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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). (2C 5:8).
   (ER 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

Seven years ago Sr. Elise Saggau of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota accepted an appointment as editor of *The Cord*. When this important journal reached its Golden Jubilee year in 2000, Sr. Elise worked on a series of events that marked this milestone. With that task safely behind her, she began to look forward to another jubilee—this time her own fiftieth anniversary of religious profession in our Franciscan family. With the same "care and solicitude" that marked her shepherding of each issue of the magazine, she elaborated a plan to step down from her post at the close of 2001. Following a round of farewell celebrations here at St. Bonaventure's she will attend the Spring Franciscan Experience at St. Isidore's in Rome in preparation for her August jubilee back home in Little Falls.

During her tenure, *The Cord* has maintained its reputation as a truly important English language source of continuing education and formation in Franciscan spirituality. Its accessibility and affordability keeps its subscription base stable in a time of great uncertainty for small publications. Its pages are home to authors with established international reputations as well as new writers seeking a place to test their ideas and concerns. By providing Franciscan organizations with an important advertising vehicle, she has created an important networking function as well.

Ever alert to new material by which to gauge the worth of her contributors, Elise has become one of the most informed women in the country when it comes to knowing what is in print and what is worth reading in the ever increasing supply of English "franciscana." Her duties at the Franciscan Institute encompassed a great deal of service to incoming students, summer school programming, text editing for countless volumes, and coordinating our University Sisters' gatherings. When the summer students of 2001 offered their farewells, they did so with gusto, humor, and a real sense of impending loss of one who had their good so totally at heart for so many years of quiet but essential ministry.

In September of 2000 Elise and I hosted Sr. Mary Frances Laughlin who assisted Philotheus Boehner, OFM, five decades ago with the founding issues of *The Cord*. Listening to her reminiscences, we realized that women have long played a part in the inner workings of Institute publications. Clearly, Philotheus was happy to invite competent associates from among the Third Order sisters to participate in the important venture of the fledgling research center. Elise has maintained that real but often invisible tradition and now she has paved a way for its continuance.

Sr. Roberta McKelvie of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters began her service as editor at the beginning of January, 2002. An Institute graduate like her predecessor, Roberta did her doctoral work at Fordham and pioneered research on the life and legacy of Bl. Angelina of Montegiove, foundress of the Third Order feminine conventual tradition. She also serves as coordinator of the summer program for Poor Clares ("Know Your Vocation") at the Institute and is a staff member of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program.

These two women share a common and abiding concern for our vocation as Franciscans. To count them as friend and co-worker has been both a blessing and an experience of our "sisterhood without borders" at its best. To Sr. Elise we offer our blessing for years of grace, health, and serenity. To Sr. Roberta we extend a welcoming hand and our hopes for a mutually beneficial term as editor of this journal.

To you, our readers, we offer our assurance that we work to support you as you pursue your own evangelical *itinerarium* month by month, year by year. Hail and farewell! Happy New Year! Pax et Bonum!

Margaret Carney, O.S.F.
Publisher

The Cord, 52.1 (2002)

Motherhood in God, Jesus, Francis, and the Franciscan Tradition

Robert Stewart, OFM

My personal interest in the metaphor of motherhood as applied to God, Jesus, and Francis arose from an incident that happened to me while I was living in Africa among the Zulu people. The Zulu people are keen observers of the behavior patterns of those around them and are excellent mimics of the sounds and movements of those observed. They have a practice of assigning nicknames that sum up someone's behavior. Often there is a polite name and a less polite name. I was told that the name given to me was *inKukhukazi*, which means "mother hen." I was not certain if this was the polite or the less polite term, but I must admit I was not pleased. However, I was consoled by this passage in Matthew's Gospel:

> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing (Matt. 23:37).

Here Jesus compares himself to a mother hen. If the comparison was all right for Jesus then it was all right for me.

From that time on I began to be interested in the imagery of motherhood applied to God and to Jesus. As I became more familiar with the writings of Francis and the Franciscan tradition, I saw that motherhood imagery was very much part of this tradition. There is much to be learned from an examination of the metaphor "Mother" as applied to God, to Jesus in the Scriptures and in the Church tradition; then it is possible to see how it is applied in Francis and the Franciscan tradition.

Old Testament Images

The powerful image of God as Mother is found in the Bible from the opening chapter of Genesis through the prophetic writings to the late wisdom literature. At first sight the image of the Spirit hovering over the waters (Gen.

1:2) may not seem maternal, but as Derek Kidner says: "This is the mother-bird hovering or fluttering over its brood."[1] He points out that the Hebrew word for hover is the same as the one used in Deuteronomy and has a female connotation:

> Like an eagle that stirs up its nest
> And hovers over its young
> That spreads its wings
> And carries them on its pinions (Deut. 32:11).

An image of the mother eagle taking care of her brood evokes God's care for his people during the Exodus: "I carried you on eagles wings and brought you to myself" (Ex. 19:4). This same image is also found in the psalms: "Keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me under the shadow of your wings" (Ps. 17:8).

During the Exodus, Moses uses mother images. In exasperation he addresses God:

> Did I conceive these people?
> Did I give them birth?
> Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms,
> As a nurse carries an infant
> To the land you promised on oath to their
> forefathers? (Num. 11:12)

This outcry must be placed in conjunction with the frequency with which God speaks of himself as mother, bearing the Israelites in his bosom, conceiving them in his womb:

> But now like a woman in childbirth
> I cry out, I gasp and pant (Is. 42:12).

> Listen to me, O house of Jacob
> You whom I have upheld since you were conceived
> And have carried since your birth. . . .
> I am he; I am he who will sustain you (Is 46: 3-4).

> As a mother comforts her child
> So I will comfort you
> And you will be comforted over Jerusalem (Is. 66:13).

Wisdom literature presents the wisdom of God as a feminine principle:

> I am the mother of beautiful love, of fear, of knowledge,
> And of holy hope; being eternal, I am given to all my children, to
> those who are named by him (Si. 24:18).

Wisdom reveals the feminine and motherly nature of God:

> Yahweh conceived me *(quanan)* at the beginning of his way,
> The first of his acts of old.
> I was woven in the womb *(nissakti)* at the first,
> before the beginning of the earth.
> When there were no depths, I was brought forth *(Holati)*
> when there were no springs abounding with the waters.
> Before the mountains had been shaped,
> Before the hills, I was brought forth *(Hotati)* (Prov. 8:2-25).[2]

Jesus as Mother: New Testament Development

The image of the Motherhood of God is also found in the New Testament, especially in the Johannine writings where the idea of birth is a common theme:

> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God (Jn. 1:13).

Peter develops another feminine image, breast-feeding, as he speaks of children being nurtured by their mother's milk. "Like new born babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (Peter 2:2-3). Additional writings refer to Peter and Paul as themselves providing milk for beginners, and so they should themselves be seen as mothers.

The New Testament introduces us to Jesus talking of himself as a mother. Jesus applies to himself the Old Testament image of God's care for Jerusalem as a mother bird watching over her young. "He will cover you with feathers and under his wings you will find refuge" (Ps. 91:4) is echoed in his lamentation over the holy city:

> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing (Matt. 23:37).

Christ's application of the Old Testament metaphor links together God as mother with Jesus as mother. Michael J. Suggs, commenting on this passage, says: "Matthew intends the saying to be understood as a word of incarnate wisdom whom he sees in Jesus."[3] He links the text to wisdom, which is imaged as wife, lover, and wise woman. All these reveal the feminine and motherly nature of Jesus.

Witness of Church Tradition

Quite a number of early theologians refer to the Godhead in feminine terms. Clement of Alexandria says: "God became a mother from all eternity in giving birth to the eternal logos." He also makes allusion to "the Father's loving breasts" and "to the milk of the Father."[4]

The idea of the **womb of the Father** was expressed in the Council of Toledo in 675:

> We must believe that the Son was not made out of nothing, nor out of some substance or other, but from the womb of the Father, that is, he was begotten or born from the Father's own being.

Later still, Anselm emphasizes the centrality of Christ in maternal imagery that flows from God to Christ to Paul to all who preach the Gospel by their lives or words. In the prayer to St. Paul, Anselm writes:

> But you, Jesus, good lord, are you not also a mother? Are you not that mother who, like a hen, collects her chickens under her wings? Truly, master, you are a mother. For what others have conceived and given birth to they have received from you. You are the author; others are ministers. It is then you, above all, Lord God, who are mother.[5]

However, it is particularly among twelfth-century Cistercian authors that we find maternal imagery referring not only to male authority figures but also to God and to "Mother Jesus." Bernard of Clairvaux uses "Mother" to describe Jesus, but his emphasis is not on giving birth or even conceiving but is seen as maturing. He writes: "If you feel the strings of temptation, such are not so much the wounds as the breasts of the crucified. . . . He will be your mother, and you will be his son."[6] Breasts to Bernard are a symbol of the pouring out towards others of affectivity or of instruction and almost invariably suggest to him a discussion of the duties of prelates or abbots.[7] This theme became a favorite theme of many Cistercian writers.

This tradition reached its zenith, however, in Julian of Norwich, who wrote:

> This fair lovely word "mother" is so sweet and so kind in itself that it cannot be said of anyone or to anyone except of him and to him who is the true Mother of life and of all things. To the property of motherhood belong nature, love, wisdom and knowledge and this is God.[8]

Julian, in chapter 48 of the "Showings," refers to Mercy as being compassionate with the tender love of motherhood and speaks of the God of Mercy. In chapter 52, she sees God rejoicing to be our Father, rejoicing to be our Mother.

Above all it is in speaking of Jesus as Mother that she waxes most eloquent. She postulates this teaching about Jesus:

> I saw and understood that the high might of the Trinity is our Father and the deep wisdom of the Trinity is our Mother, and the great love of the Trinity is our Lord. . . . And furthermore I saw that the second person, who is our Mother, substantially the same beloved person, has now become our Mother sensually, because we are double by God's creating, that is to say substantial and sensual.[9]

She also wrote that "Jesus is our true Mother in nature by our first creation, and he is our true Mother in grace by his taking our created nature.[10]

Julian also meditates on Mary's motherhood:

> So our Lady is our Mother, in whom we are all enclosed and born of her in Christ, for she is mother of our savior, and our savior is our true Mother, in whom we are endlessly born and out of whom we shall never come.[11]

Jesus is mother because we were born in him, grow in him, and through his passion have been united to him. Finally in the Eucharist, we are fed by him. Caroline Walker Bynum points out:

> In spiritual writers from Anselm to Julian, we find three basic stereotypes of the female or the mother: the female is generative (the *foetus* is made of her very matter) and sacrificial in her generation (birth pangs); the female is loving and tender (a mother cannot help loving her own child); the female is nurturing (she feeds the child with her own bodily fluid).[12]

Francis as Mother

We are now in a position to look at Francis's use of maternal metaphors for himself. We can also begin to see how mystical motherhood, rooted in God language, became an important theme in the Franciscan tradition. Francis writes: "Brother Leo, health and peace from Brother Francis. I am speaking, my son, in this way—as a mother would—because I am putting everything we said on the road in this brief message and advice" (LtL 2). Here Francis is possibly influenced by the Cistercian idea of the maternal role of an Abbot. But he is more probably influenced by an idea rooted in Pauline teaching. He associates the maternal concept with bringing forth others to life through the word of God.

> Like a mother feeding and looking after her own children, we felt so devoted and protective towards you and had come to love you so much that we were eager to hand over to you not only the Good News but our whole lives as well (1Thess. 2: 7-9).

Francis also bequeathed this maternal spirit to his followers:

> Let each one confidently make known his need to another that the other might discover what is needed and minister to him. Let each one love and care for his brother as a mother loves and cares for her son in those matters in which God has given him the grace (ER 9: 10-11).[13]

Francis, in the Later Rule (1223), returns to this theme of the maternal responsibility of the brothers towards one another. Here he lays greater emphasis on the maternal relationship of the brothers and asks the friars to become "supermums" to their companions on the way:

> Wherever the brothers may be and meet one another, let them show they are members of the same family. Let each one confidently make known his need to the other, for if a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother according to the spirit (LR 6: 7-8).

And in his Rule for Hermitages, Francis says:

> Let those who wish to stay in hermitages in a religious way be three brothers or, at the most four; let two of these be "the mother" and have two "sons" or at least one. Let the two who are "mothers" keep the life of Martha and the two "sons" the life of Mary and let them have one enclosure in which each one may have his cell in which he may pray and sleep (RH 1-2).

The second biography of St. Francis written by Thomas of Celano (*The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*) recounts a delightful story in which Brother Pacifico calls Francis mother:

> When the man of God was staying at Siena, a brother from Brescia happened to come there. He was very anxious to see the stigmata of our Holy Father and insistently asked Brother Pacifico for a chance to do so. He answered: "When I take my leave, I'll ask to kiss his hands, and when he offers them, I'll signal to you with a wink, and you will get a look." When they were ready to leave, the two of them went to the saint and Brother Pacifico, on bended knee, said to Saint Francis: "Give us your blessing, my dearest mother, and give me your hand to kiss!" He kissed the hand, offered reluctantly, and signaled the brother to look. After they left, the father suspected a holy trick had been played on him. He called Brother Pacifico back and said to him: "The Lord forgive you brother. You sometimes make a lot of trouble for me!" Pacifico immediately prostrated himself and humbly asked: "What trouble have I caused you, dear mother?" But blessed Francis made no answer, and the incident ended in silence (2C 137).

Odo of Cheriton gives testimony to Francis as mother in one of his Sunday Sermons, published in Paris at the end of 1219:

> Brother Francis, asked who was going to take care of his brothers since he received all [who came to him] indifferently, answered: "A certain king made love to a woman who lived in the woods and she bore a son. After she had raised him for a time, she came to the gate of the king, so that he might take care of the son from then on. When this was announced to the king, he said: 'So many evil and useless men eat food at my court; isn't it only right that my own son should be fed among them?'" After he told this story, Francis said that he was the woman whom the Lord had impregnated with his word, and that he had borne these spiritual sons. "And so, if the Lord provides for so many unjust people, you should not wonder how he is going to supply nourishment for his own children along with the others.[14]"

In this testimony we see both the generative and the nurturing elements of motherhood referred to by Francis.

Patristic Testimony

Origen applies the idea of motherhood to the Church and to the individual believer. The Church is joined to her heavenly spouse

> so that she may conceive by him and be saved through this chaste begetting of children brought forth by the spotless Church or by the soul that seeks nothing bodily but is aflame with the single love of the Word of God.[15]

Augustine is more explicit about the need for Christians to follow Mary's role in conceiving and bringing forth Christ into the world.

> Do in the chambers of your soul, what you view with amazement in the flesh of Mary. He who believes in his heart unto justice conceives Christ; he who with his mouth makes profession of faith unto salvation brings forth Christ.[16]

In both *Letters to the Faithful*, Francis connects spiritual motherhood with the mystical espousal between Christ and the soul and with the brotherly or sisterly love of Christ.

> All those who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength and love their neighbors as themselves, who hate their bodies with their vices and sins, who receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who produce worthy fruits of penance. Oh, 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 conscience, and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others (1LtF 1: 1-10).

Clare's Vision

Perhaps the most unusual presentation of Francis as mother is the testimony of Sister Fillipa, reported in the canonization process of St. Clare:

> She [Clare] was climbing a very high stairway, but was going very quickly, almost as though she were going on level ground. When she reached Saint Francis, the saint bared his breast and said to the lady Clare: "Come, take and drink." After she had sucked from it, the saint admonished her to imbibe once again. After she did so what she had tasted was so sweet and delightful she in no way could describe it.
>
> After she had imbibed, that nipple or opening of the breast from which the milk comes remained between the lips of blessed Clare. After she took what remained in her mouth in her hands, it seemed it was gold so clear and bright that everything was seen as in a mirror (Proc 3:29).[17]

The powerful symbols of this account express a reversal of genders as Clare is nourished by "Mother Francis." What of the golden nipple that became a mirror? In Clare's spirituality the mirror became a central symbol in which she saw Christ. Francis is associated with Christ as a mirror reflecting what gives meaning and purpose to her life.

Marco Bartoli, in *Clare of Assisi*, gives an historical analysis and a psychological interpretation of this vision. He also considers the culture in which this vision took place as well as Clare's personal culture and the symbolic images she uses. He reveals how Clare's love for the Lord was strengthened and mediated through Francis, through whom she came to know and love the poor, humble, and crucified Christ.[18]

Spiritual Motherhood in the Franciscan Tradition

Starting with the idea of motherhood in God, in Jesus, and in Francis, the followers of Francis restored and developed a neglected metaphor of the generative role of God and Christ. They used feminine imagery in their theological emphasis on love as the primary motive of creation and the incarnation. Positing and teaching the centrality of Christ, born of Mother Mary to be for us the one in whom we are to be reborn through baptism in the womb of the Church, they reverted to metaphors of generativity, bearing, and conceiving. Following Francis, they stressed the goodness of creation in all its physicality, centered as it is in Christ. Such imagery demanded a Jesus who is both mother and womb.

The development of maternal images, begun in the eleventh century, climaxed in the Franciscan movement. Franciscans taught and developed the idea of the humanity of God. This humanity made present in Jesus shows us a compassionate, loving, nurturing God, full of what were seen as feminine virtues. In and through Christ's humanity, we are reborn into divinity. Mary becomes the disciple among disciples, mirroring the pattern of God's activity. She conceived Christ in her heart through faith before she conceived him physically. For Franciscans, Mary's motherhood became the model; for, like her, all are called to conceive Christ in their hearts through obedience and bring him to birth in the world.

Scriptural Background for the Disciple as Mother

The section in Matthew that speaks of Jesus' kindred opens the way for us to become mothers of Jesus and as such mothers of God:

> He was still speaking to the crowds when his mother and his brothers appeared; they were standing outside and were anxious to have a word with him. But to the man who told him this Jesus replied, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand towards his disciples he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother" (Matt. 12: 46-50).

Luke's gospel has Jesus answer: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice" (Lk. 8:21) These texts in no way disparage Mary; rather they remind us that claims of physical relationship come after those of spiritual relationship. Mary was pre-eminently the one who listened to the Word of God and put it into practice. In her obedient response to the message of the Angel Gabriel, she conceived Christ physically, but she had already conceived Christ by faith in her heart.

Mary is the model for every disciple of her Son. We are all called to do the will of the heavenly Father and to pronounce the "fiat" to his Word. By so doing each of us becomes a mother of Christ. It is also part of our evangelical vocation as members of the Body of Christ to assist one another to be mothers of the Word of God.[19] St. Paul speaks of himself as going through the pains of childbirth to bring forth the Word in others. "I must go through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:9). This motherhood is the main thrust of Paul's evangelical outreach:

> Like a mother feeding and looking after her own children, we felt so devoted and protective towards you, and have come to love you so much, that we were eager to hand over to you, not only the Good News but our whole lives as well (1Thess. 2:7-8).

Clare's Writings

Clare was struck with wonder when she considered that a woman's womb was needed so that God could come into the world as a human being. The womb of Mary was the receptacle to receive and carry the Son of God whom the heavens themselves could not contain. In her Third Letter to Agnes she wrote:

> May you cling to His most sweet Mother who gave birth to a Son whom the heavens could not contain. And yet she carried him in the little enclosure of her holy womb and held Him on her virginal lap (3LAg 18-19).

This was one of the paradoxes of the gospel—that which is most precious, most vital, on whom history revolves, came without fanfare, despised, needy, and poor. Jesus, God incarnate, in whom all things were created, lay hidden in the womb of a woman living in a despised village, in a backwater of the great Roman Empire. But Clare understood that Mary's motherhood was more than an historical event, as important and moving as that was. She saw it also as a symbol.

> As the glorious Virgin of virgins carried [him] materially, so you too, by following in her footprints, especially [those] of poverty and humility, can without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body (3LAg 24).

Motherhood is more than a physical matter and more than a matter for women alone. Carrying, nurturing, and making life grow is the duty of all. Clare and Francis saw cherishing and nourishing as essential to interpersonal relationships. The mother who nurtures is also the sister or brother who is cherished and this extends to everything in creation.

Bonaventure

In the meditations that make up *The Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*, Bonaventure develops the theme of mystical motherhood. In the Prologue he explains how it came into his mind

> that by the grace of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High, a soul dedicated to God could spiritually conceive the holy Word of God and only-begotten Son of the Father, give birth to him, name him, seek and adore him with the Magi and finally, according to the law of Moses, joyfully present him in the Temple of God the Father.[20]

In his first meditation, Bonaventure writes:

> When at length it has rejected and despised previous imperfections and former desires for worldly things, and has resolved to lead a new life by the gracious kindness of the Father of lights from whom is every good endowment and every perfect gift (Jas. 1:17), it conceives mystically by the gift of grace.
>
> What is happening here? It is nothing other than the heavenly Father by a divine seed, as it were impregnating the soul and making it fruitful. The power of the most High comes upon the soul and overshadows it (cf. Lk. 1:35) It is a joyous conception.[21]

Having conceived by the Holy Spirit, the devout soul is led to avoid wicked company. Bonaventure concludes with the words:

> If you recognize that you have conceived God's most dear Son by a sacred resolve to strive for perfection, then keep away from the deadly poison I have just mentioned and, like a woman in labor, hasten with desire and longing towards a happy delivery.[22]

Bonaventure continues in the second meditation:

> Let us consider and mark well how the blessed Son of God, already conceived spiritually, is born spiritually in the soul. He is born when, after good advice, due thought and prayer for God's protection, we

put into practice our resolution to lead a more perfect life. That is to say, he is born when the soul begins to do that which it long had in mind, but was afraid to undertake, through fear of its own weakness.[23]

. . .

Once this birth has taken place the devout soul knows and tastes how good the Lord Jesus is (cf. Ps 34:9). And in truth we find how good he is when we nourish him with our prayers, bathe him in the waters of our warm and loving tears, wrap him in the spotless swaddling clothes of our desires, carry him in an embrace of holy love, kiss him over and over again with heartfelt longing and cherish him in the bosom of our inmost heart.[24]

In the Major Legend of Francis, Bonaventure links together the Motherhood of Mary with the Motherhood of Francis by returning to the theme of how Francis gave birth to a brotherhood of poor men.

> Through the merits of the Mother of Mercy he conceived and brought to birth the spirit of the truth of the Gospel" (LMj 3:1).

> Francis gathered all his sons around him and explained many things concerning the kingdom of God. . . . Then he disclosed to them his plan to send them to the four corners of the world. For already the lowly and seemingly sterile simplicity of our holy Father had brought to birth seven sons. And now he wished to call all the faithful of the world to repentance and to bring them to birth in Christ the Lord (LMj 3: 7).

Chapter 3 concludes with the allegory of the rich king who married a poor but beautiful woman, to which Francis, by way of interpretation, adds: "The sons and heirs of the eternal King have been born of a poor mother by the power of the Holy Spirit and they will be begotten by the spirit of poverty in our poor little Order" (LMj 3:10).

Finally, Bonaventure uses a maternal theme in the "Tree of Life" (30), where he presents the Church as having been born from the side of Christ.

> Then, in order that the Church might be formed out of the side of Christ sleeping on the cross, . . . the divine plan permitted that one of the soldiers should pierce open his sacred side with a lance. While blood mixed with water flowed, the price of our salvation was poured forth, which gushing from the secret fountain of the heart gave power to the sacraments of the Church to confer the life of grace and to become for those already living in Christ, a draught of the fountain of living water springing up into eternal life.[25]

This theme of wound and womb, delivery and birthing, became familiar among the Franciscan mystical writers. James of Milan, who wrote the "*Stimulus amoris*," developed these themes in powerful imagery that could serve as a conclusion to our survey of the Franciscan contribution to maternal imagery.

> O most beloved wounds of my Lord Jesus Christ! Once on entering them with my eyes open, they were filled with blood. Seeing nothing else, I began to enter, feeling my way into the depths of the inner organs of his charity which surrounded me on every side and deprived me of any possibility of turning back. Here I live, nourishing myself with food that nourishes Him, becoming inebriated with his drink. I am immersed in a sweetness so great that I am unable to tell you. He who out of love for sinners stayed in the womb of the Virgin now deigns to carry poor me within his inner parts. But I am greatly afraid that the moment of birth will come, depriving me of the delights which I now enjoy. In any case, if he delivers me, he must suckle me at his breast like a mother, warm me with his hands, carry me in his arms, console me with kisses and caress me in his lap.[26]

This indeed is a Franciscan picture of "Mother Jesus" conceiving, bearing, birthing, and nurturing a person.

This imagery faded during the period of the Reformation, Trent, and the counter-Reformation, but the theme of bearing God within us like Mary re-emerges in the 1982 Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular. "Within themselves let them always make a dwelling place and home for the Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (2:8).

Conclusion

Spiritual motherhood as the mystical birth of God's Word in the soul of every Christian rests on the foundation of motherhood in God, in Jesus, and, for the Franciscan family, in Francis. The recognition of the maternal side of God, Jesus, and Francis, as well as that of common humanity in the Christian tradition, has a great deal to say about the way authority is exercised in the Christian family. When this ancient tradition is restored to the forefront of Church life, it will lead to a nurturing presence, which will serve to relativize the powers of domination and violence.

Spiritual motherhood sets free the life-giving forces within each Christian. It reveals to them the mystery that God dwells and grows within them and that they are called to bring forth Christ to the world. The model is Mary, who conceived Christ in her womb, allowed him to grow in the darkness while nourishing him with her own body, and then brought him forth when his time had arrived.

Spiritual motherhood fosters the nurturing, loving, and caring side of human nature, which may serve as an antidote to every form of violence. When the maternal side of our nature prevails, the peace that Christ came to bring to the world and which Francis preached may be established.

We hope that this theme of spiritual motherhood serves to help us be sisters and brothers to one another, members of the family of God, the family of Christ, the family of Francis, begotten of tenderness and living always in that tender, loving, all good God.

Endnotes

[1]D. Kidner, *Genesis* (I.V.P.: London, 1967), 45.

[2]C. V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Almond: Trowbridge, 1985), 84. This translation was made by Camp to bring out the maternal imagery employed in this passage.

[3]M. J. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1970), 67.

[4]*Quis dives salvetur*, PG9, 641.

[5]Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm*, trans. Benedicta Ward (Penguin: Harmonsworth, 1973).

[6]Letter 322, pl 182, col 527.

[7]C. W. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middles Ages* (UCLA Press: Los Angeles and London, 1982), 115.

[8]Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 298-299.

[9]Julian, 294

[10]Cf. Julian, 296.

[11]Julian, 292.

[12]Bynum, 131.

[13]All quotations from Francis's writings and early biographies are taken from *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, volumes 1 and 2, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short (New City Press: New York, 1999, 2000).

[14]*Francis of Assisi, The Saint*, Vol. 1, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short (New City Press: New York, 1999), 591.

[15]Origen, *The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies*, trans. R. P. Lawson, *Ancient Christian Writers*, Vol. 26 (Westminster/Md.: London, 1957), 38.

[16]Augustine: *The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 38 (Washington, 1959).

[17] All quotations from Clare's writings and early biographies are from: *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. and trans. Regis J. Armstrong (Franciscan Institute Publications: St. Bonaventure, NY, 1993).

[18]Cf. Marco Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, trans. Francis Teresa, OSC (Darton, Longman, Todd: London, 1993).

[19]Eric Doyle, "Introduction," *Bonaventure: Bringing Forth Christ, Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*, trans. Eric Doyle (S.L.G. Press: Oxford, 1999), viii.

[20]Doyle, 92.

[21]Doyle, 3.

[22]Doyle, 6.

[23]Doyle, 7.

[24]Doyle, 8.

[25]*Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins (S.P.C.K.: London, 1978), 154-155.

[26]William J. Short, *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition* Darton, Longman and Todd: London, 1999), 108.

> *Mary becomes the disciple among disciples, mirroring the pattern of God's activity. She conceived Christ in her heart through faith before she conceived him physically. For Franciscans, Mary's motherhood became the model; for, like her, all are called to conceive Christ in their hearts through obedience and bring him to birth in the world.*

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The Sacred Exchange Between Saint Francis and Lady Poverty: An Example of "Vernacular Theology"

Brett Huebner

In his recent book, *The Flowering of Mysticism*,[1] Bernard McGinn discusses the mystics of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, including Franciscan mystics. In the Introduction, he provides a description of "vernacular theology."[2] McGinn recalls the development of mysticism in the twelfth century and notes critical differences between thirteenth-century mysticism and earlier monastic mysticism. Regarding the mystics of the thirteenth century, he comments:

> [They] were deeply indebted to the tradition of monastic mysticism initiated by the church fathers and developed by the monks of the medieval West. This monastic phase or layer of mysticism reached its fulfillment in the twelfth century, especially among the Cistercians and the canons of the Abbey of St. Victor outside Paris. . . .[3]

According to McGinn these groups, the Cistercians and Victorines, both played significant roles in the development of Christian mysticism. However, he believes that the mystics of the thirteenth century, who built on these earlier mystics, offered even more crucial contributions to the development of Christian mysticism.

He elaborates on several characteristics of the thirteenth-century mystical tradition. One characteristic is the way the mysticism of that century responds to the growing urbanization of Europe. He writes:

> The Benedictine monasticism that had dominated religious life in the West since the eighth century was admirably suited to the dispersed rural life and the feudal structure of early medieval society, but it was ill-suited to the commercial world of the towns and growing cities of the later Middle Ages. At the start of the thirteenth century, Western Christianity was confronted with the necessity of "re-urbanizing," that is, of creating appropriate religious responses, both institutional and spiritual, to answer the needs of a rapidly changing, urbanizing society.[4]

Since the early Middle Ages the monks had identified their lifestyles with the *vita apostolica*. They based it on the image of the Christian community described in Acts 4:32. "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had."[5] In the twelfth century, however, clerics and reformers began to argue for a more outward-oriented view of the apostolic life, suggesting that "preaching and evangelization of the world were not merely permissible but were central to a *truly* apostolic way of life."[6] A priority began to be placed on the example of Christ's preaching from town to town and on the example of his disciples, who were sent without purse, wallet, or sandals into the world. Francis of Assisi and his followers were a part of this change, and their movement was soon in the forefront of this new trend.

As European urbanization grew, so did vernacular literacy among the populace. In this spirit, Francis instructed his brothers, telling them that, ". . . when they preach their *language be well-considered and chaste* for the benefit and edification of the people" (LR 9:3).[7] Among other similar trends in the mysticism of that period are changes in "forms of language and modes of representation found in mystical texts."[8] McGinn speaks of "three interactive modes" of theological language, the "monastic, the scholastic, and the vernacular."[9] The first had been prevalent as a means of expressing the faith ever since the time of Gregory the Great. The second had arisen with the schools in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The third, the vernacular, became increasingly more popular in the thirteenth century.

Vernacular Theology

This vernacular mode of theology was directed to audiences different from the monastic and the scholastic. In one sense, it was directed to a wider audience, one not necessarily trained in Latin. Yet, in another sense, this audience was narrower. It was limited to the locale in which the language of the texts could be understood. The audience for a monastic or scholastic text would be restricted to those educated clerics and teachers of theology who could read Latin, while vernacular texts could be read by a greater number of persons literate in their native tongue. Yet, a monastic or scholastic text could be read by educated clerics and theology teachers across the continent, while vernacular texts were restricted to a country or region where the language of the text would be understood.

McGinn makes another important point regarding the rise of these vernacular expressions of theology. Some texts written in Latin could still maintain a vernacular flavor. The first example he gives is that of the Latin writings of Francis of Assisi, which, he says "are certainly not the product of a scholastic mind, or even of one trained in monastic thought, though they bespeak a deep theological vision."[10] These texts would be capable of reaching the educated clerics and theology teachers with a message often reserved for vernacular audiences.

What exactly does McGinn mean by "vernacular theology"? This is a two-part question. First, a text must meet McGinn's criteria for "vernacular" theology. Second, it must still qualify as "theology."

Vernacular

What qualifies a text written in Latin as "vernacular? McGinn uses the following three characteristics to define a text as fitting into *vernacular* theology even if it is written in Latin:

1)Inclusive of everyday life and humility.
2)Authoritative because of grace, not because of office.
3)Accomplishes its theological goals with its own unique methods, one of which is the mystical vision.

The first characteristic of vernacular theology is its greater inclusiveness of common life and humility compared to monastic and scholastic theology. Noting the research of Eric Auerbach,[11] McGinn believes this trait runs throughout the various "vernacular theologies" and gives them a "singleness of spirit that fueled these attempts to appropriate the Christian story."[12]

The second characteristic of vernacular theology concerns how it obtains its authority. McGinn suggests that the way a vernacular text becomes authoritative if classified as "vernacular" is different from the way a monastic or scholastic text becomes authoritative. A medieval theology text might become authoritative by either of two ways. It could gain authority *ex officio*, that is, it could be commissioned or authored by a person with high office in the Church. Or, it could gain authority *ex beneficio*. This means that the audience could perceive it to be inspired by a gift of divine grace. While monastic and scholastic texts were often commissioned and written by Church officials, vernacular texts became authoritative *ex beneficio* rather than *ex officio*.[13]

McGinn elaborates more fully on the third characteristic of vernacular theology. This characteristic is its use of methods distinct from the methods of monastic and scholastic theology. The vernacular method most relevant to this present study is "mystical vision."[14] What is most important about the

mystical vision is "the *kind of vision* presented, the *purpose* for which it is given, and the *effect* it has on the recipient."[15] He goes on to suggest that the kind of visionary literature most widespread in the latter part of the twelfth century was the tour of heaven and hell, as exemplified later in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. However, in the thirteenth century, a new genre of vision became more prominent. This genre "involved ecstatic transport to the supernatural realm, where a revelation in pictorial form was given to the seer, most often by a heavenly being."[16]

Theology

McGinn asserts that "all forms of medieval theology tried to be true to two goals—deepening the understanding of faith and enkindling charity so that the believer could arrive at a higher understanding of love."[17] The goals of vernacular theology were the same as those of monastic and scholastic theology.

The difference comes in how these goals were accomplished, as indicated above. Monastic and scholastic texts accomplished these goals by their own standard methods—monastic by means of biblical commentaries or rhetorical sermons and scholastic by the lectio or summa formats. "Vernacular" texts used a greater diversity of methods to accomplish the same goals—the aforementioned *vitae* or visions. To be theology, however, a medieval text needed only to have these two goals—to increase understanding of the faith and to enkindle charity.

Sacred Exchange as Vernacular Theology

The Sacred Exchange Between Saint Francis and Lady Poverty is an early Franciscan work that praises the ideal of voluntary poverty.[18] Both its author and its date of authorship remain unknown.[19] In his text the author admonishes his readers to fulfill the Franciscan vision of Gospel poverty by creating a story in which Francis seeks out "Lady Poverty," the embodied, personalized figure of that Franciscan ideal.

Sr. Mary Regina, PCPA

Although written in Latin, the Sacred Exchange is an example of vernacular theology because it meets the three characteristics that define a theological text as vernacular. And it is theology because it attempts to accomplish the two goals of medieval theology—increasing the understanding of faith and enkindling charity.

Sacred Exchange as Vernacular

Common Life and Humility

The emphasis on common life and humility appears at the very beginning of the Sacred Exchange. Clearly, the author views poverty as central to the Franciscan vision. He tells us that "holy Poverty shines with a certain prerogative before" all other virtues.[20] The vernacular theological emphasis on humility is expressed as an emphasis on the centrality of poverty. The author writes that the Son of God himself "fell in love with this virtue with a special affection."[21] Here we have reference to poverty as an object of Christ's love. The author also notes that Christ states that the poor are blessed, "for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."[22]

The Sacred Exchange also makes frequent use of the common vernacular theme of marriage, using it as a metaphor for Christ's relationship with the principle of poverty. The author personifies poverty as a lady and then speaks of her as the bride of Christ. The author first speaks of an "espousal" of Lady Poverty, putting the words in the mouth of Francis as he recruits others to follow him to her dwelling place. He states that the "espousal of Poverty, brothers, is wonderful."[23]

When Francis praises Lady Poverty, he refers to her as "the queen of virtues," desired by the "Creator of heaven and earth," who "left his house and gave up his inheritance" for her.[24] Francis exclaims that the Lord "adorned you as a bride with a crown."[25] He speaks of the Lord's own desire for poverty, a desire that led him to make her his spouse, his queen with a crown, the queen of virtues. Later in the text, Francis proclaims that, when Christ's followers abandoned him at his hour of need, Lady Poverty alone, "most faithful spouse, most sweet lover, did not abandon him for a moment."[26]

In her response to Francis's praise, Lady Poverty refers to herself as the beloved of the Most High King, saying: "That anointing teaches you everything you have uttered about the most high King Who, by his grace alone, took me as his beloved, taking away my reproach from the earth, and glorified me among the most celebrated in heaven."[27] Here we have Lady Poverty, for the first time in the text, making a statement of her own regarding her spousal relationship to the Most High King. She then recounts how she had been with the first man in paradise, only to be exiled when fallen man desired to work to

obtain wealth. She wandered in exile until Christ sought her out, embraced her, and then left her behind "as a covenant to his faithful chosen ones."[28]

Then, Lady Poverty takes Francis and his companions through a lengthy discourse on the role she has played since the time of Christ, including the rise of the good religious and the fall of many into greed and sloth. Near the end of this discourse the author causes her to make an interesting spousal implication, quoting the Lord's words to her, which are the words of the male lover to his beloved, the "Sulamite," in the Canticle of Canticles: "Return, return, Sulamite, return, return that we might behold you."[29] In speaking of the relationship between Lady Poverty and the Lord in terms of Canticles, the author drives home the idea that, here, in this text, these two are espoused and very much love each other.

After Lady Poverty finishes her discourse, Francis and his companions speak of the love between Lady Poverty and the Lord. She agrees to dine with them at the place where they are staying. She descends the mountain with them and they sit down to their meager feast. In response to her request for wine, they say that it is "not good for you to drink wine because Christ's spouse must avoid wine like poison."[30]

After their banquet is concluded, Lady Poverty blesses them and proclaims that she is overjoyed. "What I have desired I now possess, for I am joined on earth to those who bear the image of Him to Whom I am espoused in heaven."[31] With some final exhortations and blessings from Lady Poverty to Francis and his companions, the author completes the text.

Ex beneficio

The Sacred Exchange also illustrates the second characteristic of vernacular theology—how a text becomes authoritative. The text is written for a "vernacular" audience. While it is Latin-literate it is also "vernacular" because the author has gained it *ex beneficio*, by grace, rather than through an office. The author had a charism, a gift of grace. The audience is not necessarily trained in the monastic tradition or in the scholastic method. It may be that the audience is comprised of some people from these traditions, but the defining characteristic of the audience is this second "vernacular" characteristic. The Franciscan friars reading this text are not doing so because it carries the authority of something written by a pope, a university doctor, or a minister general. They are reading it because it applies to their common heritage with its great principle of poverty about which the text speaks.

Mystical Vision

Finally, the Sacred Exchange fits McGinn's description of a mystical vision. It is important to note what kind of vision it is, what its purpose is in

being given, and the effect it has on its recipient. As for its kind, it is among those visionary texts that relate the story of a privileged group of persons being removed "to the supernatural realm, where a revelation" is given to them by "a heavenly being." In this case, Francis and his companions are the privileged group of persons, or "seers," to use McGinn's term. And, in this case, Lady Poverty is the "heavenly being."[32]

The purpose of the vision is to instill the evangelical ideal of poverty into Francis and his companions, who are the recipients of the vision. The effect of the vision on them is just as Lady Poverty had intended. In his zeal to imitate Christ, Francis promises and resolves "to keep the judgments" of Lady Poverty's justice.[33]

Sacred Exchange as Theology

The text, though written in Latin, uses vernacular methods to accomplish the twofold theological goal—to increase understanding of the faith and to enkindle charity.

The vision presented to Francis and his companions attempts to deepen the faith of its Franciscan audience by impressing upon them the great union between their order's ideal of Gospel poverty and the Savior himself. It treats poverty as the ultimate virtue, above all others. The author calls Lady Poverty the spouse of Christ. Francis notes to his companions that the espousal of Poverty was wonderful. With that statement, the author connects his audience with Francis as a model of evangelical poverty. Yet, by calling her beloved by and espoused to Christ, the author connects his audience with Christ himself as the supreme model of evangelical poverty. The author forces his audience to consider whether they really are Christ's true followers or can continue to be if they refuse to embrace the virtue of poverty.

According to the teaching of the Church at that time marriage was understood to be an indissoluble union.[34] Further, the Church considered it a sacrament because it signified "the union of Christ and his Church and the union of the faithful soul to Christ."[35] This the author of the Exchange knew well, as did his readers. If this was the understanding of marriage concerning human couples within the Church, it applied no less in reference to the love of Christ for Poverty and the love of the poor for Christ.

Truly, Francis is the imitator of Christ. Lady Poverty remarks that she is now joined "on earth to those who bear the image of Him to Whom I am espoused in heaven."[36] Francis has a bride—the same bride Christ took. That which transforms Francis into the image of Christ is actually his very union with poverty. Lady Poverty could not be joined to someone who was not in the image of Christ her husband, because being joined to her is what makes a person in Christ's image. It is this deeper understanding of faith that the author intends to communicate to his audience. He presumes that the indissoluble nature of marriage is firmly entrenched in the minds of his Franciscan brothers and that they will easily apply that understanding of marriage to the point he makes regarding their relationship to poverty. Just as a man is indissolubly bound to his wife, so Christ is bound to poverty; and the Franciscan brothers, bound indissolubly to Christ by virtue of their Christian faith, are likewise bound to poverty. For they cannot be bound to Christ unless they are bound also to his bride, Lady Poverty.

The text enkindles charity in its audience by imploring them to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of the whole Order and for others by giving up whatever is now hindering their full obedience to the Gospel rule of poverty. With a profound understanding of their indissoluble linkage to poverty, they are moved to do the things poverty demands of them, embracing the virtues of obedience and simple faith and pursuing the practice of imitating Christ in all that they do.

Conclusion

Thus it may be concluded that the Sacred Exchange is an example of vernacular theology written in Latin. It includes the common and the lowly. It is authoritative because of grace rather than because of office. It is written in the form of a mystical vision of Francis and his companions meeting with Lady Poverty. The author's vision uses the common, everyday theme of "marriage" and the lowly, humble theme of "poverty" to accomplish the twofold theological goal of increasing the readers' understanding of faith and of enkindling charity within them. Even today the message of The Sacred Exchange remains an invaluable part of the Franciscan heritage.

Endnotes

[1]Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200-1350)* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998).

[2]McGinn, 19-30.

[3]McGinn, 1-2.

[4]McGinn, 3.

[5]Robert G. Hoerber, ed., *Concordia Self-Study Bible. New International Version* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), 1662.

[6]McGinn, 6.

[7]From *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, Vol. I (New York: New City Press, 1999).

[8]McGinn, 18.

[9]McGinn, 19.

[10]McGinn, 22.

[11]See McGinn, 19, notes 86 and 87.

[12]McGinn, 19.

[13]McGinn, 21.

[14]Another very common method vernacular texts use is hagiography in the form of the *vitae* of the saints. McGinn takes care to point out that not all mystical theology is "visionary narrative" or that a visionary narrative is what makes a text mystical. However, he allows that many mystical texts of the vernacular variety do indeed take the form of a visionary narrative. See McGinn, 26.

[15]McGinn, 27.

[16]McGinn, 27.

[17]McGinn, 19.

[18]For this background information and the English translation of the Sacred Exchange, I have used *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. I.

[19]Guesses on that date range anywhere from 1227 to the late thirteenth-century controversy between the Spirituals and the Community. Guesses as to authorship are also wide-ranging. For a good discussion of authorship and date of this document, see *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. I, 523-527.

[20]ScEx, 529, Paragraph 1.

[21]ScEx, 529, Paragraph 2.

[22]ScEx, 529, Paragraph 2.

[23]ScEx, 533, Paragraph 13. Cf. Stefano Brufani, *Sacrum commercium sancti Francisci cum domina Paupertate*, (Assisi: Edizioni Porziuncola, 1990), 137. (Capitulum 3:10, *Mirabilis est, fratres, desponsatio Paupertati.*)

[24] ScEx, 534, Paragraph 16.

[25]ScEx, 535, Paragraph 18.

[26]ScEx, 536, Paragraph 20. Cf. Brufani, 142. (Capitulum 6:10, *Tu autem, fidelissima sponsa, amatrix dulcissima, nec ad momentum discessisti ab eo.*)

[27]ScEx, 537, Paragraph 23.

[28]ScEx, 539, Paragraph 31.

[29]ScEx, 548, Paragraph 52. Cf. Brufani, 165, (Capitulum 26:1) and compare to *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, editionem quartam, ed. Roger Gryson, trans. B. Fischer, H. I. Frede, H. F. D. Sparks, W. Thiele, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 1000-1001 (Ct 6:12).

[30]ScEx, 552, Paragraph 62. Cf. Brufani, 173. (Capitulum 30:21, *et tibi bibere vinum non est bonum, quoniam sponsa Christi vinum debet fugere pro veneno.*)

[31]ScEx, vol. I, 553, Paragraph 64. Cf. Brufani, 174. (Capitulum 31:4: . . . *quod desideravi iam teneo, quoniam illis sum coniuncta in terris, qui mihi imaginem representant eius cui sum desponsata in celis.*)

[32]McGinn, 27.

[33]ScEx, 550, Paragraph 57.

[34]Already by 1140, Gratian had established "a two-stage process of conjugal union" that involved both the consent of the two parties involved and also the consummation through sexual intercourse. Peter Lombard had stated that only present consent was necessary to have a binding marriage. Pope Alexander III (1159-81) spoke definitively in stating that a marriage was indissoluble either by present consent or by consent to marry in the future, which then became effective by means of sexual intercourse. See Constance M. Rousseau, "The Spousal Relationship: Marital Society and Sexuality in the Letters of Pope Innocent III," *Mediaeval Studies*, 56 (1994): 91-93.

[35]Rousseau, 91-93.

[36]ScEx, vol. I, 553.

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Conversion, the Vowed Life, and a Changing Paradigm

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Franciscan Federation of the Brother and Sisters of the Third Order of Penance held in Baltimore, Maryland in August, 2001.

There is an explicit reference to the three vows in the opening of the Rule of the Friars Minor [1]But once that is said, the substance of the vows is incorporated into the text of the Rule itself without a detailed theoretical presentation of their meaning. There is, for example, no specific chapter on chastity. When the work on the 1982 revised Rule of the Third Order Regular was completed and presented to the Holy See for approval, the single criticism offered was the absence of a chapter on the vow of chastity. This was due, of course, to the example of Francis himself. But the situation was nonetheless remedied to meet ecclesiastical requirements.

It is safe to say that the vowed life of the thirteenth century was not simply identical with that of the post-Tridentine Church. There is no doubt that the understanding of the vows today has moved to another stage. This shifting paradigm is best illustrated by a short excursion into the recent past, the period of my own formation in religious life.

Let me begin with the Rule of 1927. There had been no complete revision of the Rule since the sixteenth century. The Rule of 1521 was itself composed of rules and statutes from an even earlier era. To do the work on the twentieth-century Rule, the Holy See selected a small group of Franciscan scholars who were charged with the task. This group did not originally include any member of the Third Order. However, the Minister General of the Third Order Regular was belatedly added to the group.

