scholarly achievements remain part of the Institute's proud tradition.]

Christ's invitation to become a "fisher of men" inspired nineteen-year-old Henry (Heinrich) Boehner to become a Franciscan priest. He chose the name Philotheus (lover of God) in 1920 when he entered the novitiate of the Holy Cross province of the Friars Minor in Saxony (East Germany). His talent for studies so impressed the friars that, after his ordination in 1927 (his third year of theology), he was sent for doctoral studies at the University of Muenster (1929-33) where he majored in botany and minored in philosophy. From 1933-1939 he taught philosophy and biology in the Franciscan seminary at Dorsten.

His interest in medieval studies and the Franciscan schoolmen began when he translated into German Etienne Gilson's classic on *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*—it won Gilson a chair in the French Academy. When Gilson came to the Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies in Toronto, he invited Philotheus there to work on the logic of William of Ockham.

When England went to war, Philotheus came to St. Bonaventure College in southwestern New York State at the invitation of Father Tom Plassmann, OFM. The summer courses he gave on Alexander of Hales, St. Bonaventure, Bl. John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham led to the foundation of the Franciscan Institute.

I think Philotheus is delighted with today's epistle to the Colossians (1:9-14), for it expresses what he hoped his own teaching might do, namely, rescue his students "from the power of darkness and bring them into the kingdom of his beloved Son." For like Paul, Philotheus could say to them: "We have been praying . . . that you may attain full knowledge of God's will through perfect wisdom."

His weekend ministry during the war was to a nearby German prisoners' camp, and during the week he celebrated Mass for and gave conferences to the Franciscan sisters in charge of the kitchen. Another more direct contribution—hitherto classified because of the war—was his correspondence with the mathematician and physicist, Johann von Neumann. It concerned the logical possibility of building the computer we know today. These letters, we learned recently, will soon be published.

Despite the importance of the logical and philosophical publications that brought him fame, Philotheus was always a biologist at heart. He enjoyed his after luncheon walks in nearby woods and occasional picnic fieldtrips in the Genesee river-valley, where he discovered several new species of mosses. During the war years, with government encouragement, the biology department at St. Bonaventure's expanded to a doctoral program. One of Philotheus's most interesting lectures was the one entitled "On Teaching the Sciences in a Catholic College," which he gave to the biology faculty and students. (I had it republished posthumously the year Ignatius Brady headed the Franciscan Education Conference [1955]. The conference theme was, fittingly, "Nature, the Mirror of God." That is how Philotheus regarded the biological world.)

I'd like to share his description of how that world evolved. He chose a line from Proverbs 8. The chapter is "The Discourse on Wisdom." It describes how wisdom was begotten before the earth and the fields were made, before the mountains were settled in place, when there were no fountains or springs of water. It tells how wisdom was with God when he fashioned the heavens, made firm the skies, and set limits to the sea. The description Philo loved is in verse 31, where wisdom, as God's craftsman, is *ludens in orbe terrarum*—"playing on the surface of his earth." In the story of evolution we see that play unfolding. Boehner tells us:

The theory of evolution is intimately connected with the problem of the species and their almost unbelievable multitude. By faith we know this prodigious abundance and wealth goes back ultimately to the Creator of heaven and earth. Why all these forms? Evolution can explain them only in part. Many have no particular value in the struggle for life. They are useless in this sense, and—for that reason—beautiful. [God is an artist, not an economist.]

Fascinated with all these lovely forms, must we not admire the ingenuity and wisdom of their Creator? God spread before us this mighty work of art, the result of divine wisdom at play. It's not a static picture. Each form has a special history of its own. Paleontology proves evolution is not continuous, but a series of jumps. A new species springs forth. Surprised at the unfriendly environment, it feels its way cautiously at first. Then it learns to adapt, grows stronger, and suddenly bursts forth in a variety of forms. Eventually development slows down. Degeneration sets in. Only a few forms remain or it dies out completely, leaving only remains in fossilized rock. But if one species dies, new forms spring to life. Here again we are watching the great Artist of the universe—divine wisdom of God—*ludens in orbe terrarum* ("playing on the surface of the earth").