What did the Rule of 1927 contain? It drew attention to the juridical meaning of the three vows and traced the various stages of our religious formation and life. What it lacked was any sense of the specific character of the Order in terms of its defining charism. Unfortunately it did not breathe any life or spirit.

It was simply a given to be attached to the constitutions of the Third Order Regular congregations. Most religious of the Order had no really clear idea of why it was there.

The treatment of the vows in the constitutions of that time was largely juridical. It looked to parameters, grievous and non-grievous offenses, and obligations. It was a largely negative approach. For example, the interests of poverty would be upheld by doing without and living as poorly as possible. Ownership was excluded; material goods, limited; family contact, limited. Nothing of value was to be in one's possession. Poverty was a denuding of oneself in the search of a more perfect life.

This understanding of poverty has little significance for us today. In an age when friars and sisters, even those in formation, have great mobility, advanced technology, an adequate monthly allowance, and first-rate educational opportunities, such an understanding of poverty has very little meaning. When young religious hear us speak of those days, it sounds medieval and strikingly incomprehensible to them.

The treatment of chastity was short on motivation and strong on safeguards. When it came to offenses, everything was serious. To sin against the virtue was to sin against the vow. Limits were established through mortification of the senses, custody of the eyes, and avoidance of any relationships that might lead one astray. So-called "particular friendships" were a great taboo. Such relationships included any kind of closeness with others of the opposite or same sex. Honesty compels me to admit that it was years before I understood the full implications of what that meant. Today young religious are taught the importance of authentic human friendship as supportive of a chaste life. This is due to the fact that human sexuality today is viewed in a wholly different way. Today formation in celibacy is much more positive, enabling one to walk between the Scylla of genital relationships and the Charybdis of psychological distance and isolation. Much of what was taught in an earlier age appears today as largely irrelevant and meaningless. It is for this reason, as we shall see, that chastity in the new Rule appears under the rubric of fraternal love.

In an earlier juridical approach to obedience, young religious learned the difference between a serious violation (disregarding a formal directive) and a venial transgression (including minor offenses against general discipline). The superior was invested with a status that enabled him or her to speak in God's name. Obedience to constituted authority bound one to everything that was not sin; decisions, right or wrong, were not open to question. The emphasis fell almost exclusively on the superior-subject relationship, and to contravene the superior's will was to put oneself in a sinful state. In many women's communities, for example, annual assignments were made on August 15. These were posted on the house bulletin board, and all the sisters, whether staying or

leaving, were to have their bags packed in expectation of whatever would come. Personal concerns were always subordinated to the formal decision. Today discernment is the word in play; and, while it is not always used judiciously, it is the customary way in which decisions affecting one's life are made. Some smaller communities are self-governed and do not have a designated superior. For a variety of reasons the role of the superior in religious life today has diminished considerably.

Much of this is readily applicable to any religious institute, not just Franciscans. This is not surprising, because the uniformity that characterized religious life in the past resulted in a generic approach to the vowed life. It was not the charism—at least, certainly not in the Third Order Regular—that determined the way in which the vows would be lived. Canon law was the overarching determinant in dealing with the vows, and the law was the same for everyone.

I realize that this is a very sketchy outline of a former paradigm, but I do not believe that it is a caricature. This was the way many of us were trained in the vowed life. I further suggest that a new paradigm has emerged which reflects a new age and a new ethos. It also reflects the spiritual outlook of religious life of the twenty-first century. History shows us that there was no single way of living the vowed life through the centuries; hence another paradigm shift should come as no surprise.

The Rule of Life

When work on the revised Rule of the Third Order Regular began in the early 1970s, it grew out of the realization that the Rule of 1927 failed to express adequately the charism of the Order. Work on constitutions in various Tertiary institutes had begun and in some instances completed with no attention having been given to the document that should have undergirded constitutions—the Rule of life. The work of the 70s was complicated and difficult, since there were a number of initiatives already underway to revise the Rule of 1927. The major proponents were the French and German projects and the one sponsored by our own generalate, known as the Madrid Document. This last was so named because it grew out of an international congress of men and women Tertiaries who met in Spain to deal with the Rule-question in the mid-70s. It was then that the results of historical studies on the origins of the Order saw penance or conversion of life as the charism of the Order. The problem arose in trying to bring these various initiatives together with something of a unified vision. This led to a number of impasses on the journey during those rather turbulent years.

By the time we reached the major assembly in Rome in 1982, there was still a lack of clarity. This meeting brought together about two hundred reli-

gious superiors of the Third Order Regular to reach a conclusion on the new Rule. In the text presented, there were four equal fundamental values: prayer, poverty, humility, and conversion—all four undifferentiated as to priority. It was our position (i.e., those who were of the Madrid persuasion) that, while all four are basic Franciscan values, conversion of life remains the over-arching distinctive charism. By the end of the assembly, the final text found conversion of life in its proper place. In the important article 2, wherein the distinctive character of the institute is stated, we read: "The friars and sisters are called to persevere in true faith and *penance*. They wish to live their evangelical *conversion of life* in a spirit of prayer, of poverty, and of humility." Newcomers to the life are said to begin a "*life of penance*." It was further decided to include as a prologue to the Rule Francis's Exhortation to the Faithful, which prominent Franciscan scholars claim was originally written to the penitent followers of he Poverello. The Rule, given overwhelming approval on the final vote, proved to be a monumental step forward in the history of the Order. While there may be discussion within the broader Franciscan family about the defining charism, there is no longer any doubt within the Third Order tradition.

The Vowed Life

"In this is love—not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins" (1John 4:10). It is within this framework that any consideration of the vowed life takes place. We are not working toward some elusive goal or climbing a mountain to get somewhere. Nor are we in some time-honored tradition called "striving for perfection." We are now in a state of salvation; we are drawn out of darkness into God's wondrous light. It is because he has first loved us that we want to respond generously. In taking vows, it is not a question of emptying the house so that God can fill it. Rather, we are so filled with God that there is no more room in the house. We have found the treasure in the field; and, that being the case, we are willing to surrender everything in its interest.

This notion of God's self-donation on our behalf is seen in three special mysteries that were at the center of Francis's life. All of them appear in the second edition of the Letter to the Faithful, today better described as an Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. The first mystery is the incarnation by which God took on human life in the womb of the Virgin (v. 4). The second is that the Son of God, who was born for us, "[offered] himself through his own blood for our salvation" (v. 11). The third is that in his humility he continues to remain with us in the Eucharist (vv. 6-9). It was the love of God, manifest in the incarnation, passion, and Eucharist, that gave Francis a deep sense of gratitude. It is within this context that the vows have their meaning. Gratitude is the cornerstone of our observing the vows and living the Christian life in general.

The Vows Today

With the aforesaid in place, we can look at the vows to see how ongoing conversion of life finds expression today. This we shall do in the light of the quote from Micah 6, which this conference has appropriately designated as its scriptural centerpiece.

Poverty: "To act justly"

Article 7 of the Rule reads: "The sisters and brothers are called to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring." This, it would seem, is at the heart of penitential poverty. While called to live a simple and uncluttered life, the main issue is not the computer or the car or the place where I have dinner. Poverty means to stand with those who are left out of today's society. That means the poor in a variety of senses: the homeless, the physically or sexually abused, the imprisoned, the unwed mothers, the illegal immigrants, the unemployed, the rejected homosexuals, the suicidal, the drug addicts, as well as the disadvantaged in distant lands. And the list goes on.

The charism of the Order is conversion of life—an ongoing process in our own life as well as a deep desire to see the unconverted turn to the Lord in hope. Franciscan penitents should find themselves with those left out of modern society. That means walking in shoes that are not our own. Therein lies the call of poverty.

This implies a corporate discernment and a collective undertaking. The very essence of religious life is a common witness. It may be fine for one or another of us to be involved in prison ministry or working with battered women. But is that an expression of what my community stands for? As a body we must ask ourselves in what ways are we called to give focus to our ministry through collective action. This is certain to bring the charism to life.

We are called "to act justly" in the words of Micah. So our poverty means the willingness to have our minds fashioned by the needs of society today without seeking wealth or power, influence or domination. These are the riches to be avoided and they are not found in purses or bank accounts. Our true riches then become compassion, availability, and a willingness to help. This does not exclude a car in our garage, a carpet on our floor, a microwave in our kitchen, a computer in our office, or a television in our recreation room. But it does exclude a comfortable settling into life as it has always been and basking in the sun of an unending spirit of *laissez faire* and apostolic immobility.

Chastity: "To love tenderly"

It is within this second injunction of Micah that I would like to consider the vow of chastity or consecrated celibacy. Considerations of this vow in an earlier age never included aspects of affectivity or intimacy. Relationships were carefully circumscribed; rather than being taught how to love, we were taught not to love. While many of us survived all of this, others clearly did not. Religious life has more than its share of malformed and dysfunctional people.

Chastity must be situated in the context of community. Our Third Order Regular Rule considers this in chapter 6. The two articles of the chapter speak of the chaste life as a shared and caring one. Friendly greetings, concern for the needs of others, caring for the sick, making amends, asking forgiveness, and charitable correction (arts. 20-21) are all concrete expressions of an affective nature. While we must have concern about people who cannot love without genital expression, we must be equally concerned about those who can love only at a distance, who are devoid of human warmth, and who hide themselves behind the mask of their own vulnerability. I am not so naïve as to think that we can ignore some of the traditional safeguards of chastity in a very promiscuous society. There are certainly compromising situations that should be avoided. But their importance derives from the fact that we are exposed and vulnerable. If the penitent vocation is one of ongoing conversion, it inevitably means sharing life with the unconverted. It is they who must feel our warmth and concern. We must touch them without fear. Our love for others cannot remain an abstraction. That means we must be ready for danger. As the saying goes: "If you cannot stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

It is to be acknowledged that, in Francis's teaching, there is emphasis on mortification, denial of the senses, and withdrawal from worldly things. This is evident from incidents related in Celano's writings about the life of Francis. But this clearly reflected the spirituality of the times of which Francis was very much a part. Much of it is different from the teaching of Jesus whose asceticism centered around the Sermon on the Mount. Fasting, for example, was not a characteristic of Jesus' earthly life, since it was not appropriate while the wedding feast was in progress (Mk. 2:18-19). While John the Baptist was seen as abstemious and even somewhat eccentric, Jesus came eating and drinking for which he was unjustly criticized (Mt. 11:18-19). The inner asceticism called for by Jesus far exceeded that of the ordinary practices.

By the same token, Francis was a man of compassion, outreach, and concern. He provided for the hungry and healed the sick. He looked after the lame man at Toscanella and the paralyzed man at Narni. Any encounter with a person poorer than himself moved him deeply.These sentiments, which appear again and again, are expressive of his purity and the transparency of his life.

In Franciscan life, chastity means community. It was a real love shared with others that gave meaning to Francis's celibacy. His love was not limited to one person but was for many. Of the inept and clumsy Juniper he could say: "Would that I had a forest of such Junipers."

Penitential life today in the Third Order Regular may be wasting itself in dispersion. Many individuals are engaged in salutary, even penitential expressions of life, but they do it singly. The sense of community may be weakening, if not in the eyes of the individual, at least in the eyes of the faithful as a whole. There is a difference between identifying the life and work of a Sister Jane or a Brother John and recognizing that of "the sisters" or "the brothers" in our neighborhood. And it is within the latter context that love and support are to be found. This brings happiness to the celibate life.

Effective community does not necessarily mean that all must live under one roof. I have long since ceased to believe in holding people together at all cost. Such has led to some of the most dysfunctional and unhappy conglomerates that can be imagined. But linkage and attachment are important to community. Community itself is important as a collective expression of the charism. How else can our charism, so recently recaptured, find expression in the Church?

Obedience: "To walk humbly with the Lord"

The Micah quote situates obedience exactly where it belongs. We should all be familiar with the clear teaching of Vatican II that decisions ultimately rest with those who are called to leadership in religious communities. To say the opposite is to invite chaos, not only in religious life but in any human institution. This is also clear in article 23 of the Rule. However, it is the *decision-making process* that I wish to bring to the fore at this point. The Rule clearly excludes any form of domination and calls for a mutual willingness to serve one another. The heart of obedience is essentially a following of Christ, who surrendered his own will to that of the Father. With Christ we seek first the kingdom of God and his justice (art. 22).

Penitential obedience is first of all a serious seeking of what God wills for the institute and for its members. It begins in community chapters where we prayerfully discern the will of God. All too often a general or provincial chapter is seen merely as a periodic assessment of where the community is and a moment of accountability of leaders to members. In fact, the chapter is a truly graced moment wherein we come together for the discernment of our call in the Church and the world. In chapter the important decisions are made that most influence our life and mission. My experience tells me that our chapters are often little more than "bandaids," to which I myself have often contributed. Certain themes are repeated time after time, and the conclusions and recommendations vary little from chapter to chapter. We spend an immense

amount of time and money reinventing the wheel. If a chapter sets a major new direction for the community, proposals or resolutions should be excluded from a subsequent chapter or two and accountability be the sole item on the agenda. The chapter should be seen as our major moment in obedience.

To walk the path of obedience is not simple. It stands between the Scylla of an "obedience" imposed on an individual and the Charybdis of personal pre-determination. It often happens that a member who has been requested to render a particular service in the community delays a response in the name of discernment. Then the Holy Spirit answers in the negative. In my periods of frustration in leadership, I used to ask myself if the Holy Spirit ever saw things my way! Obedience means a transparency and candor that allows the will of the Lord to be heard and obeyed. There are moments in which that will may remain obscure. It is then that we must be faithful and painfully accept the decision of the minister.

But our principal obedience is to be attuned to the decisions that have been taken by the community in giving expression to our life and work. That the way God's will is most directly manifest. Am I willing to make the sacrifices that may be required in order "to walk humbly with the Lord"? This collective dimension of obedience is of maximum importance. Those called to leadership must see themselves as obedient to the decisions taken by the chapter regarding the direction of the community. All too often today ministries are chosen in an unfocused manner due to the fact that the needs of the Church are so great. Many requests from dioceses are difficult to turn down because the opportunities are attractive and numerous. This requires a great measure of discipline on the part of community leadership. Leaders need to return always to goals aligned with the charism given in the chapter. To respond to needs in an unthinking way or, worse, to allow individuals to determine their own ministry is simply to put another nail in the coffin of community relevance.

In the matter of obedience and the direction that I have taken here, it is understandable that the need for a local minister may become unnecessary. The community may establish its own lines of personal responsibility, which can actually be more difficult than having a local minister. But, as I have tried to illustrate, this does not make the vow of obedience irrelevant. It simply makes the individual religious more attuned to what God is asking of the religious institute.

The quotation from Micah then becomes our guiding light. To be part of any Third Order Franciscan community today is to ask how we as a body can respond to the needs that surround us in line with our penitential charism. This means that we are humble, attentive, and submissive in accepting the decisions that the community has made. This is "to walk humbly with our God."

Conclusion

Today we are all affected by the decrease in our membership. Future planning is far more difficult today than it was forty, or even twenty, years ago. In the face of atrophying forms, coupled with the conviction of the continued validity of religious life, the question is raised: Is God leading us into new forms of our life? At the moment we can say nothing with certainty, but there are pointers in that direction. It is also possible that we are simply experiencing a transient moment of difficulty in the long history of the Church. Perhaps we are too much caught up in the actual moment to answer a question that will require historical perspective.

But let us not forget that we have been fortunate to live in a graced moment in the life of the penitential tradition. We have lived through a Church Council, the implications of which are still unfolding. Vatican II was *geschichtliche* or historic in the life of Roman Catholicism. It called religious to rediscover their original *raison d'être*. For the Third Order Regular this resulted in a decade of serious study, constant questions, and no small amount of tension. This was a period of debate and counter-debate, both painful and gratifying, which finally resulted in one of the most important moments in an eight-century history. At the beginning of the 1982 assembly in Rome, I still had serious doubts as to what the outcome would be. In such a large gathering of Tertiary religious, there was bound to be stress and tension. And we all experienced it. But because of obedience to the Spirit, it ended on an unforgettable note of peace and serenity. I for one went home convinced that God's will had been done. We were no longer united around the French or German document or the Madrid Statement but rather the one Rule of Life of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis.

With the Rule's approval by the Church's highest authority, a new era of rediscovery was opened. Research was published on the origins of the Order. There was a concerted effort to educate membership on the meaning of the Rule through workshops and study groups. The work on constitutions took new directions and ministry for some became more focused. Above all, we became more aware. It was no longer a question of attaching to our renewed constitutions a dusty Rule that had little significance. Rather we now had a Rule that brought us into contact with a great patrimony. We now know that we are heirs to a great tradition, the Order of Penitents of Francis of Assisi. We see conversion of life as a charism that has immense meaning in today's world.

The time for theory has passed. Our resources may be limited but we are not excused from the task of determining what ongoing conversion can mean to the spirituality and mission of our particular religious institutes. It finds expression in Tertiaries working with native Americans on our reservations, in

a community of sisters working with battered women or single pregnant women. It points to the homeless, to soup kitchens, to abortion alternatives. It includes the reconciliation of the churches or of countries through our United Nations presence. It means helping developing churches in foreign lands. It loves the unconverted addict and helps him or her see what potential means. It never gives up on people and never does enough. In the twenty-first century, this is what Yahweh asks of us as Franciscan Penitents: "To act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with [our] God."

Endnote

[1] Cf. *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents,* 3 volumes, ed. R. Armstrong et al, New City Press, NY, 1999-2001.

The charism of the Order is conversion of life—an ongoing process in our own life as well as a deep desire to see the unconverted turn to the Lord in hope. Franciscan penitents should find themselves with those left out of modern society. That means walking in shoes that are not our own. Therein lies the call of poverty.

Juncos

Ground feeders
Who go around
In brown wrappers
Like Franciscans
Looking for rejected
And scattered seed,
Their small portion
Of the harvest.

Chet Corey

Robert Pawell, OFM

The Cord, 52.1 (2002)

Poverty: The Heart of Conversion and Cornerstone of Franciscan Life[1]

Dorothy McCormack, OSF

This article is based upon a presentation given at the annual meeting of the Franciscan Federation of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third order of Penance, in Baltimore, Maryland in August, 2001.

The heart and dynamism of Francis's life was his experience of God and of the mystery of God incarnate in creation. This experience of God, which was of divine inspiration, led him into the mystery of God who, in Francis's terms, is "all good, every good, the true and supreme good, who alone is good" (ER 23). God also is Trinity—in relationship, a community. The great Franciscan theologian, St. Bonaventure, describes God as self-diffusive goodness. This love, this goodness, was so intense that it could not be contained, and it poured itself out in this beautiful cosmos, this universe which is our home. God chose not to remain a spectator to creation, and so, when the time was ripe, God chose to participate in his creation by becoming one of us. St. Francis taught that Jesus, the Beloved, the center, the heart of the Trinity, "in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, . . . received the flesh of our humanity and frailty (2 LtF 4).

A life of on-going conversion became the way through which this experience of God took root in Francis, deepening and expanding within him. The beginning of Francis's conversion encompassed several years of seeking and several stages along the way, but he finally understood that the best way he could live this life was by "following in the footsteps of Jesus" (1Peter 2:21) and living according to the form of the Holy Gospel, which the Lord revealed to him (Test 14).

Francis grew up in a culture saturated with the ideals of knighthood. In light of this, he was filled with a desire to make the world new again and marched off to Apulia to join the Crusades. On the way, he dreamt of a beautiful palace and a most beautiful bride. The next day he had another dream that directed him to go back to Assisi (2C 6). Shortly after this, while with his friends, he lagged behind them in a preoccupied mood. His friends asked him if he was

thinking about taking a wife. He responded positively. Smitten with the concept of courtly love, he began a love affair with Lady Poverty.

His desires remained—to make the world new again and to court his Lady Poverty. However, he changed his focus and began to look at the world and the marketplace in a different light. His bride led him to the leper where he exchanged the bitter for the sweet. What God showed him in prayer—mercy—he gave to the leper. In his Testament, Francis tells us that this is how he began to do penance. He also says that afterward he lingered a little and left the world. The world he left was the world of his father, the world of the market economy, in which most of the world lives even today. This world sees the goods of the world as finite and limited: not everyone can have everything, so what is mine is mine. One gets what one has through earning power. Finite goods need to be worked for and kept. This is living from a posture of scarcity.

In sharp contrast to this, Francis learned to see in a new way and began to live in a world of gift, of grace. Those I this world saw everything that exists as given by God, the great Gift-Giver. There is nothing whatsoever that we are capable of earning or that we have a right to own. Even our earning power is a gift. In this world everything that is given to us freely is meant to be given away, to be shared. To live in this world means living from a posture of abundance.

Shortly after his experience with the leper, Francis had an encounter with the Crucified Lord who asked him to repair his house (2Cel 10). He began with stone and soon realized that the house to which Jesus referred was the hearts of people. Soon after this, the Lord gifted him with brothers and sisters; the cornerstone of their life together was poverty.

What did Francis, and then Clare, see in poverty? Why did it become the entrance into the gospel way of life? Primarily because they saw in the example of Jesus' life "how for [our] sake he made himself poor though he was rich, so that [we] might become rich by his poverty" (2Cor. 8:9). Francis spelled this out in the Later Rule, Chapter 6. Clare also spelled this out in her Rule, Chapter 6. The Lord redeemed the world by poverty, not riches.

> The poverty of Francis [and of Clare] is a response to Christ Jesus, who did not "grasp" or cling to divine status, but let go of it to be among humans as a servant. This Jesus who was born in lowly status, lived as a poor man and died on a cross, the ultimate "letting go." Since He is "the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), as Francis states, the way into God is the way of relinquishment, without grasping or appropriating anything.[2]

Poverty for Francis and Clare was rooted in their Christology—their understanding of who Christ was and what he came to be for us. The heart of the

gospel life became, then, imitating the Lord in his salvific activities by being poor—poor enough to receive from God's goodness in the world, poor enough to trust that God would provide for them. Through this means Francis, Clare and their companions revealed the fundamental structure of the world as God intended it.

However we understand the primordial or original sin, our life project is to reverse it. In the context of the Biblical image of Genesis, the devil convinced Adam and Eve that they were lacking something. If they would "eat of the tree of life," they would become like God. They had been made in the image of God, so they were not lacking anything. However, they believed the lie that the devil presented to them and so ate the fruit in order that they might acquire what they believed they were lacking. Francis witnessed his father's greed and avarice, his enslavement to possessions, his need to acquire and keep things for himself. For Francis, primordial sin, the root of evil, was acquiring, possessing, appropriating to oneself what belonged to God. He saw that money, property, and power were allied—they divided people into categories (major/minor). Francis grasped the truth that all we have is gift. Gift is not bought or acquired by one's own efforts; it is freely bestowed. If we are going to keep a gift, we have to be able to give it away. Otherwise, it is a possession.

Even if we have gifts that need to be given away we are poor people begging a living from each other, dependent upon each other. Needs create community, provided we share them. Needs can be material, physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, mental, or affective. Whatever they may be, admitting and sharing needs creates community and even friendship—which is what life is about. But we must share both the gift and the need. To be a creature of God is to be totally dependent and totally filled with grace, gift. Then we live in what might be called the *divine economy* of things. When we enter this divine economy, everything is received and everything is given, yet we constantly have everything we need. We realize that we are related to all of creation. The context for living the gospel life is always relational: it is with brothers and sisters. The fruit of poverty, the promise of this "most high poverty" is life in abundance, "the kingdom of heaven" as Matthew and Mark describe it, "eternal life" as John speaks of it—life with Christ.

In his later years, the gift of so many brothers became a great burden for Francis. There was clearly need for organization and government, a gift with which he was not highly endowed. He was being led into his own passion and resurrection. He returned from Damietta (1220) weakened, sick, and almost blind. Dissension had broken out among the brothers. This seriously compromised the primitive ideal that he though of as "his project" (2MP 81). Added to these sufferings were severe temptations that lasted almost two years. In the midst of his personal struggles, at La Verna prayed to experience the sufferings of Jesus, and in his flesh were articulated the very wounds of Christ.

The Canticle of the Creatures was the gift that emerged from Francis's darkest night. Shortly after his return from La Verna, he went to San Damiano where he stayed for several weeks. In the midst of his suffering he heard a voice inside: "Francis, rejoice as if you were already in my Kingdom." Light entered him and he began to see anew. Out of this new insight, he sang this great hymn of praise. In the words of Ilia Delio: "This Canticle celebrates a homecoming; a reconciliation where Francis and creation are reborn into a primal unity."[3]

Bearing the marks of the wounds of Christ, he sang about the fraternity of sun, stars, moon, wind, air, water, fire, and our sister, mother earth. This song had been writing itself within him for some time. Now it sprang forth at the end of a long and agonizing journey, an outburst of praise through a fraternal union with all creatures. He doesn't leave the world to go to God; he unites with his fellow creatures as brothers and sisters to go to God—a cosmic fraternity!

For Francis, the intuition underlying this understanding was the universal Fatherhood of God whose first word of his self-diffusive goodness was the cosmos. Franics did not set himself apart from the non-human elements of God's world; rather he made himself at home with them. In his encounter with the poor Christ, Francis learned the fullness and richness of the world of gift. In this light and with this insight, he came to love all creatures as brothers and sisters and to renounce any desire to dominate, control, or possess them. His was an inclusive and welcoming stance toward all of creation—human and non-human alike.

As death approached, Francis added another verse to his song—a welcome to Sister Death. He saw death not as an enemy separating him from life but as a sister inviting him to communion at the banquet of eternal life, the fullness of life and abundance promised to those who embrace and live within the world of gift. This perspective, that even death is gift, is the ultimate piece of conversion, the final surrender to poverty.

Endnotes

[1]I want to acknowledge my teacher, mentor, and friend, Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM, who has largely shaped my understanding of Franciscan spirituality.

[2]William J. Short, OFM, *Poverty and Joy* (N.Y. : Orbis, 1999), 61.

[3]Ilia Delio, OSF, "Franciscan Life in Evolution: Toward a Christic Universe" (Franciscan Federation Conference, August, 1999).

> May we be able to follow in the footprints of Your beloved Son. . .and may we make our way to You, Most High. (LtOrd 51b)

Book Review

Ilia Delio, OSF. *Simply Bonaventure: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings.* Hyde Park, NY: New City Press. ISBN: 1-56548-161-5. Paperback, 208 pages, $14.95.

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, known now as St. Bonaventure, lived from 1235 to 1274. He was a prolific writer as well as a professor of theology at the University of Paris. He joined the Franciscans, became head of the Order, and eventually was appointed a Cardinal of the Church.

Delio's book is aptly titled. It summarizes, as much as possible, what St. Bonaventure wrote and taught, and is written in a way that can be understood easily by the average reader. On one level, the book is a kind of catechism. The chapters are named Trinity, Creation, Humanity, Incarnation, Journey to God, Imitation of Christ, Contemplation, Peace, and *Reductio* (all reality leads back to God), just as the chapters of a summary of Christian doctrine might be labeled. Each chapter outlines, very simply and in plain language, what Bonaventure taught on that topic. Bonaventure asks and answers the essential questions: "What is our origin; what is our purpose; and where are we going?" and "What is the meaning and purpose of Jesus?"

In the first chapter, Delio places Bonaventure in the context of his times. Even though not much is known about his personal life, Delio describes what was happening at the University of Paris, "the hub of intellectual life." She describes how the task of administering the Order might have affected Bonaventure's theology because, she says, his path "was one marked by the challenges of an administrator's life and the constant need to clarify the meaning not only of being Christian but of being a follower of the little poor man, Francis of Assisi."

Taking his lead from Francis, Bonaventure's emphasis throughout is on creation. Creation is a river that flows out from God, reflects the glory of God, and returns to its origin in God. However, were it not for humans, creation could not reflect God adequately, because the human is the crown of creation, "spiritual matter," open to union with God. The material world needs the human to be able to praise and glorify God. For Bonaventure, creation is both a mirror reflecting God's power, wisdom, and goodness and a book in which its maker shines forth. Creation is a theophany, and every creature a "little word."

Christ is the ultimate creation. There is a fittingness or congruity between the Word and the world. Without the Word, the world is incomplete.

Original sin was one of the reasons why God became human, but more importantly, the Incarnation is about cosmic completion. Christ is the midpoint toward which the universe is oriented. He is the goal, the model, and the image of creation. Jesus is the form the Word takes when it is expressed externally, the expression of the Father's humility.

It should be acknowledged that Bonaventure's thought can be somewhat harsh, especially when it comes to the stigmata and the cross, saying that we should all aspire to death and martyrdom as a way to God (138, 149, 154). At times the book has a tendency to refer to ideas and readings without giving due explanation to their meaning. One wonders, for example, about the meaning of the following statements. Referring to the Son as the perfect image of the Father: "If the Father is poor, so is the Son" (46). And referring to Walter Kasper's work: "It takes omnipotence to be able to surrender oneself and give oneself away. . . " (117).

For the most part, *Simply Bonaventure* is straightforward about Bonaventure's thought and writing. However, the end of the book gives in to a temptation to preach. "Despite the efforts today to renew Christian life, there are still many Christians who live without conviction and without passion. They are more excited about football than they are about Easter. They chant 'Alleluia' while yawning and checking their watch" (163). And, "Some are ashamed of Christ and try to excuse the historicity of the Incarnation. . . . The central figure of faith is an obstacle to practicing the religion" (166). Perhaps this is an effort to relate Bonaventure's thought to modern problems, which the book generally does not attempt to do, but these statements can seem condescending and patronizing when they don't give enough clarity of meaning or examples.

Simply Bonaventure goes a long way toward making Bonaventure's thought accessible to a general audience, but it is not a book to be read quickly. Each chapter can be thought about, mulled over, and read again. Aside from the first chapter on Bonaventure's life, perhaps the best way to read it is to pick out a chapter that looks interesting and start there.

The book is a welcome addition to the literature on Bonaventure. It will make Bonaventure's thought and theology known to many more people than might have been able to understand and be inspired by it.

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For those who may wish to introduce groups, fraternities, or communities to this Little Office, the authors, Laurent Gallant, OFM, and André Cirino, OFM, are available for conferences or workshops.

Contact either at:

Laurent Gallant OFM
10850 St. Charles
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Canada H2C2M3
514-389-0074
LAGallant@aol.com

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Coming Events 2002

Saturday, January 19, 2002

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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. 51.)

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 33603; ph: 813-229-2695; email: francntr@aol.com

Saturday, February 9, 2002

Pre-Lenten Retreat. Jerry DuCharme, 9 am- 4 pm. Contact: Franciscan Center, 3010 Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603; ph: 813-229-2695; email: francntr@aol.com

Friday, February 15-Sunday, February 17, 2002

Spirituality in the Workplace Series. Bernard Tickerhoof, TOR, Daniel Stewart, and Susan Burke, SFO. Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340. Contact the Center at 412-881-9207 or FSLCCOM@aol.com.

Saturday, March 16, 2002

Transformation and the Quest to Spirit. Dr. David Cordisco. Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340. Contact the Center at 412-881-9207 or FSLCCOM@aol.com.

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Friday, February 22-Sunday, February 24, 2002

Office of the Passion. With Andre Cirino, OFM. Scottsdale, AZ. (See ad, p. 46.)

Friday, May 24-Sunday, May 26, 2002

"Exploring Franciscan Identity in Our Culture Today." With many speakers, at The Franciscan Center, Washington Theological Union, Washington, DC. Contact Alyce Korba: 202-541-5219. (See ad, p. 50)

Abbreviations

Writings of Saint. Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BlL	A Blessing for Brother Leo
Ctc	The Canticle of the Creatures
CtExh	The Canticle of Exhortation
1Frg	Fragments of Worchester Manuscript
2Frg	Fragments of Thomas of Celano
3Frg	Fragments of Hugh of Digne
LtAnt	A Letter to Br. Anthony of Padua
1LtCl	First Letter to the Clergy (Earlier Edition)
2LtCl	Second Letter to the Clergy (Later Edition)
1LtCus	The First Letter to the Custodians
2LtCus	The Second Letter to the Custo dians
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister
LtOrd	A Letter to the Entire Order
LtR	A Letter to the Rulers of the People
ExhP	Exhortation o the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OfP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule *(Regula non bullata)*
LR	The Later Rule *(Regula bullata)*
RH	A Rule for Hermitages
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues
Test	The Testament
TPJ	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

Franciscan Sources

1C	The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano
2C	The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul
3C	The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
LCh	The Legend for Use in the Choir
Off	The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
LJS	The Life of St.Francis by Julian of Speyer
VL	The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches
1-3JT	The Praises by Jacapone da Todi
DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Aliegheri
TL	Tree of Life by Ubertino da Casale
1MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version
2MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Larger Version
HTrb	The History of the Seven Tribulations by Angelo of Clareno
ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St. Francis and Lady Poverty
AP	The Anonymous of Perugia
L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
AC	The Assisi Compilation
1-4Srm	The Sermons of Bonaventure
LMj	The Major Legend by Bonaventure
LMn	The Minor Legend by Bonaventure
BPr	The Book of Praises by Bernard of Besse
ABF	The Deeds of St. Francis and His Companions
LFl	The Little Flowers of Saint Francis
KnSF	The Knowing of Saint Francis
ChrTE	The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston
ChrJG	The Chronicle of Jordan of Giano

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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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THE CORD
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2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
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Editorial

As this issue of the *The Cord* goes to press, it marks a transition on many levels. It is my first endeavor to fly solo as the editor. Last December Sr. Elise Saggau mentored me through the production process and the multitude of details that go into selecting material, editing articles, page layout, and designing new announcements. Her love of *The Cord* shone through every step of the way and illumined my entry into this aspect of Franciscan ministry. I am most grateful for her loving care and solicitude.

Transitions are ever a challenge. The first that I face is maintaining the quality of *The Cord* and serving its readership well. I hope that I have made a good beginning, although I am aware that no venture such as this is without some difficulties. It is my hope that errors will be few, minor, and quickly remedied as I move along the path of learning during the first year at this desk. I welcome your comments, suggestions, and feedback. At this time there are no changes in store for the format of the journal. As time passes, however, new possibilities may unfold, and other transitions might be called for. For now, we will take one step at a time....

One of the beauties of *The Cord* is the variety of material that can be published here. In this issue we present a taste of that diversity. Our lead article puts forward a new perspective on the life of St. Anthony of Padua based upon a historical reconstruction of bits of information scattered in European-language resources. We also offer an article that gives opportunity for personal theological reflection on our understanding of the Cross as Christian symbol. Please note that the author wrote this long before the events of September 11, 2001; in some ways, it seems that the paper is prescient about how we would be called to new levels of suffering and compassion after those events. Murray Bodo's poem helps us embrace our role in the Paschal Mystery. Another piece focuses in very concrete ways on praxis with respect to chapters and leadership in Third Order Regular communities. Finally, the Dubuque Franciscans recently decided to return to prairie many acres that had long been cultivated as farmland. "Prairie Restoration" celebrates their Franciscan stewardship of creation (and perhaps will invite others to similar action.).

Peace and all good!

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

The Cord, 52.2 (2002)

"Something's Lost and Must Be Found..." The Recovery of the Historical Anthony of Padua

Michael F. Cusato, OFM

Anthony of Padua is surely one of the most enigmatic figures in Catholic hagiography. On the one hand, he is associated with (perhaps more than any other saint in Christian history) some of the most fantastic miracle stories whose specifics defy credulity even among the most generous of believers. For example, Anthony is said to have delivered an eloquent sermon to a group of attentive fish which lined up in perfect rows to hear the famous preacher when the townspeople of the area refused to listen to him. In the context of a debate with an Albigensian heretic, he is reported to have been instrumental in getting a starving mule to forego the hay offered to him in order to first genuflect in homage before the Eucharist. More famously, he is said to have successfully prayed for the safe return to the friary of a precious commentary on the Psalms stolen by a devious friar; this is the origin of the belief in Anthony as a restorer of lost articles. And, perhaps most spectacularly, it is claimed that he completely restored the foot of a sinner who had amputated it himself, having taken too literally the stern counsel of the gospel to cut off and throw away what had been the cause of his sin. Such exploits, coupled with the traditional depiction of Anthony in statuary and iconography in which he is represented as a meek, soft-skinned man holding either a lily or the child Jesus (or sometimes both) would seem to place him at a considerable remove from the critical and skeptical sensitivities of contemporary men and women who prefer to locate holiness in the realm of the rugged and the real.

And yet, on the other hand and contrary to all expectation, Anthony still remains-and always has been-one of the most popular saints in Roman Catholicism. Indeed, the large majority of churches the world over-even if they no longer hold the traditional Tuesday devotions to St. Anthony-still boast of statues, stained-glass windows or paintings representing this most popular of saints.

What is curious is that the popularity Anthony has enjoyed throughout the centuries seems to have had, in fact, very little to do with the historical Anthony of Padua (the Anthony of history). Indeed, ever since the time of his death the cult of Anthony has been based almost exclusively on the portrayal of the friar as he appears in the hagiography prepared for his canonization–and that image is primarily what historians call the thaumaturgical Anthony: that is, Anthony as miracle-worker. The question is: should this trouble us? Is not today's devotion to Anthony a demonstration of faith as it has been throughout the ages? Without answering that question directly right now, suffice it to say at this point that, for men and women of the 21st century, such devotion, devoid as it is of any firm historical underpinning, *does* trouble us and *should* trouble us. Can you image a cult of Francis today based primarily upon the miracles attributed to him after his death, or based merely upon the stories found in the *Fioretti* (the Little Flowers of Saint Francis) rather than upon his deeds, his writings and the historical development of the Franciscan movement? Today that would be quite unacceptable. Why then should it be any more acceptable with respect to the Evangelical Doctor?

An answer to that question is a bit more complex than it might first appear because there is, in fact, an interesting connection between the popular image of Anthony of Padua found in his cult and the actions of the historical Anthony; a relationship, in other words, between the issues addressed in the miracle stories and the values which Anthony espoused in his historical life. In these few pages, such an answer is an important but more complicated task. The aim here is actually a little easier. First, we can lay out various historical events, culled from the hagiographical sources, that comprised the life of Anthony in order that to have a deeper appreciation of the spiritual journey of the man: his struggles, the major turning points in his life, his primary achievements and his importance to the Franciscan Order. Secondly, we can examine two particular aspects of that life which are emblematic of the most important contributions Anthony made to the Church of his day (and perhaps can form the basis of his importance to ours as well). A firm understanding of the **historical** Anthony will, I hope, put us all in a better position to understand the meaning of the **hagiographical** Anthony which is–like it or not–the stuff of most Catholic devotion to Anthony today. For my bias is this: while the ahistorical may lay the basis for a fervent piety, it is the historical that lays the basis for a genuine faith. Piety has to do with religious sentiment; faith is grounded in the evangelical values of Jesus.

So let's look at the historical Anthony in light of a few general, over-arching remarks about the saint. First of all, it should be said that St. Anthony is one of those key figures of early Franciscanism whose importance is more often assumed than really understood. That importance, moreover, is attributed to two things: the spontaneous cult which rose up around him immedi-

ately after his death and the fact that he serves as a kind of linchpin between the initial suspicion of studies by Francis and his early followers and a second generation of friar-clerics for whom study was deemed essential to competent ministry within the Church of the thirteenth century. Second, Anthony did not live a very long life; indeed, many of his 43 years on this earth (if we assume 1188 to be his date of birth) were marked by a fragile health that, paradoxically, rarely deterred him from engaging in active ministry. He died in 1231-a mere five years after the death of Francis. Third, Anthony's life can be seen as a series of steps in which God continually frustrated and redirected his own wishes and desires for the good of the Church and the Franciscan Order. He began as a canon but became a friar; he wanted to be a foreign missionary but became a domestic preacher; he became a successful and articulate preacher only to be conscripted for internal service to the Order. In other words, God often had other plans for Anthony-plans which his obedient and willing spirit acceded to. Fourth, in spite of these constant reorientations of life, Anthony was still able to enjoy and combine the three primary loves of his life: contemplative prayer, study of the Scriptures, and a preaching which had, as its goal, conversion of life and reconciliation with one's enemy. And lastly, known for the boldness of his preaching, Anthony, however, never lapsed into denunciation or lack of charity; hence his success and appeal as a preacher, a friar, a man of God: in short, a saint.

In order to give a sense of form to the spiritual journey of Anthony, I have taken the liberty to divide his life into a number of different stages (eight in number), a summary of which is provided at the end of this article. These stages are, of course, entirely arbitrary; they are simply a teacher's tool to help give you a sense of the geographical movement and spiritual development within Anthony's life.

Stage 1: Birth and Early Life (c. 1185-1210)

Contrary to popular assumption, Anthony of Padua could actually more rightly be called Anthony of Lisbon since he was born and spent the first 30-35 years of his rather short life not in Italy at all but in Portugal, his native land. Born sometime between 1185 and 1188 to noble parents in the city of Lisbon, Anthony began his life under his baptismal name of Fernando. His father was apparently a vassal and knight of the Portuguese king, Alfonso I, who, by this very fact, would have been actively involved in the struggle of the crown against Islam and the Muslims. Indeed, this conflict represents the central historical context for the early life of young Fernando as the Kingdoms of Spain and (since the mid-12th century) Portugal were engaged in the *Reconquista*: that battle of the Christian kings of the peninsula to retake the land from the Muslims.

Stage 2: Early Education/First Vocational Aspirations (1210-1220)

Education in the Middle Ages was not a right, it was a luxury usually available only to the aristocracy. Being of aristocratic origin, Fernando benefited from an excellent education at the local cathedral school, the school sponsored by the local bishop of Lisbon where his uncle was both a canon and a teacher. It was there that Fernando received his early studies in the seven liberal arts. Although such an education often served as the first step towards the priesthood, it could also simply prepare a young man for a useful career in the world, a way that would lead him to contributing his talents to the affairs of the world.

Fernando, however, opted for the first route. In 1210, he requested permission of his family to enter a community of reformed canons who lived outside the walls of the city of Lisbon at São Vicente de Fora (St. Vincent-Outside-the-Walls). Although this was a monastery of reformed canons regular that been founded ostensibly to live a more austere form of priestly poverty in accord with the example of the apostles who held their possessions in common, the fact that it had been established by the Portuguese royal family ensured that it would be a well-endowed and fairly comfortable form of religious life. Nevertheless, Fernando's entrance into a monastery of canons illustrated his desire to prepare himself for the priesthood with the education that such a step would require. Fernando entered St. Vincent's in search of peace, contemplation and an atmosphere of study. What he encountered, however, was a running battle between the prior and the king over the property rights of the monastery and a constant flow of visitors from his family and friends.

Therefore, in 1212 he asked to be transferred to the mother-cloister of Santa Cruz in the capital city of Coimbra (about 120 miles away). Set in the capital and the seat of its powerful bishop, Coimbra's monastery of canons was also the most important center of studies in the Portuguese kingdom. Indeed, two of its canon-professors (Raymond and John) had just returned from their studies at the newly formed University in Paris. Santa Cruz counted 60 canons and a rich library. Access to such resources was critical to Fernando's intellectual development during the next eight years. Here also, however, the monastery became embroiled in a series of ugly disputes with the Portuguese king, Alfonso II, over its rights and properties. Such an environment most likely fractured the tenor of its religious life

as numerous canons simply went their own way, feathering their own nests, neglectful of their profession.

Stage 3: Decisive Turning: Entrance/Early Years in the Franciscan Order (1220-1222)

Thus, in spite of the rich intellectual environment that he found at Santa Cruz, the wrangling and more importantly the growing worldliness of the canons there sowed a negative seed of dissatisfaction within Fernando about his life as a canon regular. Without a doubt, one of the major thrusts of the recent Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 had been precisely the reform of priestly and religious life. That was the negative push; was there a positive pull? The positive seed was apparently planted by the presence in Coimbra of a new fraternity of poor brothers who had come to Portugal in 1217 and, through the benefaction of Queen Urraca, had established a small residence and chapel in an olive grove on the edge of the city dedicated to the hermit, Antony of the Desert. The friary was called Sant'Antonio dos Olivas.

Unfortunately, hagiographical sources do not give us much insight into the spiritual turmoil that might have motivated Fernando to ask for permission to leave the canons regular and join the Friars Minor. What can be said with surety, however, is that the most significant trigger was the mission of another group of these Franciscans among the Saracens of Morocco in 1219. The story is well known. Five friars (Berard, Peter, Otto, Adjutus and Accursius) arrived in Coimbra on their way to their mission among the Muslims. Having obtained the support of the Queen, they went first to Seville, a major Spanish city still under Muslim control. Their preaching, however, landed them in prison. Condemned to death, they were eventually pardoned and released. Undeterred, the friars traveled to Morocco, gaining the support of Peter, Alfonso II's brother-in-exile, who was in the service of the caliph of Morocco. The brothers got themselves arrested once again (one assumes their preaching either directly attacked the Islamic religion or insulted the Prophet-or both). Freed through the intercession of Peter, they were then re-arrested and finally beheaded on January 16, 1220. Peter managed to get their martyred bodies shipped back to Coimbra. Since the friars' grounds were too small to accommodate their remains, they were buried at the royal monastery of Santa Cruz -the burial site of the Portuguese kings. Whatever the negative elements troubling his soul before, it is this one event-the preaching of Jesus Christ unto death by men dedicated to a life of poverty-that prompted Fernando in the summer of 1220 to ask permission to leave the canons regular for the life of a Friar Minor.

The request, though granted, was poorly received since, in medieval canon law, one could not transfer to another form of religious life unless it was to a

stricter way of life: hence, such a transfer was seen as an indictment on the supposedly reformed life of the canons. Fernando joined the Franciscan province of Santiago whose provincial was none other than John Parenti, future minister general of the Order. Upon embarking on his new way of life and indicative of his own love of contemplation, he chose to change his name to that of the hermit patron of the friary he was now entering. Henceforth, Fernando the canon would be known to history as Anthony the friar. Since the requirement of a year's novitiate was only imposed on the Order later that year in September of 1220 (through the bull *Cum secundum consilium*), Anthony made immediate profession as a Friar Minor.

Faithful to what had just impelled his change of religious community, he asked to go to Morocco as a missionary. Having obtained the permission of his provincial, he embarked with his companion, Philip, for North Africa near the end of 1220 but immediately fell ill upon his arrival in Morocco. This illness lasted through the winter and into the spring of 1221, at which point his companion convinced him that he should abandon his plans to preach among the Saracens and to sail back to Coimbra. But God had other plans for him. Not unlike what had happened to Francis himself, a storm blew his ship off course so that both he and his companion ended up off the coast of Italy on the island of Sicily. Disembarking, they were fortunate to learn that the friars had a friary in Messina.

That late spring the friars of Messina were preparing to leave shortly for Assisi to take part in their annual General Chapter. Francis had resigned as minister general at the previous chapter in 1220 in favor of Peter Catania. However, Peter died just prior to the 1221 Chapter, so the meeting was led by Elias of Cortona-Francis's choice to run the affairs of the Order. As a new member of the Order and a friar of the far-flung Spanish province, Anthony was unknown to most of the other friars. At the conclusion of the chapter when the friars were sent out again on mission, for unknown reasons Anthony approached the provincial of the province of the Romagna (which encompassed all of northern Italy) and asked him to ask Elias if he could remain in Italy and minister in that province. Elias agreed and Anthony was assigned to the hermitage of Monte Paolo outside the northeastern Italian city of Forlì, not far from Rimini. It was a hilltop hermitage with a commanding view of the surrounding countryside, conducive to the contemplation Anthony cherished so much. Yet there might have been a more practical reason for the assignment: it would have been known that Anthony was ordained and could therefore provide the sacraments and preaching to the friars in this hermitage. What appears certain is that the friars had not yet come to know and appreciate the talents that the young Portuguese would bring to the Order. They would not have to wait very long.

Stage 4: From the Eremitism of Monte Paolo to Active Ministry in the Romagna (1222-1224)

About a year later, in the summer of 1222, the provincial of the Romagna province sent several friars, including Anthony, to an ordination of Franciscans and Dominicans in the town of Forlì. At the dinner celebrated afterward in the Dominican *convento* the Franciscan provincial suggested that one of the Dominicans give an impromptu sermon. When no one dared come forward, the provincial asked Anthony, who reportedly delivered an amazingly eloquent and polished homily. It immediately became apparent that such talent for preaching must not remain hidden under a bushel basket in some remote hermitage. At the provincial chapter the following September (on the Feast of St. Michael), Anthony was given the mission to preach throughout the entire territory of the province of the Romagna. The explicit aim of this preaching seems to have been to mount a frontal assault on the Albigensian or Cathar heresy that had taken root in the cities of northern Italy during the first decades of the 13th century. Anthony's mission, (to which I will return in detail in the second part of this article) lasted from 1222 to 1224 and used the friary of Santa Maria delle Pugiole in Bologna as its base. It is also quite possible that at this time he took full advantage of the libraries and faculties both in Bologna and Vercelli in order to strengthen his knowledge of the Franciscan tradition. We know that he made the acquaintance of a certain Thomas Gallus, who had studied theology at the famous Abbey of canons regular at St. Victor in Paris, and from whom Anthony attempted to learn (in Vercelli) the intricacies of mystical theology. Indeed, it was precisely during this same period, probably toward the end of 1223 or early 1224, that Anthony would have approached Francis asking for permission to begin to teach other friars in the area the rudiments of theology. Francis honored Anthony's request in his famous *Letter to Anthony* on this very subject.

Stage 5: Preaching and Ministry in Southern and Central France (1224-1227)

Thanks, it would seem, in large measure to his effective preaching against the Cathar heresy in northern Italy, Anthony found himself transferred in 1224 to the region that was the primary source of Catharism in the Europe of his day: southern France or, more specifically, the region known as Languedoc. This region, and specifically its major cities of Toulouse, Carcassonne, Narbonne, Béziers and, of course, Albi (from which the Cathars got their more popular name of Albigensians), had been, since the 1170s, the seat of a rival form of Christianity that had its own theology, its own bishops and even its

own dioceses. In fact, it was in the same area that St. Dominic had begun his vocation in 1205 as a preacher against this heresy.

Much had happened in the region since the preaching of Dominic. After the assassination of the papal legate Peter of Castelnau by a Cathar heretic, Pope Innocent III had launched the infamous Albigensian Crusade with its pitched battles between Cathar and Catholic forces during the years 1213-14. Catholicism as a result appeared to regain the upper hand. By 1224, however, the tide had begun to turn again against the Catholic party. With the French King Louis VIII refusing to enter the fray, the situation began to look dire. Anthony's mission into the region must be seen in this context. He arrived east of the region in the old Roman city of Arles just in time for the provincial chapter at the end of September, 1224. We know that Anthony participated in the chapter and that he was asked by the minister provincial, John Bonelli, to address the brothers. Thomas of Celano tells us in his *Vita prima* that, as Anthony spoke, a certain priest named Monaldo saw a vision of St. Francis hovering over the friars and blessing them while Anthony preached to them. In Celano's account, this vision of Francis in Arles occurs shortly after the time when Francis had received the stigmata on La Verna in Italy. The purpose of this deliberate parallel created by Celano was not only to give credence to the miracle of the stigmata of Francis but also to underscore the important role that Anthony had come to play in the life of the friars by 1229 (the year in which Thomas was writing) that is, introducing the friars to the study of theology .

Immediately after the chapter Anthony went from Arles to Montpellier, the major center of Catholic resistance to the Cathar heresy, and then moved further west to Toulouse, the stronghold of the heresy itself. Along the way he held public debates with the leading spokesmen of the heretical party. Dressed in a poor and simple habit, Anthony was a model of Catholic integrity whose life and actions matched the evangelical truth of his words. Indeed, his knowledge of Scripture, his theological depth and his eloquence were an equal match for the most brilliant Cathar preachers. Unfortunately, little information is extant on the specific content or success of these disputations in France.

Soon after, however, Anthony found himself named guardian at the friary at Le Puy, a full 180 miles north of Toulouse. This new task would force Anthony to leave the front lines of theological battle and to devote himself primarily to ministering more directly to the friars themselves. He did, nonetheless, participate in a major ecclesiastical synod held in central France, in the city of Bourges, on November 30, 1225. Called by its archbishop, Simon of Sully, in order to assess the deteriorating situation of Catholicism in the south of France, the primary aim of the synod was to try to convince Louis VIII-who was in attendance-of the necessity of immediate action in the region. In the course of the proceedings Anthony was called upon to preach to the assembled

dignitaries. Contrary to expectation but consistent with Anthony's fearless manner, the Evangelical Doctor delivered a sermon which addressed not the errors of the heretics (who were not even present at the synod and who could not so easily be changed) but rather the clerics and prelates who had it in their power to change themselves (their lifestyle and their theological ignorance) so as to rob the Cathari of the major brunt of their criticism against the Church.

Sometime after the synod, Anthony then found himself named *custos* of the friars at Limoges. At this stage of Franciscan history, each province usually had one provincial and four *custodes* to aid the provincial in the administation of the province and especially in the visitation of the various convents. Thus, Anthony entered more fully into a phase of internal ministry to the friars, moving from convent to convent, encouraging, correcting and instructing the brothers in the Franciscan life. During this time he was responsible for founding a number of new convents in the region, including the one at Brive, south of Limoges, where he created a special hermit's grotto for his cell and where a large number of miracles are attested to in the hagiographical sources.

Stage 6: Provincial of the Romagna (1227-1230)

Francis of Assisi died on the evening of October 3, 1226. Anthony in his official capacity as *custos* attended the general chapter in Assisi in May, 1227, in which a successor to Francis as minister general had to be elected. This chapter elected Anthony's first minister provincial, John Parenti, as the new general. John, in his turn, asked Anthony to return to Italy as provincial of the large sprawling province of the Romagna. Anthony may have agreed to accept this new charge because it could give him the opportunity once again to confront the powerful heretical currents in northern Italy. But as provincial he became engaged even more thoroughly in full-time ministry to the friars, spending the vast majority of his time traveling the breadth of the province visiting and encouraging the brothers. Nonetheless, there are numerous testimonies of Anthony engaging heretics in the various towns to which he had come to visit the friars, sites too numerous to list here. Generally, but with a few key exceptions, Anthony is reported to have been fairly successful in drawing them back to Catholicism.

Perhaps a more important detail from this period of 1227-30 is that the peripatetic preacher found time to begin putting down in writing his own sermon materials for the eventual use of his confrères. These materials consisted not of full-blown sermons but rather of sermon outlines that could later be used in the preparation and delivery of the friars' own homilies. Indeed it is only through these writings that the theological vision that shaped the preaching and values of the saint can be known.

Finally, being in Italy during this time, it seems quite likely that Anthony would have been present in Assisi for the canonization of Francis in July, 1228.

Stage 7: The Eventful Final Year (1230-1231)

As provincial of the Romagna, Anthony also would have been present both for the fiasco of the translation of the remains of Francis from the Church of San Giorgio to the crypt of the newly constructed lower church of San Francesco and the chaotic proceedings of the general chapter of Assisi on May 25, 1230. One of the reasons for its chaos was the impasse that the friar delegates (especially the clerics who saw reality through the lens of juridical categories) reached when they tried to determine the precise meaning of the Franciscan charism as contained in the *Rule* and most problematically in the *Testament* of Francis. Most nettlesome, of course, was the problem of what it meant to live poverty in the real world (and what it did not mean). Unable to reach agreement, the chapter designated a small, ostensibly representative group to take these outstanding issues to Pope Gregory IX-an expert canonist-in Rome to have him resolve these matters for them. Anthony, by this time an esteemed and articulate member of the Order, was a part of this delegation of seven friars. The fruit of their delegation was the monumental bull *Quo elongati*, promulgated September 28, 1230.

However, given his declining health and his desire to continue work on his sermon materials, even during the chapter itself Anthony had asked to be relieved of his duties as provincial of the Romagna. John Parenti granted the request and shortly after his work in Rome had been concluded, Anthony returned to northern Italy and settled just outside of the city of Padua, at a small friary next to the Poor Clare monastery of Arcella. There he met and became the companion of a friar named Luke Belludi. Eventually, Luke would become provincial of the province and be the one responsible for building the basilica in Padua that would become the final resting place of the saint.

Anthony had lived for a brief time at Arcella, between the end of 1227 and early 1228. When he returned near the end of 1230 he began an extremely busy period of work. First, he completed the Sunday sermon outlines that he had been working on for some years. Then he began work on a series of feast-day sermons for the church year, apparently upon the request of Gregory IX. Forsaking for a time an active engagement in the ministry of preaching, he also set himself to studying the moral teaching of the Church.

If Anthony did preach, he preached in the friary church in the city at Santa Maria *Mater Domini* or more rarely in some of the other area churches. From the winter of 1230 until Lent, 1231, he worked assiduously on finishing his sermon outlines for the feasts of the church year. But then Anthony also decided to preach the season of Lent in Padua in 1231. Although nothing

remains of these famous sermons, we know that he preached from February 6 until March 23, 1231 (from Ash Wednesday to Easter). Anthony created an entirely new model of Lenten preaching as he preached every day, moving from place to place, church to church, working his way through the city to engender a spirit of profound conversion among the citizenry of Padua, great and small, rich and poor. The key themes of this preaching were forgiveness and reconciliation among peoples, especially among political parties; the return of things acquired unjustly, especially through usury; the release of debtors from prison; and the conversion of life in conformity with Christian morality. These themes reached their culmination not in one final summary sermon-as would have been customary-but in the presentation of a formal request on March 17th (Monday of Holy Week) to the city's civil authorities to formulate a new law for the commune that would incarnate some of the values just propounded by Anthony in these Lenten sermons.

By this time in his career reconciliation had become the pre-eminent theme in Anthony's life and preaching. A further example of this is found in his ill-fated intervention in the conflict between Riccardo, count of Sambonifacio and Ezzelino da Romano. Put simply, Riccardo, leader in the city of Verona, had been overthrown, captured and put in prison in June, 1230, by the partisans of Ezzelino, who was attempting to control the entire region of northeastern Italy. A delegation came to Padua asking for intervention on the part of its leading citizens to free Riccardo. The most powerful abbot of the region, Giordano Forzate, suggested that his friend Anthony, who had just concluded a Lenten mission centered on the very theme of reconciliation, should make the appeal. Anthony journeyed to Verona, but his entreaties to Ezzelino fell on deaf ears and his mission ended in failure.

Returning from Verona, Anthony went not to the friary of *Mater Domini* in the city, nor even to the little friary at Arcella. Tired and in poor health, he instead retired to a place called Camposampiero (about eight miles outside the city) whose owner, Count Tiso, had donated land where the friars could establish a hermitage and small chapel. It was there that Anthony supposedly built for himself a kind of hermitage high up in a huge walnut tree that once stood on the property. But Anthony's stay at Camposampiero lasted only a few weeks. On June 13, 1231, after climbing down the tree for the noon meal, he fainted and then asked to be taken to the friars' church in Padua, *Mater Domini*. Luke Balludi and a certain Roger took Anthony in a cart on a journey that took six hours, reaching Arcella by evening. There, surrounded by a few friars and Poor Ladies, the Evangelical Doctor surrendered his spirit to God.

Stage 8: After the Death of Anthony

When word began to spread that the great preacher had died, typical of medieval piety, the scramble for his relics was on! Fearful of what might occur, the friars and sisters at Arcella refused to transport the dead friar into the city. Meanwhile, the friars of *Mater Domini* pressed their claim to the body; after all, such had been Anthony's dying wish. An ugly standoff then ensued, pitting the two groups of friars against each other and each supported by its own contingent of civil and ecclesiastical authorities. Eventually the minister provincial, Albert of Pisa, had to be called into the unseemly affair, deciding in favor of *Mater Domini*. Anthony was thus finally buried there on June17th. Canonization proceedings were initiated shortly thereafter by the citizens and dignitaries of Padua. Less than a full year later, on May 30, 1232, Anthony was enrolled in the catalogue of saints in a ceremony presided over by Gregory IX in the cathedral of Spoleto. Fifty-three miracles had been attested to by then; these testimonies served as the basis for the first hagiographical account of Anthony, called the *Assidua*. At the conclusion of the ceremony, to honor the new saint, Gregory intoned the versicle known as *"O Doctor optime"* (O excellent Doctor)-an antiphon normally reserved for doctors of the Church. Official status as Doctor of the Church, however, had to wait until 1946 when Pius XII proclaimed him *Doctor Evangelicus*, the Evangelical Doctor.

Parallel to what had occurred with Francis, work began almost immediately (1232) on a basilica to house the new saint. Due to political upheaval in the city involving tensions between the papacy and the Emperor Frederick II and his allies, notably, Ezzelino da Romano, work was suspended in 1240 and resumed only in 1256. Anthony's remains were transferred from *Mater Domini* to the new basilica on April 8, 1263, with the minister general, Bonaventure, attending. However, apparently so poor was the initial construction of the basilica that two years later, in 1265, work was begun on a total reconstruction of the facility.

Such was the life-journey of the historical Anthony. There are two particular aspects of that life which represent the importance of Anthony to the Franciscan Order and to the Church of his day: his preaching against heresy and his concern for the social welfare of his fellow human beings, especially the most vulnerable. A better understanding of these two themes will give concrete content to the commonplace assumption that Anthony was not only an outstanding preacher but also the first Franciscan theologian. Both of these areas will be examined in the next issue of *The Cord*.

Editor's note: This text has been revised from a manuscript based upon a lecture first given by the author at St. Peter's Church in Chicago, Illinois on June 12, 2001.

THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF

ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA

STAGE 1: Birth and Early Life (c. 1185/ 88–1210)
- Lisbon (Portugal)

STAGE 2: Early Education / First Vocational Aspirations (1210-1220)
- St. Vincent-Outside-the-Walls (Lisbon, Portugal)
- Santa Cruz (Coimbra, Portugal)

STAGE 3: Turning Point: Entrance / Early Years in the Franciscan Order (1220-1222)
- St. Anthony-of-the-Olive-Grove (Coimbra)
- Morocco
- Messina (Sicily)
- Montepaolo (outside Forlì, northeastern Italy)

STAGE 4: From Eremitism of Montepaolo to Active Ministry in the Romagna (1222-1224)
- Numerous cities in northern Italy, particularly Rimini
- Bologna (Santa Maria delle Pugiole)

STAGE 5: Preaching and Ministry in Southern and Central France (1224-1227)
- Arles / Montpellier / Toulouse (southern France)
- Le Puy / Bourges / Limoges / numerous other cities (central France)

STAGE 6: Provincial of the Romagna Province (1227-1230)
- Bologna
- Numerous other cities (northern Italy)
- Assisi

STAGE 7: The Eventful Final Year (1230-1231)
- Padua/Camposampiero

STAGE 8: Posthumous Career of Anthony = *il Santo*

Bibliographical Orientation:

Solid writing on the historical Anthony has not been, until quite recently, very plentiful. The English language, in particular, has been poorly served in this regard. However,the following titles can help orient the reader to the major historical events in the life of the Evangelical Doctor:

Sophronius Clasen, OFM, *St. Anthony Doctor of the Church*, trans. Ignatius Brady, OFM (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973). Probably the most authoritative synthetic work on Anthony available in English. Originally published in German in 1960.

Lothar Hardick, *"He Came to You so that You Might Come to Him": The Life and Teaching of St. Anthony of Padua*, trans. Zachary Hayes, OFM (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989) Originally published in German in 1986. In part dependent on Clasen's work, the second half of this presentation also adds several extended reflections on the theological vision of Anthony.

Of particular value for this article have been the following four works-all in Italian:

Grado Giovanni Merlo, "La santità di Antonio e il problema degli eretici," *Il Santo*, 2 ser., 36 (1996): 187-202;

Giuseppina de Sandre Gasparini, "La pace in Antonio e nella 'devotio' dei mendicanti del 1233," *Studia patavina* 28 (1981): 503-508. This volume contains other presentations given at a conference titled "S. Antonio di Padova tra storia e profezia";

Cesira Gasparotto, "La grande missione antoniana a Padova nella Quaresima 1231," *Il Santo* 4 (1964): 127-152.

Gustavo Cantini, "Vita apostolica e azione sociale di Sant'Antonio," *S. Antonio dottore della Chiesa* (Città del Vaticano: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1947), 223-248.

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The Cross - A Symbol of Humanity and a Way of Life

Clara Mair, SHC

The journey to true incarnation includes accepting the contradictions in our lives and in ourselves. As human beings we belong at the same time both to earth and to heaven. We are outstretched between light and darkness, God and human, between male and female, between height and depth, between good and evil. The cross unites all contradictions.

The human being is like a cross.[1] The **vertical** part of the cross rises upwards; it towers into heaven. By the grace of God, we do not remain turned in ourselves; we must come out of our own world and move beyond ourselves. Our character is to be open to receive the grace of God and to be touched by him.

This openness means being without protection, to be vulnerable, and so the cross clamps us into position between two poles. We cannot relieve this tension; it is necessary to bear it. This engages all our capacity. The **horizontal** beam of the cross brings us into community. We are never only for ourselves. In everything, we are already influenced by other people or things and also through our life we shape others around us.

The cross challenges us to give up focusing on ourselves, to stop being self-centerd and to show solidarity with all people. The cross exposes us to the touch of others and to the world. That means opening ourselves to other people and allowing ourselves to be touched or wounded by them.[2] But if we are not centered in our life, then to be outstretched between heaven and earth and to be open for others can be too demanding. The horizontal (being in relationship with others) has to be borne by the vertical (the grace that impels us toward God) so that we do not lose ourselves in others or in the world. Our turning towards the world has its source in the center. The center is God, to whom we have access through the crucified Jesus Christ. He shows us the way to unify all opposites and tensions in our life. This is the holistic way to become more human. The cross puts our contradictions in the right order.

Having the cross as our center and the symbol of our salvation means accepting our own inner conflicts, enduring the unsolved problems in life, and in this tension letting ourselves become more and more open to God.

A Way of Life

According to Jürgen Moltmann, the crucified Christ clarifies our image of God and humanity.[3] The more we become Christ-like the more we become fully human. In looking at the cross as the archetype of humanity we are shown the mystery of the human person, which God clearly reveals in Jesus Christ "when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared" (1 Titus 3:4). Taking the theological to the level of praxis becomes the challenge. Our way of life is not like a one-way street in which we move closer and closer to God by self-control; it is more like a crossroad. Again and again our life journey and our plans are intersected by good and bad experiences; the journey is often an up and down motion. We might that say our life is disturbed by God. Only when we accept that we have been thrown out of gear can we find the way into God. Becoming more open to God and people on the journey is the way of love. We will be touched and maybe wounded by people until God's love penetrates these wounds and transforms and heals them. The one who is not vulnerable is the one who is not able to love.[4]

There is significant scriptural basis for such an interpretation. Moses, in his encounter with Yahweh, discovered a new direction: he must do what God commands (cf. Ex. 7:6), he must lead the people of Israel to freedom from slavery in Egypt. Jesus also came to be with God's people to set them free. The end of Jesus' earthly life shows us clearly the significant and concrete cost of discipleship, because the cross is the price to pay ***for*** a concrete commitment at the sight of the poor, weak, lowly and contemptible.[5]

Right understanding of the meaning of the cross creates a way of life boundaried by contemplation and action. We come to this kind of understanding by realizing that the motive for the Incarnation was not the cross. If it had been, then our God would be masochistic. The person who focuses on the cross alone has a masochistic view of Christianity. Rather, the reason for the Incarnation and human life is the overflowing love of God. The cross is the end. It is a murder weapon, the instrument of the powerful to remove an inconvenient prophet. It is the price Jesus paid consciously and freely, giving all to his God and to his mission for the poor and lowly. On this basis, the cross becomes a way of life with a double meaning: **contemplation and compassion.** Contemplation of the cross leads us to Compassion for all creation.

Contemplation

The contemplation of the Cross or, in other words, meditating on how Jesus gave his life, led Francis to give up everything for the healing and salvation of creation, the wholeness of humanity. I believe that Jesus in his incarnation and in his death on the cross points to the injured dignity, suffering and the

sacrifice of martyred creatures. Through meditation on the cross we become sensitive to all suffering in the world. Doing this, we empathize with suffering which is not our own. In contemplating the cross we do not remain in our own sorrow; we open our eyes and heart to the trials and suffering of others.

Francis's way of being was that of profound contemplation, contemplation viewed not as withdrawal from the world but as entry into the mystery of life, the presence of God in life. He moved through life in contemplation, that is, in a fundamental attitude of receptiveness to the Spirit and a primary attunement to the reality around him at all times. His manner of contemplation led to a very deep experience of life; the awareness of God's presence shaped how he lived every moment.[6]

As Christians we can find authentic "contemplation in action" nowhere else but in the following of Jesus. Within the framework of discipleship, we can contemplate history, God's history. Discipleship is the authentic locale of contemplation. It is there that we can see what sin and injustice are and what love and hope are. It is there that we can find out who exactly the [Human One] is, the One who preceded us on the same road. Finally it is there we can find out who God is, who keeps opening out history until God eventually becomes "all in all" (1 Cor 15:25).

Only in " following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ" (LtOrd 51) do we undergo the conversion of eyes, ears, and heart that makes it possible for us to see, hear, and respond as Jesus did to God all around us.

Compassion

The cross is not only a holy image of meditation, it is also a model for Christian action. To be called to discipleship in Christ is a vocation to espouse the same aspirations as Jesus. We do not live simply for ourselves; we give our life for the other. It is not necessary to seek out the cross, but we are not to avoid it if it comes into our life. After the encounter with the Crucified in San Damiano, Francis was formed by "compassion" (L3C 14). So, too, we must be formed into compassion. "Compassion is not to feel for; it is to feel with and to be moved to act on behalf of another. Compassion, the outstanding characteristic of Jesus' life, means 'to have one's guts torn apart' with feeling."[7] Francis could not pass by, apathetic and unconcerned, the suffering of any creature. He always moved toward kindness in word and deed when he encountered the pain of any creature.

Conventional wisdom trains us to be dispassionate in the face of suffering multitudes, not to see the enormity of human pain. So shattering and excruciating is the suffering of so many that we run from it with such practiced dexterity that we fail even to notice our own running. To face suffering, we

think, would be unbearable; it would paralyze us; it is too excruciating. But compassion, sympathy, affection, sensibility for others is an urgent need in our contemporary time. One Franciscan founder taught a community he founded that the need of [a given] time is the will of God.[8] Franciscans learn through the cross that drawing people's attention to the needs of suffering in the world remains an important and obligatory task for us.

The Cross: A Sign of Protest Against Forgetfulness of Suffering

The cross does not permit us, in looking at the passion of Jesus, to forget or ignore the corresponding passion of the world. In looking at his crucifixion we cannot ignore the crucifixion of the world. "We have to relearn the capacity to suffer."[9] Without this conversion, there may be further progress in technology and civilization, but with regard to freedom and truth there will be no growth.

Contemplation opens the door to seeing and to compassion so that we are able to recognize Christ in the suffering and Christ accompanying the suffering. It likewise enables *us*, too, to look at the suffering, to approach, touch and suffer deeply. The cross is like an "organ of perception" for the Christian. It sharpens our eyes to see what is not good, what is evil, not in order to condemn and search for the guilty but to feel with and be moved to act on behalf of another. Again and again the cross says: Ecce homo!

Ecce homo: look at this person, disconcerted and abused. Move then to those people who do not experience safety or security, who do not have a home. Become the sister of the raped woman, of the child who was given birth under inhuman conditions; become a brother of the man who has no place in the shelter, of the stranger who is forced out of his town, every town, exiled even in his homeland.

Ecce homo: perceive those people who cannot find a community to live with and therefore go through life always thrown off balance, unhappy and unfulfilled. Be aware of those who live on the edge of society, expelled and excluded from affluence and wellbeing. Have a heart for anyone who moves around aimlessly.

Ecce homo: go to the people who suffer, who are handicapped, needy and poor, who are crying for bread, love and justice.

Ecce homo: go to the people who share the fate of the Crucified, stand up for them because it is God who takes their part on the cross.

To belong to God means one must *be with* those victims. To know the Crucified is to develop a clear awareness of the wounded and show solidarity for the weak and poor. There is no Christian faith without this "ecce homo," there is no religious life without attention for the suffering. The cross turns

our values upside down; the cross reveals the wisdom of God to us. We must not fear to ask ourselves how we receive it.

Endnotes

[1]Ingrid Riedler, *Formen-Kreis, Kreutz, Dreieck, Quadrat, Spirale* (Stuttgart Kreuz Verlag, 1985), 39.
[2]Riedler, 41.
[3]Jürgen Moltmann, *Der gekreutzigte Gott* (Munich: n.p., 1972), 65.
[4]Anselm Grün, *Das Kreutz* (Munich: Munserwarsach, 1996), 93.
[5]Anton Rotzetter, *Neue Innerlichte* (Freiburg: Herder, 1992), 141.
[6]Marie Dennis, Joseph Nangle, O.F.M. et al., *Francis and the Foolishness of God* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, :993), 147.
[7]Dennis, 152.
[8]Theodosius Florentini, O.F.M. Cap., (1808-65), founder of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross.
[9]Grün, 82.

St. Francis Covers Christ's Wound

When he was dying, he placed his bandaged hand over the wound in his side, and turning his bright face to his brothers, he said, "The Lord has shown me what was mine to do; may Christ show you what is yours."

How relieved they were he covered his wound, for who could follow such suffering or invite Christ's wounds praying: "May I feel in my flesh your crucifixion and in my heart your great love that embraced it"?

Now they are free to cover their own uninvited wounds, love less heroically like the tropical plant which blooms and drops its flowers every day, that small death and rising enough, though no one sees.

Murray Bodo, O.F.M.

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Our Way of Life, Chapters, and Leadership

Elise Saggau, OSF

> Following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ who made his own will one with the Father's, the sisters and brothers should remember that, for God, they have given up their own wills. Therefore, in every Chapter they have, let them "seek first God's reign and justice" (Mt. 6:33), and exhort one another to observe with greater dedication the rule they have professed and to follow faithfully in the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let them neither dominate nor seek power over one another, but let them willingly serve and obey "one another with the mutual love which comes from the spirit" (cf. Gal. 5:13). This is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ.
> (Third Order Regular Rule, Article 25)

As the season for chapters rolls around, a congregation feels a deep stirring within it. Sometimes this just seems like an upset: we have an uncomfortable feeling that things are going to be all re-arranged for us again – and just when we were starting to feel a bit settled! For others of us, anticipation of a chapter feels exciting. There is a recurrent hope that *this time* we are going to do it right; *this time* we will do something that will really make a difference in the congregation and in the world around us. For others yet, the chapter is just another time when we will gather to hear fine words, have a few debates, do some impressive praying together, raise our hands or our colored cards to promote or repel a variety of motions, and then go home and take up life exactly where we left it before the chapter.

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar? Obviously some chapters make a real impact on our lives; significant things change for us; we feel an inner movement to respond to our life call in a more authentic way than we have in the past; some things make more sense than they did before. Our renewal chapters, thirty or so years ago, were surely such experiences, which many of us well remember. Perhaps those most affected by a chapter, however, are the sisters who are designated to take up the responsibility of leadership. Obviously, for them a profound change takes place in their lives and ministry.

Let's consider what awaits both the grass-roots members and those who will take up the burden of leadership at chapter-time. At a recent preparation session for a certain congregation, one of the statements that emerged from the organizing meeting called members to "clarify and express [their] identity as Franciscan women in light of present global realities." One of the sisters in the group remarked in a rather weary way that "This question of identity comes up in every Chapter." As she said that, it struck me that this is precisely right. The reason it comes up in every chapter is that this is *why we have chapters*: to remind us *who we are* (or perhaps more to the point, *why we are.)* Article 25 of our Rule says:

> In every Chapter they have, let them 'seek first God's reign and justice' (Mt. 6:33), and exhort one another to observe with greater dedication the rule they have professed and to follow faithfully in the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a statement of purpose about which we all need consistent reminders. We need to look into a mirror once in a while, lest, as James says, we forget what we are like (James 1:22-24). Our chapters are (or should be) occasions for looking at our corporate selves in the "mirror" of our Rule and Constitutions. How willing are we to take a close look at who we are?

Being Beginners

One thing a chapter confronts us with is the notion that we are always beginners in this mysterious process of living the Gospel life in the manner of Francis and Clare and the early followers. 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]

Our lives are like that. Look at us. We have had a lot of experience in living; we have had a lot of insight into living our Franciscan way of life. Don't

we say to ourselves "Shouldn't we all be experts by now?" Maybe, maybe not. If we expect this of ourselves and of one another, we lose the most essential attitude that keep us always open to new possibilities in our lives: humility. A famous Zen teacher once said: "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few." This is an important truth for us. If we, as Francis recommended, keep seeing ourselves as beginners, the path stays open to us. If we are 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. If we are beginners, we can never settle down and say: "It is enough now; I've done enough; I've tried hard enough; I've become as good as I can get."

Why should we read and re-read our Rule, the Gospels, the Scriptures? What new discoveries can be made there after ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or even sixty years? We are always beginners. (I read just recently that even someone who is eighty-five years old is still a novice at being eighty-five years old!) Every day our vocation is renewed by God's grace. Every day we have a new chance to come a little closer to living more authentically what we have been learning for many years. We are always aspirants, asking for acceptance; we are learners, seeking to know ourselves and to know God better. Every day we are again inspired to turn more completely to God and God's ways, to be changed, converted by God's power and grace; to be more authentically persons of real prayer; to let go of those encumbrances in our lives that keep us from true spiritual freedom; to recognize our own littleness, our frailty, our dependence on God and our need to trust in God's loving care for us.

And that is why we choose to join others in following a Rule. The Rule encapsulates and articulates our desires, the longing of our hearts, our best inspirations, our profoundest aspirations. Yes, we are all aspirants, aspiring to the goals described in the Rule. We look at the end and know we are at the beginning and we are glad, for there are so many possibilities for us as beginnners on this beautiful way. Francis danced it and sang it; he prayed it; he wept it. He laughed it and raged over it. He did not do it perfectly either. Francis, like us, was always beginning. That accounts for the remarkable freshness of his words, which still live powerfully for us today in this Rule and in his other writings.

As we recommit ourselves to living this way of life, we must be mindful that we are little ones, beginners. 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 beginner's clumsiness and lack of expertness, as well as 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. Today is the only day we have. We can only start from where we are. Today is the day we

will begin. We are little, but God guides our steps and will do for us what is impossible for us alone. We need to open ourselves to Francis's words in his Letter to the Faithful: "How happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, since the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them" (1 LtF5-6).

What Can Help Us?

As we begin again, then, we look for what can help us in the serious enterprise of being what we are called to be. As we gather in Chapter we draw from many sources. As ecclesial women, we look to the greater Church and its challenges. As ministers of the Gospel, we look to the needs of our society, our world, and even now, our cosmos. As inheritors of the Franciscan tradition, we review our Rule and our particular spiritual tradition to draw from it the peculiar wisdom that is ours and examine how our personal and corporate experience embodies that wisdom tradition today. Michael Himes wisely advises us to "go back periodically and reclaim those ancestral lands. . . . [those] many important, vital, necessary experiences, images, sources of wisdom which have grown up in religious life in the Western church over the course of fifteen centuries."[2] Our special ancestry is the Franciscan story, only eight hundred years old, but replete with its own peculiar "wisdom." It is our own "treasury," from which we can draw as we examine how we are doing. This, the story of Francis and Clare and the early followers, is a story with openings in it for us.[3] The question is: How do we fit into the story today? How do we pass this story on to a future generation of which we will not be a part?

As Third Order Regular Franciscans, our special access to this tradition is through our Rule, which embodies those values and virtues that we desire to radiate as Franciscan followers of the Gospel. This is our guidebook for the way of life (the *forma vita*) that provides a common agenda for us as Franciscan persons-in-community. Our insertion into this way of life is not primarily for ourselves, but for the sake of the "other," and first of all the "Other" that is God, Source of our life and our love and end towards which we strive. It is secondarily for the "other" who is our neighbor, distant or near. With our focus on God to whom we owe our worship and total life-response, we become instruments of God's goodness in the world, God's compassion for this broken, suffering, human enterprise. As our Rule bids us in the words of Francis, we "desire one thing alone, namely, the Spirit of God at work within us" (Article 32). This echoes Francis's directive in the friars' Later Rule: "Let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy manner of working" (RegB 10:8).

Once every four or five years religious congregations set aside a time to do this corporate "review of life" which helps us to hold up to ourselves the mirror of our important documents such as the Rule or constitution in order to see if we can discover therein an actual image of ourselves. It creates an opportunity for us to determine if there are areas within this mirror in which we fail to recognize ourselves and, if so, to see how we might sharpen or renew that image or make it more effective for our times. One of the questions we need to ask at a Chapter is "What time is it?" Each gathering occurs in a specific time that has specific needs and requires different kinds of responses. "What time is it in this congregation? in this Church? in this world? What, in our way of life, is being particularly challenged or called upon at this time? What do we need to focus on now? What kind of leaders do we need in our congregation now?

Supporting Leaders

Leadership in a religious congregation is a gift. Margaret Carney, OSF, reminds us that leaders come from among ourselves, from our own ranks. Good leaders are born of good members.[4] She suggests that leaders will ordinarily not be better than the members of their congregations. This is something to think about. Sometimes we have the notion that leaders are really different from ordinary members, that they come from some kind of special species among us. Leaders, however, are not *ipso facto* better than the other members of the community. Even after their election or selection, they have the same responsibilities, obligations, and privileges that any member has. This includes the right to be treated with respect and compassion, to be allowed to make mistakes, to fail at times, just as each one of us does. But, the elected leader has, in addition to her responsibilities as a member, some greater responsibilities by virtue of the office we entrust to her by choosing her. She is vested with the kind of authority that empowers her to "oversee," "teach," "challenge," even to "insist upon" what is needed for the congregation to be faithful to its public commitment in the Church. This is a service that is required of the designated leader; she needs "to call members to the original and renewed vision of the community," as Margaret Carney says. A leader should have a special gift for "putting the ideal into words, inspiring others to act in order to reach the ideal." She, of course, must live this way herself and not expect from members anything she cannot or would not do herself. So, in this sense, we look for persons to lead us who manifest gifts, skills, and talents that can serve this larger purpose for the congregation. This is not for anyone and everyone, in fairness to the person, in fairness to the congregation. We need to seek these gifts in our members as we prepare to designate new leaders.

A few years ago Margaret Carney and Margaret Guider collaborated on an excellent text that describes in a very beautiful and understandable way the leadership qualities of Clare of Assisi.[5] They identified qualities that members of any congregation might look for when it begins to discern its leadership

needs. I summarize some of the qualities they describe:

- *Solicitude and prudence.* Clare was always careful to have the consent of the sisters in decisions for the whole community. For her, "the bedrock of governance [was] the mutuality of hearts and respect for the operation of the Holy Spirit in each member."
- *Vigilance in care.* Clare was concerned "to maintain certain forms of order, certain practices, and certain attitudes. . . . She called the sisters to a constant conversion and a constant awareness of the kinds of discipline and directions required for commitment to the path of publicly vowed religious witness."
- *Diligent in reminding.* Clare recognized the kinds of activities that were destructive of community. She "did not hesitate to call the sisters continually beyond the limitations of human frailty and ego-centricity in her desire to see to it that the common heart was rooted in Jesus and in the Gospel message."
- *Constant in compassion.* This was a hallmark of her leadership. She had a "profound concern for the sick," she carefully instructed the young, she was assiduous in offering hospitality to guests, she maintained a mutual regard for the friars. She was able to make exceptions, modify policy, dispense from or bend the rule "when charity, necessity, or human frailty" required it.
- *Skillful in governmental administration.* "Clare understood very well the structures and the origins of the structures by which she lived. She had a consummate skill in addressing the realities of current church law, traditions handed down from generations of monastic practice, new policies or legislation arrived at by common consent as well as by long and proven experience. At the same time, she never lost her . . . enthusiasm for the fresh new charism that she shared with Francis."[6]

Joseph Chinnici, OFM, in an unpublished article on Clare's leadership also comments upon some important leadership characteristics he finds in Clare:[7]

- *The experience of reciprocity:* he includes here *conversation* (the ability to maintain significant on-going relationships with higher ecclesial authority, with the friar community, and with others); *foot-washing* (the willing-ness to give humble, even menial service in the community); and *the participation of all* (her insistence on consulting all the sisters on matters that would affect them all).
- *Personal integrity*: a leader knows about the spiritual self, has experienced the self of conversion, the freedom of conversion, and is committed to helping others have this experience. This is fundamental to our "way of life."

- *Personal power as transforming*: a good leader possesses "a vitalizing energy which is not self-generated, but self-liberating and illuminating." This is significant in those places where there is an issue among women religious relative to the exercise of power. Chinnici cites the "fear . . . that any exercise of authority characterized by assertiveness and competency might confine women especially to their subordinate position in the older structure and their feelings of childish submission within their own religious orders." At issue here is the reaction of some women religious (after Vatican II) against pre-Vatican ways of exercising authority. An excessive reaction can undermine our ability to respond appropriately and fruitfully to a proper, energetic, and competent exercise of authority.
- *Promotion of the "form of profession"*: "The goal of an office of leadership is to relate the members of a community to each other and to the world within a particular way of life." Our preparations for chapter should help us see that "Evangelical leadership would take [the TOR Rule] seriously, laboring to instruct all in the spiritual and experiential dimensions of the Rule."
- *Accepting the creative "power" of her own frailty*: the leader depends on the sisters for acceptance and support and depends on God for the power to persevere. "Clare, because she is *with* the sisters, experiences her ability to lead as severely restricted, hemmed in by people, by their strengths and weaknesses, by circumstances, by institutions, and by her own tremendous limitations. The evangelical leader experiences her office as a burden and a limitation. In a very real sense, she is one who unites others by eliciting their help; who gathers the community around her own weakness; who is compassionate because she herself is frail."

This last quality truly points to the issue of minority, which we avow as a quality fundamental to our way of life. We are indeed, as members and as leaders, the "little, frail ones" who understand that any good that is accomplished through us is the very work of God and of God's Spirit in us and is never to be attributed to our own strength or goodness or superior gifts. For as Francis says in one of his Admonitions:

> A servant of God may be recognized as possessing the Spirit of the Lord in this way: if the flesh does not pride itself when the Lord performs some good through him–since the flesh is always opposed to every good; rather he considers himself the more worthless in his own eyes and esteems himself less than all others (Adm 12).

At chapter time and in ordinary time, looking in the mirror of self-reflection can be uncomfortable. Yet, I suggest that it is a necessary part of

evangelical life together. But it might be helpful to embrace the beautiful summary and challenge to us Chinnici offers us as sisters bonded in the common enterprise characterized by our Franciscan heritage. He says:

> What would happen to us if we perceived our leaders and ourselves in this fullness of our reciprocal experience-not only as powerful, but also as weak; not only as rich in resources, but also as poor; not only as proficient in the evangelical life, but as beginners; not only as adults, but as children? Would we not then begin to create, as Francis and Clare created so well, community out of our poverty, mission out of our need for help, and leadership out of the power of God in each other?[8]

Endnotes

[1]Rick Fields, ed., *Chop Wood, Carry Water A Guide to Finding Spiritual Fulfillment in Everyday Life* (NY: (Penguin/Putnam, 1984), 22.

[2]Michael Himes, "Returning to Our Ancestral Lands," *Review for Religious* (Jan./Feb., 2000): 7.

[3]Joseph Doino, OFM, notes from a class lecture, The Franciscan Institute, 1993.

[4]References in this section are from unpublished talks on leadership by Margaret Carney, OSF.

[5]Cf. "From Discernment to Concernment," *The Cord*, 46.3 (May/June, 1996): 106-116.

[6]Carney and Guider, 112-113.

[7]Joseph Chinnici, OFM, "Clare and Leadership," unpublished paper.

[8]Chinnici, 22.

Editor's Note: This article is based upon a presentation given to a group of Sisters in a time of chapter preparation.

About Our Contributors

Murray Bodo, OFM, a friar of St. John the Baptist Province, Cincinnati, is a priest and poet. He has authored a number of books and is an occasional contributor to *The Cord.* A former English professor at Thomas More College in KY, Murray in now a full-time writer.

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Prairie Restoration

Ignoring gravity, the red-winged blackbird
sways atop a stalk of grass
and chirps peculiar code to fellows
perching on equally precarious
holds. They seem to love the tangled
mass of green and golden grasses,
purple climbers, yellow lilies'
jumbled scrawl across the hill.

Butterflies and bumblebees
enjoy the prairie too,
suck the juice from purple vetch
and store for winter.

As Francis set the rabbit free
en route to sale
and ransomed doves from fowler's snare,
his sisters have surrendered corn crops,
granting wildness license to return.
Sister Earth rewards this toss of chaos
only with a thousand smiles
of wings and song and creeping forest.
Paid in Earth's good coin,
we join the chorus.

Jane Russell, O.S.F.

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Erratum: The book review in the last issue indicated that Bonaventure "lived from 1235-1274." The dates of his life are 1217-1274 and 1235 is the accepted date for his arrival at the University of Paris.

Abbreviations

Writings of Saint. Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BlL	A Blessing for Brother Leo
Ctc	The Canticle of the Creatures
CtExh	The Canticle of Exhortation
1Frg	Fragments of Worchester Manuscript
2Frg	Fragments of Thomas of Celano
3Frg	Fragments of Hugh of Digne
LtAnt	A Letter to Br. Anthony of Padua
1LtCl	First Letter to the Clergy (Earlier Edition)
2LtCl	Second Letter to the Clergy (Later Edition)
1LtCus	The First Letter to the Custodians
2LtCus	The Second Letter to the Custo dians
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister
LtOrd	A Letter to the Entire Order
LtR	A Letter to the Rulers of the People
ExhP	Exhortation o the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OfP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule *(Regula non bullata)*
LR	The Later Rule *(Regula bullata)*
RH	A Rule for Hermitages
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues
Test	The Testament
TPJ	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

Franciscan Sources

1C	The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano
2C	The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul
3C	The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
LCh	The Legend for Use in the Choir
Off	The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
LJS	The Life of St.Francis by Julian of Speyer
VL	The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches
1-3JT	The Praises by Jacapone da Todi
DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Aliegheri
TL	Tree of Life by Ubertino da Casale
1MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version
2MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Larger Version
HTrb	The History of the Seven Tribulations by Angelo of Clareno
ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St. Francis and Lady Poverty
AP	The Anonymous of Perugia
L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
AC	The Assisi Compilation
1-4Srm	The Sermons of Bonaventure
LMj	The Major Legend by Bonaventure
LMn	The Minor Legend by Bonaventure
BPr	The Book of Praises by Bernard of Besse
ABF	The Deeds of St. Francis and His Companions
LFl	The Little Flowers of Saint Francis
KnSF	The Knowing of Saint Francis
ChrTE	The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston
ChrJG	The Chronicle of Jordan of Giano

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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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Volume 52, No. 3 *May/June 2002*

THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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

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

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Editorial

One of the questions frequently posed to me in recent months was "What new things will you be doing with *The Cord*?" My almost invariable response has been "I need to think about that; in a year or so I can tell you something concrete." To my surprise, however, this issue is a first step toward implementing one of the ideas that came to mind almost immediately concerning the pattern of themes for the issues.

In the past, one issue each year has been devoted to Clare of Assisi and other Franciscan women; another has always centered exclusively around Francis. That is fitting and will remain the same for now; in that way the "First Order" and "Second Order" are covered. Other issues seem to follow a liturgical-season focus within the framework of Franciscan topics. Sometimes there is material relevant to the Third Order Regular, and, less often, to the Secular Franciscan Order. But it seems that a greater level of consistency could be developed. Would it be possible, I wondered, to devote a regular yearly issue to the laity of Franciscan family, the Secular Franciscans? What would be a good time? Where would I find articles?

This issue moves toward answering those questions. Most of the material focuses on SFO topics and some items are written by SFO members. All of the selections have been chosen for their potential impact in two ways: as formative material for Secular Franciscans themselves, and as informative material for the rest of the Franciscan family.

The lead article concludes Michael Cusato's work on St. Anthony of Padua begun in the last issue; it offers much to think about in terms of economic violence and social justice both in the time of Anthony and in the present world situation. The next two articles present the theme statement for the soon-to-be-held 16th Quinquennial Congress of the Secular Franciscan Order and the collected theme statements of all the preceding congresses in this country. I am indebted to Benet Fonck, O.F.M., for his assistance in providing these resources as well as Peter Keogh's piece on the SFO in Oceania (comprised of over 70 groups!). We also offer a contribution from the national formation leaders of the SFO, and two poems which speak to the affective heart of Franciscan life.

May all of us be inspired by the quality of faith and hope these articles reveal to us, and may they challenge us to re-examine our own sense of commitment to Franciscan values.

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

The Cord, 52.3 (2002)

"Something's Lost and Must Be Found..." The Recovery of the Historical Anthony of Padua (Part II)

Michael F. Cusato, O.F.M

In the previous issue, I attempted to recover the basic outlines of the historical Anthony: the Anthony of history as distinct from the Anthony of hagiography and popular devotions. In the conclusion of this article I will take a closer look at two specific aspects of his life and work: his preaching against heresy and the efforts, at the end of his life, to facilitate reconciliation and peace in the communes of northern Italy. This examination will allow us to see Anthony as a person whose religious ideals, once re-grounded in their historical contexts, can have particular resonance in contemporary situations.

Anthony and His Preaching against Heresy

We have shown that Anthony's first public ministry within the Franciscan Order involved preaching throughout the province of the Romagna in northern Italy and that this commission seemed to entail an almost exclusive concentration on challenging the heresy of the Cathars in these areas. This mission unfolded between 1222-1224, followed by a stint in the heart of Cathar country in southern France between 1224-1225. Whereas the veracity of the hagiographical stories that recount a series of incidents in which Anthony engaged these heretics had once been called into doubt not so very long ago, it now seems fairly certain that these events did in fact occur and were representative of a real and serious problem of heresy in northern Italy and southern France during the early part of the 13th century. Tellingly, the majority of the incidents in Italy were said to have occurred in and around the city of Rimini, a town not far from Forlì-the city closest to the hermitage of San Paolo Monte where Anthony first resided as a Friar Minor in Italy. Rimini was one of the primary seats of the Cathar heresy in central Italy. Not surprisingly, therefore,

in the hagiographical accounts about Anthony, Rimini is the site of no fewer than three different "fish stories" involving Anthony and the Cathars: (1) the story about his coming into town and being deviously invited by a Cathar to a poisonous fish dinner from which he escapes unharmed; (2) the story of his being invited to dinner by another Cathar on a Friday-a day of fasting-and being served a chicken dinner only to have it turn into fish, thereby sparing the friar from an infraction of his abstinence obligation; and (3) the famous story of his sermon to the attentive fish outside town, when certain Cathars had persuaded the townspeople not to attend his preaching in town. Finally, Rimini is also the location of the story of the genuflecting mule. Here, Anthony had become engaged in a debate with a famous Cathar of 30 years, a certain Bononillus, who rejected the validity of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This venerable Cathar concocted a test to disprove that presence. First, he deprived a mule of food for three days then ushered it into the piazza on the fourth day where a pile of oats had been placed. When the mule entered the piazza Anthony was to enter from the other end with the monstrance. Predictably, the mule completely ignored the oats and did homage to the Eucharist on bended hoof. Bononillus, as a result, renounced his Cathar beliefs and returned to Catholicism.