St. Augustine first conceived history as *pulcherimum carmen*—a most beautiful dramatic composition in verse (like a Shakespearean drama)—and Bonaventure repeats the idea. In evolution, with its various periods, its acts and scenes, its individual actors, we enjoy an enchanting poetic work, staged by divine wisdom, since the earth first evolved and slowly gave birth to organic life. Our present world is but a single scene in this cosmic drama.

Philotheus suffered from angina pectoris. He died relatively young, in his sleep, after a biological field trip (May 22, 1955). If he found so much to admire on this earth—one planet of a lonely sun in a relatively vacant arm thirty thousand light years from the center of our galaxy—what must he have found for which to praise God, when the whole of God's material creation is spread out for his scientific investigation? Almost half a century ago he passed from this earth. If we could call him back he would have his own version of God's *pulcherimum carmen*. For the music of creation is an on-going symphony. Were it not, Alexander of Hales assures us, God would not be omnipotent. I believe I even know the name of the Franciscan song Philotheus would be singing: "The Canticle of the Cosmos."

[Francis] succeeded in obtaining an interview with the Sultan; and it was at that interview that he evidently offered . . . to fling himself into the fire as a divine ordeal, defying the Moslem religious teachers to do the same. . . . It is said that the Mahomedan muftis showed some coldness towards the proposed competition, and that one of them quietly withdrew while it was under discussion. . . . But for whatever reason, Francis returned as freely as he came. There may be something in the story of the individual impression produced on the Sultan, which the narrator represents as a sort of secret conversion. . . . There is something in the suggestion that the tale of St. Francis might be told as a sort of ironic tragedy and comedy called The Man Who Could Not Get Killed. Men liked him too much for himself to let him die for his faith; and the man was received instead of the message. But (this is a guess) as a great effort that is hard to judge, because it broke off short like the beginnings of a great bridge that might have united East and West, and remains one of the great might-have-beens of history.

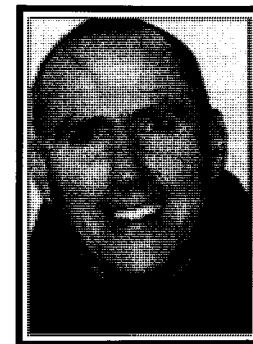
(G. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1954], 187-8.)

The Cord, 51.6 (2001)

IN MEMORIAM

Robert M. Stewart, OFM
1950-2001

St. Bonaventure University



Robert M. Stewart, OFM, died of cancer on Saturday, September 1, 2001, at the St. Bonaventure Friary, St. Bonaventure University.

Born on April 17, 1950, in New York City, Father Bob entered the Order of Friars Minor of the New York Franciscan Holy Name Province in 1975. He was ordained in 1980. After an internship at St. Bonaventure University, Father Bob pursued doctoral studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, and received his Ph.D. in 1990. Assigned to St. Bonaventure University, he was granted tenure and assigned to the rank of Associate Professor of Theology in 1996.

Father Bob was an energetic and beloved professor of theology and preacher of the Gospel until his death. Besides being active in the academic, spiritual, and social life of St. Bonaventure University, he was also Director of the International Center for Secular Franciscan Studies and a member of the Formation Directorate of Holy Name Province. He recently authored a book on his experience of cancer: *Making Peace with Cancer: A Franciscan Journey* (Paulist Press, 2001).

He is survived by his mother, Irene Stewart of Naperville, Illinois; his two sisters, Patricia Thibos of Naperville and Jeanne Stewart of Chicago; his brother, James Stewart of Lake Bluff, Illinois; seven nieces and nephews; and one grandnephew. He was preceded in death by his father, Gerard.

Father Bob was acting editor of *The Cord* from March till December, 1994, following the sudden death of the former editor, Father Joseph Doino, OFM. He contributed articles to *The Cord*, the most recent being "The Millennium Rule" (Nov./Dec., 1999) and "A Leper Named Cancer" (Sept./Oct., 1998).