These incidents all occurred in Rimini but there were others scattered throughout northern Italy, especially in Milan. It is no accident, therefore, that in these hagiographical sources Anthony comes to be called "the hammer of the heretics"-the one who "lowered the boom," so to speak on these Cathar preachers and their theologians. But if Rimini was the center of a rather widespread heretical defection from Catholicism, Padua had become known as the one unswerving Catholic bulwark against heretical infection in northeastern Italy-which explains why Anthony would have chosen it as his place of residence once he settled down in 1230.

Two important questions pose themselves. First, why was preaching against this heresy so important for Anthony and his Franciscan provincial in the Romagna, so that he would dedicate his energies towards eradicating it both here as well as in southern France? And secondly, how did his involvement in this particular ministry affect developments in the Franciscan Order?

The Doctrine of the Cathars and Its Danger to the Church

To answer the first question, it helps to reformulate it by asking what was at stake for Catholicism in this struggle according to Anthony of Padua? Catharism as it came to manifest itself in western Europe in the mid-12th century was an offshoot of Catholic Christianity whose ideas had deep roots in the dualistic religious ideas of eastern Europe (most notably, Bulgaria). Moreover, the particular brand of Catharism present in southern France and north-

ern Italy by the late 12th century was an especially radical form of this dualism which believed that there were, in fact, two principles of creation: a good God and an evil God. The good God was responsible for creating all that was spirit whereas the evil God was responsible for creating all that was matter. By extension, that which was spirit was inherently good while that which was matter was inherently evil. Thus, in such a system, anything involving created matter-like the body, or anything created by sexual generation, or material things like property or possessions-was considered evil, not of God and to be avoided at all costs. This position, moreover, had several direct ramifications for Catholic doctrine. First, all sacraments (including the Eucharist) were null and void because spirit could not be conveyed through evil matter. Recall that in the Middle Ages, by definition every sacrament, in order to be valid, required matter as well as form; this requirement of matter in the sacrament-bread, oil, or water-rendered it evil and thus devoid of grace. Second, since the body was composed of matter, all activities of Jesus Christ involving the human body-pre-eminently the incarnation, the crucifixion, and the resurrection-must again, by definition, be dismissed as sham misrepresentations in the Scriptures. Such positions obviously undercut the very basis of the traditional Catholic doctrine of salvation and the earthly means towards that salvation in the sacraments. Even if northern Italy would have reverted back to a more moderate type of dualism by the early 13th century, still, the radical nature of these positions, coupled with the fact that Catharism had set up a rival Church with its own bishops, required a frontal assault on the heresy and its proponents. St. Dominic had already created an Order of cleric-preachers that dedicated itself to the extirpation of this heresy first in southern France and, after 1217, in northern and central Italy as well. Now Anthony, a cleric-preacher in the Order of Friars Minor, would nudge the Franciscan Order in the same direction.

Effect upon the Franciscan Order

Such was the grave situation facing the Church in the communes of northern and central Italy that confronted Anthony as he began his preaching mission there in 1222. It is in this context that we must situate the famous letter of Francis to Anthony written towards the end of 1223. Anthony apparently had written to him requesting permission to begin teaching the basics of theology to some of the friars in the region, most notably at Bologna. Why? It seems obvious that Anthony, overwhelmed with the task at hand, decided to develop a team of preachers to combat the Cathars, much as Dominic had done in southern France and in Bologna itself. He therefore wrote to Francis requesting permission to train a group of friar-preachers for this task by giving them the benefit of his own education as a canon so as to be prepared for the mission at hand.

Francis responded in the affirmative, but not without some hesitation. We know of his suspicions not so much toward learning itself but rather about what the dynamics of study and the acquisition of knowledge can often do to its recipient. Moreover, there was also an issue of social class involved: in the Middle Ages, the educated belonged to a social class well removed from the ranks of the poor and humble of society. Francis feared that his friars could become estranged from the invisible and voiceless of the world. What then might have convinced Francis to allow Anthony to set up a study center in Bologna in 1223? It seems that in his own preaching journeys in the north but also further south, particularly in Spoleto, Francis himself would have encountered Cathar heretics. But having only the rudimentary education of a merchant, he knew himself to be incapable of answering these articulate and learned Cathar preachers. Crucial also, I think, was his meeting St. Dominic in 1220 in Bologna where the latter had explicitly come to launch his own assault on the heresy. This encounter seems to have convinced Francis of the urgency of the task and of his own insufficiency in the matter. Indeed, his own writings regarding the Eucharist, the Incarnation, and the respect to be given priests give ample testimony to his awareness of the fundamental importance of these aspects of Catholic doctrine and how they were being threatened by the Cathars. Indeed, in that most unusual but intimate form of address with which he opens his response to Anthony-calling him "**my** bishop"–was not Francis possibly echoing his awareness of the Cathars' establishment of their own bishops and telling Anthony that, in these matters of doctrine, he would willingly bow to Anthony's greater theological wisdom and authority?

It must be stressed, however, that Anthony's request and Francis' permission were for a limited purpose: the training of competent preachers to combat this particular heresy. It should not be understood as anything more. However, the fact of the matter is that, in the years that followed, the establishment of this one house of studies in Bologna for this particular purpose did in reality open the door wide to two new major developments in the Order of Friars Minor. First, the possibility of studying theology as a friar now made the Order much more attractive to young men desiring to engage in the priestly ministry of preaching, confessing and celebrating Eucharist. Moreover, the sudden influx of such clerics into the Order-who brought with them their clerical and juridical way of looking at the world (recall the problems leading up to *Quo elongati*) would forever change the orientation of the Order from a primarily lay fraternity to a community of clerics intent on ministry within and on behalf of the Church. And a second development: the creation of the *studium* at Bologna likewise opened the door to the creation of other study centers (in Paris and Oxford, for example, to name only the most famous) which, during the 1240s and 1250s would evolve into major centers of intellectual innovation and writing at the great universities in those same towns. Anthony thus

stands at the threshold of these changes: not responsible for them but having opened the door to them.

The Social Consciousness of Anthony of Padua

One might ask why the Cathar heresy had been able to proliferate at all in northern Italy at this time? The reasons are actually quite complex but the overall reason is due to the fact that between the mid-12th and early 13th centuries the communes of northern and central Italy were attempting to assert their political and economic independence from all over-arching authorities to whom they had been traditionally subject: feudal lords, representatives of the German emperor, and local bishops who were, themselves, part of the feudal nobility. In this struggle, therefore, Church authorities came to be viewed as just one of several other political obstacles to be overcome in pursuit of this autonomy. The fact that these same religious authorities (bishops, abbots and popes) often acted as vain, grasping and arrogant political overlords-interested more in asserting their rights than in living according to gospel values-only intensified the estrangement between the peoples of the new communes and the Church. In such an environment, Catharism-which was, it must be recalled, a form of radical dualistic **lay** Christianity propounded and led by **lay** Catholics-found fertile ground in the communes. The fact that these **lay** Cathars not only preached a detachment from the world but also lived in poverty and simplicity made them all the more attractive to men and women looking for integrity in their religious leaders.

James Orthmann, OFM

But while reducing the influence of the mainstream Church on life in the Italian communes, these struggles for independence also had a second effect within these same cities: each commune came to be fractured into warring factions and parties (essentially rooted in long-standing family jealousies and rivalries) who fought each other for power, property and wealth within the commune and who also allied with larger forces-like the German Emperor or the papacy-outside the commune. Constant warfare, strife, expropriation of land, revenge, murder and forced exile were common realities for the cities of northern and central Italy in the 13th century-and the histories of cities like Assisi and Padua were no exception. Now, one could tackle this problem as a purely political

one-which was increasingly the solution preferred by the papacy: wrest control of the city by winning over its most powerful authorities and all would be well again. Anthony, however, preferred to see the problem in the Italian communes as a spiritual one. What was needed was not dominance but healing; and what needed repair were the shattered, divided relationships between the various political parties within the cities. Thus, from Anthony's perspective, what was needed was reconciliation, especially the reconciliation of inveterate enemies. And only by bringing peace between warring parties and individuals could the Church-acting as a mediator rather that as a partisan-hope to begin to exert its influence once again over the lives of its citizens.

We have seen in Part I how reconciliation was the primary, overriding theme of the Lenten sermons of 1231 and how Anthony had tried to effect reconciliation between Ezzelino and the Sanbonifacio clan in the Veneto, even though this particular initiative ended in failure.

Nonetheless, Anthony's analysis of the woes that were tearing the communes apart and leaving the cities exposed to heretical infiltration went deeper still-not exactly to the root of the problem but closer than that analysis being proffered by most civil or religious authorities. Anthony surmised that the same attitude of despising the other as one's sworn political enemy carried over into a more general attitude toward **all** human beings. And such a dismissive attitude-treating one's neighbor as an object to be used, subjected or even conquered in order to satisfy one's own self interests–is what led to the rampant and shameful exploitation of the poor and vulnerable of society. They, unlike their powerful political enemies, had no armies, mercenaries or weaponry to fight off or protect themselves from the rapacity of the great and powerful of the world. In short: Anthony had a profound sensitivity to the plight of the poor. This perspective will not, however, be found very readily in the thousands of pages of stylized sermon outlines which he left us. Rather, one must look at the account of what he was trying to achieve in the great Lenten mission of 1231 and, most particularly, its culminating point: the statute of March 17th that he proposed at the end of his preaching cycle.

The express purpose of this statute was to protect the poor of Padua from the exploitative actions of the powerful; or more specifically, it aimed to protect poor debtors-and those who had vouched for them-from their usual fate within the commune. When people fell on hard times, they were often extended credit by unscrupulous lenders-but usually at exorbitant rates. When they inevitably defaulted on the repayment of these loans, they were summarily thrown into prison and their lands confiscated. Such draconian measures, however, deprived their families of the means of survival and also, paradoxically, ensured that they would rarely, if ever, be able to repay the original loan. Whole families, therefore, fell into destitution and despair, turning to crime, prostitution and even murder simply to survive.

Anthony's proposal of March 17, 1231, aimed to end this vicious cycle of violence by prohibiting lenders from putting defaulters and their guarantors into prison. Other means had to be worked out to ensure that loans were not burdened with excessive interest and that they were eventually paid back. His strategy was, again, one of promoting reconciliation between aggrieved parties: not by writing off the debt completely (thereby doing injustice to the creditor) nor by grinding the poor debtor or his family into deeper poverty. This desire to see justice done between contending parties is a side rarely depicted in Antonian iconography and hagiography; and yet in many ways does it not represent his more authentically Franciscan side?

Indeed, Anthony's insights into civil strife and his initiatives to resolve them did not die with him. The same analysis of social discord found an echo in 1233, in the famous popular marches for justice and reconciliation in northern Italy known as the "Alleluia Movement," as well in the great preaching assemblies launched in the same region by members of the Franciscan and Dominican Orders in 1233 and 1234. These preaching missions always ended with proposals to rewrite the statutes of the communes with an eye to rectifying the plight of the poor and creating the conditions for a just peace in the communes.

Conclusion

These are the actions of a saint that can speak to the spiritual vision of men and women of the 21st century who value integrity of life and an evangelical sense of justice. As children we were taught, on the basis of hagiographical stories, that we should pray to St. Anthony for items lost or misplaced: *"St. Anthony, St. Anthony, something's lost and must be found...,"* etc. What has unfortunately been lost for many of us is the Anthony of history: an Anthony we can relate to, whose evangelical vision resonates in our hearts, who looks like a Friar Minor engaged in the real concerns of real people. Isn't it about time that he was found?

Editor's note: This text has been revised from a manuscript based upon a lecture first given by the author at St. Peter's Church in Chicago, Illinois on June 12, 2001.

This map depicts the places in Italy significant to the preaching ministry of Anthony of Padua, especially in the later years of his life.

The Cord, 52.3 (2002)

Called to Build a More Fratemal and Evangelical World

Benet A. Fonck, O.F.M.

Theme Statement for
The 16th Quinquennial Congress
of the National Fraternity of the
Secular Franciscan Order, U.S.A.

To be held July 2-7, 2002
Loyola University
New Orleans, Louisiana

On November 11, 1215, Francis of Assisi heard a sermon preached by Pope Innocent III on the Tau symbol. The Pope, referring to the Book of Ezekiel (9: 4) and applying his thoughts to the upcoming crusade, proclaimed, "Be champions of the Tau and of the cross!" When the Pope said, "Mercy will be given to those who carry the Tau, the mark of a life of one doing penance and renewed in Christ," Francis took this message personally. His crusade was to preach penance. His mission was to keep his eyes fixed on Jesus. The charge given to him by Christ himself was to embark upon a new crusade to renew the Church and to build a more fraternal and evangelical world by conforming to the poor and crucified Christ. So his sign became the Tau.

This experience of 1215 confirmed what Francis had come to know a few years earlier when he came in touch with the Brothers of St. Anthony the Hermit, whom he met in Rome and outside of Assisi in his contacts with the lepers and the impoverished infirm. These brothers wore a Tau cross on their habits and carried a staff on which was mounted a Tau. For them it signified their commitment to humility and to loving attention to the sick and the unfortunate. Through their contemplation of the poor and suffering Christ and through their compassionate presence to the lepers, Francis embraced this same vision and mission. Hence, he saw the Tau cross as an efficacious symbol for all those who accepted being marked by it. In other words, those

who chose to identify themselves spiritually by penance and physically by charitable outreach with the poor and crucified Christ shared in the glory of the Resurrected Lord.

The Tau cross, therefore, had a very specific meaning for Francis of Assisi:

- *the certainty of salvation* because of the victory of Christ over death and evil and our participation in that victory by carrying about in our lives the dying of Jesus through penance, prayer, and proclamation;
- *the universality of salvation* because by his holy cross Christ has redeemed the whole world and by our sharing in the cross we build a more fraternal and evangelical world;
- *the sweetness of salvation* because it is the sign of God's goodness and love and the means to transform what is bitter and miserable into the ability to "taste and see how good the Lord really is" (Ps 34);
- *the liberation of salvation* because to be converted, to allow oneself to be marked with the Tau, is to become poor in the appropriations of this world but rich in the Kingdom of God, to become liberated from the slavery of possessions but bound to the beauty of Lady Poverty, to be stripped of the world's concerns but to be clothed in light of Christ;
- *the mission of salvation* because, as the Lord himself became the servant of the human race unto death, we choose to reach out to others in love by preaching penance, by celebrating Eucharist, by washing each other's feet, and by reconciling all things in Christ.

Thus, the Tau has become the escutcheon of the whole Franciscan Family. The Tau cross, based on the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, symbolizes the completion of the passover from death to life by means of sacrifice. It has come to mean the corporal passage from sinfulness to sanctity through conversion, the spiritual passage from ignorance to intimacy with Christ through evangelization, the eternal passage from aloneness to union with the blessed Trinity, and unity with Christ's Body the Church through eucharistic celebration and community-building.

The Tau cross, moreover, is a sign that one is chosen, sent forth, and empowered by God to be a new crusader-committed to **Transformation**, **Apostleship**, and **Unity** in our own day. According to the principles and the example of Francis, Clare, and the whole "cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1) who lived as brothers and sisters of penance, on whose shoulders today's Secular Franciscans now stand, the members of the Secular Franciscan Order make it

their aim to renew the Church and to build a more fraternal and evangelical world

- by means of their transforming spirituality of penance,
- by means of their evangelization through witness and the apostolate, and
- by means of their community-building through liturgy and fraternal life.

As we read in the SFO General Constitutions about the Secular Franciscan vocation:

> "Christ, poor and crucified," victor over death and risen, the greatest manifestation of the love of God for humanity, is the "book" in which the brothers and sisters, in imitation of Francis, learn the purpose and the way of living, loving, and suffering. They discover in Him the value of contradictions for the sake of justice and the meaning of the difficulties and the crosses of daily life. With Him they can accept the will of the Father even under the most difficult circumstances and live the Francis spirit of peace, rejecting every doctrine contrary to human dignity (art. 10).

In regard to their mission of **Transformation,** by which they choose to embrace the values of a holy and healthy life to strip away whatever obstructs that journey toward oneness in Christ, the SFO Rule states:

> United by their vocation as brothers and sisters of penance, "and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls 'conversion.'" Human frailty makes it recessary that this canversiar be carried out daily (art. 7).

Expressing their commitment to **Apostleship** both by the witness of their faithful example and by their involvement in the ecclesial, charitable, and secular ministries of the apostolate, the Constitutions say:

> Secular Franciscans are called to make their own contribution, inspired by the person and message of St. Francis of Assisi, towards a civilization in which the dignity of the human person, shared responsibility, and love may be living realities....Secular Franciscans should always act as a leaven in the environment in which they live through the witness of their fraternal love and clear Christian motivations....Secular Franciscans, committed by their vocation to build the Kingdom of God in temporal situations and activities, live their membership both in the Church and in society as an inseparable reality (art. 18,19, 20).

The Secular Franciscan vision of **Unity** is demonstrated by the General Constitutions:

> The Eucharist is the center of the life of the Church. Christ unites us to himself and to one another as a single body in it. Therefore, the Eucharist should be the center of the life of the fraternity. The brothers and sisters should participate in the Eucharist as frequently as possible, being mindful of the respect and love shown by Francis, who, in the Eucharist, lived all the mysteries of the life of Christ....They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere....They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples ....The brothers and sisters are co-responsible for the life of the fraternity to which they belong and for the SFO as the organic union of all fraternities throughout the world. (art. 14.2, 18, & 30).

Secular Franciscans, therefore, see themselves as "Tau People" called, sent forth, and empowered for Transformation, Apostleship, and Unity as they renew the Body of Christ, the Church, and thereby commit themselves "to build a more fraternal and evangelical world" (SFO Rule, art. 14).

Eternal rest grant to him, Lord,...

We have learned, as we go to press, that Sister Death has embraced our brother Bill McVernon, a Secular Franciscan Order Minister for the TAU Cross Region in New York. For many years Bill was a perennial supporter of the programs of the Franciscan Institute and often attended summer classess. May our loving God enfold him in love.

The Cord, 52.3 (2002)

Theme Statements of Secular Franciscan Order Congresses: A Retrospective

Material for this article was supplied by Benet Fonck, O.F.M.
and edited by Roberta A. McKelvie, O.S.F.

Since 1921, national congresses of the Secular Franciscan Order have been held every five years, with two exceptions. The meeting scheduled for 1946 was postponed to the following year, due to wartime concerns at the time of planning. In additon, there was no meeting in 1982.

As one scans the information that follows, the developmental process of organization on a national basis within the past 80 years becomes clear. And, just after the Secind Vatican Council, there is a change in the tone of the statements; most striking is the sense of revitalization evident following the 1978 promulgation of the new Secular Franciscan Rule.

First Congress (1921 – Chicago)

This congress led to the uniting into one organization of all the Third Order fraternities of the four jurisdictions in the United States. The new entity created the post of a Directive and Executive Council.

The Second Congress (1926 – New York City)

This congress gave the first impetus to the Third Order's mission into two fields subsequently maturely developed: recruiting the young, and formation of fraternities at non-Franciscan churches and institutions.

The Third Congress (1931 – San Francisco)

The theme of this meeting was social reform through the medium of individual reform. Tertiary literature published subsequent to the meeting witnessed to the effectiveness of the program.

The Fourth Congress (1936 – Louisville, Kentucky)

It continued the good work of the previous congress (see above), and also presented a well-defined program of Catholic Social Action: the "Three-Point Program" of popular economics.

Fifth Congress (1941 – Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

The meeting commemorated the 20th anniversary of the formation of a national organization of Third Order groups, as well as the appearance of the encyclical *Sacra Propedium*, by Pope Benedict XV. It also witnessed the participation of young people in the ranks of the Third Order.

Sixth Congress (1947 – Cincinnati, Ohio)

This gathering highlighted the return to Christ through the family, since good Christian and Franciscan family life is the aim of all tertiarism.

Seventh Congress (1952 – Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

Because the roots of the Third Order of St. Francis is rooted in the Gospel and is therefore apostolic, the topic for this congress was Third Order Apostolate.

Eighth Congress (1957 – Boston, Massachusetts

This meeting commemorated the 75th anniversary of the encyclical *Auspicata*, by Pope Leo XIII, and the congress' theme, "The Franciscan Way of Living" was based on the eloquent 1956 discourse of Pope Pius XII.

Ninth Congress (1962 – Detroit, Michigan)

"The Third Order in the Life of the Church Today" was chosen as the theme, in light of the papal encyclical *Mater et Magistra* by Pope John XXIII. This meeting had a larger number of tertiary delegates than any of the previous congresses, and its program included more sessions, workshops, and addresses than any other. It would be fair to say that, given the above, this was the most lively congress held up to this point.

Tenth Congress (June 22-25, 1967 – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Its theme was "Franciscan Renewal Today." Panel discussions, workshops, and "buzz sessions" comprised integral parts of the convention. Frequent references were made to the new DOCUMENTS of the Second Vatican Council.

Eleventh Congress (August 13-19, 1972 – Santa Clara, California)

This event was described as a "week of community" during which "Lay Franciscans, Sisters, and Priests prayed and lived together, seeking direction from the Lord, striving to understand what it means to be a Franciscan in today's world." One outcome was "A Statement of Commitment" drawn up by the participants. A separate youth conference was held in Rensselaer, Indiana August 20-23.

Twelfth Congress (August 4-7, 1977- Collegeville, Minnesota)

The theme chosen for this congress was "Evangelization, Francis' Gift to America–The Word Made Flesh in our World." Manuela Matteoli, the Minister General of Secular Franciscans throughout the world, was the featured speaker at the congress.

Thirteenth National Congress (1987 – San Diego, California)

"Live, Learn, and Love the Rule" constituted the theme of this gathering. Over 550 persons attended this event. It was the first congress to be organized solely by Secular Franciscans, and was encouraged by the support of friars. Presentations and small group discussions focused on insights into better understanding of the importance of each of the Apostolic commissions of the SFO: Peace and Justice, Family, Work, and Ecology.

The Fourteenth Quinquennial Congress
(August 2-7, 1992 – Dayton, Ohio)

The theme was "Christ's Faithful People, the Challenge and the Response." This teme was based upon the "Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Christifideles Laici" of Pope John Paull II, a document that addressed the topic of vocation and the mission of the laity in the Church and the world. A vision statement summarized the recurring themes of the congress: fidelity to and love for the Church and the Franciscan way of life; and responsibility to rebuild the Church through faithfulness to prayer and service to all people, centered in the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love.

The Fifteenth Quinquennial Congress
(July 1-20, 1997- Newark, Delaware)

The Congress theme was "Now is the Time – The Kingdom Is at hand." It gathered over 600 Secular Franciscans and spiritual assistants together to face the coming millennium with a strategy for leadership, an authentic experience of community, and a vision to build a world based on Christ's values. In the words of Sister Brenda Hermann, the congress' primary facilitator, it was an opportunity for Secular Franciscans to "return to the excitement of [their] founding story." In the closing session the national Minister, Richard Morton, offered the participants a three-fold challenge: 1) invite God to be "God-within" us in order to demonstrate convincingly that God does dwell within each person and each community; 2) seek authentic Franciscan fraternity in order to realize that the God within moves people to seek the fruit of togetherness in the face of trials; 3) move to apostolic action in order to liberate those without hope. A special feature of this gathering was the dividing of all participants into small "congress fraternities" for prayer, dialogue, and interaction.

For an Unknown Disfigured One (in the Cathedral)

As yet you do not know
I've come to claim you for my own
as someone dear to love
to pray for,
someone to love.

How could you?
You barely meet my eye when I
pause sometimes to greet you;
but, then, I too am shy.

The superficial fact
that you've been somewhat disfigured by,
like St. Francis, great affliction,
does not matter.

That only means, I believe,
that really means you are beloved,
greatly so by God,
and so, by me.

I only wish I had the courage to reach higher,
like St. Francis, to kiss your ravaged brow—
as he enthroned his lonely lepers;
to say how much I need you
to love and pray for me,
to tell you you are infinitely
more beautiful than I.

Patricia Craddock

The Cord, 52.3 (2002)

"Make Present the Charism of Our Seraphic Father" The Secular Franciscan Order in Oceania

Peter Keogh, SFO

This presentation was made at the Capuchin Provincial Chapter in Plumpton, Australia, in December, 1999. If offers food for thought for those not familiar with the spread of the Secular Franciscan Order in our day.

My Dear Capuchin Brothers, gathered in Chapter. Greetings from your brothers and sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order in Oceania. It is a privilege to be invited to address you today.

I will try to put before you some thoughts about the SFO Where we are today-what we are-what we are trying to be and how all that is completely tied up with the Capuchin Order (as well as the other first Orders and the Third Order Regular).

To Celebrate is to Make Present: this principle has guided the Franciscan family over the years and still shapes our commitment to "Observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, after the example of St. Francis of Assisi."

In living the Secular Franciscan rule, we Seculars try to "Make Present the Charism of our Seraphic Father, Francis, in the life and Mission of the Church" (Rule, art. 1) through our many celebrations of community and fraternity. In our experience of sharing with each other and with our brothers and sisters of the rest of the Franciscan family, we witness to the "vital reciprocity" that is uniquely Franciscan.

Our common lifestyle, our common spirituality and attempts at evangelisation rooted in our Rule encourage us to re-enliven the Franciscan charism in the specific vocation of the Catholic layperson living the full Christian life within the secular world in communion with the Holy Catholic Church. That is our challenge today-to make Christ present with us in the "Market Place": in our own life, in our family, in our workplace and in our associations. To live this challenge effectively, we have to understand and embrace fully the gift of the Church to us. This clearly means that we also need from you [friars] a FUNDAMENTAL OPTION FOR THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER and not just a nice comfortable brotherly sign of support or an occasional offer of fraternal greeting and recognition. We need a true FUNDAMENTAL OPTION-a sign of your real presence *for*, *with*, and *to* the SFO.

This option must show itself in concrete, positive action-not just a fine position paper or a policy statement from General, Provincial, or local Chapters but a real commitment to **join with** Seculars by providing well-prepared and enthusiastic spiritual assistants who fully understand and appreciate the Rule and the constitutions of our Order and who will commit themselves to build the Secular Franciscan branch of the family in complete harmony with its secular leaders. You provide us with that special spiritual presence and encouragement that is essential to complete the SFO charism.

Your presence is not one of leadership or control but is a special blend of encouragement, acceptance, spiritual input and providing that authentic Franciscan gift to the life of the Secular Fraternity. We need friars who have been formed and are willing to continue to be formed as we Secular leaders endeavour to develop fully our Franciscan lifestyle in the Secular context of the world around us.

We, like you, are on a journey-a journey that takes us as Franciscans to new and unknown frontiers. We need more than anything to be well-prepared and able and spiritually strong enough "to make present the Gospel in our life and in the world that we are part of."

Life in Fraternity is our way. It is a totally different lifestyle than that of the professed Religious Franciscan. But fraternity needs to be developed by the Secular Franciscan in a way that includes prayer, sacraments, care for each other, as a special bond of familial love and concern that is present at all times, every day, even though we might only come together infrequently. The Secular Fraternity is a unique style of fraternity. It is developed at a distance; we do not live in each others' pockets but we do live in a way that we are especially close and care about each other. This is where our Franciscan spirituality comes to the fore. Our prayer life, our communication with each other and our awareness of the needs of each other are the tools for building and living fraternity.

The presence of the Franciscan religious in this fraternity is paramount. You and your special charism make our lifestyle possible. The Franciscan charism is only at its fullness when we Franciscans are together as a family-living in dynamic interaction and vital reciprocity. This style of living and working together is based upon our common origins, common charisms, common means of achieving our goals, and especially the common need for each others' existence, support and assistance. Each branch of the Family has to face up to its own challenges, but it is only when we come to grips with the

fact that we are dependent on each other that the challenge becomes acceptable and liveable for us.

So what can the Capuchin friars do for us?

1. Adopt an attitude: "The attitude of Spiritual Assistance" is the conviction in the heart of a Friar that a Secular Franciscan is an "authentic Franciscan" and a necessary co-equal in sharing the Franciscan spirituality, life style, and ministry of evangelisation and hence it is also the commitment to interact with and work with the Secular Franciscans.
2. Create a Fraternal Plan: A plan of spiritual assistance should be introduced into all facets of the Friars' formation program to introduce and educate the Friars in the life and way of the Secular Franciscan and a fraternal plan to provide "suitable" spiritual assistance to the SFO.
3. Study and become familiar with the Church's teaching on the role of the Laity through the documents of Vatican II and the Post-Synodal documents such as "*Christifidelis Laici*" which form the basis for the life of a lay Catholic in the Church and in the world. These texts constitute essential formation for Secular Franciscans and therefore are also essential to the Spiritual Assistant and Animator.
4. We need sharers, supporters and companions for our journey as Franciscans. We need the example of the life of the Friar and the Friar Community to reinforce our lifestyle.

The Secular Franciscans in Oceania, more than 20 years after the introduction of the New Rule, are starting to show a new and well-founded attitude to the active living of the Franciscan life in the Secular dimension. The Rule of the SFO is now permeating our lives in the ways originally envisioned by those who wrote and updated the Rule of 1978.

Last weekend we celebrated a gathering of formators from all regions of our national Fraternity, which includes New Zealand, all States of Australia and Singapore. The understanding, enthusiasm and wisdom which was displayed at this meeting showed a mature, well-formed and active leadership which gives great hope for the future of the Secular Franciscan Order in Oceania. This has come about through the combined interaction of the secular leaders of the SFO at all levels, united with a balanced and formidable Spiritual Assistance from the friars and Franciscan religious who have worked with us for decades past.

The SFO is a successful and progressive part of the Franciscan family. We have matured and are still maturing from a pious Franciscan lay society

to an active, Gospel-centered Franciscan Order that is on the way to a continued growth in the Church and the Franciscan family.

We have over 70 groups (fraternities and small groups) right across the national Fraternity of Oceania. We have some 1,500 Secular Franciscans who are trying to live the life. Many of the older style larger fraternities are dying out but are being replaced by smaller, widespread Fraternities who are seeing the simple and exciting lifestyle offered by the SFO as a new way to live the Secular life in the Church. It is this challenge of meeting, forming and establishing such groups that is the work of the SFO leaders and, of course, this includes the presence of the First Orders and the Franciscan Religious. That is why we need you to work with us, to give us the spiritual impetus to accept and answer the challenge.

About Our Contributors

Patricia Craddock lives in Lawrenceville, Georgia. Her passion is for Italian poetry and art, and she sees St. Francis of Assisi as an endlessly inspir ing poetic subject. Her poems have been published in England and Italy, and this is her second appearance in *The Cord.*

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Coming to Full Maturity or Maximum Excellence

Therese and Deacon David Ream, SFO

This article is adapted from TAU-USA, the Newsletter of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States. It was first published in Autumn, 2001.

We are well along into [the new millennium], this third millennium of Christ. The National Commission Chairs share their reflections on last year's general theme of "New Beginnings" by focusing on the third major developmental life stage, that of mid-life or middle adulthood. A word often associated with adulthood is maturity, which the American Heritage Dictionary defines as "The state or quality of being fully grown or developed." Synonyms for the verb "mature" include *age, develop, and ripen*. The central meaning shared by these verbs is "to bring or come to full development or maximum excellence."

"Maximum excellence" in realizing our Franciscan vocation-now there's an image that fires the imagination! Do we ever, can we ever attain complete maturity in living the Gospel way of life we profess as Franciscans? Probably not, since growth in maturity is truly the work of a lifetime, a process that ends for us only when we are finally embraced by our Sister Bodily Death, and pass over from this life to eternal life. Perhaps it would be more accurate to claim that we are always maturing in our vocation, "by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls 'conversion'" (SFO Rule, Article 7). This same article of our Rule also reminds us that "Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily." Ongoing conversion, then, is the genuine pathway to "maximum excellence" in realizing our call to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, after the manner of Francis of Assisi.

The newly revised . . . General Constitutions of our Order also support this notion of maturing in our vocation. Article 37.2 states that "The journey of formation, which should develop throughout life, begins with entrance into the fraternity." All of Article 44 addresses the issue of ongoing formation:

> Begun by the preceding stages, the formation of the brothers and sisters takes place in a permanent and continuous way. It should be understood as an aid in the conversion of each and everyone and in the fulfillment of their proper mission in the Church and in society" (44.1).

Article 44.2 of the General Constitutions states that: "The Fraternity has the duty to give special attention to the formation of the newly professed and of the temporarily professed, to help them become **fully mature** [emphasis added] in their vocation and develop a true sense of belonging." Article 44.3 presents a number of specific experiences of ongoing formation, all of which are to assist in "deepening the Franciscan vocation.

In his Letter to the Ephesians (4:14-16), Saint Paul exhorts us:

> Let us, then, be children no longer, tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine that originates in human trickery and skill in proposing error. Rather, let us profess the truth in love and grow to the full maturity of Christ the head. Through Him the whole body grows, and with the proper functioning of the members joined firmly together by each supporting ligament, builds itself up in love."

Our goal as Christians, and especially as Franciscan Christians, is to become adult in our Faith, to become increasingly mature in our Franciscan vocation and identity, to "grow to the full maturity of Christ the head.

We are invited to reflect on the following statement: "In order to become 'Fully Mature with the Fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13), the Secular Franciscan, called to holiness within the Church and prompted by the Spirit to deepen that calling, like Francis and Clare, through the Secular Franciscan Order, with its rich history and development, observes the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in community through a life of penance,through evangelical simple living, through a life of prayer, and through evangelizing with witness and the apostolate as a secular person with a lay mission by bearing peace and charity, by instilling justice and dignity, by being sensitive and loyal to the Church, and by witnessing to the Gospel in a public profession through the example and help of the Blessed Virgin Mary in intimacy with and conformity to Jesus the Lord."[1]

What a mouthful! What a life project! What a vision to move toward "maximum excellence" as Franciscan women and men of the Gospel. Sisters and brothers, may God give you the joy of a maturing Franciscan vocation!

Endnote

[1] Benet Fonck, O.F.M., *Fully Mature with the Fullness of Christ*, Province of the Sacred Heart, 1995.

The Cord, 52.3 (2002)

OPEN THOSE SHUTTERS (Assisi Pilgrimage Revisited)

Throw open those shutters; let it all in!
And in it all came:
The Spoleto Valley, sprawled in its splendor.
There, straight ahead, San Damiano, a simple delight,
Where the Lord started the journey.
And off to the right, dwarfed 'neath the dome,
Lay Francis' treasure, his home for all friars,
His Little Portion his, Mary's, the angels'.
And in between, sunk now from sight,
Lay the plain of the lepers,
Where he found refuge and Jesus after his fight.

A beautiful view, no one can doubt.
But let it all in? It might puli me out!
Or worse still, inside out.
Isn't that what happened to him, 'The Form for the Minors'?

He had prayed, "Who are you, O Lord, and who am ?"
And he stayed, searching the answer
In caves and in darkness at least for six years.
A dark disappointment he became to father and friends.
That brought on fears almost too fretful to face.
But face them he did, though it cost him that life.
He sold all he knew, to buy the unknown.
It left him poor and rejected, naked but clothed,
Filled him with freedom, embraced by a Father in heaven.

Let **that** all in?
Who wants to tread in the cave of one's fears?
It might rip off rnasks I'veworked on for years.
I might be rejected by those I hold dear,
For I too might hear answers that get to the heart of the prayer
"Who are you, O Lord, and who am I?"
and they might not fit in the eyes of those standing near.
But I might find freedom, his freedom and joy-

And in freedom walk, naked,
wrapped in the arms of our Father in heaven.
Open those shuffers, let it all in!

He was confronted, confused by the Cross:
"See my church falling to ruin."
His place in the family would fall into ruin.
If the church followed suit,
Where could he ever find his own spot?
Alone and unsure, he still trusted and acted.
Taunted and jeered, he never felt victim.

Let **that** all in?
I want to belong, secure in my place.
I don't want to walk, alone and unsure,
Into buildings half-empty, abandoned by many.
Shun them - they're shabby;
That's not where it's at.
But a less vocal voice still speaks from that cross.
I hear it when other voices I silence-
And those eyes, who'd want to run from those eyes?
Victory's sound may seem distant,
But its echo I hear when I listen.
So throw aside those robes of a victim.
Open those shuffers; let it all in!

The lepers he loathed became his new lodging,
Learning from them how to know Love when degraded
He called them his "brothers" while washing their wounds.
Waves of healing it brought them;
To him, waves of wholeness.

Let **that** all in?
I'm used to my comfort,
To walking in paths
Which keep people put in their places.
Love's easier that way; I get my reward,
Warmly accepted by all those who count.
But what am I learning; where's any healing?
I do want wholeness,
When all will be "brothers" and all will belong.
Then be brother first to your discomfort and loathing.
Open those shuffers; let it all in!

New brothers the Lord brought him,
Brothers to bear the burden of building the church
And washing the lepers.
Brothers to walk with him in the unknown,
Holding to nothing but the Lord and each other,
Listening together to Jesus and Mary, Queen of the Angels.
"It's too hard," the Pope said, "so cease and desist."
But the dream proved too strong; their joy was too real.
"So go into the whole world and preach this good news."

Let **that** all in?
When brothers come in, it only increases the burden.
You're no longer alone, yes;
But now you're surrounded with mess.
Who can say whose way is best, which way the Lord's?
Brothers add to the joy, but muddle things up.
But the Lord brought him brothers, and with brothers he'd walk
Though it still makes small sense to popes and some people.
The good news is there yet to proclaim,
And how else to believe we're one Body in Christ?
Open those shuffers, let it all inl

All this came in when I opened the shutters.
Not just buildings, steeples, valleys, romance and dreams.
But life, real life, my life, his life
Francis, the form of all friars.
I drank it all in front of my window.
It did pull me out.
But first it invited,
"Go inside, then out."

Dan Crosby, O.F.M. Cap.

Robert Pawell

About Our Contributors - Graphics

James Orthmann, OFM designed the cover for the May, 1973 issue of *The Cord*, which is reprinted in Michael Cusato's article.

Robert F. Pawell, OFM, is a friar of the Sacred Heart Province. He co-founded Project Lazarus, a residence for persons with AIDS and developed retreats for those affected by HIV/AIDS in New Orleans. In 1996 he established, with other friars, Holy Evangelists Friary in Chicago, a community dedicated to the Ministry of the Word. A self-trained artist, he now serves out of Chicago, employing poetry and the arts in the Ministry of the Word.

The Church needs to be renewed in each age. Not all baptized Christians, not all members of the hierarchy, and not all Secular Franciscans are converted in all areas of their lives. Where the members of Secular Franciscan Fraternities fully commit themselves individually and collectively to ongoing conversion in all areas of their lives, a blessing will be given to the Church....The palpable holiness of authentically lived conversion cannot but be a grace in the Church. Robert M. Stewart, O.F.M
"De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam" (p. 364)

37th Franciscan Federation Conference

August 14-17, 2002

Theme:
Being Franciscan Peacemakers in a Chaotic World

****

Presenters:
Maria Elena Martinez, OSF
&
Michael Crosby, OFM Cap

Conference Registration Cost

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Franciscan Renewal Center

Sister Paula Gonzalez, SC

Intercommunity Sisters Retreat

Tuesday, May 28 to Monday, June 3, 2002

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***Sr. Paula Gonzalez, SC** is a Sister of Charity of Cincinnati. Formerly a college science educator, Sr. Paula has offered over 1,300 programs on various aspects of Global Futures to religious communities, educators, civic leaders, and church professionals. Her focus has been on learning from Earth, Ecospirituality, Renewable Energy, Shifting Paradigms for the New Millennium and the Future of Religious Life.*

The Retreat: Check-in Tuesday, May 28 from 4-6 pm; retreat concludes with lunch Monday, June 3, 2002. Fees: Includes accommodation, meals & program. Single, $290; Double occupancy, $215; Commuter Fee, $115 per person, includes meals & program.

Sister Ishpriya, RSCJ

God Beyond All Names

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***Sr. Ishpriya, RSCJ** is an English member of the Society of the Sacred Heart. Since 1974 she has been living in Rishikesh in the foothills of the Himalayas, a Christian presence among Hindu Sannyasis. She holds a doctorate in Psychology from the University of London and is committed to interfaith dialogue in the spirit of mutual understanding and common search.*

The Retreat: Check-in Wednesday, June 5 between 4 -6pm; Dinner at 6pm; Retreat concludes Sunday morning after breakfast, June 9. Fees: Includes accommodation, meals & program. Single, $250; Double occupancy, $220 per person.

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May 3-5th and August 16-18th	The Lessons of St. Francis *Director: John Michael Talbot*
May 24-16th	The Jewish Roots of Catholicism *Director: Bob Fishman*
June 7-9th	Troubadour for the Lord *Director: John Michael Talbot-*
June 20-23rd	Simple Living Retreat *Director: John Michael Talbot and community*
June 28th-30th	The Power of His Presence *Director: Monsignor Frank E. Chiodo*
July 12-14th	Catholic, Evangelical and Eucharistic *Director: Dr. Scott Hahn*
July 19-21st	Mary, Our Jewish Mother *Director: Bob Fishman*
August 26-28th	Togetherness: A Weekend for Married Couples *Director: Fr. Martin Wolter, OFM*
August 9-11th	Healing the Wounds of Life *Director: Tonti Curtis*
August 23-25th	Christ and the Creative Process *Director: Michael Card*
Sept. 6-8th	Are You Ready for A Miracle? *Director: Sr. Francis Clare, SSND*
Sept 27-29th	Gospel Life in the Domestic Church *Director: Fr. Bob Dombrowski*
October 11-13th	Men's Charismatic Retreat *Director: Dr. Dennis Holt*
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Theme:

Harmony of Goodness: Reconciliation as Franciscan Pilgrims and Strangers

Presenter:

Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ
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With forward by Margaret Carney, OSF

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On the Franciscan Circuit
Coming Events

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"Exploring Franciscan Identity in Our Culture Today." With many speakers, at The Franciscan Center, Washington Theological Union, Washington, DC. Contact Alyce Korba: 202-541-5219.

Tuesday, May 28-Monday, June 3, 2002

Intercommunity Sisters' Retreat. At the Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, Arizona. Conact the Center at 1-800-356-3247. For complete list of programs visit www.thecasa.org

Wednesday, June 5-Sunday, June 9, 2002

God Beyond All Names. Sr. Ishpriya, RSCJ. A silent retreat designed for people familiar with silent-sitting and contemplative prayer. At the Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, Arizona. Conact the Center at 800-356-3247. For complete list of programs visit www.thecasa.org. (See ad, p. 133).

June 1-July 10, 2002

The 40-Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat. Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort, IL 60423-8330. For more information, contact Kathleen Copp, OSF at 815-464-3850 or e-mail SKACOPP @AOL.COM. (See ad, p. 135).

Saturday, June 8-Friday, June 14, 2002

Franciscan Art & Spirituality Retreat. with Mary Elizabeth Immler, Kay Francis Berger, and WoodSong Music Ministries. Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort, IL 60423-8330. For more information, contact Kathleen Copp, OSF at 815-464-3850 or e-mail SKACOPP@AOL.COM (See ad, p. 135).

Thursday, June 20- Sunday, June 23, 2002

Simple Living Retreat. Little Portion Retreat and Training Center, Eureka Springs, AR 72632. For more information, contact retreats@ LittlePortion.org. (See ad, p. 136).

Friday, June 28-Sunday, June 30, 2002

The Power of His Presence. Directed by Msgr Frank E. Chiodo. Little Portion Retreat and Training Center, Eureka Springs, AR 72632. For more information, contact retreats@LittlePortion.org. (See ad, p. 136).

Abbreviations

Writings of Saint. Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BlL	A Blessing for Brother Leo
Ctc	The Canticle of the Creatures
CtExh	The Canticle of Exhortation
1Frg	Fragments of Worchester Manuscript
2Frg	Fragments of Thomas of Celano
3Frg	Fragments of Hugh of Digne
LtAnt	A Letter to Br. Anthony of Padua
1LtCl	First Letter to the Clergy (Earlier Edition)
2LtCl	Second Letter to the Clergy (Later Edition)
1LtCus	The First Letter to the Custodians
2LtCus	The Second Letter to the Custo dians
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister
LtOrd	A Letter to the Entire Order
LtR	A Letter to the Rulers of the People
ExhP	Exhortation o the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OfP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule *(Regula non bullata)*
LR	The Later Rule *(Regula bullata)*
RH	A Rule for Hermitages
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues
Test	The Testament
TPJ	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

Franciscan Sources

1C	**The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano**
2C	**The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul**
3C	**The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano**
LCh	The Legend for Use in the Choir
Off	The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
LJS	The Life of St.Francis by Julian of Speyer
VL	The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches
1-3JT	The Praises by Jacapone da Todi
DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Aliegheri
TL	Tree of Life by Ubertino da Casale
1MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version
2MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Larger Version
HTrb	The History of the Seven Tribulations by Angelo of Clareno
ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St. Francis and Lady Poverty
AP	The Anonymous of Perugia
L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
AC	The Assisi Compilation
1-4Srm	The Sermons of Bonaventure
LMj	The Major Legend by Bonaventure
LMn	The Minor Legend by Bonaventure
BPr	The Book of Praises by Bernard of Besse
ABF	The Deeds of St. Francis and His Companions
LFl	The Little Flowers of Saint Francis
KnSF	The Knowing of Saint Francis
ChrTE	The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston
ChrJG	The Chronicle of Jordan of Giano

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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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Volume 52, No. 4 *July/August 2002*

THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS: Address all manuscripts to Editor, *The Cord*, The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778.

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

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

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

ADVERTISING: Ads should be sent to the editor at the above address. Cost: full page, $50.00; half page, $25.00. Ad deadline: first day of the month preceding month of publication (e.g., April 1 for the May/June issue).

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

Editorial

It seems that it was only yesterday that we were commemorating the 800th centenary of the birth of Clare of Assisi. We celebrated *Clarefest* at LaCrosse, Wisconsin; the Franciscan Institute published a series of books dedicated to expanding and enriching our knowldedge of Clare; Poor Clares around the world were re-discovered by the rest of the Franciscan family. And, true enough, that was less than ten short years ago. Now, in about a year, we will mark the 850th anniversary of Clare's passage into eternal life. We are surely blessed to be living in this age when Clare re-assumes her importance as one of the founding figures within the Franciscan movement, a movement that changed the Church and the civil culture of the thirteenth century.

Much has happened in our world and in Franciscan studies these past ten years, and this issue reveals the fruitfulness of some of those changes. We have two articles written from different cultural perspectives: Gilberto Cavazos-Gonzalez was raised in the Hispanic culture and Delir Brunelli is a Brazilian sister whose ministry is catechesis. Both bring Clare to us in rich and challenging ways: Gilberto focuses on a spiritualty of liberation and Delir teaches us about Clare as a transformed and transforming presence in the world. We also have a meditative piece offered to us as a "remote preparation" for the 2003 anniversary of Clare's death. Tom Barton, Murray Bodo, and Joanne Schatzlein lead us through the streets of Assisi on the night Clare left her family to join Francis and his/her brothers at the Portiuncola. Together these articles provide wonderful insight into Clare herself and into her importance in our day.

When I began my work as editor of *The Cord*, I promised that mistakes would be "quickly remedied" and I now make good on that promise. You may have noticed that in the May/June issue Dan Crosby's poem "Open Those Shutters" was published with some typographical errors not caught by this editor. An author deserves to have the integrity of his/her work protected, and the best way for me to do that is to re-publish the poem (with no typos) in the current issue. I am grateful to Dan for the grace and good cheer with which he received the news of the mistakes.

May our sister Clare, and all her sisters around the world, rejoice in the beauty of her life! May you always continue to do what is yours to do!

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

The Cord, 52.4 (2002)

The Spirituality of Liberation in Clare's Process of Canonization

Gilberto Cavazos-Gonzalez, O.F.M.

It has been said that "Translators are traitors" to their texts. They make choices that affect the message of a document. Such is the case in the contemporary translations of *The Process of Canonization* for St. Clare of Assisi.[1] When I first read the *Process* I did so in Spanish, English and Italian. Eventually I read and reread the document in the original 15th century Umbrian (an Italian dialect). It was only then that I noticed how a theme of liberation appeared in the testimony given by the witnesses of the *Process*.

In reading the Umbrian version of the *Process*, I found a liberating saint who let herself be used by God for the liberation of many. In it the witnesses give testimony of the physical healing of several sisters and children, the mental healing of Friar Steven and the exorcism of a possessed woman from Pisa. These healings are spoken of in terms of liberation.[2] The sisters do not only speak of liberating healings and exorcisms; they also state that thanks to the prayer of Clare, the monastery of San Damiano and the town of Assisi were "liberated" from war.

Where did this liberating force in Clare come from? She did not write great treatises on liberation in any sense of the word. In her case, I believe we can say that she was a Christian in whom a spirituality of liberation was experienced and lived.

The *Process of Canonization* Text

The actual process of canonization for Clare of Assisi lasted a total of six days, from the 24th to the 29th of November, 1253. Once the process was completed, the proceedings or *Acta* were sent to the Pontifical Curia for their examination. In the meantime, Innocent IV, who had called for the process, died. Thus, it was left to his successor, Alexander IV, to canonize Clare in 1255-only two years after her death. After the canonization, Clare's *Process* was most likely used by a heretofore unknown author for the redaction of her official hagiography. After the *Legend of Saint Clare* was finished, the *Process* would have been discarded as was the custom of the time.

The *Process* as it is found today was published in 1920 by the Friar Minor, Zeferino Lazzeri, along with a very detailed introduction in the *Archivum Franciscum Historicum* (*AFH*). Lazzeri claimed that this document, written in Umbro-Italian,[3] must be a translation of the original, which being a juridical document had to have been written in Latin.[4]

The *Process* is one of thirty-four files that at one time might have been separate works, but that now form part of the Landau-Finaly collection in codex ms 251.[5] According to Lazzeri, it comes from the monastery of Santa Chiara in Perugia. Apparently this codex belonged to sister Cherubina Deborgianni, abbess of said monastery during the sixteenth century.[6]

The text itself was probably set in its present form in the fifteenth century. This we can conclude because it is written in the Umbrian dialect of that time.[7] Interestingly, it also shows signs of having been written by two people.[8] According to Lazzeri, the present text of the *Process* is a "Life" of St. Clare that was taken to the monastery of *Santa Clara Novella* in Florence.[9] This monastery was founded in the mid-fifteenth century by Sister Maria de Albizi, who in 1453 was joined by Sister Magdalena del Conde Humberto de Romana, abbess of the monastery of St. Chiara in Perugia. Sister Magdalena brought two other sisters with her to help her in the new monastery. Lazzeri believes that these sisters either brought with them, or later sent for a copy of a Life of St. Clare.

The text is a legal document that was written for the Roman Curia with the purpose of determining whether or not to canonize Clare. As a legal document it is a simple document, which uses pre-established formulas,[10] without a chronology, with much repetition of information, and with interruptions made to the narration.

The document is structured in 20 chapters, with an introduction that includes the letter of Pope Innocent IV's bull *Gloriousus Deus*. For the most part, each chapter is dedicated to the testimony of a single witness. These chapters are further divided into several narratives about events that occurred during the life of Clare, events to which the person giving testimony was a witness.

Because it is a legal document, it does not flow as well as the *Legend of Saint Clare*, but it does contain the strength and vitality of the testimony of the people that lived with Clare, and that saw in person the events and miracles that happened during her lifetime.[11]

Spirituality of Liberation

Today, liberation is talked about and sought after in a variety of social and ecclesial movements. The reality of these liberation movements leads us to ask: Where can true liberation be found? A Christian spirituality of liberation founded on the Sacred Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church responds that only in the Triune God can true liberation be found.[12]

In the Sacred Scriptures, God is revealed as the God who liberates the slaves (Ex 3: 7-8), revealing Himself as a liberating God who opts for the poor and oppressed.[13] This theme grows into "good news" for the poor, for those to whom Jesus says that He has come to announce the good news of liberation (Lk. 4:18). This liberation that God works with and for people is not just an interior or "spiritual" liberation. It is also a concrete external liberation; it is a liberation that re-establishes human dignity, and that converts the liberated person into a liberator in Jesus Christ.

The encounter with Jesus is the source that refreshes and sustains the spiritual life of a person and of a community. This encounter not only demands a conversion of life, but also life-giving testimony, and that is the reason why the liberation that Christ offers cannot be limited to an interior liberation. Christian spirituality, then, cannot be an adventure in individualism because the Christian must participate in the liberating mission of Jesus who gave His life for the sake of others and who formed a community of Spirit-filled disciples.[14]

Christian spirituality comes from an encounter with the Christ of faith, an encounter that permeates historical reality with the Holy Spirit. The Christ of faith is revealed in the Scriptures, which present the historical Jesus.[15] By the "historical Jesus," the spirituality of liberation understands the totality of the history of Jesus, Who accepted the historical reality into which He was incarnated. Reflecting on this historical reality, José Comblin states that the Spirit acts in history through the poor.[16] It was the Spirit that inspired the poor to go to Jesus of Nazareth, and it was the poor and crucified Jesus of history that after His resurrection continued to inspire the Church in the way of conversion.

Every time Jesus prayed, preached or acted He had only one goal in mind: the realization of the Reign of God.[18] The Christian call is an invitation to a conversion to the Reign of God through a preferential option for the poor and their integral liberation. This radical conversion will lead the Christian and the Church to identify, in the same way in which Francis and Clare of Assisi and many other saints did, with the poor and crucified Christ, as well as with the poor and oppressed.[19]

The idea of conversion as a response to an encounter with Jesus presupposes the acceptance of the existence of sin in our lives and in the world in which we live.[17] Sin is never just a personal matter and therefore neither is conversion.

The Language of Liberation and Clare's *Process*

Through the testimony of her sisters and other people who knew her, this woman who decided to live the "liberating" Gospel of Jesus Christ, allowing herself to be used as an instrument of liberation by the Lord who "freed" her, can be examined. When the Umbrian-language text is read and compared with the modern translations, the richness in vocabulary the original document possesses is obvious. Part of this richness is related to the language of liberation that is contained in the *Process*. This language of liberation is very important. The word "liberation" (*liberatione*) appears thirteen times, while the verb "to liberate" (*liberare*) appears seventy-four times in different forms of conjugation. Also, Clare is described as "liberal" (*liberale*), that is, as generous. But in many of the testimonies in which the language of liberation is used, modern translations have opted to use words that have more to do with the language of healing.[20] The English version found in *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* translates the verb *liberare* and its variants as "to cure," and translates the subject *liberatione* as "cure" when dealing with the liberation from an ailment.[21]

The Umbrian version of the *Process* uses *liberatione* and *liberare* not only on those occasions that refer to the liberation of the monastery and of Assisi, but also when referring to those healings performed by Clare as acts of liberation. The witnesses spoke in great detail of how Clare liberated the people of Assisi and the Poor Ladies both from the human enemies that endangered their lives, as well as from the enemies that endangered the health and well-being of her sisters and of several people that lived outside of the monastery.

Clare and the Spirituality of Liberation

In addition to the explicit use of the word liberation, the *Process* also contains implicit aspects of a Christian spirituality of liberation such as Clare's fidelity to reality, her conversion process, and the way in which Clare related to Jesus Christ and her sisters.

Although the *Process* never mentions it, we know that Clare and her family were exiled in Perugia during the time of Assisi's civil war. Clare would have been a child then, and it was probably during this confrontation with reality that Clare learned to be faithful to the reality in which she lived and not close her eyes to the misery that surrounded her. Another aspect of this fidelity to reality is learned from the secular witnesses of Clare's *Process*, who attest to her asceticism and her generosity toward the poor. For Clare, being a good Christian meant being generous with the poor beyond acts of asceticism. Even from her childhood, "conversion towards the Lord always involved conversion towards the poor as a principal dimension."[22]

These witnesses also claim that from her infancy, Clare was a model of virtue and purity, and that she had been blessed with the Holy Spirit from her mother's womb. Nonetheless, the spirituality of liberation would recognize that although Clare was a model of generosity and practiced charity, she needed to go through a process of conversion because of social sin. According to the witnesses, during the decisive moment of her conversion Clare demonstrated her desire to turn away from the evil in which she lived: the evil of a noble family concerned with land and property; a family that owned much land and most likely enslaved the poor. In abandoning the enslaving nobility of her youth, she turned towards a liberating God.

Testimony given by the witnesses mentions that Clare considered the Lord a guardian who protects and frees the ones He loves. An example of this trust was described by the witnesses who saw in the liberation of Assisi and of the convent of San Damiano the great faith with which Clare would pray to Jesus to defend them from their enemies.[23] This trust in the liberating power of Jesus was likewise manifested in the trust Clare had that Divine Providence would protect her and her sisters. Before dying, Clare herself remembered the fact that God had always protected her, as a mother cared for her beloved child (Proc. III:20). The God that cares so much for God's own is a God that "liberates them from all evil."

Clare also presented herself as an instrument of the care that God had for the sisters and for those in need. When the Saracens arrived at the monastery, she let herself be used by God as a protecting shield for the liberation of her sisters. It is with great humility that Clare says "*Lord, guard these your servants, because I cannot guard them*" (Proc. IX: 2), putting her sisters in this way in the care of the Lord.

Examples of Liberation

A Christian spirituality of liberation is one that leads the Christian to identify with Christ as the Poor and Crucified Lord found in the poor and oppressed peoples of this world. In this identification s/he will be carried forward to the Reign of God by five currents that blend into his/her life of faith: fraternity/sorority, contemplation, the Cross, poverty, and the Eucharist.

Fraternity

The sisters dedicate seventy-six verses to testimony about the theme of fraternity/sisterhood. When Clare acquiesced to Francis and became the abbess of the monastery of San Damiano, she did so under two conditions: poverty and service. She lived with her sisters in a mutual care that drove Clare to consider herself the servant of her sisters, but also allowed her sisters to take

care of her. In the life that was described by the witnesses at San Damiano Clare stands out as a woman of service even more than as a woman of poverty.

In the testimonies given by the sisters during the *Process*, we find that Clare's fraternal circle extended from her community to the friars, and from there to the hierarchy, to the laity. Apparently, the visitor's parlor of San Damiano was used quite often. The fraternal circle also extended to every creature of God. Clare would encourage her sisters to glorify God every time they encountered one of God's creatures. She actually gave them a list of the creatures for which they were to praise God; these creatures were *the beautiful trees, florid and full of fronds, people and other creatures* (Proc. XIV:9). Among the creatures mentioned the tree receives special attention. It might be that in the tree Clare was reminded of the special tree used for the crucifixion, or of that other tree in the parable of the Lord, the tree that has room for all of the birds in the sky (Cf. Mt. 13:32; Mk. 4:32; Lk. 13:19).

Clare Ellen, OSC

Prayer and Contemplation

There is no doubt that Clare was a woman of contemplative prayer.[24] In the *Process* we find the word "contemplation" (*contemplazione*) six times, "prayer"(*oratione*) fifty-seven times, and the verb "to pray" (*orare*) six times in its different conjugations. According to the secular witnesses, Clare prayed often in her childhood. After she entered religion her prayer matured into a continuous prayer and contemplation of the mysteries of God. Sister Pacifica affirms that Clare *kept vigil* (*veghiava*) *so much of the night in prayer* (Proc. I:7). The verb *veghiava* used in the imperfect indicative tense tells us that Clare was constantly in prayer during the night.[25]

The words with which the sisters described Clare's prayer and contemplation are "assiduous" (*assidua*), "solicitous" (*sollicita*), "vigilant" (*vigilante*), "continuous"(*continua*), "customary" (*consuete*), and "sublime" (*sublime*). Of these words only *consuete* and *sublime* are adjectives, while the other words are adverbs that express a dynamic sense in the prayer and contemplation of Clare.

The sisters also testified that they would see Clare surrounded by a great splendor while at prayer. Clare's face, more beautiful than the sun,[26] was not the only outward manifestation that made the sisters happy when Clare returned from praying *as if she had just come from heaven* (Proc. I:9), because she would come back speaking to them words of God which both chastised and consoled them with a *certain sweetness* (Proc.VI:3).

The Sign of the Cross

The miracles that God realized through Clare were, according to the words of Sister Beatrice and of other witnesses, miracles of liberation and defense. These were the consequence both of her prayers and of her tracing of the sign of the cross *with her hand.*

The cross had been important for Clare from the beginning of her life. In the Middle Ages, giving birth to a child was a dangerous and frightening experience,[27] and that is why many women would pray to Saint Michael the Archangel for his protection. Ortolana, however, *standing before the cross, praying that the Lord would help her in the danger of childbirth*, did not entrust the birthing of her child to Saint Michael, but to Christ crucified. It was in front of the cross that as the witnesses attest, she heard a voice that told her: *"You shall birth a light that will greatly illuminate the world."* (Proc. III:28) Putting all of her faith in that voice, she gave Clare her name and destiny.[28]

Thanks to the prophecy received by Ortolana, and to her having shared it with her daughter, Clare, from the very beginning of her life, encountered the crucified Jesus who would reveal to her her life's destiny, a liberation through the sign of the cross.

Of the twenty-two testimonies about the liberations that Clare performed thanks to the sign of the cross, fifteen were dedicated to the liberation of two or more of the Poor Ladies. Clare worried about the welfare of her sisters, although she did not cure all of them. Sister Lucia testified that: *She said that she heard that the Lord had liberated more sisters by her merits. But she had not been present, because she was sick* (Proc. VIII:4). Sister Lucia was not oppressed by her own illness. She actually demonstrated a well-balanced view of the liberations that were attributed to Clare: while many of the other sisters emphasized that their *blessed Mother liberated with the sign of the cross*, she declared that it was the Lord that liberated the sisters thanks to the merits of Clare.

Poverty

The testimony that we find in the *Process* briefly touches on Clare's love for poverty[29] and her struggle for the Privilege of Poverty.[30] The noun "poverty" (*poverta*) is found only sixteen times in the Umbrian document: twice in

the testimonies given about her decision to live in poverty; nine times about the love that she had for poverty, four about the "Privilege of Poverty," and once about her commitment to living in poverty.

The term "the poor" (*poveri*) as a noun is found ten times in the testimony that talks about her youth: once to declare the love she had for the poor; once in speaking about the help that Ortolana gave to the poor; two times to state that Clare would send her food to the poor; and five times to testify that she had given her inheritance to the poor.

Sister Pacifica declared that the young Clare *loved the poor* (Proc. I:3), and according to the testimony of the other sisters, this love for the poor was transformed into a love for poverty itself. Clare loved the poor so much that she embraced poverty as an essential element in her Christian life. Clare had found the way to holiness in the preferential option not only for the poor but for poverty itself as the way to the Kingdom of God, and she always recommended this way to her sisters.

The Eucharist

In the Middle Ages when people were choosing not to receive communion, giving preference to an act of adoration that was far from the physical contact with the consecrated bread,[31] it is interesting to note the presence of the adverb "often" (*spesso*) in relation to when Clare *took* the holy sacrament of the body of Jesus Christ. In total, we have four testimonies that make reference to the reception of communion by Clare,[32] and only one testimony that refers to her Eucharistic adoration.[33]

Clare sustained a personal relationship with her Lord that was expressed through both communion and adoration. It was not enough for her to receive the Lord in the bread of his Body; it was also necessary to adore him, putting her trust in his presence. In the encounter with the Saracens, Clare demonstrated how much she trusted in the Lord, and in His presence in the Sacrament. While other sisters made special reference to Clare's prayer when faced with the Saracens, Sister Francisca emphasized the act of adoration that Clare did *throwing herself prostrate* on the ground when they had brought the Blessed Sacrament in front of her in the refectory (Proc. IX:2). This scene of Clare face down on the ground in adoration and supplication is in strong contrast with many images of the saint we often see, in which she holds high the host in a monstrance as if she were Joan of Arc brandishing a sword in front of the frightened enemy. For Clare, the Body of the Lord was not an instrument of war but the presence of Jesus Christ who defends and lovingly cares for his flock.

Summary

In spite of the fact that the *Process* used as a source here is not in its original written language, it is in the tongue of its witnesses. This fact gives the *Process* a freshness and vigor that it might not otherwise have in Latin. With its language of liberation, the text is a wonderful source for the study of the life of Clare. It is also an important tool for us to use to discern what is it that this amazing woman can offer us today while she continues to challenge our concept of liberation. The text of Clare's *Process of Canonization* is full of testimonies given by people who loved Clare both as a mother and as a sister, recognizing in her a liberated and liberal woman.

Clare herself did not write anything about liberation; it was more important to her that she be used as an instrument of liberation by the Lord. She was one of the many saints who have responded to humanity's desire for liberation, and she challenges us to live a process of liberating conversion so that once liberated ourselves, we can help liberate other.

Endnotes

[1]Realizing that there still does not exist a critical edition of the Process of Canonization of St. Clare of Assisi, the citations of the process will be taken from the reproduction of the text written by Fr. Zefferino Lazzeri, OFM in "*Il Processo di Canonizzazione di S. Chiara D' Assisi*" in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 13 (1920): 403-507.

[2]Of the seventy-four times that the verb "to liberate" (*liberare*) and the noun "liberation" (*liberatione*) are used within the context of healing, only in five verses do the witnesses refer to the event using the words *liberare* and "to heal" (*guarire*) (Proc. III:10, 15; IV:11; VI:8; IX:6) while in two verses the witnesses speak of healing without reference to *liberatione*; Cf. Proc. III:11, 16. Two other verses are also of interest here: Proc. III: 16, where sister Fillipa comments that Sister Andrea desired *guarire*. The notary, in the title that he gives to this event, states that Clare "freed" her; and Proc. VI:9, in which Sister Cecilia declares that some who were brought to Clare to be "healed" (*curati*), were actually "freed" (*liberati*).

[3]Cf. Lazzeri, "*Processo*," 409.

[4]Cf. Ignacio Omaechevarria, *Escritos de Santa Clara y documentos complementarios* (Madrid, 1970), 62.

[5]Lazzeri states that this codex is the only one that is known to contain the *Process;* cf. Lazzeri, "*Processo*," 437.

[6]Cf. M. Bartoli and G.G. Zoppetti, *S. Chiara d' Assisi: scritti e documenti* (Assisi, 1994), 149.

[7]Unfortunately, the "supposed" original Latin text has been lost. However, it must be noted that some version of the *Process* was consulted by different Franciscan authors throughout the centuries: an anonymous author of a late fourteenth century biography of St. Clare; friar Mariano of Florence in the early sixteenth century; and friar Luke Wadding, who cited and used the acts of the *Process* towards the middle of the seventeenth century. Unfortunately for us, the first two authors do not tell us where they found the acts of the *Process*, nor found the acts of the *Process*, nor if they were written in Latin or in the Umbrian dialect. And after Wadding finished working with these *acta*, they were again forgotten until 1920 when Zefferino Lazzeri, O.F.M., found and published them. See Lazzeri, "*Processo*," 406-408; 412-414.

[8]Lazzeri also tells us that the first eleven pages of our Process were handwritten in a "style characteristic of the XIV century," but that beginning with folio 11v, " a new style of writing is recognizable, one less beautiful, and closer cursive script than the first one, and which continues till the end of the Process." Cf. Lazzeri, "*Processo*," 409, 438.

[9]Lazzeri states that our text for the process of canonization of St. Clare was originally found in this monastery. Cf. Lazzeri, "*Processo*," 409.

[10]Cf. Lazzeri, "*Processo*," 412.

[11]Cf. C.A Lainati, "*Proceso di canonizzazioni di santa Chiara*" in *Fonti Francescane: Scritti e biogrfie di san Francesco d' Asisi; Cronache e alter testimonianze del primo secolo francescano; Scritti e biogrfie di santa Chiara d' Assisi* [IV ed.] (Padua, 1990), 2302.

[12]Pope John Paul II in his "Inaugural speech given at the Palafoxiano seminary in Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico," declares human dignity an "evangelical value which cannot be despised without greatly offending the Creator," while at the same time stating that the process of liberation forms part of the ecclesial mission that must always consider the human being "in the integrity (totality) of his own being." Cf. Papa Juan Pablo II, "Discurso Inaugural" III 1-III 2 in *Puebla: La evangelizacion en el presente y en el futuro de America Latina* [2 ed.] (Madrid, 1985), 20-21. (The translations of Spanish texts are my own).

[13]Y. Spiteris, *La vita Cristiana: esperienza de libertà* (Bologna, 1993), 24.

[14]Cf. G. Gutierrez, *Beber en su propio pozo: En el itinerario espiritual de un pueblo* (Salamanca, 1993), 89.

[15]Cf. P. Casaldaliga and J. M. Vigil, *Espiritualidad de la liberación* (Santander, 1992), 115-121.

[16]Cf. J. Comblin, *Spirito Santo e liberazione* (Assisi, 1989), 74-79.

[17]The Latin-American bishops in Puebla were very clear in stating that personal sin has social consequences that cause anguish and frustration to a large part of the world. The bishops especially condemn as anti-Christian the ever-growing gap that exists between the poor and the rich. Cf. Puebla, 28 and 73.

[18] Cf. Puebla, 226.

[19]Puebla, 1134 and 1140; Cf. P. De Anasagasti, *Liberación en San Francisco de Asís: Peculiar metodología misionera franciscana en el siglo XIII* (Aranzazu, 1976), 194-95.

[20]The Italian version of the *Processo*, found in the *Fonti Francescane*, is a contemporary version of the fifteenth century Umbrian version. It contains a few modifications that do not affect the language of liberation. The Spanish version, which can be found in the *Escritos de Santa Clara y documentos complementarios*, written by Omaechevarria, the majority of times changes the verb *liberare* and its variants for the verb "to heal" but only on half of the occasions does it change the word *liberatione* for that of healing. Of the seventy-four times that the verb liberare is found in "its several verbal forms" in our text, Omaechevarria only translates it fifteen times using some verbal form of "to free"; the other fifty-nine times he translates the verb with some verbal form of "to heal," or the noun of the word "healing" (two times), and on two occasions he does not even translate the word. In Proc. XIII: 9 where the word *liberatione* is used in regard to the liberation of the monastery and the liberation of Assisi, Omaechevarria translates "to free" the monastery and "to free" Assisi. He does not explain why he made this change,

neither does he explain why he used the noun *liberatione* to translate "liberation (five times), and healing (six times).

[21]Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994). Of the seventy-four times that *liberare* is found in "its various verbal forms" in our text, Armstrong only translates one case with the verbal form "liberated;" one with "delivered" and in six cases he used "to free"; in other cases he translates them with a verbal form of "to cure,"or "to heal" (one time), and on one occasion he does not translate the word at all.

[22]S. Galilea, *El seguimiento de Cristo* (Bogota, 1989), 45.

[23]It is interesting to see that the "liberations" of Assisi and of the convent are not mentioned by the civil witnesses, while nine of the fifteen sisters attest to it. Cf. Proc. II, 20; III:18-19; IV:14-15; VII:6; IX:2-3; XII:8; XIII:9; XIV:3.

[24]Contemplation is considered as that which gives Christian action its efficiency because, in the end, it is the Christian who must move within the "realm of love," trusting always that, even if the efforts in favor of liberation are ours, the results will always be in God's hands. Without contemplation, any act of liberation is simply transformed into a social activity that does not see nor go beyond the present, and that does not know how to transcend itself. Without acts of liberation, contemplation is transformed into a type of self-satisfaction that also does not see beyond the present, and that does not know how to transform itself through generosity. The experience of generosity through contemplation makes us aware that it is God who has given us life, and that it is God who calls us to an efficacy that does not fall into fatalism, but that it rises in the hope of the merciful and providential action of God in our lives and in history. Cf. Gutierrez, *Beber*, 142-45.

[25]The other sisters also use verbal phrases to express the regular praxis of Clare's prayer in its different manifestations: she was a long time in prayer; she rose for prayer; she kept vigil in prayer.

[26]Sisters Benvenuta, Francisca and Agnes declared that they saw a great splendor that surrounded the head of the saint on three other occasions: once while she was praying, then when she received the Eucharist before she died, and finally, when she was listening to the preaching of brother Phillip; Cf. Proc. II:17; IX: 10; X: 8.

[27]Ingrid Peterson, *Clare of Assisi* (Quincy, IL: The Franciscan Press, 1993), 46.

[28]In the Middle Ages, the name was important because it was believed that it was a sign from the very beginning of the type of person that the child would become as an adult. The name Clare would be for Clare "the synthesis of her history in prophesy." Cf. M. V. Triviño, *Clara de Asís ante el espejo: historia y espiritualidad* (Madrid, 1991), 35-37.

[29]Cf. Proc. I:13; II:22; III:3, 13; IV:3; VI:10; VII:8; XIII:10; XIV:4.

[30]Cf. Proc. III:14, 32; VII:8; XII:6; XIII:3.

[31]Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987), 53.

[32]Cf. Proc II:11; III:7, 24; IX:10.

[33]Proc IX:2.

Clare had found the way to holiness in the preferential option not only for the poor but for poverty itself as the way to the Kingdom of God, and she always recommended this way to her sisters.

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"Contemplation in the Following of Jesus Christ" The Experience of Clare of Assisi

Delir Brunelli, CF

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Contemplate: to see with the eyes of the heart; to feel in another way; to perceive that analyses alone do not explain because they cannot.

Clare of Assisi (1194-1253) is a great teacher of Christian spirituality.[1] Her experience is inscribed in the living and dynamic context of the 11-13th centuries, during which many religious movements arose that actively involved a great number of women.

Inspired by God and animated by Francis of Assisi, Clare broke away from her family and her social environment in order to follow Jesus Christ in the condition of the poor of her time.[2] She sought an alternative Christian life, one that flees from the monastic model and also innovates in relation to the feminine religious movements of that period. With great wisdom, she traced a spiritual itinerary which can be expressed in a few words: to follow Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became the Way and Mirror, when he assumed the human condition in the form of a Servant and was obedient until death on a cross.

The mystery of the Incarnation is at the root of Clare's spirituality. Not only the fact of the Incarnation, but the Incarnation as it happened in reality: in poverty and total renunciation. In this mystery Clare perceives God's special solidarity with the little and poor ones, with the abandoned and powerless, with the marginalized and those excluded from the social contact of their times.

Poverty and sister/brotherhood concretize the "following of Christ" and become the main pillars of Clare's form of life. Through spousal mysticism Clare emphasizes the personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the sharing of

the life and communion with the destiny of the Poor and Crucified. Through maternal mysticism, she accentuates the commitment to generate new life, to produce fruit which will last.

But the originality of Clare's proposal is shown, in a particular way, by inserting contemplation in the dynamic of "following." This deals with a contemplative following which transforms and sheds light. The metaphor of the mirror is used to speak of this experience and to proclaim a truth little recognized in the Middle Ages: that women who follow the Way and contemplate the mirror (who is Christ) participate in the Christifying grace and may reflect in their revealed faces the image of divinity.

It is this contemplative aspect of the experience of Clare of Assisi which is developed in this article.[3] The first section shows that Clare's contemplation develops through a very simple method which harmonizes the participation of the senses, mind and heart; the second part accentuates a contemplation which transforms, divinizes, and unfolds in witness.

Look, Consider, Contemplate . . .

In recent centuries the contemplative life has been understood as a specific type of consecrated life in the Church. The charisms of diverse religious orders and institutes were classified as either contemplative or apostolic based on a type of polarization between the praying Jesus and the Jesus who announces the Reign of God. Contemplative charisms had as a determining characteristic intense prayer favored in the cloister, particularly in the case of women. This reductive vision was greatly damaging for the Church because it dispensed the majority of Christians-including members of religious institutes of an "apostolic nature"-from searching for contemplation as an experience of the Christian life.

The present time has seen a return to the question of "meaning" and the possibility of contemplation in any type of life within the horizon of the following of Christ and of commitment to the cause of the Reign of God. In Latin America, for example, one speaks of "contemplation in action," "contemplation in commitment," and "contemplatives for liberation," as a profound experience of God in history, in the mixed reality of grace and sin where one realizes the concrete struggle in favor of life and where the Spirit of God works.[4] In this way Clare of Assisi speaks with authority. For her, contemplation is not something distinct from her radical option for Jesus Christ but is an intrinsic and indispensable dimension of this same option.

To express her contemplative experience Clare uses the metaphor of a mirror, well known during the Middle Ages, but she makes it original by applying it to Jesus Christ as much in his divinity as in his humanity.

The great teachers of contemplation speak of steps, stages, measures or degrees through which one arrives at the experience of contemplation.[5] Clare also elaborates her method but without becoming restricted by any of the current trends. Hers is a simple method which germinates from experience and is not entangled in lengthy explanations and considerations. It can be summed up in three verbs that appear together twice in the Letters to Agnes of Prague: look, consider, contemplate (2LAg 20, 4LAg 19-23).

Enfolded in the perspective of the following of Jesus Christ poor and crucified, Clare's contemplation involves the entire person. It has no difficulty in harmonizing the participation of the senses, mind, and heart without excessively accentuating one aspect to the detriment of another.

For Clare, the Son of God became the Way for us by assuming our humanity in the form of a servant. At the same time He became a mirror. Clare's contemplative way is the same as the "following": the mystery of the Incarnation, synthesized in the manger, in the public life, and on the cross. It is a "mirror-way," where we see reflected the poverty, the humility, and the love of the Son of God. To contemplate this mirror every day, continually, is to walk in this way without weakening, with light but firm footsteps; to place the mind, soul, and heart in the mirror, and is also to place one's feet in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Look at Poverty

The contemplative following of Jesus Christ involves one's manner of seeing. In St. John's gospel the first challenging proposal of Jesus to the disciples is this: come and see (Jn. 1:39). "To see" is the fundamental attitude of one who wishes to follow the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth. It is as fundamental as "to listen," "to follow," and "to serve."[6]

A *following* begins with an encounter, with a "seeing," "listening," "touching," "feeling." The women who approach Jesus, who live alongside him and follow him have this experience. They see (Mk. 15:40); listen (Lk. 10:39); touch (Lk. 7:38; Mk. 5:27); speak (Jn. 4:9-26; 11:21-27); anoint (Lk. 7:38; Jn. 12:3; Mk. 14:3). An experience of the senses is fundamental for witness. John, in his first letter, expresses it thus: "...what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have contemplated and our hands [illegible] . . . this is what we announce . . ." (Jn. 1:1-3). The witness of one who has seen cannot be challenged because it is true (Jn. 19:35). The "[illegible] synthesizes all experience-leads one to "remain": "They went [illegible] lived and remained with him . . ." (Jn. 1:39).

In the symbolism of the mirror it is obv[illegible] emphasized in a special way. Clare delves into this symbol [illegible] type of synthesis to express the involvement of all the senses [illegible] lative following

of Jesus. When she says "look" she also means "touch," "listen," "experiment," "perceive the essence and flavor." All these aspects appear in relation to Jesus. Clare invites Agnes to look at his bruised and violated beauty (1 LAg 9; 2LAg 19; 3LAg 16; 4LAg 10); and embrace him (2LAg 18); touch him (2LAg 8); perceive his fragrance (4LAg 13); hear his voice (4LAg 24-26); taste the hidden sweetness which his friends experience (3LAg 14).[7]

In speaking of the mirror, the invitation is to look at the poverty of Jesus: *"Look at the border of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him Who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. The King of angels is laid in a manger"* (4LAg 15: 19-21). This is not about a romantic posture before the manger but a real experience of poverty which is the deprivation of material things, [an experience of] humiliation and contempt such as the Son of God who, ". . . on coming into the Virgin's womb, chose to appear despised, needy, and poor in this world" (1LAg 19).

It may be that the poor whom Clare loved so much and to whom she extended her hand (LegCl 3; Proc 1:3; 17:1), specific persons who lived on the periphery and byroads of Assisi and who frequented San Damiano in search of help, were present there in the human features of the Son of God wrapped in swaddling clothes and resting in the manger.

The first step in Clare's contemplation (contemplation according to Clare) does not consist in penetrating one's own self to discover one's own misery but to go out of the self to see the misery of the other. It is not a struggle against vices and passions, an arduous exercise of humility but a resolute option for poverty, the chosen way of the Son of God.[8] The reality of the option made in her youth and the battle waged throughout her entire life to remain faithful to this option did not allow Clare to idealize or spiritualize poverty. For her, poverty is very concrete and can be seen: "Look! He is there, wrapped in swaddling clothes."

Whoever suffers from poverty suffers, first of all, physically. The suffering comes from hunger, thirst, nakedness, exhaustion, sickness, homelessness. . . .In the same way, whoever perceives poverty observes it, above all, through the senses. Thus the evangelical way of solidarity is opened and a sharing of life which is exactly the proposal of the mirror as we see it in the manger takes place. Clare's gesture of solidarity with the powerless and forsaken, severing the link with the socio-economic and political model of her time, has, as its fundamental incentive the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God as it is synthesized in the manger. Clare first lived what she later recommended to her friend: *"Look upon Him Who became contemptible for you, and follow Him, making yourself contemptible in this world for Him"* (2LAg 19).

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In the symbolism of the mirror it is obvious that "seeing" is emphasized in a special way. Clare delves into this symbol and shapes it into a type of synthesis to express the involvement of all the senses in the contemplative following

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Consider Humility

The following of Jesus involves the mind, intelligence, and reason. On various occasions Jesus questions the disciples: why do they not understand or why are they slow to understand his words and actions. Later, he himself demonstrates the meaning of the signs which he accomplishes, explaining the parables and the Scriptures.[9]

In order to follow Jesus it is necessary to understand the mystery which is involved. According to Clare, this consideration leads us to perceive the humility, the contrast, which scandalizes and fascinates: the King of angels is wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger (4LAg 19-21). He who rules heaven and earth appears in the world despised, needy and poor (1LAg 19); the Son of the Most High takes refuge in the little cloister of Mary's womb (3LAg 17-19).

Poverty and humility form an inseparable duality in the writings of Clare and appear almost constantly in the texts which speak of following (RCl 8:2; 12:13; TestCl 46-56; 2LAg 7; 3LAg 4, 7, 25; 4LAg 19-22). This preference shows that the particular focus within which she understands the mystery of the Incarnation and the "following of Christ" is the same as that of Francis.[10]

Poverty highlights life in the condition of the poor, and humility expresses the depths of poverty, the degradation, the humiliation, the disdain. For Clare the practice of poverty meant to assume the life of the poor, without the guarantee of material ownership, or, for example, to assume the condition of the excluded, those whose story was not included in the official archives of the time. If poverty is the negation of riches, humility is the negation of power. The following of Christ demands both dimensions.

This consideration should lead to an understanding of the salvific motivation of the humility of Jesus Christ. The Son of God divests himself and becomes a servant: to make us rich (1LAg 20); for our salvation (2LAg 20); for our love (3LAg 15); for the redemption of the human race (4LAg 22). This should also lead us to discern the real motive for our response. We do all "for Him" as Clare writes to Agnes (2LAg 19).

Biblical and theological studies help us to understand the Christian mystery. In her writings Clare reveals a very solid theology acquired certainly through her listening to the Word of God, preaching, the liturgy, and personal reflection. One of the sisters testifies to this: "The witness also said Lady Clare delighted in hearing the Word of God. Although she had never studied letters, she nevertheless listened willingly to learned sermons" (Proc 10:8).

For contemplative following of Jesus Christ it is also necessary to understand reality in its many dimensions, since this following takes place within the limits of a very specific history. The following of Christ is concretized within time and space, within a series of relationships and decisions.

In the course of Clare's life, in the decisions she made and in the struggles which she endured, Clare proved herself a profound expert of the reality in which she lived. When she decided not to possess properties and asked for the "Privilege of Poverty," when she renounced her status of nobility and established a style of life in San Damiano which made no class distinctions, when she renounced the use of the title "abbess" and organized her community in a democratic manner, or more so when she resisted the pressures of Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241), she was not acting from mere intuition but knew exactly what she wanted and in what territory she was walking.

To consider the humility of Jesus Christ, his work and sorrow, means to sink deeply into the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God in its essential dimension of *kenosis*, poverty and renunciation, in order that this mystery be renewed today in the different realities where we live and work.

Contemplate Love

The contemplative following of Jesus involves the heart. In her *Third Letter to Agnes*, Clare invites her to "Place your soul and heart before the mirror of eternity" (3LAg 12). In the following letter she added: "*Happy indeed, are you to whom it is given to share in this sacred banquet so that she might cling with all her heart to Him... whose affection excites . . . the mirror without blemish*" (4LAg 9, 11, 14).

In speaking of the heart in the relationship with God and Jesus Christ, Clare seeks inspiration more in the Scriptures than in the prevailing contemplative thought of her time.[11] The Bible, of course, places a great emphasis on the heart. It is the place of the decisive options of the human being and the mysterious and merciful action of God. The covenant which God made with his people passes through the heart and demands openness, welcome, commitment. The first obligation of Israel is to seek God with all its heart and with all its soul if it wishes to encounter God (Deut. 4:29). As a partner with God in the Covenant, Israel must love God with all its heart, soul, and all its strength (Deut. 6:5). Israel is called to abandon idols and secure its heart in God and serve only Him (1 Sm. 7:3). God Himself assumes the responsibility of giving Israel a new heart, totally purified, to guarantee fidelity to the covenant (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 31, 32, 33, 39; Ez. 36:25).

The New Testament follows the same thought. The new covenant, established in Jesus Christ, also demands that we love God with our whole heart (Mt. 27:37). In the Beatitudes the pure of heart are promised the vision of God (Mt. 5:8). Paul asks that God enlighten the "eyes of the heart" of the Ephesians in order that they understand their call (Eph. 1:8). He also asks that they be strengthened by the Spirit and that Christ live in their hearts. In that way they

may understand the mystery of the love of Christ which surpasses all human understanding, and experience the fullness of the life of God (Eph. 3:16-19).

For Clare also the heart is the place of the covenantal exchange with God and expresses the radicality of our response, our total involvement, a communion which helps us to perceive the divine. Agnes could have enjoyed the pomp and honors that this world lavishes upon [the wife of] an emperor, but she preferred poverty with all her soul and with all the affection of her heart (lLAg 6). She should not now become discouraged in the face of difficulties but should place her mind, soul, and heart in the "mirror," and should "cling to Him with all her heart." In this way she will experience the sweetness which God has reserved for his friends (3LAg 12-14; 4LAg 9).

God also has a heart. This aspect is decisive in order to understand Clare's invitation when she writes to Agnes: "... *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*" (4LAg 23).

To speak of God's heart is to speak of God's mercy, God's maternal instincts. Hosea 11 is most significant here. Yahweh loved Israel since he was a child, cared for him in the desert, wrapped him in a maternal embrace. When God thought of punishing him for his infidelities God's heart became wrenched within; God was moved within the depths of his being. After all, God is God and not a human being!

Luke expresses God's perfection in terms of mercy and it is the same mercy which is demanded of the disciples (Lk. 6:36; Mt. 5:48). John's first letter is clear: "God's love only abides in those who have not closed their hearts, their deepest selves, to the needy" (1 Jn. 3:17).

This merciful love of God is manifested above all on the cross of Jesus. There, one perceives the unequivocal manner with which God gives his heart to the misery of the human condition, leading to the extreme of God's love. The scandal of the cross is the scandal of love, the scandal of the heart of a God deeply in love. In the face of this scandal, the disciples flee. But a few women remain and contemplate the mystery which transcends them. They try to penetrate this mystery.[12] They en[illegible] ter into communion with the pain and loneliness of [illegible] Him who is totally stripped of power, totally [illegible] who can "only love."

The Jesus whom Clare contemplates is [illegible] crucified. These three dimensions correspond to "see," "co[illegible]ide." Contemplation summarizes the entire process, reassume[illegible]nsions the "see"

and "consider." To contemplate is to see with other eyes, to feel with another capacity, to perceive what analyses alone cannot explain. To contemplate is to see with the eyes of the heart, but with the heart of God, which is compassionate and merciful.

This is not a matter of simply employing the affections; that could reduce everything to sentimentalism. To contemplate is to sense and perceive the love of God made visible in Jesus Christ and to vest oneself with the same love, to put on Christ (Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:24), to have the same attitude as Christ who renounced everything . . . until the cross (Phil. 2:5). It is this Clare proposes and desires for Agnes: *"Let yourself be inflamed more strongly with the fervor of this charity. . . "* (4LAg 27).

To look and consider may be attitudes which are simply human. We look at Jesus and study the gospel in detail; we look at reality and analyze the causes of poverty, violence, the exclusion of millions of people. Contemplation will make the difference. It does not dispense seeing and considering, but gives them a special touch. It is the difference made by the Spirit. To contemplate is to open oneself to the Spirit who renews, transforms, and impels to witness.

Be Transformed and Witness!

In the New Testament the Christian life is presented as "new life." The radical change which the Reign of God demands, the *metanoia* (Mt. 3:2; Mk. 1:15) is equivalent to new birth. There is a double dimension to "new life": a conversion to following Jesus Christ and a "Christification." Both are the work of the Spirit (Jn. 3:5; 2Cor. 3:17), but in the first the human response is accentuated, while in the second what is emphasized is the gratuitous action of God. Clare's contemplation includes both dimensions. In the texts where she uses the metaphor of the mirror, the process of conversion in the following of Jesus appears as embellishment and compassion, while the "Christification" is seen as a participation in divine life, anticipating eschatological communion.

Witnessing is also a part of Clare's spirituality. To be a mirror of Christ is not a privilege but a missionary vocation, a call to reveal, in one's own life, the project of God manifest in Jesus Christ.

Enhancement and *Com-passion*

According to the Gospels, God desires us to be like Him in perfection and mercy (Mt. 5:48; Lk. 6:36). This synthesis also includes the commandment of beauty, which can be expressed: "Be 'beautiful' as your heavenly Father is 'beautiful.'" [The author is using a word, *beleza*, which also means gracefulness, goodness. . . translator's note].

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and "consider." To contemplate is to see with other eyes, to feel with another capacity, to perceive what analyses alone cannot explain. To contemplate is to see with the eyes of the heart, but with the heart of God, which is compassionate and merciful.

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In the theology of spirituality of recent centuries, the irruption of the

divine in beauty was rarely perceived. Excessive rationalization banalized beauty; moralism was suspicious of it, and pragmatism considered it useless.[13] Today, however, one can perceive the search to redeem beauty and what has begun to appear is a relationship between theology and aesthetics, mysticism and aesthetics. This is where Franciscan/Clarian spirituality can contribute. For Francis of Assisi beauty is a very important divine attribute. He praises God with these words: "You are joy and jubilation! You are beauty!" (PrsG 4). Creatures are all beautiful and reflect the Creator (Ctc 8; 1C 81; 1MP 116). In them, according to Bonaventure, Francis contemplates the Most Beautiful! (LMj 9:1).

Clare's contribution is Christological. She contemplates the glory/beauty of God which is reflected in the face of Christ, as the New Testament tells us. (2Cor. 4:6; Heb. 1:3). The theme of beauty appears in Clare's four letters, signifying that this [concept] is fundamental and constant in Clare's spirituality. Jesus Christ is "beautiful" (1LAg 9), or better, He is the *"most beautiful among the sons of men"* (2LAg 20). The sun and the moon and all the armies of the heavens admire his beauty without end (3LAg 16; 4LAg 10). But what is of interest to Clare is not so much to exalt the beauty/glory of the Son of God but to perceive that this beauty revealed itself in the face of the man Jesus of Nazareth and, moreover, to call attention to the contrast! He who is so beautiful is bruised and disfigured for our salvation.

Jesus Christ's beauty not only leads Clare to ecstasy but also seduces her and impassions her. An ardent desire to follow Him is born, to become like Him, to vest oneself with the same beauty. The symbolism of the mirror, better than any other, is adequate to express the transformation at work in one who is capable of contemplating beauty.

To our present-day sensitivity it seems out of context to speak of the following of Jesus Christ in terms of "adornment." But not for Clare. She writes to Agnes: *"Gaze upon that mirror each day . . . and continually study your face within it, that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes . . ."* (4LAg 15-17). Clare's mirror serves as a means for Agnes to beautify herself and also as a point of reference to verify her own beauty.[14] To "mirror oneself" in him means to confront one's own life with the life of Jesus and with the word which he announces. To beautify oneself externally is to journey along the same road, in the concrete reality in which one lives. To beautify oneself internally is to assume the way of Jesus with the same spirit, with the "same perception" (Phil. 2:5).

The following of Jesus, thought of as a process of adornment/beautification, highlights the contemplative dimension and the important aspects of joy and pleasure which accompany the encounter and the intimate living together with one whom one loves.

Tradition has accustomed us to consider the Christian life as an obligation, expressed in the search for truth, in the observance of the commandments and precepts, in the practice of renunciation and asceticism. Today this obligation is translated as a struggle, a journey and commitment but one runs the same risk: to turn the Christian life into a burden of responsibilities without any beauty.

The life of Clare wasn't any less difficult and her obligation wasn't any less than what is demanded today. The witnesses to this are numerous. But one notes in Clare a joviality, a lightness and joy which not only cause admiration but question and attract. Contemplation even transforms her externally, increasing her beauty and kindness (Proc. 4:4; 6:3).

Because of this, when she writes to Agnes saying that she should adorn herself, Clare wants to express also the pleasure, thrill, and joy of living found in the following of Jesus. This is the secret of a woman impassioned not only for a cause but also for someone she allows herself to be totally involved with, in freedom and even daring. [This is the secret of] a woman who adorns herself because she feels loved and because of this is capable of profoundly communicating her longings to the loved one, and is also ready to give her life so that these aspirations be realized.

But one could ask: is it possible to speak of the following of Jesus Christ in terms of adornment without leaving the concrete reality wherein the adventure of following the Poor Crucified takes place? In order to avoid this risk Clare joins adornment to *com-passion*. The Son of God is in our midst as a servant, stripped, humiliated, excluded. Because of this, the adornment that Clare speaks of passes through solidarity as the means to recapture a wounded and violated beauty.