One of Father Bob Stewart's major achievements was the publication of *De illis qui facunt penitentiam: The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* (Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini: Roma, 1991), a landmark contribution to understanding and implementing the Secular Franciscan Rule of 1978. His love for and service of the Secular Franciscans was outstanding and his influence will have long-term effects among them.

A Brother's Intuitions

Michael Blastic, OFMConv.

[Reflections at the Funeral Liturgy of Robert M. Stewart, OFM, on September 5, 2001, in St. Bonaventure University Chapel.]

By now you are probably aware that how we have celebrated Bob's funeral liturgies was not something that we friars had to scramble to get ready after his death on Saturday night. Bob planned everything—at least in broad strokes—including who he wanted to speak last night and this morning and the tone of the Eucharist—he wanted this to be a celebration of hope in the resurrection, and especially a prayer of consolation and support for his mom and his sisters and brother and their families. He was so organized he amazed us who cared for him these last weeks. From his bed he would tell us exactly where to find this or that, on what shelf and in what corner of what drawer and what box—and he was always right. Kevin Downey, OFM, and I were sitting with him one day a few weeks ago. He had us in tears from laughter telling us about a trip that he and his sister Jeanne had taken recently. When we caught our breath, Kevin asked Bob if he thought he would be surprised by anything when he got to heaven. Without blinking an eye Bob responded, "Oh Yes!! Do you think they could possibly have things organized up there the way I want them to be?"

When he asked me to say something on behalf of his brothers, the friars here at St. Bonaventure, I was honored by his request. Bob sat me down last March and we talked very frankly, as we often did, about what was ahead of him in his struggle with Brother Cancer. Then he told me that he wanted me to speak at his funeral. He said that he was not going to tell me what to say—you'll know what to say he said. This was somewhat out of character for him because he usually offered suggestions about what he thought or what to consider in the case or how I might proceed. And so I responded to him tongue in cheek, asking if he was sure he wanted to give me the last word? He smiled and replied that no one ever gets the last word with him. We laughed then, but I knew he spoke the truth as he always did, and if each of us listens carefully and

attentively, Bob will have a last word for all of us. It won't be a different word from what he spoke to us these last years, months, weeks, and days as he walked with Brother Cancer.

We Franciscans struggle to put the meaning of our lives and experience into words, into statements of values and principles, just like Francis and Clare struggled to do it when they received the grace that started off the whole Franciscan thing. We work hard to do that and we come up with some things that might capture the spirit; but those kinds of definitions or descriptions of Franciscanism are as unsatisfying as they are necessary. Franciscanism is a matter of intuitions—intuitions about the world, about people, about God, and about how these things get connected to Jesus Christ in the flesh and blood of our own personal and social existence. Bob lived from his heart and enfleshed intuitions that express the core of what it means to be Franciscan. Let me share just a couple of these.

From the time I met Bob, I have marveled, and even been envious, of his prayer. Bob always, without exception, prayed to a "Gentle and Loving God." That never changed for him. He prayed to that Gentle and Loving God after what he considered to be his stunning victories on the racketball court, which usually ended in humiliation for his opponents. He prayed to that God after spending hours in the classroom and office where he would always give his attention to whoever needed it. He prayed that way when the cancer was first diagnosed five years ago. He prayed to that same Gentle God after surgeries that scarred his body and brought him inestimable pain. Bob prayed that way at the outset of his final struggle six weeks ago; and he prayed again to that Gentle and Loving God just moments before he died. That prayer was not just words—you could see it in his face that he believed what he was saying and even more, that he KNEW his God was gentle and loving.

But more significantly, Bob lived that way—gentle and loving. He imaged the God to whom he prayed. It all came together for him in a consistent, clear, affirmation of God's goodness. Bob preached this with words but even more with his life—his flesh and blood—that indeed God is good, and God created a good world, and that we are all good people. During the last six weeks of his life, we found ourselves reacting to Bob's courage and conviction with the word—"incredible, he is just incredible." But we finally realized about a week ago that we were getting that wrong. Bob was not beyond belief. To the contrary, he was quite credible. Thomas of Celano, the first biographer of Francis, tells us that near the end of life, as he became afflicted with more severe sickness and suffering, Francis, "made of his whole body a tongue!" (1Cel 97). I read that passage many times, and I understood what Celano was trying to say, but for the first time in my life I witnessed that in how Bob's body, riddled with cancer and pain, scarred and collapsing, too weak to speak words, spoke to us of God's goodness. His body became a tongue, just like Francis's.