In her *Rule* Clare synthesizes the principle characteristics of her life and the life of her sisters: "When the Blessed Father saw we had no fear of poverty, hard work, trial, shame, or contempt of the world . . . " (RCl 6:2; TestCl 27). In Clare's letters these characteristics appear as essential aspects of the human life of Jesus, aspects which Agnes should contemplate. The most explicit text is in the second letter: ". . . *contemplate your Spouse, who, though most beautiful among the children of men, became, for your salvation, the lowest of men, was despised, struck, scourged untold times throughout His entire body, and then died amid the suffering of the Cross"* (2LAg 20). The content is the same as that expressed in the fourth Song of the Servant: ". . . he had neither beauty nor splendor . . . he was despised and abandoned by all, a man subject to suffering, familiar with pain . . . nevertheless, it was our infirmity which he bore, our sufferings which he endured . . ." (Is. 53: 2-4).

Clare has this experience of *com-passion* in varied ways. She confronted poverty, fatigue, humiliation and even a prolonged illness (LegCl 44; RCl 6:2; TestCl 27). She assumed the suffering of the poor and sick who ran to San Damiano in search of help (Proc. 2:18; 3:7, 15; 4:11). She had solidarity with her sisters, especially those who endured illness (Proc. 1:12; 16:2, 13:3; 7:16).

She took upon herself the distress of the citizens of Assisi, threatened by the Saracens and troops of Vital of Aversa (Proc. 3:18-19).

The cross which Clare lived was a redeeming cross. One does not sense a pleasure in suffering itself but from the fact that it allows one to accept it for Christ and, with Christ, bring forth new life. In the final analysis it is not the cross but the life which bursts forth from it. It is with this consciousness that the harsh penances that Clare practiced must be understood. They do not reflect any rejection of the body but the great desire to be conformed to Jesus crucified from the same perspective as the desire for martyrdom.[15]

With the Sign of the Cross Clare cured the sick and consoled the afflicted (Proc. 2:13; 3:6, 11, 15; 4:7-8, 10-11). She did not have the stigmata in her hands and feet, as Francis did, but she carried within her heart the Passion of Christ as well as the suffering of others. The sisters, the friars, and the many poor from the surrounding area of Assisi, as well as ecclesial personalities such as Cardinal Hugolino, felt the grace of her compassionate heart.

Divine Union

The last condition of "following" is not a configuration with the Servant but a configuration with the Resurrected Christ and a communion with God. Adornment and *com-passion* are part of a journey to be traveled which leads to the participation in that life which is born of death, of the glory/beauty which shines forth from the face of the Resurrected Servant and from Trinitarian communion which resurrection makes possible. This signifies a real participation in the divine life and happens in a progressive manner; it begins at baptism/conversion and continues throughout the entire process of the following.

Participation in the divine life is a fundamental point in Clare's spirituality. Her thought is enfolded in three aspects all present in the *Third Letter*: through the grace of God we are the dwelling place of God; through following Him we can beget Christ within ourselves; through contemplation we are transformed into the divine image.

Dwelling Place of God and Maternity

The mystery of the Trinitarian presence in us is very much a part of Christian spirituality and has its foundation in Baptism. With Baptism the person becomes the dwelling place of God and is immersed in the Trinitarian life. These are two movements of the same mystery: God comes to us and we are assumed into God. Through divine grace and love, Clare affirms, we become the mansion of God. [He Who is] the Truth has said: *Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too shall love him, and we shall come to him and make our dwelling place with him* (3LAg 23; Jn. 14:21, 23).

But baptismal grace is a covenant and our response is the following of Jesus Christ, fidelity to God's project with the action of the Holy Spirit. The following renews not only a few aspects of the life of Jesus, as the proclamation of the Reign of God, but also the entire mystery of the Incarnation: Jesus Christ is born again for the life of the world. Clare writes further:

> *As the glorious Virgin of virgins carried [Him] materially, so you too, by following in her footprints, especially those of poverty and humility, can, without any doubt, carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body . . .* (3LAg 24-26).

In Mary, the Trinitarian presence has an outcome which becomes exemplary: the Incarnation of the Son of God and discipleship. This approach allows us to perceive that the presence of God in a person is not only for the person's pleasure, but to generate new life in order to renew the Incarnation in every time and place. The connection between maternity and following shows that there is a way to generate new life: that way traveled by Jesus of Nazareth and followed by Mary, the faithful disciple.

Divine Image

Clare also emphasizes the "Christification" of the human being and participation in the divine life. It is this that she expresses in writing to Agnes:

> *Place your mind before the mirror of eternity! Place your soul in the brilliance of glory! Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance! And transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead Itself through contemplation* (3LAg 12:1-3).

In the formulation of her thought Clare comes close to the passages in Wisdom 7:26 and Hebrews 1:3. But the principal supporting Biblical text is 2Cor. 3:18, which reads: "*And all of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit.*"

The Pauline context shows the superiority of the New Covenant in relation to the Old Law. The ministry of the Old Law had a passing luster; the ministry of the New Covenant, founded upon the Spirit of the living God, is much more glorious and this glory is lasting. Moses kept his face covered with a veil because the glory which shone on his face was transitory. But conversion takes away the veil and Christians, with unveiled faces, reflect in a lasting way the glory of the Lord and are transfigured into the same image (2Cor. 3:46).[16]

The transformation of which Clare speaks-as in the Pauline text-is a divinizing transformation. Agnes is transformed in the *divine image*. With this point Clare reaches one of the apexes of Christian anthropology: Christification.[17]

Woman, Image of Christ

Divine union is a fundamental theme within the entire Christian tradition as much in spirituality as in theology. But, in Clare's time, to what degree was there a consciousness that the gift of manifesting the "image of divinity" in her face was given to woman also?

"Christification" is intimately linked to the fundamental anthropological data of the image of God present in the human being since creation. This leads one to relate 2Cor. 3:18 with Gen 1:26 and also with 1 Cor. 11:7. The central message of the accounts of creation regarding the image of God present in man and woman was hidden by 1 Cor. 11:7. Paul begins by saying that a man should pray and prophecy with his head uncovered, to honor his head who is Christ; a woman, on the contrary, should cover herself with a veil in order to honor her head who is " man" (1 Cor. 11:4). After this he adds (vs. 7): "As for a man, he should not cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man." This Pauline affirmation, conditioned by the socio-cultural atmosphere of the time, prevailed over the affirmation in Genesis 1:26 which explicitly confers also on a woman the dignity of carrying within herself the image of God.[18]

The Pauline texts which speak of the new creation in Christ and of the restoration of the divine image in the human being do not exclude woman. This is what we see in 2Cor. 3:18. But in a theology and exegesis strongly influenced by a patriarchal and andocentric vision, it was not difficult to ignore *"all of us"* in this text and push to the background the idea that woman is also given the gift to "remove the veil" and reflect the glory of the Lord with an unmasked face. This silence is enough to also allow, in the order of grace, the error of an exclusionary interpretation in the order of creation.

The consequences of this manner of thinking are evident in feminine hagiography. It was believed that women had much more difficulty than men in the quest for sanctity and even that they were incapable of developing spiritually. The monastic tradition had strengthened and divulged the thought of St. Jerome-an author well-known in the Middle Ages-regarding the special connection between woman and sin which impeded the grace of God from producing its fruit in her.[19]

In this context, Clare's certainty with respect to the divinization of woman in Jesus Christ is a pleasant surprise. Agnes is seen as the mirror and image of Jesus Christ, not only in the sense of an example, but also as a faithful disciple

who follows in the footprints of Jesus in his entire historical trajectory as well as a participant in the divine life, as a daughter of God who bears on her face the splendor of the glory/beauty of the Son. This new title is not the privilege of man. Acquired in baptism, it blooms by means of transforming contemplation, introducing woman to the Trinitarian communion and making her a revelation of God.

Contemplation and Witness

The great masters of spirituality in the twelfth century point out the apostolic fruitfulness of contemplation. It helps develop love of neighbor and fills one with zeal and ardor for the cause of the Kingdom of God. But contemplation and the apostolic life are two distinct realities though intimately related.

Clare's perception is different. Implanted in the perspective of the following, Clare's contemplation has, in its own fiber, the dimension of witness, commitment, and the proclamation of the Gospel. Whoever is transformed in the mirror of Christ, by this fact alone, radiates and manifests his image. This means to testify to the Risen Christ and to announce that the human being is called to the fullness of life and communion with God.

In her *Testament* Clare again uses the metaphor of the mirror to highlight this dimension of witness. She says that the Lord has placed the Damianites as an example and mirror and that this illumination goes beyond the limits of the religious community and reaches the entire world (TestCl 19-22).

One can point out three aspects in Clare's testimony: participation in God's project as realized in Jesus Christ, insertion within the Church, and form of life. In Clare there exists a burning desire that the redeeming work of Jesus Christ be expanded and completed in such a way that all of humanity could experience the gift of God.

The "mysticism of maternity" follows this thought. It expresses a participation in God's project as a gift and duty to continue bringing Christ to life for the life of the world (1LAg 12:24; 3LAg 24-26).

Insertion within the Church is likewise strongly emphasized by Clare. As did Francis, she also felt called to rebuild the Church, to build up the Body of Christ. This vocation became a veritable challenge for the Damianites. Other groups at that time assumed the same task but vacillated or became discouraged along the way. Clare always insisted on remaining faithful to the Church and struggled very much to see her form of life approved by the Church. She was not interested in building another group on the margins of the ecclesial community.

Clare's fidelity to the Church, however, was a prophetic and active fidelity. She searched for "loopholes" and did not hesitate to resist even the Pope himself when she felt that the project which she assumed was threatened. At the

same time that she promised obedience she remembered that the Church should accept that which is born of the Spirit, encouraging her sons and daughters in the following of Jesus Christ.

Clare's strongest and most eloquent witness, however, is her own "form of life" practiced in San Damiano. Clare's broad vision in respect to the social and ecclesial reality of her day permitted her to perceive that poverty and the sisterhood were the dimensions of Christian life most needed at that moment, the areas in which she needed to concentrate the most energy in order that the gospel could become a living and transforming force.

In a selective and excluding society where ownership constituted a barrier separating the social classes, and in a Church which was strongly and powerfully hierarchical, the community of San Damiano appeared as a prophetic sign: renunciation of all property, not establishing class distinctions among the members, and organizing community along democratic and participative lines. The community of the Church, born under the sign of sharing and brother/sisterhood (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35), was reborn with that group of women who put themselves among the minors of their day, assuming the posture of those who serve (Mt. 20:25-28; 23:8).

Conclusion

Women like Clare of Assisi demonstrate the importance of the feminine presence in the area of spirituality that even today continues to accentuate the masculine. This presence is fundamental so that women discover their own ways to express faith and to experience the transcendent. In addition, such women can contribute by pointing out aspects which are often unnoticed by men, so that the feminine dimension can be integrated into spirituality.

Clare of Assisi revealed herself a great woman and great Christian spiritual leader. Her proposal is of great importance not only for the Franciscan family but for the entire Church and can establish for our times also, a branch of spirituality which is alive and fertile. Her witness has sufficient power to cross over the boundaries of time and continue to awaken many young and old, men and women, to the following of Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

[1]Clare is one of the few women of the Middle Ages whose writings were preserved. We have a Rule, a Testament, a Blessing and Five Letters, four to Agnes of Prague and one to Ermentrude of Bruges. For the writings of Clare of Assisi, in Portuguese, see: *Fontes Clarianas*, translation, introduction and notes by Fr. Jose Carlos Perdoso (Petropolis: Vozes/CEFEPAL, 1994).

[2]Clare leaves her paternal house on Palm Sunday in 1212, at 18 years of age. After a few days, she is followed by her sister Agnes [Catherine]; they soon go to live next to the church of San Damiano, rebuilt by Francis. In August, with the arrival of Pacifica, the group begins to grow.

[3]The theme proposed here is part of a broader study to be published by Editora Vozes under the title "He Became the Way and the Mirror."

[4]Among others cf.: L. Boff. "*Contemplativus in liberatione*," in *REB* 39 (1979): 571-580; P. Casaldaliga-J.M. Vigil. *The Spirituality of Liberation.* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1994), 129-146; *CRB*. A *Prayerful Reading of the Bible.* (São Paulo: Loyola/CRB, 1990), 20-36: S. Galilea. "Liberation as an Encounter of Politics and Contemplation," in *Concilium* 96 (1974): 702-713.

[5]Cf. A. Blasucci, B. Calati, R. Gregoire, "*La spiritualita del Medievo*," in *The History of Spirituality*, vol. 4 (Rome: Borla, 1988), 35-38; St. Bonaventure, "The Triple Way" in *The Works of Saint Bonaventure*, vol. IV (Madrid: B.A.C., 1947), 114-163; CRB, *A Prayerful Reading of the Bible.* Op. cit., 16-32.

[6]An abbreviated study of these four words as used in the New Testament can be found in A.M. Tepedino, *The Disciples of Jesus* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1990), 23-55.

[7]In the contemplative way, according to diverse trends in spirituality, sensible realities receive little emphasis. To look at the humanity of Christ appears, at most, as a necessary step for beginners, or as the first degree which should quickly be surpassed by the mind. See J. M. Dechanet, "Contemplation in the XIIth century," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite Ascetique et Mistique*, vol. II/2, 1956 and 1962.

[8]For St. Bernard, the first stage is that the monk become conscious of his misery in the exercise of humility by trying to conquer the vices and passions. CC, "*de gradibus humilitatis et superbie*," 4:13-15; PL 182, 948d-950c. Cited in: J.M. Dechanet, "Contemplation in the XIIth Century," op. cit, 1949.

[9]This theme of the disciples not understanding is particularly emphasized by Mark, but also appears in Matthew and Luke. Cf. *The Jerusalem Bible*, Mk. 4:13, note b.

[10]The association of poverty-humility is frequent in Francis and permeates all the Franciscan sources. Cf. G. Iammarrone. "The 'Following of Christ' in the Franciscan Sources" in *Miscellanea Francescana* 82 (1982): 421-58, esp. 430-32; F. Uribe, "*Cristo en la experiencis y en las ensenanzas de Santa Clara*," in *Selecciones de Franciscanismo* 22 (1993): 461s.

[11]The participation of the heart in the contemplative life was accentuated, in the twelfth century, in the Benedictine and Cistercian path. William of St. Thierry highlighted "the eyes of the heart" more than intelligence. Cf. *Le Miroir de la Foi* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1982), 96-122. Already by the time of the Victorines a great emphasis was given to intelligence. Cf. J.M. Déchanet, op. cit.

[12]Tepedino, 94.

[13]R. Fisichella, "Beauty," in *The Dictionary of Fundamental Theology* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1994), 107.

[14]D. Dozzi. "Clare and the Mirror," in D. Covi, D. Dozzi, eds. *Clare: Franciscanism and Femininity* (Rome: Collegio S. Lorenzo, 1992), 296.

[15]M. Bartoli affirms that Clare was "tempted" by the "secluded religiosity" which characterized feminine piety at the beginning of the 13th century and was expressed through the practice of fasting and harsh penances. But she achieved a balance in the measure that she assumed, in fact, a communitarian (communal) body and was also concerned about the physical needs of the sisters (what to eat, what to wear, where to sleep, how to care for the sick). In addition to this, Clare's spirituality is devoid of that

rejection of the body, through physical beauty and through everything material which characterized the mystical experience of other women, for example, Maria d'Oignies and Margaret of Cortona. See Bartoli's *Clare of Assisi* (Rome: The Capuchin Historical Institute, 1989), 134-47; available in English translation (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993).

[16]J. Dupont, "*Le chretien, miroir de la gloire divine d'apres IICor III*, 18," in *Revue Biblique* 56 (1949): 398-400.

[17]S. Lopez, "A Theological Lecture on the Third Letter of Saint Clare," in: *Selecciones de Franciscanismo* 22 (1993): 431.

[18]"In reality, Paul does not negate that a woman is in the image of God; but with his argumentation, he does not react to the Judaic exegesis referring to the biblical affirmation that only man (the masculine) is the image of God." See R. Fabris and V. Gozzini, *Woman in the Primitive Church* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 1986), 98.

[19]A. Vauchez, *Sanctity in the Middle Ages* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1989), 356s.

[20]The *Form of Life (Rule)* of Clare of Assisi was approved August 9, 1253, by Pope Innocent IV. The bull was presented to Clare on the 10th, the vespers of her death.

Mary Connor, OSC

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On a Sunny Afternoon

Tom Barton, O.S.F., Murray Bodo, O.F.M. and
Joanne Schatzlein, O.S.F.

On a sunny afternoon in late June, Joanne Schatzlein, O.S.F., Murray Bodo, O.F.M., and Tom Barton, O.S.F., sat at a table in the café opposite Santa Maria Sopre Minerva, in Assisi. There for a little while they dreamed. As the staff for the Franciscan Study Pilgrimage that summer, they were trying to create something which would coalesce their experience and material on the Lady Clare. What appears below is what they dreamed and then did themselves that afternoon. Several days later they led their group of pilgrims in this prayer ritual through the streets of Assisi. We are offering it to you today as we prepare to celebrate the 750th anniversary of the death of Clare of Assisi.

The ritual involves movement through the city of Assisi, stopping at specific sites important for tracing the route of Clare on the night she left home for the last time in March, 1212. Each "station" is introduced by an imaginative description in order to set the scene for us.

Meditation on Clare's Departure

Station 1 Early Life of Clare

Imagine yourself at the piazza in front of the present-day Cathedral of San Rufino. Facing the cathedral, the rose windows catch your attention; then your gaze moves to the left, and you see the marker commemorating the buildings on the left side of the piazza as the family home of Clare, daughter of Offreduccio.

How many good-byes did Clare say? When did she say those goodbyes?
Reluctantly, good-bye to Assisi when her family fled to Perugia.
Good-bye to toys, to other things in the abandoned house, to friends in Assisi.

On this Palm Sunday at midnight, good-bye to Papa and Mama Offreduccio.
Good-bye to her very own life,
with all its security, and power, and status.
Good-bye to nobility, good-bye.

But, for Clare there were hellos too.
Hello to Jesus, whom she met through Francis.
Hello to the penitents, right at this very spot.
Hello to the faces of the Perugians who distrusted her family,
but still allowed them to resettle for a time in Perugia.
Hello to Francis and his brothers, right here in Assisi.
And on Palm Sunday at the hour of midnight,
Hello to Christ her Beloved: "draw me after you, oh
Heavenly Spouse,
And I will run to the aroma of your perfume and
I WILL NOT TIRE."

Good-bye. Hello! Clare ran to her Beloved Spouse.

Station 2 Nobility and Family Status

Clare crept out of the house on Palm Sunday night, with no light but that of the moon. She crossed the piazza to the other side and moved to the first step leading down into the lower part of the city. One last time, she turned to look at the entrance to her home.

Clare, like other noble women of Assisi, has defined herself in
terms of her own family.
The men of the family are knights, and so the women are
the very summit of the social scale.
The downside is that they live very restricted lives,
enclosed within the boundaries of their own homes;
and the customs of the nobility, like arranged marriages;
and no juridical guarantees once their spouse died.
The women were defined in terms of the feudal lords.

Now Clare is leaving that prestigious but confining world.
What are her thoughts?
How will she define herself now?
What boundaries and parameters will still confine her?
Will this new freedom still be circumscribed by the feudal Church of the Middle
Ages?

How will she keep alive and continue to live out the new gospel-freedom
she has found?

Station 3 Awakening to Francis

Midway down into the neighborhood, Clare began to feel that she might succeed in her escape. She prayed that no one would see her, and that none of the neighbors have heard anything. What would she do if someone came out of one of the houses? Clare stayed close to the walls of the houses as she descended the hill.

Francis' deeds were known to the entire city.
Word spreads quickly in this small town.
What do the neighbors know about what is going on?
What has Clare heard about Francis? Does she know of
- the sale of the cloth at Foligno
- the encounter before the San Damiano Crucifix . . .
(did she go down and gaze on this same face of Christ?)
- Francis begging for stones to rebuild San Damiano?
- the stripping before Bishop Guido?
- Pietro's wrath?

Did the mothers, Ortolana and Pica, speak to each other
during these days, trying to understand what was happening to
their children?
When and where did Clare first hear Francis preach?
In this neighborhood somewhere?
When did the fire within her begin to grow?
Where in this city did she and Francis meet as she
continued to discern God's call?

And what did the neighbors say about this?
Did they even know?

Station 4 Crossing the Borders-Going among the Poor

At the bottom of the first hill, Clare turned to the right and moved toward the place where Francis had once lived, near that old stable which legend tells was his birth-place. This was a part of town not too familiar to her; she had never been there alone before.

Clare has now crossed the boundary between the *maiores* and the *minores*.
She stops near the shop of Pietro Bernardone . . .

here the poor work, dyeing the cloth,
far removed from the knightly pursuits of her father's house.
Near here Francis is said to have been born in a stable
like his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to cross those invisible borders between
privilege and distinction, and disenfranchisement,
marginality, anonymity?
What is implied when this noble woman crosses over
to the other side,
where there is little or no education, no luxuries . . .
only the boredom of repetitive, uninteresting, and
demeaning work?

What gospel passages come to her mind?
Is there a further identification with Christ in this
small physical but large psychological and spiritual
border-crossing?

Station 5 Choices

Below the merchants' area, the street curved a bit, and Clare could breathe a little more freely, because she was half-way down the length of the town. It was cold, but her movement kept her from shivering. Then Clare was at the curve which let her face the valley below the city; she hoped she was moving in the right direction.

Did it ever occur to Clare before, how many choices she had?
When life seemed to be a pre-determined existence,
didn't she still have choices?
Didn't she choose the life of penance as a virgin?
Didn't she choose not to HATE the Assisani for driving
the noble families away?
Didn't she choose to give food to the poor and distribute her patrimony?
Looking at the people who live here in this part of Assisi-
how many choices did they ever have?
And seeing the lepers, MOTHER OF GOD,
what possible choices could they have?
"Unclean," people cry, "Unclean, Unclean."

How many times did Clare come to this very place,
always accompanied by a maid and a knight?

How many times did Clare turn back and run home?
Choices, yes, Clare made many choices.
She could still turn around now and run home,
but where would her home be now?
Would she even be able to get back inside?
Would she be able to return
after all these choices?

At this place, did she wonder if she had made the best choice this
Palm Sunday night?

Station 6 Commitment-the Future

Suddenly, Clare stood at the gate of Porto Moiano, near the house of Bishop Guido. She was almost positive now that she would be able to get through the gate with no interference. Once that happened, she would be met by some of the brothers who had joined Francis. Perhaps even her cousin Rufino would be there to escort her to the Portiuncola.

Before the gate:

Having made up her mind, did she pause to consider her decision
one more time?
From here, the valley must have looked very dark and foreboding.
Who was guarding the gate? Were they asleep?
The gate is close to Bishop Guido's house . . . the Bishop
who earlier this day gave her the palm at Mass.
Did he help her get past Porta Moiano?

Clare decides to walk through this gate, no longer able to
keep the fire which is blazing
contained within.

Passing Through the Gate:

As you imagine yourself standing in the center of Porta Moiano, recall the many decisions you have made in your life. Ponder the consequences of these decisions. As you pass through this gate in your imagination or memory, pray for the grace to remain faithful to commitments you have made.

Opposite Side of the Gate:

Gaze upon the vast expanse of the valley, open and free-there are
no boundaries.
Could Clare see the Madalena Chapel and the Portiuncola from
here? Absolutely not.
She went into the unknown.
But looking back, see how narrow and confining this gate looks,
with its tiny slit windows.
It is meant to keep people out.
Clare can never return here as a woman of nobility.

Now look at Santa Chiara. Clare could never have imagined that this
new place would represent nearly 800 years
of loyal discipleship
on the part of her sisters.

Santa Chiara today holds two most precious Franciscan symbols:

- the San Damiano Crucifix
- the Body of Clare.

Haven't we also received the call to go and rebuild God's house,
which we know is falling into ruin?

Aren't we called to be one as Franciscans, to be part of a family
making up the Body of Christ who is the center and soul of
both Francis and Clare?

This is our Call.
This is our Challenge.

Clare decides to walk through this gate, no longer able to keep the fire which is blazing contained within....

The Cord, 52.4 (2002)

OPEN THOSE SHUTTERS (Assisi Pilgrimage Revisited)

Throw open those shutters; let it all in!
And in it all came:
The Spoleto Valley, sprawled in its splendor.
There, straight ahead, San Damiano, a simple delight,
Where the Lord started the journey.
And off to the right, dwarfed 'neath the dome,
Lay Francis' treasure, his home for all friars,
His Little Portion his, Mary's, the angels'.
And in between, sunk now from sight,
Lay the plain of the lepers,
Where he found refuge and Jesus after his fight.

A beautiful view, no one can doubt.
But let it all in? It might puli me out!
Or worse still, inside out.
Isn't that what happened to him, 'The Form for the Minors'?

He had prayed, "Who are you, O Lord, and who am ?"
And he stayed, searching the answer
In caves and in darkness at least for six years.
A dark disappointment he became to father and friends.
That brought on fears almost too fretful to face.
But face them he did, though it cost him that life.
He sold all he knew, to buy the unknown.
It left him poor and rejected, naked but clothed,
Filled him with freedom, embraced by a Father in heaven.

Let **that** all in?
Who wants to tread in the cave of one's fears?
It might rip off masks I've worked on for years.
I might be rejected by those I hold dear,
For I too might hear answers that get to the heart of the prayer
"Who are you, O Lord, and who am I?"
and they might not fit in the eyes of those standing near.
But I might find freedom, his freedom and joy-

And in freedom walk, naked,
wrapped in the arms of our Father in heaven.
Open those shutters, let it all in!

He was confronted, confused by the Cross:
"See my church falling to ruin."
His place in the family would fall into ruin.
If the church followed suit,
Where could he ever find his own spot?
Alone and unsure, he still trusted and acted.
Taunted and jeered, he never felt victim.

Let **that** all in?
I want to belong, secure in my place.
I don't want to walk, alone and unsure,
Into buildings half-empty, abandoned by many.
Shun them - they're shabby;
That's not where it's at.
But a less vocal voice still speaks from that cross.
I hear it when other voices I silence-
And those eyes, who'd want to run from those eyes?
Victory's sound may seem distant,
But its echo I hear when I listen.
So throw aside those robes of a victim.
Open those shutters; let it all in!

The lepers he loathed became his new lodging,
Learning from them how to know Love when degraded
He called them his "brothers" while washing their wounds.
Waves of healing it brought them;
To him, waves of wholeness.

Let **that** all in?
I'm used to my comfort,
To walking in paths
Which keep people put in their places.
Love's easier that way; I get my reward,
Warmly accepted by all those who count.
But what am I learning; where's any healing?
I do want wholeness,
When all will be "brothers" and all will belong.
Then be brother first to your discomfort and loathing.
Open those shutters; let it all in!

New brothers the Lord brought him,
Brothers to bear the burden of building the church
And washing the lepers.
Brothers to walk with him in the unknown,
Holding to nothing but the Lord and each other,
Listening together to Jesus and Mary, Queen of the Angels.
"It's too hard," the Pope said, "so cease and desist."
But the dream proved too strong; their joy was too real.
"So go into the whole world and preach this good news."

Let **that** all in?
When brothers come in, it only increases the burden.
You're no longer alone, yes;
But now you're surrounded with mess.
Who can say whose way is best, which way the Lord's?
Brothers add to the joy, but muddle things up.
But the Lord brought him brothers, and with brothers he'd walk
Though it still makes small sense to popes and some people.
The good news is there yet to proclaim,
And how else to believe we're one Body in Christ?
Open those shutters, let it all in!

All this came in when I opened the shutters.
Not just buildings, steeples, valleys, romance and dreams.
But life, real life, my life, his life
Francis, the form of all friars.
I drank it all in front of my window.
It did pull me out.
But first it invited,
"Go inside, then out."

Dan Crosby, O.F.M. Cap.

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May 24-16th	The Jewish Roots of Catholicism *Director: Bob Fishman*
June 7-9th	Troubadour for the Lord *Director: John Michael Talbot-*
June 20-23rd	Simple Living Retreat *Director: John Michael Talbot and community*
June 28th-30th	The Power of His Presence *Director: Monsignor Frank E. Chiodo*
July 12-14th	Catholic, Evangelical and Eucharistic *Director: Dr. Scott Hahn*
July 19-21st	Mary, Our Jewish Mother *Director: Bob Fishman*
August 26-28th	Togetherness: A Weekend for Married Couples *Director: Fr. Martin Wolter, OFM*
August 9-11th	Healing the Wounds of Life *Director: Tonti Curtis*
August 23-25th	Christ and the Creative Process *Director: Michael Card*
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and
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Authors include
Joe Chinnici, OFM; Dominic Monti, OFM;
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Friday, August 16 - Saturday, August 17, 2002
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Weekend Retreat: "Christ and the Creative Process." Director: Michael Card. Little Portion Retreat and Training Center, 171 Hummingbird Lane, Eureka Springs, AR. Call 479-253-7379 or e-mail: retreats@LittlePortion.org. (See ad, p. 183).

Friday, September 6 - Sunday, September 8, 2002
Weekend Retreat: "Are You Ready for a Miracle?" Director: Sr. Francis Clare, SSND. Little Portion Retreat and Training Center, 171 Hummingbird Lane, Eureka Springs, AR. Call 479-253-7379 or e-mail: retreats@LittlePortion.org. (See ad, p. 183).

Friday, October 20 - Friday, October 27, 2002
Franciscan Pilgrimage to the California Missions. The mission sites of central California are the focus of this pilgrimage. Contact Franciscan Pilgrmage Progams, P.O. Box 321490, Franklin, WI. Call 414-427-0570 or visit www.FranciscanPilgrimages.com.

Thursday, October 10 - Sunday, October 13, 2002
The Franciscan Connection. With Elizabeth Imler, OSF and Diane Jamison, OSF. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation, Regions 4 & 5. At Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet, IL. Contact Sr. Margaret Kelly, OSF at 309-829-0455.

Abbreviations

Writings of Saint. Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BlL	A Blessing for Brother Leo
Ctc	The Canticle of the Creatures
CtExh	The Canticle of Exhortation
1Frg	Fragments of Worchester Manuscript
2Frg	Fragments of Thomas of Celano
3Frg	Fragments of Hugh of Digne
LtAnt	A Letter to Br. Anthony of Padua
1LtCl	First Letter to the Clergy (Earlier Edition)
2LtCl	Second Letter to the Clergy (Later Edition)
1LtCus	The First Letter to the Custodians
2LtCus	The Second Letter to the Custodians
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister
LtOrd	A Letter to the Entire Order
LtR	A Letter to the Rulers of the People
ExhP	Exhortation o the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OfP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule *(Regula non bullata)*
LR	The Later Rule *(Regula bullata)*
RH	A Rule for Hermitages
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues
Test	The Testament
TPJ	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

Franciscan Sources

1C	The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano
2C	The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul
3C	The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
LCh	The Legend for Use in the Choir
Off	The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
LJS	The Life of St.Francis by Julian of Speyer
VL	The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches
1-3JT	The Praises by Jacapone da Todi
DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Aliegheri
TL	Tree of Life by Ubertino da Casale
1MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version
2MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Larger Version
HTrb	The History of the Seven Tribulations by Angelo of Clareno
ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St. Francis and Lady Poverty
AP	The Anonymous of Perugia
L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
AC	The Assisi Compilation
1-4Srm	The Sermons of Bonaventure
LMj	The Major Legend by Bonaventure
LMn	The Minor Legend by Bonaventure
BPr	The Book of Praises by Bernard of Besse
ABF	The Deeds of St. Francis and His Companions
LFl	The Little Flowers of Saint Francis
KnSF	The Knowing of Saint Francis
ChrTE	The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston
ChrJG	The Chronicle of Jordan of Giano

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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

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Volume 52, No. 5 *September/October2002*

THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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

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

   (1Cor. 13:6). (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

Not too many years ago I attended a province Chapter for my congregation during which we were challenged to look at things in light of one question: "What would Francis do?" At the time, the focal point of the question was to invite us to examine how we intended share ourselves-time, talent, financial resources and property-with those outside our membership who stood in need. We were asked to use Francis of Assisi, the prodigally generous son and brother, as our touchstone. It was an effective question which produced some amazing answers.

That same question keeps coming back to me in light of the events of last September, the current financial debacles in the business world and the clergy scandals within the American church. What *would* Francis do?

We think we know the answer, at least in broad terms: Francis would open the book of the Gospel and try to follow the example and teaching of Jesus. But, what this would mean in specific or concrete terms, we might be less certain. What ought we do when faced with questions of patriotism and peace? How do we reconcile issues of justice and integrity?

As we pass the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks and move once again toward two major feasts for the Franciscan family, the feast of the Stigmata and the feast of Francis's passing over into eternal life, our pursuit of insight and understanding takes on more importance than ever. The materials selected for this issue of *The Cord* will, it is hoped, stimulate each reader's search for truly Franciscan answers.

We publish here articles from two Friars Minor, one Friar Minor Conventual, and two Capuchin Friars Minor-in itself a statement of unity and brotherhood. The authors offer us their insight into the post-conciliar world in which Francis lived, recall us to the dream of minority and poverty that he so deeply embraced, present a vision statement for our own discipleship (no matter which branch of the family we call our own), and remind us that, in the end, we will all be called home to the loving embrace of the God who loved us into being in the first place and will certainly love us throughout eternity.

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

The Cord, 52.5 (2002)

A Vision Statement of Franciscan Discipleship

Timothy Kulbicki, O.F.M. Conv.

At the Second Vatican Council, the decree on religious life asked all religious institutes to pursue "suitable renewal" which involved a two-fold task of "a return to their original inspiration" and an "adaptation to the changed conditions of our times."[1] The 1992 Extraordinary General Chapter of the Conventual Franciscan Friars (held in Mexico City) particularly enjoined all jurisdictions of the Order to address such renewal by specific planning in three categories: formation, leadership, and mission. Acting on a dually-sponsored resolution of the then St. Anthony of Padua (USA) Province Spiritual Life and Continuing Education Commissions, the 1994 Provincial Chapter created the Franciscan Discipleship Commission. The Chapter entrusted to it the ambitious task of "facilitating the formulation of a Province plan to promote systematically the growth of the spiritual, fraternal, personal, and ministerial life of the friars."[2] Development and growth refer to the task of continuing formation, and continuing formation in the contemporary world involves *Perfectae Caritatis*' call to return to original inspiration and adapt to changing conditions. This vision statement, slightly adapted for publication, enunciates that task in those areas.

Return to Original Sources

In terms of growth and development, returning to the sources invites us to return to the vision of Francis of Assisi. "The primary objective of the Order is to rediscover and repropose the spirit of our Seraphic Father."[3] As we know, Francis' vision was thoroughly Christocentric: he wanted the friars "to follow the poor and humble Christ," becoming so identified with Him, and Him Crucified, so as to become "a new man."[4] To become a "new man" for Francis of Assisi involved "belonging to the community, the experience of prayer, growth in asceticism, and apostolic commitment."[5] Thus, a return to Francis' vision was precisely the task which the Province entrusted to the Franciscan Discipleship Commission: promote the growth of the fraternal life of the friars (belonging to the community); promote the growth of the spiritual life of the friars (the experience of prayer); promote the growth of the personal life of the friars (growth in asceticism); and promote the growth of the ministerial life of the friars (apostolic commitment), so that each of us can become the "new man" of the Gospel.

Yet Francis realized that for himself and for anyone wishing to follow in his footsteps, as he sought to follow in the footsteps of Christ, this process of becoming "a new man" had to involve the process of becoming "new men."

> The Franciscan Gospel fraternity is the fundamental value to be lived out and to repropose to the Church as the "mystery of communion" and to the world as a valid alternative to fragmentation. Fraternity, therefore, is understood as the specific contribution of the Franciscan.[6]

For Francis, and therefore for us as well, personal development is dependent upon and coexistent with fraternal development. Since the development of the capacity to live the gospel life personally and fraternally is the core of our apostolate, such development is dependent upon and coexistent with ministerial development. To "have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy behavior" and "intimately connect prayer with work"[7] is incumbent upon all religious and friars; thus, the other three areas of development are dependent upon and coexistent with spiritual development.

The integral notion of what it takes to live the full gospel led Francis to envision a new community. The *novitas Francescana* involved for Francis a new environment, a new possibility that did not seem feasible in any other form of life. Thus, when Pope Innocent III in 1209 originally suggested to Francis that he find his place in one of the already-established forms of living the Gospel, Francis graciously yet forcefully declined. Francis recognized that in himself and in his followers something unique, something different, a new charism, was being given to the Church, a notion eventually assented to by Innocent III orally and Honorius III juridically.

The recognition of the *novitas Francescana* was also a recognition that contemporary religious life at the time of Francis was not meeting the needs of a rapidly changing Christendom, for 13th century Europe was changing dramatically. The political changes from weak but centralized imperial authority to local autonomy; the economic change from feudalism to mercantile economy; the social change from landed aristocracy to aristocracy of wealth; the intellectual change of scholasticism; the beginnings of humanist spirituality: all these changes precipitated for Francis a recognition that adaptation to changes in society were fundamental to what it means to be Franciscan. Thus the Church's call to "read the signs of the times" and adapt to them is exactly in line with the historic bases of Franciscanism. Adapting to change is part and parcel of what it means to be Franciscan.

Adaptation to the Changed Conditions of Our Time

Some of the changed conditions of our times are global and transnational in scope. These include the ever-increasing secularization and consumerization of the post-modern Western world; the rapidly changing conditions of post-Cold War Eastern Europe; and the global injustice and social crises affecting much of Latin America, Africa and a large part of Asia, not to mention whole segments of our own American society.[8] These changes affect the way the world is, and ultimately affect the way we are.

More immediate to us are the changes that affect us more directly as American Catholics. The period following World War II saw the gradual eroding of a distinctively immigrant Catholic culture in America. Fueled by the educational opportunities offered by the GI Bill and increasing post-war prosperity, American Catholics went to college for the first time in massive numbers, and decided to leave their ethnic urban enclaves for the greener grass of the suburbs. There, American Catholics became less distinctively Catholic and more homogeneously American in attitude, for better or worse. The *aggiornamento* ushered in by Vatican II simply added to that change, and, coupled with all the social changes that can be summed up in the phrase "the '60's," has left us an inheritance of a rapidly changed and continually changing environment.

How did American Franciscan religious life change in those same post-war years? Many communities sensed early on that the various immigrant cultures in which many of the individual members and the communities themselves had been born and raised were diminishing both in size and in vitality. Many communities responded to those early signs of change by daring expansion projects in the 1940s and '50s, reaching out in apostolic ventures somewhat different than original ones, expanding their geographical bases of operation, and opening foreign and domestic missions. Such daring initiative and expansion occurred in most communities straight through the early 1970s.

But signs of further change were already in the winds. The past quarter-century has been marked by sometimes slow and occasionally sudden diminishment, as evidenced by withdrawal from numerous traditional places of ministry. In addition, the commonly-accepted manner in which ministry is done has been challenged by the continually changing social conditions around us, calling into question many traditional forms, yet opening up new ones. The diminishing numbers of those seeking to join Franciscan communities, plus a slow but steady defection of already professed members, changed not only the manner in which young religious are initially formed, but also the way in which community life is lived and experienced. These "quantity" changes, in both numbers of religious, numbers of communities and places of ministry, leave their impact upon all those aging religious who remain More subtle, and perhaps more incisive, are the changes in "quality" that have affected American

Franciscan religious life. Quality in this sense does not mean grading or evaluation of better or worse; rather, it means that the qualities or the ways in which American Franciscan religious live and work with each other have changed rapidly, unevenly, and in different ways. What are some of the qualities that have changed in individuals and around Franciscan communities?

Experience

At one time most American Franciscan religious shared commonly held experiences and rituals that bound them together. Most members were drawn from similar socio-economic and cultural groups; many members had been molded into the life of the religious communities by extensive contact prior to joining; most American Franciscan religious had common formation experiences in well-established motherhouses and seminaries. Most American religious lived in local communities in which everyone shared the same ministry. However, today the fewer numbers who join come from widely diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Not many of these come to our communities after a long pre-entrance exposure to religious in ministry, because there are fewer corporate ministries and fewer religious ministering in them. The common bond of shared formation has been stretched to include religious formation with other religious congregations in mixed novitiates, as well as uneven needs for professional formation due to the wide variety of pre-entrance experience. Many American Franciscan religious are engaged in forms of ministry either personal by nature or outside the corporate context, leading to naturally diverse notions and experiences of work and community interaction.

Spirituality

Similarly, in the past American Franciscan religious shared common notions of the meaning of Church, prayer, holiness, and religious life. Increasingly, ideological debates in the Church are finding adherents within local communities, and ecclesiological orientations are dictating where and with whom we are comfortable working. Common ideas concerning what prayer is have given way to honest disagreements concerning obligation vs. desire, shared and spontaneous vs. formalized, highly vertical vs. highly horizontal, scriptural vs. devotional. Holiness, once viewed as an ascetical detachment from the world, has been challenged by ideas of holiness involving a deeper incarnation into world(ly) situations. Religious life as a juridical concept set apart from others has been challenged to be alternatively more commonly baptismal, more prophetic and countercultural, or more eschatological and witnessing.

Personal Responsibility

Earlier commonly-held ideas about obedience fostered a good deal of personal responsibility being shifted to whoever was another step above the individual, from local superior straight up to Pope. The daily horarium and periodic mandated events such as retreats, workshops, and chapters asked for mere attendance as a level of responsibility. Religious life as a total environment, in sociological terms, took care of all physical, social, relational, spiritual, and affiliative needs. In recent years, however, the Roman Catholic ethical principle of subsidiarity is shifting responsibility downward rather than upward. Attendance at events is no longer enough: active participation, a principle drawn from liturgical renewal, as well as cognitive and behavioral change in response to new experiences and educational opportunities, have become the measure of the responsible religious. Engagement in different ministries, commitments to different groups and circles, and greater acknowledgment of individual needs and desires have all contributed to the breakdown of the total system of religious life, as individual religious now have multiple and at times conflicting sets of personal responsibilities.

The Challenges That Face Us

Ultimately, the challenge that faces each American Franciscan religious individually and corporately is the challenge of relationship with Jesus Christ and the need for continual conversion and growth in grace. All of us need to regularly and continually turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel, for the Reign of God is really at hand. Each of us and all of us have to battle those aspects of our lives that prefer darkness to light, death to life, apparent yet unfulfilled satisfaction to transforming and transformed fulfillment.

What are some of these challenges? Among them are the following:

1. Change is an inevitable factor of everything, and rapid change marks all contemporary experience. The Church, the Franciscan charism, and ultimately Christ is calling American Franciscan religious to change. Many American Franciscans of many congregations may not be moving and developing at the rate at which the Church needs.
2. Part of the resistance to change among many religious is the high priority of personal comfort levels, whether psychological, physical, social, or economic, over any and all other values. American Franciscan religious need to more urgently shift priorities from internal comfort to effectiveness in building the Reign of God. An unwillingness to get beyond our own comfort and in-house issues is a lack of faith, a betrayal of the Gospel, and an obstacle to the entire community's deeper conversion to Franciscan living. Personal responsibility for growing in fraternal, spiritual, personal and ministerial effectiveness is a recognition of the call of the Holy Spirit, not merely a management technique.
3. Change is painfully slow. Learning is the sustained effort to change towards the good. Nothing changes without effort. Active or passive resistance to learning can no longer be acceptable to our community, to the People of God, or ultimately to God.
4. American Franciscan religious are diverse, opinions are diverse, ideas are diverse, experiences are diverse. Communities need to abandon the vain desire for uniformity, identify those things that still bond them, and learn appropriate skills that help them live with a reasonable pluralism.

> *Adapting to change is part and parcel of what it means to be Franciscan.*

5. Relationship is one of the hallmarks of contemporary life: relationship with God in prayer, helping relationships in ministry, or the necessity for healthy and life-giving relationships for personal growth and development. Openness to building relational skills is imperative for all American Franciscan religious.
6. The integral nature of the Franciscan calling referred to above impels American Franciscan religious to deeper conversion and continuing formation in all aspects of life: community, spirituality, ministry, and personal issues. There can be no hierarchy or timetable for this; paraphrasing Francis on the virtues, it must be understood that whoever works on one and does not offend the others, works on all, but whoever neglects one, does not work on any and offends all. Consequently, continuing formation needs be both individual and communal, involve life and work, and remain both broad and constant.This is indispensable.
7. The *novitas Francescana*, with its spiritual and theological response to the changing situations of the world, has to color the efforts of American Franciscans. Continuing formation without sustained and theologically responsible reflection on both individual experience and the conditions of the surrounding world would be unfaithful to the incarnational insights so dear to Francis. Continuing formation cannot be merely a mirror to look at ourselves, but it must also be a window to look at the world with theological/spiritual glasses.

8. The experience of diminishment of the last several decades has left many American Franciscans at times feeling apathetic, misunderstood, angry, sad or detached. While human feelings are real and valid, they must not become solely determinative about how individuals choose to respond anew to God's call. American Franciscans have other choices, options, and hopes.
9. Some internal strife in Franciscan communities is not merely a struggle with diversity but is an effect of sin and the effects of an obtuse spirit within. To not state this as true would be dishonest and spiritually imma ture.
10. Finally, while the social sciences have much to teach, American Franciscans must continue to return to our spiritual and theological Franciscan roots. We commit to Franciscan discipleship and continuing formation because we are created good and graced, yet marked by sin, and struggling to grow is a response to grace. We commit to Franciscan discipleship and continuing formation because the Word of God took flesh and struggled with human existence, and to do less dishonors Jesus Christ. We commit to Franciscan discipleship and continuing formation because of the eschatological promise of Christ, in which we continue to hope and which gives us the strength to persevere.

Endnotes

[1]*Perfectae Caritatis*, 2.

[2]1997-2000 Province Planning Document (Ellicott City, MD: St. Anthony of Padua Province), # 12.

[3]Toward the Year 2000," in Friars Minor Conventual: Documents of the Extraordinary General Chapter in Mexico City, August 20-September 15, 1992 (Rome: General Curia O.F.M. Conv.), 1.1

[4]Ibid., #9.

[5]Ibid., #10

[6]Ibid., #2.1

[7]General Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual (Rome: General Curia O.F.M. Conv.), #68.1.

[8]"Toward the Year 2000," Introduction.

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Francis of Assisi: Liturgical Reformer

Tom Washburn, O.F.M.

> To poor priests [St. Francis] also provided help, reverently and piously, especially in the appointments of the altar, and, in this way, he became both a participant in the divine worship and provided assistance for the need of its celebrants (LMj 1:6).

Our own Francis of Assisi has been called many things: founder of a new way of religious life, herald of the Gospel, mirror of Christ, prophet, savior of the Church in conflict. The list could be extended on and on, but I would be willing to guess that Liturgical Reformer is not one of the titles that usually is attached to Francis. Those who work within liturgy circles don't often espouse the reforms supported by this Poor Man of Assisi. But a close scrutiny of the times and the writings of Francis, especially in relation to the Fourth Lateran Council, reveals a different picture. This shows us a Francis who so dearly loved the sacred rituals of the Church that he took to heart the liturgical reforms of the day and became a primary promulgator of them wherever he went and to whomever he wrote. This type of liturgical reform, led by the sons and daughters of Francis, is something that the Church could use today.

Thirteenth-century medieval Italy was a place of religious conflict. The ideas of Joachim of Fiore, Peter Lombard and the Albigensian heresy swirled about. In the midst of this, two great events took place that forever changed the Church. The first occurred in 1209, when an unknown poor man from the imperial city of Assisi visited Rome along with eleven companions, seeking approval from Pope Innocent III who, "when he saw in the man of God such remarkable purity and simplicity of heart, such firmness of purpose and such fiery ardor of will, . . . was inclined to give his assent to the request"[1] to live the gospel way of life, thus beginning one of the greatest religious developments in the history of the Church. By 1226, the year the saint died, his Order had grown from that small band of men to an organization numbering in the tens of thousands throughout Christendom.

The second great event of that time came in 1215, when the fathers of the Church gathered at the Church of St. John Lateran in Rome for what would be the fourth Ecumenical Council held at that site. That Council was best known for its support of the human and divine natures in Christ, in response to the Albigensian heresy's claim that all matter was evil, so Jesus could not have been human. The Council also made the profound profession of the Church's Trinitarian faith that was meant to end the dispute between the writings of Joachim of Fiore and Peter Lombard over the nature of the Trinity.

This was the world of Francis of Assisi, one in which the Church was not only involved in theological dispute but also faced sociological and spiritual flux as well. The state of the Catholic Church had declined to a point where there was real need for reform. Francis would be the man to spearhead that reform through his actions, his simple way of life, and his absolute adherence to the Gospel. St. Bonaventure reports on what happened when Francis approached Pope Innocent III, seeking approval for his way of life:

> There was among the cardinals a most venerable man, John of Sabina . . . he said to the Supreme Pontiff and his brother cardinals: "If we refuse the request of this poor man as novel or too difficult, when all he asks is to be allowed to lead the Gospel life, we must be on guard lest we commit an offence against Christ's Gospel. For if anyone says that there is something novel or irrational or impossible to observe in this man's desire to live according to the perfection of the Gospel, he is guilty of blasphemy against Christ, the author of the Gospel." (LMj 3:9)

Such were the crucial elements that would guide Francis in his way of life: he was profoundly dedicated to the Gospel of Christ; he held dear the teaching that emanated from the Fourth Lateran Council; and in his own spirituality he was deeply moved by the humanity of Christ. His prayer and his actions witness to this awareness of Christ's human nature. In opposition to the Albigensian heresy, Franciscan spirituality has always been very deeply connected to the Word made *Flesh*.

These guiding principles led Francis to become a liturgical reformer in the thirteenth-century Church. To be fair, Francis is not often thought of as a liturgist or a liturgical reformer. But often overshadowed by the great Trinitarian statements of the Fourth Lateran Council are the canons that dealt with liturgical practice and sought to restore dignity to liturgical celebration. The writings of Francis show that he was devoted to the promotion of these canons, decrees perhaps even more than the others that came form the Council. We don't often rank the Fourth Lateran Council as one of the great liturgical councils. Instead, we usually mark Trent, which set the Roman liturgy in an

unchanged cast for 500 years until the Second Vatican Council melted that away and brought about the current era of liturgical renewal. But, for their time and circumstance, the changes initiated by the Fourth Lateran Council were profoundly felt on a very popular level. The canons of the Council brought about reform in areas that anyone in the Church would have immediately noticed. St. Francis and St. Clare both took up these canons in their ministry and helped to effect the changes that the Council envisioned.

The Fourth Lateran Council and Liturgy

The Council's liturgical canons give us insight into the practice of liturgy at the time. Canons were passed to forbid clerics from drunken displays and from hunting; clerics were forbidden from pronouncing or executing a death sentence against someone; they were forbidden from holding secular offices or engaging in dishonest pursuits; and clerics were reminded to live chaste and virtuous lives. It is difficult to envision the state of affairs that would lead the Council to state:

> Their garments must be worn clasped at the top and neither too short nor too long. They are not to use red or green garments or curiously sewed together gloves, or beak-shaped shoes or gilded bridles, saddles, pectoral ornaments (for horses), spurs, or anything else indicative of superfluity. At the Divine Office in the church they are not to wear *cappas* with long sleeves, and priests and dignitaries may not wear them elsewhere except in case of danger when circumstances should require a change of outer garments. Buckles may under no condition be worn, nor sashes having ornaments of gold or silver, nor rings, unless it be in keeping with the dignity of their office. All bishops must use in public and in the church outer garments made of linen, except those who are monks, in which case they must wear the habit of their order; in public they must not appear with open mantles, but these must be clasped either on the back of the neck or on the bosom.[2]

The Council also made several proclamations about sacred liturgy which were intended to restore dignity to liturgical celebrations. Canon 17, regarding the Divine Office, reads:

> It is a matter for regret that there are some minor clerics and even prelates who spend half of the night in banqueting and in unlawful gossip, not to mention other abuses, and in giving the remainder to sleep. They are scarcely awakened by the diurnal concerts of the birds. Then they hasten through matins in a hurried and careless

manner. There are others who say mass scarcely four times a year and, what is worse, do not even attend mass, and when they are present they are engaged outside in conversation with lay people to escape the silence of the choir; so that, while they readily lend their ears to unbecoming talk, they regard with utter indifference things that are divine. These and all similar things, therefore, we absolutely forbid under penalty of suspension, and strictly command in virtue of obedience that they celebrate diligently and devoutly the diurnal and nocturnal offices so far as God gives them strength.

The phrase, "that they celebrate diligently and devoutly" has the ring of a liturgical battle cry much like "full, conscious and active participation" from the Second Vatican Council. Similarly, regarding sacred space, the Council addressed the issue of the care of the Church and its liturgical vessels:

> We do not wish to leave uncorrected the practice of certain clerics who convert the churches into storehouses for their own household goods and also for those of others, so that the churches have the appearance of the houses of lay people rather than of the house of God. . . .There are also others who not only neglect to keep the churches clean but also leave the vessels, vestments, palls, and corporals so unclean that sometimes they are a source of aversion. . . .We strictly forbid that household goods be placed in the churches, unless by reason of hostile invasion, sudden fire, or other urgent reasons it should become necessary to store them there. . . . We command also that the aforesaid churches, vessels, corporals, and vestments be kept clean and bright. For it is absurd to tolerate in sacred things a filthiness that is unbecoming even in profane things (Canon 19).

These canons demonstrate that there was a clear lack of care for the liturgy: "It is absurd to tolerate in sacred things a filthiness that is unbecoming even profane things." An image emerges of a clergy with little concern for their own spiritual life or that of their flock, with little care for their churches, vestments, vessels, and likewise little care for the proper celebration of the Church's rituals. In this milieu, it shouldn't be surprising that the Council also states in Canon 20: "We decree that in all churches the chrism and the Eucharist be kept in properly protected places provided with locks and keys, that they may not be reached by rash and indiscreet persons and used for impious and blasphemous purposes." And for the faithful, we see the beginning of what will become the Easter Duty: ". . . receiving reverently at least at Easter the sacrament of the Eucharist" (Canon 21). Canon 27 reflected these issues in its call for better training of priests:

> We strictly command that bishops . . . diligently prepare and instruct those to be elevated to the priesthood in the divine offices and in the proper administration of the sacraments of the Church. If in the future they presume to ordain ignorant and unformed men (a defect that can easily be discovered), we decree that both those ordaining and those ordained be subject to severe punishment. In the ordination of priests especially, it is better to have a few good ministers than many who are no good, for if the blind lead the blind both will fall into the pit (Mt. 15:14).

Canon 33 called upon the bishops to strongly promote these reforms in their churches: "Those conducting the visitation shall not seek their own interests, but those of Jesus Christ, devoting themselves to preaching, exhortation, correction, and reform, that they may bring back fruit that perishes not." Francis heeded this command and strongly promoted these reforms concerning the Eucharist, the Word of God, the dignity of the priesthood and the dignity of the celebration of sacred liturgy and the sacred vessels used during the celebration of liturgy.

Francis: Liturgical Reformer

The Council's Canon 21 stated "Let this salutary decree be published frequently in the churches, that no one may find in the plea of ignorance a shadow of excuse." Francis was in attendance for at least part of the Council, and both his writings and writings about him show that he took this call to heart and incorporated it into his mission in a way that constantly uplifted both the dignity of those who are ordained and the task to which they have been called.

It is stunning to see the frequency with which Francis strikes these themes in his writings. In his Second Letter to the Custodians Francis makes it clear that not only does he desire to spread the word about the Council's concerns, but he wants the rest of the Order to do the same. Francis exhorted the *custodes*:

> I beg you, as much as I can, to give to bishops and other members of the clergy those letters treating of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord. . . . Make many copies of the other letter I am sending you . . . and distribute them with great zeal to those to whom they should be given (LtCus2: 4-7).

Francis wrote letters to many groups: to the clergy, to custodians, to rulers of the people, to a minister, to the entire order, and to others. In them, he

repeatedly called for greater reverence of Jesus, of the Eucharist, of churches, God's Word and priests.

In the Letter to the Entire Order, care of the Eucharist was the first substantive issue Francis spoke of: "I also beg in the Lord all my brothers who are priests, or who will be, or who wish to be priests of the Most High that whenever they wish to celebrate Mass, being pure, they offer the true Sacrifice of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with purity and reverence, with a holy and unblemished intention" (LtOrd 14-16). Francis was encouraging friar-priests to a higher holiness than apparently was evident at the time. He continued, "See your dignity, my priest brothers, and be holy because He is holy. As the Lord God has honored you above all others because of this ministry, for your part, love, revere and honor Him above all others It is a great misery and a miserable weakness that when you have Him present in this way, you are concerned with anything else in this whole world!" (LtOrd 23-25) It is also in this letter that Francis gave his great hymn to the Eucharistic celebration:

> Let everyone be struck with fear,
> Let the whole world tremble,
> And let the heavens exult
> When Christ, the Son of the living God,
> Is present on the altar in the hands of a priest!
> O wonderful loftiness and stupendous dignity!
> O sublime humility!
> O humble sublimity!
> The Lord of the universe,
> God and the Son of God
> So humbles Himself
> That for our salvation
> He hides Himself
> Under an ordinary piece of bread!
> Brothers, look at the humility of God,
> And pour out your hearts before Him!
> Humble yourselves
> That you may be exalted by Him!
> Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves,
> That He Who gives Himself totally to you
> May receive you totally! (LtOrd 26-29)

Francis, in this Letter to the Entire Order, wrote that those who are involved in liturgical life must "also care for the vessels and other liturgical

objects that contain His holy words in order to impress on ourselves the sublimity of our Creator and our subjection to Him" (LtOrd 34). Speaking of pages on which the Word was written, he continued, "If they are not well kept or are carelessly thrown around in some place, let them gather them up and preserve them, inasmuch as it concerns them, honoring in the words the Lord who spoke them" (LtOrd 36). Similarly, Francis pulled together different liturgical formulations from the service of Good Friday and the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross and commanded the friars to pray the following prayer every time they entered or passed a church: "We adore You, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Your churches throughout the whole world and we bless You because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world" (Test 5).

Perhaps Francis was so beloved in the Church because through his simple preaching and constant calling people to holiness he was able to begin to effect real reform in the church around the issues raised at the Council. Again, his Testament states: "Afterwards the Lord gave me, and gives me still, such faith in priests who live according to the rite of the holy Roman Church . . . and I desire to respect, love and honor them" (Test 6-7). This regard for the dignity of priests is deeply connected to the Eucharist, as Francis explained: "I act in this way because, in this world, I see nothing corporally of the most high Son of God except His most holy Body and Blood which they (priests) receive and they alone administer to others" (Test 10). Similarly, for the sacred vessels used at liturgy, he wrote, "I want to have these most holy mysteries honored and venerated above all things and I want to reserve them in precious places" (Test 11).

In his Letter to Clergy, Francis excoriated his brother clerics and exalted the dignity of liturgy:

> Let all those who administer such most holy mysteries . . . consider how very dirty are the chalices, corporals and altar-linens upon which his Body and Blood are sacrificed. It [the Eucharist] is placed and left in many dirty places, carried about unbecomingly, received unworthily, and administered to others without discernment. Even His written names and words are at times left to be trampled under foot. . . .Let us, therefore, amend our ways quickly. . . .Wherever the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ has been illicitly placed and left, let it be moved from there, placed in a precious place and locked up. . . . Let those who make copies of this writing in order that it might be better observed, know they have been blessed by the Lord God (LtCl 4-15).

Francis clearly called for renewal with authority and asked clerics not only to elevate their own celebration of liturgy, but also to spread the word.

Francis did the same in his Letter to the Rulers of Nations and his Admonitions. It is clear that Francis addressed these conciliar concerns at every level: to all people, to all the members of the Franciscan Order, to the Minister General of the Order, to all secular rulers, to all the clergy. And these themes are not absent from the Rule that Francis wrote for the community. In both the Earlier Rule and the Later Rule Francis addresses the same themes for the brothers: the proper reverence for the Eucharist, for the Word of God, for a desire for good preaching, for a devout spirit of worship both at the Liturgy of the Hours and Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Writings About Francis

Francis' biographers were also aware of his passion in this regard. For example in his Life of Francis, St. Bonavenutre mentioned the work of Francis in traveling far and wide, never missing an opportunity to spread greater devotion to liturgical celebrations. Bonaventure is not alone in noting Francis' devotion in this area. Thomas of Celano, in his second biography, The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul, writes, "He frequently received Holy Communion" (2C 201). The Lateran Council had decreed the Easter duty of reception of Holy Communion at least once a year precisely because reception by the faithful was infrequent, if not non-existent. Francis, by example, led the way to greater reception of the Eucharist. Thomas of Celano goes on, "Francis wished at one time to send his brothers through the world with precious pyxes, so that wherever they should see the price of our redemption kept in an unbecoming manner, they should place it in the very best place. He wanted great reverence shown to the hands of priests, for to these has been given authority from God over the consecrated bread and wine" (2C 201). The Legend of Perugia also reports:

> Blessed Francis had a great deal of respect and devotion for the Body of Christ. He wanted it written in the rule that in the provinces where they lived, the brothers were also to devote much care and regard for It, to exhort and encourage clerics and priests to reserve the Body of Christ in a decent and fitting place and, if the clerics did not do so, to attend to it themselves (LP 80).

This source adds that Francis "likewise decided to send brothers into all the provinces with beautiful and good bread irons" (LP 80). Examples like these are plentiful in writings about Francis, showing that Francis made liturgical reform tangible, in word and in action, commanding that all who would listen should do these things.

St. Clare and her sisters also took up this mission, becoming devoted to the making of worthy altar linens, spreading the work of reform among all the members of the Franciscan family.

Call To Reform Today

These may seem like minor points to focus on as major actions of liturgical reform in light of our current era. Certainly the reforms of Trent or our contemporary reforms after the Second Vatican Council seem more in-depth and far-ranging, at the heart of liturgical theology and spirituality. But I would argue that, for their day, the liturgical canons of the Fourth Lateran Council were profound. Just as the decrees of the Second Vatican Council affected the celebration of liturgy on the core local level, so, too, Lateran IV made changes that would be immediately recognized by those in the congregation. The faithful would have noticed immediately the changes being effected in the lives of the clergy, the emphasis on liturgical dignity, the more frequent reception of Eucharist by a community that didn't usually partake of the Bread of life. In the midst of this, Francis, perhaps more than any other, took up this charge, made it a part of his preaching and ministry and was a crucial element in restoring the honor, sanctity and solemnity to the Church's liturgies and rituals.

These reforms are poignant today because the Church once again needs a renewal of the liturgy's dignity. We need another Francis to spearhead greater devotion to the Church's worship. More to the point, the sons and daughters of Francis today must take up this charge to hold high the sanctity of worship.

The complaints of the thirteenth century find echoes today. People aren't happy with the level of preaching-in fact, this is the most common complaint about Catholic celebrations. In too many places a spirit of liturgical minimalism leaves the celebration of the sacraments somehow empty on an emotive level. There are increasing calls for a greater focus on the Eucharist because people's understanding of and reverence toward the Eucharist have dwindled in the years since the Second Vatican Council. Too many people say, "I'm not being fed by liturgy." And yet where liturgy is vibrant and engaging and beautiful, the presence of God and the gift of grace are tangible. Celebrations are excit-

ing, worship succeeds in lifting the heart, mind and soul to God, and strengthens the faithful for the journey and for mission. The problem is not, as some claim, that we no longer pray in Latin or that priests face the people. The problem is that the rituals that we have are too often not done well, with the dignity and beauty that can (and should) be present in them. There is in too many places a basic failure to simply pray the liturgy of the Church with purpose, with care, with grace, with beauty.

This should be a continuing Franciscan mission. We need to be ones who lead first by the example of our own holy and pious experience of God's grace in sacred liturgy. We must be the ones who uphold the dignity of liturgy through our own liturgical practice, through our concern for inspiring preaching, through our own reverence for God's Word and for the Body and Blood of Jesus. We must be the ones who will show the sacredness of prayer in ways that can't help but invite people into the mystery that is God. Once we lead by example, then we must also spread the word. Our holy father Francis did this before us, and we must follow his lead.

Francis preached seemingly simple things–clean up the churches, use nice vessels and linens, be conscious of the presence of Christ's Body and Blood, hold dear the Words of God, recognize the dignity of the ministry of the priest. These simple things, however, had profound results. Today too, more than a need to rework or reorder our liturgies, our churches, the clergy and those involved in planning and implementing liturgy must be concerned with its sacred character and seek ways to emphasize the wonder and mystery of the moments of grace we celebrate. Perhaps there is no greater example to look toward for this type of liturgical renewal than the poor man of Assisi:

> And whoever observes these things, let him be blessed in heaven with the blessing of the Most High Father, and on earth with the blessing of His Beloved Son with the Most Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, and all the powers of heaven and with all the saints And, as far as I can, I, little brother Francis, your servant, confirm for you, both within and without, this most holy blessing" (Test 40-41).

Endnotes

[1]St. Bonaventure, "Life of St. Francis," 3:9, in *Francis of Assisi Early Documents*, vol. 1, eds. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv., William J. Short, O.F.M. (NY: New City Press, 1999).

[2]Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), canon 16. All canon cited in this article are based upon this text.

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Minority: The Core of Poverty

Leonard Lehmann, O.F.M. Cap.

The Choice of a Name

Minority is an essential element of evangelical poverty, for it is impossible to be poor in spirit (see Mt. 3:5) without humility. To defend poverty in order to take pride in it or exalt ourselves would be contrary to minority, an original value that identifies the Franciscan movement. The two terms "poverty" and "humility," found so often in the writings of St. Francis, are expressed in minority. This gospel attitude means that we do not occupy the first places, we are not over others, and we do not impose ourselves on anyone. We are the servants of all, ever ready to do good, with no claim to recompense, thanks, honor, or glory. Although the term "minority" is not well known or understood outside Franciscan circles, it clearly touches the core of our life. Indeed, we call ourselves Friars Minor. The added term "Franciscan" or "Conventual" or "Capuchin" is secondary, seeing that Francis wanted his companions and followers to be called "lesser brothers."

According to the Legend of the Three Companions, the first converts to Francis's ideal presented themselves as "penitents originally from the city of Assisi" (L3C 37).[1] Later they chose the name "Poor Minors," but finally they changed it, this time definitively, to "Friars Minor" (*Fratres Minores)*-in the new edition of the *Early Documents* translated as "Lesser Brothers":

> But the subject at hand is primarily the Order that he accepted and retained as much out of love as out of profession. What was that Order? He himself originally planted the Order of Lesser Brothers and on the occasion of its founding gave it this name. For when it was written in the Rule, "Let them be lesser . . . ," at the uttering of this statement, at the same moment he said, "I want this fraternity to be called the Order of Lesser Brothers (*Ordo fratrum minorum)*" (1C 38).

Celano is not the only one who tells of Francis's explicit desire to call his group the Order of Friars Minor. We also have the interesting testimony of a man from outside the emerging Order, the chronicler Burchard of Ursberg

(d. 1230). He carefully situates the primitive Franciscan core group in its historical context, speaking of other pauperist movements that had arisen in central and northern Italy. He tells us that in 1210 he saw "some followers of the sect of the Poor of Lyon who were presenting themselves to the Apostolic See under the leadership of a certain Bernard, their master." Their purpose was to ask Pope Innocent III to approve their way of life through a privilege. Burchard continues:

> But during that audience the Lord Pope rebuked them for some of their superstitious practices. . . .Instead the Pope approved other religious who arose in their place and called themselves *Poor Minors.* On the one hand, they rejected all the aforementioned false and superstitious practices; on the other hand, they went about barefoot in both summer and winter. They accepted neither money nor anything else, only food and clothing when they were in extreme need and if someone offered it spontaneously. Later, reflecting that taking cover behind a name that is too modest can often lead to vainglory, and that, using the name of poverty as their shield, many who bear it fraudulently use it as an excuse for proud boasting in the sight of God, they preferred to call themselves *Friars Minor* instead of *Poor Minors*, and they were submissive in all things to the Apostolic See.[2]

Burchard, a Premonstratensian and a qualified chronicler, gives a good description of the characteristics of the new order. He also notes the danger of glorying in one's own poverty. Francis repeatedly warns against this danger in his writings. Instead of "Poor Minors," the name used at first, Francis chose the name "Friars Minor" to avoid the danger of a poverty that was proud, fanatical, and lacking in charity. This new formula would also serve to place the profession of poverty on two essential foundations: *fraternity* and *minority*.

Minority as a Gospel Value

Maiores – minores – minimi

It is now taken for granted that at the time of Francis there were in Assisi, as in many other cities, *maiores* and *minores*. The *maiores* were the feudal lords, also called *boni homines*, "good people;" the *minores* were representatives of the people who were trying to gain their freedom from feudal service. When the people of Assisi attacked the stronghold (*Rocca Maggiore)* in 1198 and destroyed it completely, the feudal lords-among whom were Clare's relatives-had to flee to Perugia. This caused an increase in the tension that had always existed between the two cities. It reached its climax in the battle of Collestrada in 1202, in which Francis participated and was taken prisoner. Gradually the nobles

returned to Assisi and at a certain point, in 1203 signed a peace treaty (*Carta pacis*) with the representatives of the people to provide a reinforcement in the face of external threats. This accord must not have been very successful, since in 1210 the *maiores* and *minores* had to sign a new treaty, the *Carta franchitatis*, the "Charter of freedom." In it the two social groups that were struggling for power agreed to do away with feudal service and to build the *commune* together.

It was not, therefore, a rebellion of the little people against the nobles and the rich. The *minores* were also owners, even though less powerful; as such they aspired, through the new means of money and labor, to a higher social standing similar to that of the *maiores*.

There was also a third class not mentioned in the two charters (*carte*). The Franciscan sources speak about "people considered of little value and looked down upon, the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers and the beggars by the wayside" (ER 9:2). It is these with whom the Friars Minor wish to stand; not with the *minores* of the city who represented the active political force, but with the people of the countryside, the poor and poverty-stricken of the city, and the lepers abandoned on the plain below Assisi. We might call these non-citizens, with neither a voice nor access to the freedom that came from work; this kind of people are the *minimi*, the last ones.

Servants in order to serve . . .

While admitting that socio-political realities exercised a certain influence on the choice of the name of Lesser Brothers (Friars Minor), it must be noted that for Francis this was not a choice of class (for then he would have been associated with the party of the *minores*, who were powerful!). It was a gospel choice! His name was motivated by the Bible, as is clear from the various passages found in his writings. Looking at the Earlier Rule (the *Regula non bullata*), which preserves the original inspiration and fundamental intuitions, we see that minority is motivated by the Gospel and based on it.

A key and revealing text was Mt. 20: 20-28 (see also Lk. 22: 24-27). Jesus responds to Zebedee's sons by declaring the overthrow of the canons of human judgment:

> You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant (Mt. 20: 25-26).

This gospel text is repeated in chapter five of the Earlier Rule, which deals with relationships among the brothers, especially among those whom we incor-

rectly call "superiors" and "subjects." Jesus' description of himself in the conclusion of the passage has a profound repercussion in the writings of Francis: "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life . . . " (Mt. 20:28).

This principle is applied to the ministers in order that they might exercise their office in a spirit of service. But an attitude of service does not exclude a heavy responsibility for the salvation of souls. The Rule links minority with responsibility when it says:

> Let the ministers and servants remember what the Lord says: I have not come to be served but to serve; and because the care of the brothers' souls has been entrusted to them, if anything is lost on account of their fault or bad example, they will have to *render an account* before the Lord Jesus Christ *on the day of judgment* (ER 4:6).

Another recurrent saying is the golden rule, expressed both positively and negatively: "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you" (Mt. 7:12) and "Do not do to another what you would not have done to you" (ER 4:4).

All the provisions in the "fraternity statute," as Chapters 4-11 of the Earlier Rule may be described, speak of fraternal service, love for the sick, humility, submission. These attitudes are suggested by the love that makes us regard others as higher and more worthy, neither flattering them nor tearing them down. It is the behavior of one who wishes to imitate the poor and humble Christ: renunciation of the "I" after renunciation of the "mine." The minority the Rule demands of the lesser brothers is condensed and summarized in the twelfth Admonition:

> A servant of God can be known to have the Spirit of the Lord in this way: if, when the Lord performs some good thing 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 the others (Adm 12).

. . . *after the example of Jesus who is among us as the one who serves* (Lk. 22:27)

The figure of Jesus the servant is the theological basis of minority as chosen by Francis. Although he was in a position to become great, Francis chose instead the way of littleness in order to answer the call of Jesus and bear free witness to the mystery of the Kingdom. His meditation is always filled with the image of God who humbled himself by becoming one of us (Bethlehem-Greccio) and by accepting the cross (Golgotha-LaVerna), humbling himself

in the washing of the feet (Jn. 13) and in his daily coming "upon the altar in the hands of the priest" (Adm 1:18).

Francis's writings are full of recollections of the Gospel of minority and service. It is impossible to mention them all here. However, for individual and community reflection we might turn to the psalms of the Servant of Yahweh (Pss. 22; 56; 68; 70; 85-87 etc.) used by Francis in his Office of the Passion (Pss. 1-7); to St. Paul's splendid hymn on the kenosis of God (Phil. 2:5-11); to the teachings of Jesus (Mt. 20:26-28; Mt. 25:4; Mk. 9:35-37; Lk. 12:32 and 22:26); and especially his example in washing the feet of his apostles (in Jn. 13:1-17). These passages constitute the framework of the Rule and Life of the Friars Minor.

Minority before God

Poverty-minority is primarily a way of situating ourselves before God, the Most High Lord to whom belongs all good. It is no accident that Francis begins his prayers with the address: "Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart . . ." (PrCr). Exaltation of God by assuming our proper place before him characterizes all Francis's prayers, from the first to the last:

> Most High, all-powerful good Lord,
> Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing,
> To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
> and no one is worthy to mention your name
> (CtC 1-2).

Between God and us there is an impassible abyss on our side. The grace of God and his humility have crossed the abyss and drawn us. This view of God and ourselves is clearly evident in the great Chapter 23 of the Earlier Rule, which has been called a Franciscan preface, because the refrain, "We thank you" recurs five times. The chapter begins with the invocation, "All-powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God," and goes on to sing the history of salvation from creation to the parousia. The first strophe of the preface reads:

> All-powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God, holy and just Father, Lord, King of heaven and earth we thank you for yourself for by your holy will and by your only Son with the Holy Spirit you have created all things spiritual and corporal and, after making us in your own image and likeness, you placed us in paradise. Through our own fault we fell (ER 23:1-2).

In the fifth strophe Francis continues:

> Because all of us, wretches and sinners, are not worthy to pronounce your name, we humbly ask our Lord Jesus Christ, your beloved Son . . . to give you thanks, for everything as it pleases you and him, who always satisfies you in everything, through whom you have done so much for us. Alleluia! (ER 23:5).

Because of our misery, frailty and corruptibility, our sin and our rebellion, we cannot help but feel humble (close to the *humus*, the earth), transitory, lesser. By recognizing our situation, by accepting the fact that we are in need of redemption, the door to salvation is opened. But if we are closed in our pride and self-sufficiency, if we do not accept the fact that we are lesser and poor before God, we risk losing the eternal salvations won for us by Christ.

Minority, then, is part of being a creature. And it seems that the holier we are, the more we feel sinful, little, lesser. That was certainly the case with Francis and with many of our canonized brothers and sisters.

Francis - Lesser Servant

Francis adopted the attitude of a servant as the most suitable way to follow Christ. He even describes himself in his writings as "little brother Francis, your servant" (Test 41). His life was a singular example of minority, as is shown by many episodes recounted in the biographies. Instead of these, I would prefer to offer some passages from his letters. They show, in all their authenticity, how he internalized the humble life of Jesus without falling into self-hatred.

In the Letter to the Faithful he presents himself as "the servant of all," who wishes "to serve all" (v. 2). He ends his long letter with this insistent statement:

> I, brother Francis, your lesser servant, beg and implore you in the love that is God, and with a wish to kiss your feet, to receive, to put into practice, and to observe, as you should, these words and the others of our Lord Jesus Christ with humility and love (2 LtF 87)

Undaunted and persuaded of a universal mission, he writes "to all mayors and consuls, magistrates and rulers throughout the world." The sender of this political address is the humble "Brother Francis, your little and looked-down-upon servant in the Lord God, who wishes all of you health and peace" (LtR 1).

In his letters to the friars, we notice that Francis never calls them servants but always brothers. Among brothers there can be no minors, for this would

to the very identity of the fraternal group. But Francis describes himself as a servant in relation to God and to his brothers. In his Letter to the Custodians Francis introduces himself as "your servant and little one in the Lord God" (LtCus1:1). In the long and last Letter to the Entire Order he introduces himself as "Brother Francis, a worthless and weak man, your very little servant," and takes his leave as "a useless man and an unworthy creature of the Lord God" (LtOrd 3:4). When he calls the brothers to something that is especially dear to his heart, he likes to place himself "at the feet" of all. Thus at the end of the Rule:

> And, kissing their feet, I implore everyone to love, keep, and treasure them [the things written in the Rule] greatly (ER 24: 3).

Francis's asceticism is not one of self-sufficiency or extremism. He is not a fanatic. He acknowledges that he is limited, weak, little, at the mercy of his moods. It is a humble yet optimistic spirituality; it is generous because, despite the reality of its own limits, it is able to see the other reality of the riches and goodness of God. Nothing is more eloquent in this regard than his *confiteor* in the middle of his letter to all the friars, "from first to the last," and consequently also to us today, no matter if in India or in Italy:

> I have offended the Lord in many ways by my serious faults especially in not observing the Rule that I have promised him and in not saying the Office as the Rule prescribes either out of negligence or by reason of my weakness or because I am ignorant and stupid (LtOrd 39).

Minority "*ad intra*"

Following the command of Jesus that none of his disciples should lord it over the others, but that "whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant" (Mt. 20:27), Francis always refers to those responsible for his fraternity as "ministers and servants" (ER 4:6; 5:3, 7, 11). He says: "Do not call yourselves masters, you have but one Master in heaven" (ER 22:35). We notice that minority even enters into the name of the offices: instead of *mag-ister* Francis chooses *min-ister*, the one who usually serves the greater, the master. By combining the two synonyms " minister and servant" he wishes to prevent the title "minister" from becoming a mere formality, thus losing all its expressiveness or control in this instance, especially power. Francis distinguishes between "ministers and servants" and brothers who are "subject to the ministers and servants" (ER 5:3), but "through the charity of the Spirit, all should serve."

Overturning the ideas that dominated the political and religious (Benedictine) world, the Rule lays down that "no one is to be called prior, but

let everyone in general be called a lesser brother. Let one wash the feet of the other" (Jn. 13:14; ER 6:3). This inner attitude of minority is reasserted in the fourth Admonition, in which (not accidentally) the two gospel passages Matthew 20:28 and John 13:14 occur:

> "I did not come to be served, but to serve," says the Lord. Let those who are placed over others boast about that position as much as they would if they were assigned the duty of washing the feet of their brothers. And if they are more upset at having their place over others taken away from them than at losing their position at their feet, the more they store up *a money bag* to the peril of their soul (Adm 4).

Other profound descriptions of Franciscan minority are provided by the Franciscan Beatitudes, that is, those Admonitions that begin with the words, "Blessed is the servant who . . ." (Adm 17-28). The most eloquent is that on the humble servant of God:

> Blessed is the servant who does not consider himself any better when he is praised and exalted by people than when he is considered worthless, simple and despised, for what a person is before God that he is and no more.
>
> Woe tothat religious who has been placed in a high position by others and does not want to come down by his own will.
>
> Blessed is that servant who is not placed in a high position by his own will and always desires to be under the feet of others (Adm 19).

Minority "*ad extra*"

To serve and to work in dependence on others . . .

Interior humility and mutual service within the fraternity is expressed "ad extra" in specific attitudes. Chapter seven of the *Earlier Rule* is relevant in this regard:

> None of the brothers may be treasurers or overseers in any of those places where they may be staying to serve or work among others. They may not be in charge in the houses in which they serve; nor may they accept any office which would generate scandal or be harmful to their souls. Let them, instead, be the lesser ones and be subject to all in the same house (ER 7:1-2).

This chapter sheds light on the beginnings of the Order, when the brothers were accustomed to working among the people, outside their own dwellings. Later, such an arrangement was no longer understood, and copyists changed some of the readings, adapting them to developments in the Order: for example, the *cancellarius* or clerk in public offices becomes the *cellarius* who cleans the friary cells. The text of the Earlier Rule has its own very concrete *Sitz im Leben*. Different variants cannot be understood and properly evaluated except in light of the primitive history of the Order, on the one hand, but also, on the other hand, in light of its later history. Thus the position of the Friars Minor in society was well defined. By their own free choice they accepted only positions of work in the service of others, not as overseers but as subjects. The more the brothers were seen as capable and honest workers, the more they would yield to the temptation to accept positions as overseers and administrators. They would become organizers of good works, promoters of charitable associations (e.g. the *Montes pietatis*, a kind of co-operative bank), contractors who employed other people dependent on them. Here we note how the option for minority involves a choice of social position. For Francis, the motives for being minor were Christological, but their application was sociological.

Minority was and is not only an interior virtue; it is a social status, the refusal to accept higher positions, the renunciation of a career, the rejection of being a manager. Here lies the greatest challenge for us today. The kind of work we do, our position in society, and the means we use ought to coincide with our being lesser brothers.

The social component of the gospel vocation to minority is also very clear from a well-known sentence in the Earlier Rule. But we must cite it with the motivation that precedes it, which links the evangelical-theological and social motives:

> Let all the brothers strive to follow the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ and remember that we should have nothing else in the whole world except, as the Apostle says: having food and clothing, we are content with these (cf. 1 Tim 6:8).
>
> They must rejoice when they live among people considered of little value and looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside (ER 9:1-2).

It is a choice of preference for those who are socially uprooted and condemned to remain on the margins of society: victims of famine, sickness, injustice. The Rule and Constitutions (60:5-6) ask us to take a clear stand in favor of the lower social classes, without closing ourselves to the upper classes or being opposed to them. "Sincerely choosing the last place, we are called by vocation to find Jesus Christ in the total emptying of his Incarnation and of his Passion. Consistent with Franciscan minority, this choice opens us to be neighbors to all in a spirit of fraternity and joy" (V PCO 36c).

Aid to the Clergy

The choice of minority involves assuming a position within the Church. Francis was not opposed to the fact that priests were entering the fraternity, but he himself remained a deacon. Out of humility he refused to be ordained a priest. On his deathbed he reasserted his firm intention to be always subject to Catholic priests, even if they persecuted him:

> If I had as much wisdom as Solomon and found impoverished priests of this world, I would not preach in their parishes against their will. I desire to respect, love and honor them and all others as my lords (Test 7-9).

As long as the preaching of friars consisted of exhortations to penance *(laus et exhortatio)*, it was not incompatible with the lifestyle of minority. But once the fraternity started to move in the direction of a permanent and official apostolate, the office of preaching *(praedicatio)* became a problem for Francis. He warned against appropriating the office of preaching received from the minister general (ER 9:3), and he admonished the brothers not to change it into a personal right they were no longer willing to renounce (ER 17:4; Adm. 19). The other side of the problem of preachers was their tendency to become autonomous in the apostolate, obtaining privileges from the Roman curia so as to be able to exercise the apostolate with greater freedom, even to the point of building their own churches (see Test 28-29). Even though it might lend apostolic distinction to the Order, the race to exemption, by now begun, was a danger to the fraternity's attitude of minority. Francis, as his Testament proves, wished to submit unconditionally to the immediate and concrete church authorities-priests and bishops-no matter how much they restricted his freedom. He used to say to the brothers:

> We have been sent to help the clergy toward the salvation of souls. . . and it can be better obtained by peace with clerics than by disagreements with them. . . .Therefore, be subject to prelates, so that, in so far as you can help it, no jealousy will spring up. If you will be sons of peace, you will win the clergy and the people for the Lord, and the Lord judges this more acceptable than to win the people but scandalize the clergy (2C 146).[3]

Submissive to all . . .

In his Testament Francis recalls this essential rule of minorite life: "We were simple and subject to all" (Test 19). Although there were some clerics and

educated people in the first fraternity, Francis says of himself and the others that they were unlettered *(idiotae)*. This means that the humble following of Jesus had led them to renounce their learning as a means of work or apostolate, insofar as the latter presupposed a certain level of prestige and power. In an atmosphere where knowledge and learning were concentrated in the monasteries and cathedrals, the Friars Minor preferred to use the lower and more popular culture to communicate their experience of the gospel.

To be a *minor* is a status that must not be betrayed even among non-Christians. In fact, it is the first duty of those who by divine inspiration go among non-Christians:

> Let them not engage in arguments or disputes but be subject *to every human creature for God's sake* and acknowledge that they are Christians (ER 16:6).

Francis sets no limits on who may be his brother or sister; his true self-expropriation makes him submissive to all. In his Salutation of the Virtues he broadens and radicalizes the concept of subjection, saying that in holy obedience the true Friar Minor

> is subject and submissive to everyone in the world, not only to people but to every beast and wild animal as well that they may do whatever they want with him insofar as it has been given to them from above by the Lord (SalV 14).

Here we reach the height of minority, whose ultimate limit is the gift of oneself in death. Those who give themselves completely to God are ready to suffer martyrdom not only at the hands of others, but even if inflicted by beasts and wild animals through the circumstances of life. Francis sees martyrdom as the proof of minority. This is illustrated by the fact that when he heard the news of the martyrdom of the first brothers who had gone to Morocco, he joyfully exclaimed:

> "Now I can truly say that I have five Friars Minor!" But it is significant that he destroyed the first account of their martyrdom so that it would not be a source of vainglory for the brothers.[3]

These examples make it clear that submission also means readiness to expose oneself to failure, persecution, martyrdom. Under no condition must the Friars Minor have recourse to letters or protection or recommendation, nor

to apostolic privileges with which to disarm the bishops, even under pretext of greater service to the people of God (see Test 25-26).

More than anything else, Francis sees faithful submission "to the prelates and all clerics of holy mother Church" (Testament of Siena, left out in ED I) as the guarantee of minority. He wishes the Rule approved by Pope Honorius III to be observed

> so that, being always submissive and subject at the feet of the same Holy Church and steadfast in the Catholic faith, we may observe poverty, humility and the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have firmly promised (LR 12:4).

But submission to the Church does not mean yielding to every wish of the hierarchy. To Cardinal Hugolino, who wanted to use the Friars Minor as bishops, Francis replied:

> Lord, my brothers are called "lesser" *(minores)* precisely so they will not presume to become "greater" *(maiores)*. They have been called this to teach them to stay down to earth, and to follow the footsteps of the humble Christ, which in the end will exalt them above others in the sight of the saints. If you want them to bear fruit in the Church of God, keep them in the status in which they were called, and hold them to it. Bring them back down to ground level even against their will. And so I beg you, Father, never allow them to rise to become prelates, otherwise they will just be prouder because they are poorer, and treat the others arrogantly (2C 148).

Conclusion

Just as the gospels do not speak of poverty even once but mention the poor ninety-five times, so Francis in his writings never speaks of *minoritas* but mentions the *minores* nine times. It is not a question of an abstract ideal for which to strive, but of concrete ways to express our following of Christ, who, although he was rich, became poor.

To place oneself at the service of others is a free choice, a mission, a charism. It demands a solid inner identity rooted in the person of Christ, since in our society minority is not a value but a gospel challenge. That is why only faith and love can give a liberating meaning to minority, which is so hard to understand and which we must live and renew in all our relationships: familial, fraternal, professional and social.

In our form of life minority must be practiced more or less on two fronts: to be itinerant in the apostolate or in seeking work means to depend on the hospitality of others and to be submissive to them; to extend welcome and hospitality in our friaries (houses of prayer) and in our churches (*i..e.* confessions) and to assist the marginalized (soup kitchens, caring for the handicapped) means to place ourselves at the service of others. Thus minority has many applications and nuances. Like the yeast that permeates the dough, minority is the note or mark that characterizes the being and activity of the lesser brother, and his poverty as well.

Endnotes

[1]*Francis of Assisi Early Documents*, 3 vols. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellman, O.F.M. Conv., and William J. Short, O.F.M., eds. (NY: New City Press, 1999-2001). All citations from the writings of St. Francis are taken from these volumes.

[2]See *Testimonia minora*, 17-18; cf. the Italian *Fonti Francescane*, pp. 2244-46.

[3]A sincere return to Francis led the Capuchins to be once again subject to the bishops, renouncing their exemption (Constitutions of 1536, n. 7-8). This lasted only until the Constitutions of 1552, when the paragraph about renunciation of exemption was suppressed.

[4]See Jordan of Giano, *Chronicle of the Arrival of the Friars in Germany*, nos. 7-8.

About Our Contributors

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Thomas Kulbicki, O.F.M. Conv., is a member of the Conventional province of St. Anthony of Padua. He currently serves as the Dean of the School of Theology and Associate Professor of Church History at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, MD. He was chair of the commission that drafted the article which appears in this issue.

Leonard Lehmann, O.F.M. Cap., is the editor of the *Collectanea Francescana*, published in Rome. He also serves as a faculty member of the Institute of Franciscan Spirituality at the Pontifical Atheneum Antonianum.

Pietro Maranesi, O.F.M. Cap. is a Capuchin friar from the province of the Marches in Italy. Pietro enjoyed a close personal friendship with Bob Stewart, developed from the time Bob stayed with the Capuchin Friars at the Historical Institute as he researched and wrote his own dissertation.

Tom Washburn, O.F.M. is a friar of the Immaculate Conception province. He is trained as a liturgist and serves on the Liturgical Commission for the diocese of Manchester. Tom also serves in youth ministry at St. Thomas Aquinas parish in Derry, New Hampshire.

Believe

Roger Hall, O.F.M.

Great in kindness
Constant care
Ever present
I Am
Here
Burning with desire
So much so, afire
To light the night of your darkness
May you see and believe.
In your believing
Come to be
as
I Am
In love with you
In love with all
This is a very great love in deed
Constant in caring
Never sparing
Life in mercy and charity
That you might come to see
And in your seeing
Come to believe.

A Reflection on Making Peace with Cancer: A Franciscan Journey

Pietro Maranesi, O.F.M. Cap.

One remains disconcerted by the simple and serene account that the Friar Minor Robert Stewart, to his friends Bob, gives in this book, an account of his final years of living before "Brother Cancer" introduced him to Sister Death in September, 2001. And his words have much more strength and truth for those who had the good fortune of sharing long and intense years of friendship with him.

How were you able to make peace with cancer Bob? You were so full of life, a successful teacher of theology at St. Bonaventure University in New York, endowed by nature with an athletic body, with a joyful nature and so full of enthusiasm for life. How were you able to accept in faith and peace the unexpected and devastating intrusion of the tumor that first appeared in 1996, and that within five years obliged you to undergo three serious and painful surgeries? How did you arrive at the point of handing yourself over to a death that, from the beginning, you knew was inevitable? Finding a response to questions like these, raised by a friend, caused Bob, about a year before his death, to write these pages.

The brief text is not an autobiography, but a turning back to his own story into order to recount it to his friend in bits and pieces and at times out of sequence, in order to retrace the central moments of his last years, signed as they were by sickness, and through this to express his new and profound experience of God and his love. Bob tells his story to his friend, helped by a central figure in both his Christian and human existence: Francis of Assisi. Even though he did his doctoral dissertation on one aspect of the life of the *Poverello* (*De illis qui faciunt poenitentiam: The Rule of the Secular Franciscans*), teaching in the Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University before joining the faculty of Theology, and even though he knew Assisi well from his enthusiastic visits every summer-despite all this, it was only though his sickness that he fully discovered the figure of Francis as the point of reference in order to understand himself and what God was doing with the tumor. The seven chapters of

his text are each introduced by passages taken from the Major Legend of Bonaventure, in which, retracing the principal steps of the life of Francis, Bob comprehends his existence and his sickness as a journey to the Lord, or better, like the process of an artist commissioned to depict his design not on a canvas, but in his body. And so in seven chapters Bob describes his human journey like the progress of an artist who begins with a formative period, that of an apprentice his youth up to adulthood, who encounters masters as he encounters significant persons in his life and arrives at the choice of religious life and only truly begins his work as an artist with the arrival of cancer. All the rest of his life had been a preparation for that moment, compressed in a few years, during which he had to sketch out the design to paint when the tumor presented itself, and having to embrace it as Francis embraced the leper, needing to choose the colors of humility and joy so as to paint the new image that God wanted to impress on him like Francis on LaVerna, to the point of the transformation of the image itself. At the end, he ceded absolute space to God's artistry and accepted the fact that the artistic image he began would not be completed until his final meeting with God beyond death.

To repeat, his text is not an autobiography-he does not give details (mentioning only those which refer to Francis and the events of his life that Bob blended with his own), nor precise chronological references that would help the reader locate the stages of his existence and of his sickness. He does not want so much to recount an event-the facts relative to a sickness-as much as he wants to recount an experience and the feelings that emerged from his encounter with "Brother Cancer."

These are pages full of light and serenity, full of life and faith, full of a humanity transformed by the love of God. An expression returns frequently in these pages, synthesizing well this Franciscan climate of suffering and dying in peace and reconciliation: "I am very blessed." Even though destroying a part of his body, the irruption of cancer in his life gave him a fuller and deeper share of existence, expressed in the intimacy of many brothers and above all

with God. Accepted and seen with the eyes of faith, the cancer was transformed by Bob into a brother who, with gentleness and patience, led him to a new vision of himself, of life, and of God; and to a richness and depth of experience that he did not want to lose. In this context there are discomfitting and moving pages dedicated to the possibility of a miracle; there are others on the relationship of God to his suffering, where there emerges with total clarity his Christian vision of life in which God is not the great insurer or magician that resolves problems with a magic wand, but the loving Father impotent in the face of the suffering of his son. There are words that simultaneously recall the reader to an authentic Christian and Franciscan vision of existence and away from one often disguised by an infantile and miracle-dependent faith. Reading Bob's gift of these pages will surely help the reader to hear the exhortation of Francis ßthat constituted for Bob a constant point of reference in the last years of his life: "I have done my part, may the Lord teach you what is yours to do." Everyone has a part in the great story of the love of God, a particular design to realize, and everyone must find colors to give it life. For Bob this part was shown to him by brother cancer; he accepted it with serenity and joy:

> I see more clearly now what is mine to do-not to finish these pages, but to complete my painting without canvas. My part involves walking with Brother Cancer, living what he has taught me, following faithfully in the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ, admitting my sinfulness and weakness, seeking to love and to serve, becoming vulnerable before my God, living and loving, painting my life until that final brush stroke, living even my death so that I may welcome the sister who beckons me, not to death but to the fullness of life.