Now cancer is a grotesque, awful, violent, life-choking disease. Bob never praised God for cancer. Bob praised his gentle and loving God for helping him live with cancer. He never asked, as long as I knew him, "Why me?" as if God gave him cancer. Cancer is simply an accident of nature. And Bob knew that God's reaction to his struggle with cancer was the same as his own mother's reaction—she cried, she felt helpless, she wanted to take away the pain and suffering, and in her helplessness simply did what a mother does best—she loved him and in a mother's way held him close. Bob experienced God doing this for him, as well. No, cancer is simply a flaw of nature, a terrible accident. But, to be able to walk with cancer as a brother meant for Bob that he could still walk with God as Father and Mother. To be able to do more than simply survive with cancer meant to be able to discover and share in the secret of Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Creatures." One of the translations of a verse of that poem goes like this:

Be praised my Lord, through all people who learn in your love to pardon each other, who endure in their weakness, are not undone as they suffer. They come to know joy becoming grounded in peace: You are yourself, O God, their great reward.

For Bob, that's what it meant to walk with brother cancer—not to be undone by suffering, but to enjoy God!

Bob showed us that life is what you make of the accidents—whether it be sickness or a natural disaster, a failed relationship to which you gave your all, addictions, defeats, disappointments, failed plans, and even our own sinfulness. These kinds of accidents provide us with the opportunity either to live with grace or to sit down and give up on the tremendous gift of life offered us by a gentle and loving and good God. Bob chose the former option—to live with grace—and that was and is the fundamental Franciscan intuition and choice that enlivened our good brother Bob's heart and life. This is what his diminished body was saying these past years and months. This was Bob's final prayer, whispered to us just moments before he breathed his last—love, share, depend on God's mercy, God is good and life is good! He showed us, his Franciscan brothers, what it means to live what we profess—to follow in the footprints of Jesus Christ for the entire time of our life, even amid some of life's most terrible and horrifying accidents. We his brothers here are no longer the same anymore because he showed us what our profession calls forth from each of us.

And one final but essential intuition of Bob's: Bob knew that to get Franciscan living right, at least a part of your heart has to be Italian! And so, Bob always said he was Italian. He loved to speak the language, and he spoke it often these last weeks. He enjoyed praying in Italian too. One of the friars offered one night to pray in Spanish, but Bob said that just didn't cut it as he wanted to make sure God understood his prayers. His memorable laugh re-

vealed his life-loving Italian *alter ego*. He had an Italian heart and soul. It was that part of him that made him a glutton at life's table—enjoying with *piacere* everything that life had to offer—even life with Brother Cancer. And so for him and for that part of our Italian hearts, I'll close in Italian.

Caro Bob, fratello e amico—adesso ti lasciamo e ti affidiamo al Dio cortese ed amorevole. Ricordati di noi. Aiutaci a vivere pienamente e con gusto. Prega per noi, così che possiamo conoscere nei nostri corpi la bontà di Dio. E più di ogni altra cosa, farci sempre ricordare che la vita è bella! Amen.

(Dear Bob, brother and friend—now we leave you and entrust you to a gentle and loving God. Remember us. Help us live fully and with gusto. Pray for us, so that we can know the goodness of God in our bodies. And above all else, make us always remember that life is beautiful! Amen.)

Contributors

Michael Blastic, OFM Conv., is a friar of the St. Bonaventure Province, Chicago, and currently teaches at The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, New York. He is editor of the scholarly annual, *Franciscan Studies*.

Jean François Godet-Calogeras, contributed to the publication of the concordances of the Franciscan sources (CETEDOC, Louvain, 1974-1979) and the French edition of the writings of Francis and Clare (Sources Chrétiennes #285 & 325). He currently lives in Cleveland, Ohio, and serves as an associate editor at the Franciscan Institute.

Kevin Kriso, OFM, is a friar of Holy Name Province. Since he joined the order in 1988, he has worked as a pastoral counselor, spiritual director, and retreat leader. He currently serves as the Assistant Director of Post Novitiate Formation for Holy Name Province and lives in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Benedikt Mertens, OFM, of the Fulda Province (Germany), has been a missionary in Togo, Africa. A graduate of The Franciscan Institute, he contributed a chapter, "The Eremitical Movement During the 11th Century," to *Franciscan Solitude* (The Franciscan Institute, 1995). He now serves on the Ivory Coast.

Dominic Scotto, TOR, a friar of the Loretto, Pennsylvania, province, taught theology at St. Francis Seminary and St. Francis College in Loretto from 1969-1979 and later served in provincial ministry. He has written two books: *The Liturgy of the Hours* and *The Table of the Lord* (St. Bede's Press), as well as numerous articles and is now stationed in Steubenville, Ohio.

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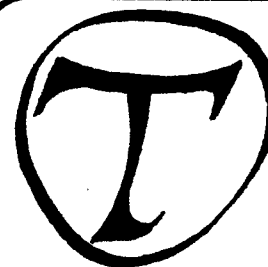
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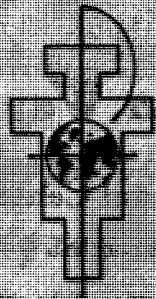
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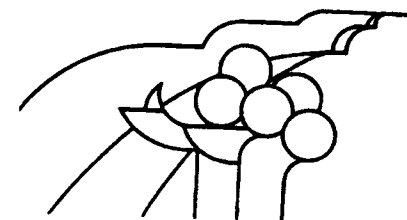
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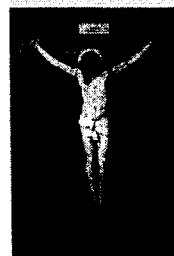
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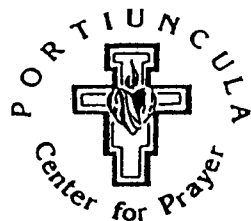
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Friday, November 30-Sunday, December 2, 2001

The Canticle of Conversion. At Avila Retreat Center, Durham, NC. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 312.)

Friday, December 7-Sunday, December 9, 2001

St. Bonaventure's Five Feasts of the Child Jesus. Retreat with Andre Cirino. At Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, AZ. (See ad p. 311.)

Monday, January 7-Sunday, January 13, 2002

The Franciscan Solitude Experience. With André Cirino, OFM. At Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort, IL. (See ad p. 316.)

Friday, January 11-Sunday, January 13, 2002

Weekend Franciscan Solitude Experience. With André Cirino, OFM. At Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort, IL. (See ad p. 316.)

Friday, January 11-Sunday, January 13, 2002

The Canticle of Conversion. At Mount Alverno Conference Center, Redwood City, CA. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 312.)

Saturday, January 19, 2002

Franciscan Responses to Mother Earth. With Sean Fitzsimmons and Jeanne Williams, OSF. 9 am - 4 pm. Contact: Franciscan Center, 3010 Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603; ph: 813-229-2695; email: francntr@aol.com

Friday, February 1-Sunday, February 3, 2002

The Canticle of Conversion. At Berger Hall, St. Louis, MO. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation. (See ad, p. 312.)

Saturday, February 2-Thursday, February 7, 2002

Franciscan Gathering. Becoming a Person of Prayer: The Legenda Minor as a Handbook of Franciscan Prayer. With Anthony Carrozzo, OFM, and Diane Jamison, OSF. Franciscan Center, Tampa, FL. (See above.)

Saturday, February 16-Thursday, March 28, 2002

40-Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat. Format follows Rule for Hermitages. At Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort, IL. (See ad p. 316.)

Friday, February 22-Sunday, February 24, 2002

Office of the Passion. With Andre Cirino, OFM. Scottsdale, AZ. (See ad p. 311.)

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