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Editor's Note: This article was originally submitted as a book review. We decided, however, to publish it as a memorial in the issue which marks the first anniversary of Bob's Stewart's death. Therefore, all chapter and page number references have been removed. The art piece is an adaptation of the illustration by Attilio Razzolini, found in *I Fioretti di S. Francesco* (Florence: Casa Editrice S. Lapi, 1908), 259.

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May 3-5th and August 16-18th	The Lessons of St. Francis *Director: John Michael Talbot*
May 24-16th	The Jewish Roots of Catholicism *Director: Bob Fishman*
June 7-9th	Troubadour for the Lord *Director: John Michael Talbot-*
June 20-23rd	Simple Living Retreat *Director: John Michael Talbot and community*
June 28th-30th	The Power of His Presence *Director: Monsignor Frank E. Chiodo*
July 12-14th	Catholic, Evangelical and Eucharistic *Director: Dr. Scott Hahn*
July 19-21st	Mary, Our Jewish Mother *Director: Bob Fishman*
August 26-28th	Togetherness: A Weekend for Married Couples *Director: Fr. Martin Wolter, OFM*
August 9-11th	Healing the Wounds of Life *Director: Tonti Curtis*
August 23-25th	Christ and the Creative Process *Director: Michael Card*
Sept. 6-8th	Are You Ready for A Miracle? *Director: Sr. Francis Clare, SSND*
Sept 27-29th	Gospel Life in the Domestic Church *Director: Fr. Bob Dombrowski*
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Franciscan Spiritual Center
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Franciscan Solitude Experience at Clare House
October 11-14, 2002 and February 14-17, 2003
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Presenter: Lynn Patrice Lavin OSF
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December 6-8, 2002
Presenter: Ingrid Peterson OSF
Registration Deadline: November 22, 2002 $140 ($30 deposit)

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January 24-26, 2003
Presenter: Ilia Delio OSF
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Thursday, October 10 - Sunday, October 13, 2002
The Franciscan Connection. With Elizabeth Imler, OSF and Diane Jamison, OSF. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation, Regions 4 & 5. At Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet, IL. Contact Sr. Margaret Kelly, OSF at 309-829-0455.

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Abbreviations

Writings of Saint. Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BlL	A Blessing for Brother Leo
Ctc	The Canticle of the Creatures
CtExh	The Canticle of Exhortation
1Frg	Fragments of Worchester Manuscript
2Frg	Fragments of Thomas of Celano
3Frg	Fragments of Hugh of Digne
LtAnt	A Letter to Br. Anthony of Padua
1LtCl	First Letter to the Clergy (Earlier Edition)
2LtCl	Second Letter to the Clergy (Later Edition)
1LtCus	The First Letter to the Custodians
2LtCus	The Second Letter to the Custo dians
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister
LtOrd	A Letter to the Entire Order
LtR	A Letter to the Rulers of the People
ExhP	Exhortation o the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OfP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule *(Regula non bullata)*
LR	The Later Rule *(Regula bullata)*
RH	A Rule for Hermitages
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues
Test	The Testament
TPJ	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

Franciscan Sources

1C	The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano
2C	The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul
3C	The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
LCh	The Legend for Use in the Choir
Off	The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
LJS	The Life of St.Francis by Julian of Speyer
VL	The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches
1-3JT	The Praises by Jacapone da Todi
DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Aliegheri
TL	Tree of Life by Ubertino da Casale
1MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version
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HTrb	The History of the Seven Tribulations by Angelo of Clareno
ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St. Francis and Lady Poverty
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L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
AC	The Assisi Compilation
1-4Srm	The Sermons of Bonaventure
LMj	The Major Legend by Bonaventure
LMn	The Minor Legend by Bonaventure
BPr	The Book of Praises by Bernard of Besse
ABF	The Deeds of St. Francis and His Companions
LFl	The Little Flowers of Saint Francis
KnSF	The Knowing of Saint Francis
ChrTE	The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston
ChrJG	The Chronicle of Jordan of Giano

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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

THE CORD

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THE CORD
A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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

This closing issue of 2002 goes to press in the midst of rumors and more than rumors of going to war with Iraq, sniper violence in the areas surrounding our nation's capital, and urgent calls for ethical reform in business and other areas of the public domain. Hardly reasons for gentle thoughts of Advent and Christmas! Yet this is *The Cord* that arrives in your hands during the precious time when our thoughts turn to the birth of Christ and what the Incarnation means in our Franciscan lives. What can one do in the face of the pain of the world and the apparent loss of faith in the ***fact*** of the redemption of humankind?

Perhaps we can be called to a new understanding of the phrase, "Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace." At the end of the summer the Franciscan Federation's Annual Conference was dedicated to the theme "Being Franciscan Peacemakers in a Chaotic World." The immense energy of the group, fueled by the keynote conversation of Maria-Elena Martinez and Michael Crosby, has been transferred, we hope, into the pages that follow. Certainly, the presidential address of Ellen Lamberjack calls us to be present to the chaos around us so as to bring compassion into the vocation of being peacemakers. Maria-Elena and Michael challenge us to enter into a deeper stance of inclusion and to embrace the notion that "There is no enemy" for committed Christians. And Marie Lucey celebrates those from many congregations who model for us willingness to stand in the milieu of peace and justice regardless of the personal cost. May their words inspire us throughout the tasks that lie ahead!

A wolf does not usually appear in Christmas crèche scenes, but given the content of this issue, we felt it important to bring the story of the wolf of Gubbio into our consciousness for this coming season. Jean-François Godet-Calogeras presents the story as a model for conflict resolution in our day, a model that each person and institution can understand, and, if brave enough, imitate.

Lastly, a technical note. Because this issue is a compilation of oral presentations and a previously-published article, the standard endnote forms are fewer than might otherwise be the case. For the most part, our authors this month have chosen to provide us with recommended readings in lieu of multiple notes. Enjoy reading the suggested texts!

May the God of all good and the Prince of Peace be with us!

Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF

The Cord, 52.6 (2002)

Presidential Address to the 37th Annual Conference of the Franciscan Federation of the Third Order Regular

Ellen Lamberjack, O.S.F.

Introduction

Good morning! As we come together in this conference we want

- to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of The Rule of the Third Order Regular,
- to remember the twenty-year history of our Franciscan response to peace and justice issues,
- to acknowledge the many peacemakers from our congregations that are here with us,
- and very especially to address the topic of "Being Franciscan Peacemakers in a Chaotic World."

In 1981, Sister Patrice Kerin, OSF, in her President's Accountability Report, said that a "greater collaboration may evolve a presence that makes for a 'mighty peace maker'." May this conference bring us closer to that desire and that reality!

Some years ago, Leonardo Boff in his book *Saint Francis* wrote the following:

> our present-day culture finds in Francis a great deal of that for which we hunger and thirst. The expansion of the dimension of the anima in terms of gentleness, care, and living together answers a collective demand of our age in agony. A clear path is left where Francis directed his attention, a path strewn with affection, enthusiasm, and tremendous goodness toward all creatures, especially toward the disinherited of society.

According to Boff, we need to sink ourselves into the heart of God and into the human heart which is capable of compassion and emotion. "If we do not give ear to the heart and its needs," he says, "everything remains sterile and dark."

With these thoughts in mind, I would like for us to consider eight challenges, developed below.

To See God's Presence in the Chaos

"In the beginning," says the author of Genesis, "when God created the universe, the earth was formless and desolate. The raging ocean that covered everything was engulfed in total darkness . . ." (Gen. 1:1-2). That is the imagery used by an ancient storyteller to tell us about a very early time of chaos. Centuries later, just about one hundred years ago to be exact, the more prophetic throughout the world began talking about the decline of the West, something that we may define as our present state of chaos. That decline was seen by psychologists like Freud and Jung as both a spiritual and psychological decline: people losing their sense of meaning, losing their myth. I would add losing their sense of relationships to one another and losing touch with the heart. William Johnston in his book *Arise, My Love. . . : Mysticism For a New Era*, says that what has really destroyed western civilization, as it has all civilizations, is violence. We are living in a time when millions are dying in wars, in hunger, in systemic slaughter of the unborn, in the violent rape of Mother Earth. It is common language to speak of those who are different from us as the "enemy." It is also common knowledge that millions are cast to the edges, to the very periphery of our society, as the wealthy amass fortunes for themselves and protect those fortunes at whatever costs, including going to war. Today throughout the world many have lost their sense of security, their sense of hope, their sense of trust, their belief that peace is even a possibility. It was similar in the time of the prophet Isaiah for he said, "In the city everything is in chaos, and people lock themselves in their houses for safety" (Is. 24:10). Again Isaiah says, "Now leave me alone to weep bitterly over all those people who have died. Don't try to comfort me. This is a time of panic, defeat, and confusion . . ." (Is. 24:4). The prophet's words are those of many today who feel they are being betrayed by our elected government leaders, by the economic empire, and even by our Church. Sadly, this is the reality that becomes ever more conspicuous to us as we listen to the evening news.

But there is another reality that the newscasters seldom mention and a reality that we ourselves may not reflect on often enough to give us the hope we need to sustain us; it is the reality that the storyteller in Genesis proclaims when he says ". . . and the power of God was moving over the water" (Gen. 1:2).

To Expand Our Viewpoint about Our Charism

In these past three years during my time on the National Board of the Federation I have sensed God moving among us as we gather at the annual conference. Each year our number has swelled so that this year we are the largest group ever to have gathered for the annual Federation meeting. Likewise, there have been increased numbers of our members coming together to attend the excellent programs that have been held in the regions. We are being drawn together to celebrate the charism that is ours. God is moving among us and we have hope.

I see more of us be willing to go beyond ourselves to offer ourselves as spiritual assistants to the Secular Franciscan Order and to network in our areas with the larger Franciscan Family. I would challenge us as individuals, congregations, and as a Federation to stretch ourselves even more to reach across cultures to collaborate with Franciscans in other countries and with Franciscans of other religious denominations. Looking around this room, we see that the congregations represented here are primarily Anglo-Caucasian; it is from this viewpoint that we have understood the Franciscan charism. As we come in contact with persons of other cultures, we begin to understand how much more there is to know about our charism. We thank those of you from other countries who accepted our invitation to participate with us in this conference. We have much to learn from you, particularly this year as we look at Franciscan peacemaking in a chaotic world.

To Embrace a Call to Be Mystics

In this very room are 500 of us who carry the Franciscan charism in our hearts. There are thousands of others in our Federation and in other branches of the larger Franciscan Family with that same charism. Do we understand what living out our charism can mean in a society where God has no public visible body? Do we fully understand how we can be the yeast in the dough that brings the good news of the gospel to a world that is feeling deep, deep pain? Do we know how to pay attention to the crucified of our times and to commit ourselves in our solidarity with them as our founders and foundresses did in their day? Are we willing to go to the periphery and to stay there with those cast to the edges, to those who are the lepers of our day? We are told that only mystics can profoundly listen to the realities of the world and respond in compassion and deep peace. This is Bonaventure's message in his *Soul's Journey Into God*, that the goal of the spiritual journey is ecstatic contemplation, which is peace.

To Respond to New Needs

It is no wonder that Francis remains our mentor as a mystic who responded in compassion. Within the Federation I see individuals and congregations responding, by direct service, by educating others about the needs of the poor and oppressed, or by challenging the systems that cause so much misery and injustice to those who have been cast to the edges. I also see us valuing time for longer periods of contemplative prayer. I raise the question: Do we have the will to join together as congregations to meet the needs of our times that no individual congregation can meet? Can we let those who are mystics among us begin to listen together to know what those needs are?

To Use Our Charism to Recreate the Church

Leonardo Boff tells us that Francis maintained two fidelities: to the poor and to the ecclesial institution of the Church. Francis brought the message of the Gospel to the poor to console them and to join with them in ecclesial communities. On the other hand, he disquieted the ecclesial institution with the Gospel and with his intuition that his charism was for the entire church and did not belong to him alone. In the midst of all the pain, the anger, and the disillusionment that some are experiencing because of what has been brought to light about our Church, I believe that one of the areas for peacemaking for us as Franciscans is in our relationship to the institutional Church. Perhaps for some of us, the experience of Church has been that of a love-hate relationship. I would venture to say that for some Franciscan women religious the Church is looked upon as "enemy." How will we be peacemakers, as individual religious and congregations, and as a Federation, in a Church that exerts authority over us religious but gives us little room for dialogue? To truly walk in the footsteps of Jesus as did Francis and Clare of Assisi is no easy task, especially today when we reflect on their relationship to the Catholic Church. As we know, Francis collected piles of stone, not to throw at an imperial and even scandalous Church of his time, but to repair the Church. How can we keep from getting stuck in our anger so that we can use our charism to recreate the Church?

To Use the Media to Share God's Goodness

We are a very educated group. Because of our knowledge and our experience in analyzing social situations, we are brought to a consciousness of what has been and what could be. Often we are the forerunners of knowing when traditional institutions are in crisis, including the institution of the Church and forms of religious life. We have the temptation to become very impatient and try to hurry the process for change to happen. We risk the danger of not distinguishing between the cultural superstructure of an institution and the spiritual core of that institution. The mystics among us see clearly where there are outdated structures and sinfulness, but they also know how to love, with gentleness and compassion, the weak human beings in the institution. We cannot let ourselves become paralyzed and pessimistic as institutions around us lose their stability. We need to let the fire of God's love burn in us, in the core of our beings, where we hear God call our names, where we know a deep peace that no one can take from us. This may call us to go figuratively or actually to the caves or to the mountains as Francis did so often. It is in those times that we know again that we also are sinners, but deeply loved by an extravagant God. It was in such moments that Francis knew that God was his all. Francis left the mountains and the caves to tell of God's goodness to the church leaders, to the mayor of the town, to the Sultan, to the people of Assisi, to the lepers living outside the city, to the larks, the pheasant, and the fish.

Could we Franciscans find a way to share good news, in contrast to and very different from the daily evening news? Could we find a way to use TV and other media effectively to help more people hear about the goodness of God and their neighbor? Is there a way that we could collaborate together or collaborate with others to do this? There may be those who would be very willing to work with us but who would need perhaps some of our resources of finances or personnel, but most of all our spiritual grounding, our charism which is a gift to be shared. William Johnston in the work cited earlier says, "The good news is for the tax collectors and the prostitutes, the gays and the addicts, the dropouts and the outcasts. It is precisely to these that the gospel will make the greatest appeal, and these will be the mystics of the future."

To Encourage Research about Our Third Order Tradition

Throughout this presentation I have spoken often about our Franciscan charism. It has come to my attention repeatedly this summer that there is very little written about our Third Order tradition. We have volumes about St. Francis and the First Order. Recently we have more information about Clare and the Second Order. We still have much to learn about us in the Third Order. As Roberta McKelvie says, "Franciscan history has been overshadowed by a centuries-long emphasis on the 'First Order'." (Having said that, I acknowledge in gratitude the credit to be given to the First Order for all the history that they have preserved for the entire family! Can you imagine us *not* having the information and the inspiration that the First Order has provided for us?) So then, starting with the foundation that we have, are there some here among us who are capable and willing to do the research necessary to document what is our Third Order tradition? For almost eight centuries the Secular Franciscans and the Third Order Regular have been engaged in the works of mercy in the various countries of the world. We have our mystics, our saints, our sinners, our peacemakers, our scholars. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have our story told?

To Become Peace Makers

We began this morning talking about chaos. Leonardo Boff tells us that contact with Francis always produces a profound and welcome crisis. I have a feeling that as we go through these next few days with Michael [Crosby] and Maria Elena [Martinez] and the panel, and as we participate in the breakout sessions, we will sometimes be disturbed, perhaps challenged to conversion, and even experience a powerful and welcome crisis. According to Jim Wallis (in his book, *Call to Conversion*), "fewer lives have been risked for peace than for war." Peacemaking will make us misunderstood in a world that knows violence better than peace. I would challenge us to take seriously our call to be mystics who love so deeply that there is no place for any personal violence in our lives. Just as any form of violence in some mysterious way fuels the engines of war, so peace in an individual life creates a climate for peace throughout the world. Peacemaking is not easy; it is hard work. We are called to be not just peace lovers or peace-keepers, but peacemakers. In the "Canticle of Creatures" Francis says, "Blessed are those who endure in peace." Bonaventure writes of Francis: "At the beginning and end of every sermon he announced peace; in every greeting he wished for peace; in every contemplation he sighed for ecstatic peace. . . ." He "was peaceable with those who hated peace." During these days may we feel a new call to, and then have the courage to be, peacemakers.

Conclusion

I would like to close by sharing with you a poem that was sent to me from a friend in Nicaragua. The poem was written by Pablo Neruda and translated by Stephen Mitchell. Please let yourself listen to the meaning of the poem, more than to the words of the translation. The poem is entitled "Keeping Quiet":

Now we will count to twelve
And we will all keep still.

This one time upon the earth,
let's not speak any language,
let's stop for one second,
and not move our arms so much.

It would be a delicious moment,
without hurry, without locomotives,
all of us would be together
in a sudden uneasiness.

The fisherman in the cold sea
would do no harm to the whales
and the peasant gathering salt
would look at his torn hands.
Those who prepare green wars,
wars of gas, wars of fire,
victories without survivors,
would put on clean clothing
and would walk alongside their brothers [and sisters]
in the shade, without doing a thing.

What I want shouldn't be confused
with final inactivity;
life alone is what matters,
I want nothing to do with death.

If we weren't unanimous
about keeping our lives so much in motion,
if we could do nothing for once,
perhaps a great silence would
interrupt this sadness,
this never understanding ourselves
and threatening ourselves with death,
perhaps the earth is teaching us
when everything seems dead
and then everything is alive.

Now I will count to twelve
and you keep quiet and I'll go.

Recommended Reading

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For unto us a child is born
unto us a son is given,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful,
Counselor. . .
Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:5

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Being Franciscan Peacemakers in a Chaotic World: A Conversation Considered

Maria Elena Martinez O.S.F., and
Michael Crosby O.F.M. Cap.

Introduction

The annual meeting of the Franciscan Federation of the Third Order Regular took place in St. Louis, August 14-17, 2002. The task of the keynote presenters was to challenge participants to find new ways to use their charism of peacemaking to recreate the church and to respond to new needs in the world in the face of the chaos that exists in both spheres today. The following material summarizes the presentations of the conference.

> Conversation is always an experiment. . . .[Each party who engages in conversation] . . . starts with a willingness to emerge [from the process] a slightly different person. Conversation involves risk . . . [as its] results are never guaranteed. Conversation is an adventure in which we agree to cook the world together and make it taste less bitter.[1]

These observations of Theodore Zeldin are germane to the method used by the keynote speakers at the conference. Along the way, they invited those in attendance into the conversation. The context is laid out first. Each element of the title *Being Franciscan Peacemakers in a Chaotic World* is then explored separately. We hope that this text presents what was at the heart of our experience during those days.

The Context

Major church and world events of 2001-2002 surfaced a vulnerability uncharacteristic of us both as Americans and as Catholics. The frightening events of September 11, 2001, literally brought the nation to its knees. In the months following, the continuing revelations of cases of abuse by American clergy, until now cloaked in silence, added to our dismay.

Our sense of power and security crumbled as terrorist planes demolished our architectural symbols of economic and military might, taking the lives of thousands right before our eyes. Almost simultaneously, institutional secrecy has eroded the church's credibility and has shaken our trust in people we thought we could trust.

As a nation, America's thoughts quickly turned to retaliation. Along with our destructive presence in Afghanistan, national leaders are now preparing to launch a war in Iraq in the name of ridding the world of terrorism and evil. The Catholic hierarchy has issued a no-exceptions policy on sexual abuse without ever acknowledging that its own silence was, in fact, complicity. Where are we in the face of all this? Are we be tempted to be overwhelmed by it all? Do we feel vulnerable? How can we respond in positive ways to these events? Perhaps we are now being invited, in light of these events, to look at our world, nation(s) and church with "new eyes"; one perspective might be that of people "in exile." We are being challenged to choose a response that will demonstrate to all our love, compassion and courage in the face of other calls for angry retaliation and war. Peaceful responses would emerge from our sense of *oikologia* -we are all members of the world community who can choose to share ourselves and our resources because Jesus has shown us the way. That is, we can be individuals and communities whose way of being in the world is marked by healing, reconciliation, compassion and prophetic vision.

Chaos Theory

Let's look at our post-modern world through some different facets, as through a prism. What light can chaos and systems theory, along with scriptural grounding and the Third Order Regular Rule, shed on us, our church and our world with respect to sin and grace?

Looking at the church and world today through the lens of chaos theory, we find much that is positive and energizing. Margaret Wheatley, in her seminal work, *Leadership and the New Science*, describes her own effort to learn about the order, organization, and potential for growth that accompany chaos. She writes:

> Chaos is a necessary stage for any organism seeking to become more adaptive and healthier in its environment. Neither we nor our organizations can transform ourselves without being willing to pass through the dark night of chaos. If chaos is a necessary step in the creative, life-growing process, then we need to change our usual approaches to it.[2]

When we learn to work with chaos, when we find new ways of thinking about it, we can learn that chaos has its own wisdom, grace, order, and beauty. Chaos cannot be controlled, but it can be befriended.

The Genesis account of creation gives us an early encounter with the concept of chaos, whose Hebrew root *tohu wabohu* means "the formless void." We read in Genesis a description of the underlying dynamic of the interconnectedness of all:

> *In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and the darkness covered the abyss, [tohu wabohu] while a mighty wind [Ruah] swept over the waters. Then God spoke. . . .God looked at everything and found it very good* (Genesis 1:1-3, 31).

RFP

Chaos asks us to stand back in faith, to live with a sense of confidence in the face of messiness. Chaos invites us to be attuned to the breath of the Spirit and let go of our temptation to want to fix, control, or otherwise address the situation. With the breath of the Spirit, patterns emerge from chaos, and the situation finds its own strength and force, its own new creation.

Systems Theory

Through the lens of systems thinking, seeing the inter-connectivity among all that is, we come to know and believe that nothing happens in isolation. The economy, poverty, politics, culture, and lifestyle are connected, not only in the United States but also around the earth. Wisdom in this post-modern age might indeed be the ability to see the existing connections and to make new connections that will highlight the underlying patterns in today's chaos.

Systems thinking helps us to get to the root of all the *isms* that poison our thinking. When we perceive others as less than human and set up unequal power relationships with them- racism, ageism, sexism, etc.-we lose sight of the connections that bind us to one another. *Isms* are both cause and effect of our dehumanization of others. Some *isms* come to us almost in our mothers' milk, while others are learned beyond our homes and families. As Franciscans,

our core value of minority/humility is the most meaningful response to unequal power relationships (*isms*).

The creative nub of systems thinking, like that of chaos theory, is the sure knowledge that my life touches and affects the lives of others, just as surely as the butterfly that flutters its wings in the rain forest of South America causes, but does not direct, a hurricane on the other side of the globe. The individual, the family and community, the infrastructure, and the environment are inextricably intertwined, and every effort on one individual's part to get beyond racism also reduces sexism and ageism in all of our lives. There are three ways to go about this:

- to believe that we are all relatives (*mitakuye oyasen*);
- to suspend all received notions about our own power over "others";
- to understand that we are to lead obediently.

What better way to see the sacredness in all of creation, to acknowledge the dignity of others than to walk in sacredness with them? What better way than to look through God's eyes at all that is and to know that it is good?

Dialogue and conversation are important tools for achieving this kind of peaceful stance. However, we live in a tradition that acknowledges the realities of sin and grace, and we understand that we are always on the way. In *Inclusion: Making Room for Grace*, Eric Law describes what he calls the *grace margin*. It is the space between our comfort zone where we feel safe and the stretching zone where we are called to change, to adapt. The act of naming and describing our own comfort zone, Law tells us, and allowing others to invite us to go further, brings us into the possibilities of the grace margin. Being in the grace margin brings us face-to-face with chaos and all its possibilities:

> In the grace margin, we invite people to share their stories in honest and authentic ways. In the grace margin, we invite people to listen compassionately to one another's revelation. In the grace margin, we strive to maintain a balance of motivation to dialogue, curiosity in learning from each other, and give-and-take of power.[4]

The events of September 11, 2001 and the scandals in the church today call us to stretch, to find the grace in the chaos, the mess. They call us into the grace margin.

Being Franciscan

We Third Order Regular Franciscans, our families and communities, our world and our church, our environment live in sin and are in need of forgive-

ness and conversion. If the heart of conversion is to admit that we have sinned and in doing so have diminished not only ourselves as persons, but everyone and everything else with whom we are in relationship, then surely the fruits of conversion are grace and new life for all else as well for "where sin abounds, there grace does more abound" (Romans 5:20).

Within the grace margin, conversion, the charism of Third Order Regular Franciscans can take place. We live in a nation and belong to a church whose official representatives often cannot acknowledge that they've done anything wrong, that they have sinned. What a profound and sorely needed gift the TOR charism could be if we believed and then acted as if individual conversion, transformation at the deepest level of our being, also effects, *must* also effect, conversion of family, community, infrastructure, and environment as well! Isn't this exactly what Francis and Clare innately knew and preached?

Francis and Clare underwent, each in his/her own way, personal conversion which led to a change in lifestyle. Each was then impelled to work for conversion of family, community, the church, the world, and long ahead of the rest of the world, the environment. They lived in relationship, addressing all as brother and sister. How in our times can we live as creatively with chaos as did Francis and Clare in their own era? The answer-and the model for the evangelical life-is found in Jesus' description of his true family. In Matthew's version of the story, told that his mother and brothers were standing outside waiting to speak to him, Jesus responded with a gesture that included all the disciples, "Here are my mother and brothers. For whoever does the will of God in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12: 50). With these words, Jesus upended the ***isms*** of his own day, seeing all as brothers and sisters regardless of family, national origin, religious belief, or worldview.

In the new community under God's reign envisioned by Jesus, everyone is equal. This is an alternative to the typical community of subject and authority whether in Jesus' 1st century, Francis and Clare's 13th century, or our own 21st century. Jesus came into the world wherever there was chaos and created the new household in which all are brothers and sisters. When we live in this new household, our perspective is enlarged beyond accepting Jesus as personal savior to a world where we see as a greater good the reallocation of resources so that everyone has what s/he needs because we are all in relationship to one another.

Both history and our Third Order documents tell us that Francis and Clare understood this dynamic, gave it flesh in their own lives. Francis gave us the values found in the Third Order Regular Rule which we have embraced to help us do the same in our own day. Francis and Clare's contemporaries saw this in lives of gentleness and joy, of non-compliance and compassion. Third Order Regular members today tend to more consciously recall the former two

characteristics and be less aware of the latter two. Both non-compliance, the product of a discerning heart, and compassion, the virtue of a loving heart, are beyond law and perhaps beyond reason and understanding. Each grows, and is nurtured in, the heart of persons who know who they are in the eyes of a loving God. Each is founded on fidelity to God and to self. Each rests on a contemplative way of being in relationship to all.

The antidote to the discomfort of the formless void-chaos-is to remember that *ruah*, the Spirit of God hovers over it. The Spirit transforms negative energies such as domination and control into loving care and non-violence. When Francis, open to the Spirit, kissed the leper, he found that "what before seemed bitter was changed into sweetness of soul and body." In this act, Francis entered the grace margin and was converted.

Third Order Regular Franciscans are called to be and must choose to be with the *minores*. Today's reality for us is that of exile, exile in our own land and exile in our own church. The grace of conversion is to be exiles in solidarity with all other exiles who, though they lack the safety and security of a home, possess the strength and grace of relationship. Exiles live in the grace margin, ripe for conversion. Can we truly live as exiles, as pilgrims and strangers in these times?

Making Peace

While living in a world and church whose official representatives seem to have turned their backs on the creative possibilities of chaos, we've seen through a number of facets (chaos and systems theories, Sacred Scripture, and the values of our Rule) that interconnectivity, relationship, is key to who we are and how we act. We are constantly being called into relationship. How does relationship nurture peacemaking?

Each perspective we've explored can be maximized only in the absence of dominance and control. This has implications, as we've seen, on every level. On the individual level, self-acceptance is key. Making peace within our own hearts implies giving up the desire to control. It means that we constantly and willingly engage in the arduous journey toward self-knowledge, accepting both gifts and shadow, and living at ease with a God who loves us unconditionally.

Extending this same process to the family and community level implies willingness on our part to ask forgiveness, to engage in penance for the sake of conversion, and to seek reconciliation with those to whom we are the closest, our family and extended family, the communities in which we live. Expanding outward, we can then take a prophetic stance toward our nation and our church, each a complex infrastructure that sometimes loses sight and sensitivity toward the individuals they exist to serve. On these levels, the way to make peace

is to first seek justice for our brothers and sisters forgotten or hurt by the structures built to serve them. Peace will follow only after the establishment of right relationship with one another.

Making brothers and sisters of others on each of these levels, and expanding beyond to the level of the environment is the only way to make peace in the only world we know. Thus, being Franciscan peacemakers in the midst of chaos is the life-long journey we undertake, the journey of conversion that leads us back to the God "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." On this journey, there is no enemy, only the *other*, with whom we are already interconnected who invites us into relationship as brother and sister and mother. We walk through life knowing that there is no enemy.

Practical Pieces

In addition to the keynote speakers who addressed the conference, each day there were opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue with Franciscan visitors who are African, Asian, Northern European, Central and South American, and native North American. Near the end of the meeting they participated in a panel discussion, sharing what they wanted to teach us about peacemaking and reconciliation.

- From Brazil: We have a commission on justice and peace which is composed mostly of laity; it tries to support local groups with connections to Franciscans International. **"We ask you to *be concrete* and incorporate those from other cultures: We are called to be twins."**
- From Uganda: On individual levels, we observe the rituals of our clan; we interact with other tribes/nationalities, learning their issues. **"We value each culture."**
- From the Cameroon: There are polygamous families with many children who live together without fighting. Everyone shares what they have with others, whether in the family, the tribe, or the clan. **"Please influence the government not to support political/social/economic dictatorship; do not allow the draining of our natural resources."**
- From Jamaica: Lobby and promote legislation that supports legalization of drugs in this country. **"Disempower the drug cartels and corrupt officials."**
- From Tanzania: We share prayer in small Christian communities; we need you to share what you have. **"Become educated: go to other nations and cultures for first-hand experience."**

- From India: Out of two billion people, 80% live below the poverty line; there are more than 100 languages in my country. **"Only 2 % of the people are Christian. We need you to know of the persecution of Christian missionaries."**

"Were not our own hearts burning within us . . ." (Luke 24:32) as we've come to know that the journey toward relationship as brothers and sisters is the only way we can grow toward *Being Franciscan Peacemakers in a Chaotic World*?

Endnotes

[1]Theodore Zedlin, *Conversation: How Talk Can Change Our Lives* (Mahwah, NJ: Hidden Spring, 2002), 2, 3.

[2]Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science* (San Francisco: Berrett-Hohler, 1992), Introduction.

[3]*The Holy Bible*. New Revised Standard Version. All Scripture citations are taken from this edition.

[4]Eric Law, Inclusion: *Making Room for Grace* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 45.

> INCLUSION IS A DISCIPLINE OF EXTENDING OUR BOUNDARY TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION ANOTHER'S NEEDS, INTERESTS, EXPERIENCE, AND PERSPECTIVE, WHICH WILL LEAD TO CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF OURSELVES AND OTHERS, FULLER DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE AT HAND, AND POSSIBLY A NEWLY NEGOTIATED BOUNDARY OF THE COMMUNITY TO WHICH WE BELONG.
>
> ERIC LAW, MAKING ROOM FOR GRACE, 42

The Cord, 52.6 (2002)

Peacemakers' Banquet Reflection

Marie Lucey, O.S.F.

PEACE.
Pace.
Pacem.
Paz.
Shalom.
Shalem.

It's a lovely word; a nice word; a word that can conjure up images of tranquillity–walking in the woods, watching the sun rise or set over the ocean, sitting by a calm lake or in a hushed garden, or on top of a solitary mountain. Isn't PEACE something that every heart desires? Then why is PEACE so difficult to achieve? Why is it so foreign to our chaotic world? Why did the first companions of Francis beg him not to ask them to give a greeting of peace in the town of Assisi? A greeting which brought down on them ridicule, scorn, and abuse? I will return to this paradox of PEACE.

It is truly an honor to be invited to offer a reflection at this evening's celebration of Franciscan peacemaking and peacemakers. All of us gathered in this room can consider ourselves Franciscan peacemakers, at least we strive to be, although each congregation has chosen one member to be especially honored tonight. When Sharon [Dillon] invited me to share some thoughts at this celebration, I didn't ask, "Why me?" because I thought she might change her mind! Perhaps it is because of sheer longevity. Perhaps because my ministry in congregational leadership was preceded for many years by peace and justice ministry. In my mind, though probably not in Sharon's, it may have been because of two letters: one that I wrote, and one that I received.

In 1978, when I was asked to assume responsibility for promoting peace and justice efforts in my community, I did what most of us probably do when we assume a responsibility–I looked around for allies, partners, others with

whom I could collaborate and network. So, in 1979, I wrote a letter to Roberta Cusack, then Executive Director of the Federation, asking if there were any plans underway to build a Franciscans for Peace movement, similar to the Benedictines for Peace group. After all, if the Benedictines were publicly announcing a mission of peacemaking, certainly the Franciscans should be! And-I wrote-if the Federation had no intention of initiating such an effort, then our congregation would. A rather brash proclamation on my part! Fortunately the Federation Board thought the idea was worth considering and invited me to speak to the membership-at that time, only congregational leadership, at the 1980 Conference. The membership supported the creation of a Federation Peace and Justice Committee which began to meet in 1981, and did considerable work on materials for reflection on the Bishops' Peace Pastoral and provided input for the pastoral letter on the economy. It was this committee that developed the statement on Franciscan Peacemaking around the values of Contemplation, Conversion, Poverty and Minority.

The second letter was one I received from Elizabeth Cameron, a Clinton, Iowa Franciscan, urging our Peace and Justice Committee to promote a Franciscan presence at the United Nations, and offering her services to work in an office there. When we discussed Elizabeth's letter in committee, we thought it might be prophetic and recommended that it be brought to the membership at the next Conference. Of the several recommendations we made that year, this one brought the most enthusiastic response. The rest is history, as the saying goes. And I raise it up because it is a piece of the history of the Third Order Regular that we need to remember, because sometimes our role in bringing about a Franciscan Non-Government Organization at the United Nations is overlooked. Franciscan Brother of Brooklyn, Tom Grady, and Franciscan Sister of the Poor, Bernadette Sullivan, invested a great deal of time, energy, and hard, sometimes frustrating work, in bringing Franciscans International into being in collaboration with the larger Franciscan family. Then Kevin Smith became the first Director.

In the 1980's, when the Peace and Justice Committee was doing its work, we thought that the outlook for world peace couldn't be worse. It was the time of the Cold War, nuclear weapon stockpiling, Reaganomics, and plans for a missile defense system–Star Wars. But here we are in 2002, and it has grown worse–or at least more complicated. We seem to have circled back to the same place, but with significant differences. Like a spiral, the spin is to an old, yet new, place. The Cold War is long over, and the evil enemy of the 1980s is now an ally. There is no longer a Soviet Union or a Berlin Wall. We thought for a while that we were beyond nuclear threat and Star War fantasies. But nations who were not even players twenty years ago now have access to destructive nuclear power that our country arrogantly thought only we had the right to possess. Nuclear war is again in the realm of possibility, as is biochemical war-

fare, and the U.S. military budget is more inflated than it has ever been. So here we are with a similar script and some of the same actors from the 1980s, but in a different theater, a part of the world that has special significance for those who follow the Francis who visited the Sultan.

In addition, there have been two pivotal occurrences that none of us imagined at our Conference just last year. First, on September 11, the unthinkable happened. Our home was the one attacked. Until that moment, we had worked for peace and prayed for an end to violence that was happening somewhere else. But this attack was against us, on our soil. How did we respond as Franciscan peacemakers? Like everyone else, we experienced shock, outrage, disbelief, grief. Did we also want retaliation and revenge? This was a terrible test of our convictions. After all, even Ghandi, that great disciple of non-violence, said that if there were only the choice between running away and fighting, he would favor fighting over cowardice. All of us Franciscan peacemakers gathered in this room-how did each of us react to the horror of 9/11? Perhaps some of us felt that retaliation was the only choice open to our country. Perhaps some of us never doubted that a violent response was out of the question. Perhaps many of us found ourselves struggling between our gospel, Franciscan commitment to peace and our personal and national anger demanding that we fight back. More important than our initial emotional reactions nearly a year ago, especially for those close the scenes of destruction and who knew people who were killed, is how we view, now, the continued bombing of Afghanistan, the threats of attacking Iraq, and the continued drain of our national resources away from health, education, social services, and environmental protection into so-called "homeland security" and weapons of war. Are we able to hear the insistent peacemaking message of Jesus which Francis took so seriously?

The second pivotal occurrence was also very close to home, the cracking open of official Church secrecy about clergy sexual abuse of minors, with the resulting loss of credibility of United States Bishops whose teaching we had called on in our peacemaking work. We know that this crisis is not yet over. Those of us who are not members of the clergy know that we may yet experience allegations and the resulting personal and communal anguish. We also have as part of our Franciscan legacy, Francis's great love for the church and its ministers, a love very much aware of scandal and sinfulness in the Church, yet which reached out in an embrace of peace and reconciliation.

Francis of Assisi understood so well why "Peace" was a threatening word in a violent society and Church. Which brings me back to my initial question. Why, when PEACE is so desirable, is it so difficult and challenging? Why were the first brothers as well as peacemakers today often ridiculed and abused for holding onto and speaking such an apparently harmless word? There are probably a number of responses to this question, but I offer two for your reflection.

The first is that in the biblical understanding of the text, "peace and justice kiss." Not the juridical justice of an eye-for-an-eye, but the distributive justice of sharing whatever we have; of providing for the widow, the orphan, and the alien; of seeing each person and all creation as sister and brother and acting accordingly. The scripture readings some weeks ago recalled for us the anguished cry of Jeremiah, "We wait for peace to no avail; for a time of healing, but terror comes instead." This is a cry as painfully fresh today as it was thousands of years ago, a reminder to us that ours is not the first experience of a chaotic world. As long as we try to separate "peace" from "justice" the world will be chaotic; it will not be in the right relationship demanded by its Creator and modelled in human living by Jesus Christ. In our own lifetime (for most of us, at least), Pope John XXIII made clear that "Peace is more than the absence of war." Isn't absence of war how nations define peace? Isn't this why Jesus promised faithful followers a peace that the world cannot give? What is the "more" than the absence of war? It was never stated more succinctly than by Pope Paul VI: "If you want peace, work for justice."

Neither Jesus nor Francis were social reformers. They were more: they were radical promoters of the reign of God; they called for conversion of life and transformation of society. They knew that unjust social structures were in opposition to God's vision for the world, so they lived lives that were counter to the prevailing culture in which each lived. Yet, even for us, followers of the gospel way of life, "justice" can be a discomforting word, and we may try to disassociate it from "peace." In my own personal experience, and I suspect this was true for others, the ministry of working for justice was initially a painful one because many of our own sisters viewed it as "political," and therefore outside the holy work of religious men and women. Works of charity were applauded; the work of justice was suspect. Not by all, and in my fortunate case, not by elected leadership; but by many members for whom embracing the work of justice was a very difficult challenge. But over the years, minds were opened and hearts were moved. The greatest confirmation for me that our sisters recognized that peace and justice must kiss was in 1996, when they elected to congregational leadership several of us who had long been committed to peace and justice, who had sometimes been thorns in the side. I was very proud of our sisters for electing to leadership some of the "justice folks!" And I was very grateful to God that they were able to take that risk.

The second response I offer to the paradox of the peace question is that our 21st century culture lacks imagination. Developing a culture of peace calls

for so much more creativity than building a culture of war. War is a concept easily grasped: there is an enemy; one of us must win and one of us must lose; so we set to work building more and bigger weapons, and we use every means available to "sell" the need for war to a people that must be willing to make great sacrifices, even the lives of beloved family members and friends. But Peace calls for thinking "outside the box," as we have come to describe imagination today. I often quote Walter Bruggeman's *The Prophetic Imagination* which I believe is still one of the most relevant books of our time. Bruggeman states that our culture can build almost anything–and imagine almost nothing. We know how to make war; we have no idea how to make peace, because we cannot imagine it. When 9/11 shattered our complacent, globally unaware national psyche, we reacted with war, because war was the only response we knew how to make. But we must find other ways. In his recent book, *I'd Rather Teach Peace*, Colman McCarthy states: "If we don't teach our children peace, someone else will teach them violence." We know this to be tragically true.

As Franciscan peacemakers we have a daunting challenge: how to work for peace in a world that does not live by distributive justice, a culture that puts its faith in war as a means to accomplish peace, and a Church that has a powerful body of social teaching, but whose leadership suffers from damaged credibility. A starting point for all of us, elected leaders and members alike, is to recommit ourselves to working for peace with justice, even when it is as hard for us as it was for the companions of Francis, and to try ourselves to cultivate and promote imaginative approaches to peace. We also may be ridiculed and abused when we cross lines in the name of peace with justice; we may be patted on the head and called naive when we call for non-violent responses to conflict; we many lose the financial support of benefactors. When these things happen to us, we need to remind ourselves and each other that this is what Jesus meant by taking up our cross and following him; and what Francis meant by "perfect joy." A strange kind of joy, indeed. But our Rule and Life clearly states, in the words of Francis:

> . . . it should be obvious that they are joyful, good humored, and happy in the Lord. . . .And in greeting others, let them say, "The Lord give you peace." (5:20)

Not a small part of our joy is each other, the brothers and the sisters, companions on the journey. When Francis finally figured out what the Lord required of him, he tells us, "The Lord gave me brothers." What a gift our sisterhood and brotherhood is for the daunting work of peacemaking. May we support and encourage each other; may we listen to the prophetic voices in our communities, and may the prophetic voices hear the concerned questions of others, especially those responsible for the common good; together, may we

have the daring wisdom to imagine a world of peace, and the compassionate courage to work for a peace with justice. It is together that we are able to do the impossible; that is, in the words of songwriter and singer, Libby Roderick, to "dance in front of the guns."[1] I would like to close this evening with some of the lyrics of this song which one of our sisters in initial formation shared with me, and which I quoted in my opening remarks to our Chapter assembly in June in the context of facing the future as Franciscan women. There are all kinds of guns facing us; may we be bold enough, and imaginative enough, to hold tight to God's hand, to the hands of Francis and Clare, to each other's hands, and accept the invitation of the song:

We're facing the guns again
We have faced them before
Humanity's longing after so many deaths
for something more human than war.
But part of me whispers
Take your body and run away,
Leave the vision to somebody else—
Then I hear myself say

I'd rather be dancing
at the edge of my grave.
I'd rather be holding you close as we
march forward loving and brave.
I'd rather be singing
in the face of my fear,
I'd rather be dancing in front of the guns
as long as I'm here.
I'd rather be dancing in front of the guns
as long as I'm here.
Dance with me as long as I'm here.

Endnote

[1]"Thinking Like a Mountain," Libby Roderick Music, Turtle Island Records, n.d.

Recommended Readings

Bruggeman, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.

McCarthy, Colman. *I'd Rather Be Teaching Peace*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002.

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More Than A Legend: The Wolf of Gubbio

Jean François Godet-Calogeras

There is a page in early Franciscan literature that fits perfectly the theme of nonviolence: the story of Francis and the wolf of Gubbio. Francis of Assisi has been for centuries universally known, admired and liked for his ability to speak to the birds and to befriend a wolf. Famous as they are, those stories are, nevertheless, usually considered just legends expressing Francis's kindness toward every creature, including fierce beasts. There is, of course, much more to them, and that is what we would like to consider as we move into the season that commemorates the birth of the Prince of Peace.

Where Do We Find the Story of The Wolf of Gubbio?

We have only two medieval documents reporting the story of the wolf of Gubbio, the *Fioretti di san Francesco* and the *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius*. In both documents this story is told in chapter twenty-one. The *Fioretti* are better known and have been translated many times into many languages. In English, they are called the *Little Flowers of Saint Francis*. They are a collection of beautiful stories about Francis which greatly emphasize the supernatural. The *Fioretti* were written in Italian by an anonymous Franciscan friar toward the end of the fourteenth century. The *Actus* represents the main ancestor of the *Fioretti*. The text dates from the 1330s, when it was written in Latin by a certain Brother Ugolino in Central Italy.

Interestingly, no early biography of Francis contains the story of Francis and the wolf of Gubbio, a city not too far from Assisi. Neither do the texts of Thomas of Celano, Bonaventure, the Legend of Perugia nor the Assisi Compilation relate how Francis freed the people of Greccio, a small town in the Rieti valley between Assisi and Rome, from a plague of wolves and hail. But, even though the city of Gubbio is mentioned on various occasions because several events of Francis's life happened there, the writers ignored the story of the wolf, deliberately or not.

Although the *Actus* and the *Fioretti* cannot be considered as early documents since they were written well over a hundred years after Francis's lifetime, they depend on an oral tradition that does go back to Francis. One can wonder, then, whether the first hagiographers had ever heard a story like the wolf of Gubbio; or if, for whatever reasons, did not judge it worthy to be included in their work. That should not surprise us: nowadays old stories about Francis and Clare that were never put in writing can still be heard from Umbrian people.

The Story

Once upon a time when our holy father Francis was still alive, there happened in the city of Gubbio something wonderful and worth being frequently remembered. Here is the story, not strictly translated, but rather retold according to the *Actus* version.

The event took place around 1220. Francis happened to come to Gubbio at a time when there was a conflict between the people of the city and a wolf; this was not unusual if we read the early documents. The wolf was so hungry that it would venture near the town looking for something to eat. Some animals had already been devoured; even some individuals had perished. The people were under siege.

The wolf is a fascinating creature, admired and feared at the same time. Throughout the ages and in many cultures it has been a symbol of wildness. That is probably why wolves have been–and still are–hunted with a sort of rage by humans. The wolf is seen as a threat. For most people the relationship to the wolf is conflictual and competitive: the wolf has to be outdone, and the only way to outdo the wolf is to kill it. That perception is mostly irrational. The people of Gubbio were no different: they were terrified and wanted to get rid of that wolf by killing it.

Enter Francis. Because he is a disciple of Jesus and wants to live the Gospel, Francis is a peacemaker: "Blessed are those who work for peace! They will be known as God's children" (Mt. 5:9). Francis feels for the people of Gubbio. So he decides to do something for them: he will meet the wolf. To do that, he has to go outside the city walls, he has to leave the security found with the walls. The people warn Francis not to do it because it is too dangerous, and because, of course, the wolf is vicious and will kill him.

However, Francis is a very determined man, one who gets his strength not from weapons but from his faith. He knows that human beings as well as animals are creatures of the same God. He sees no need for weapons. Francis does not believe in weapons. He will meet the wolf as one creature meets another creature, keeping in mind the Creator.

So Francis goes, with his companion. Notice that Francis has always at least one companion with him: the Franciscan journey is a communal thing. As always happens in such circumstances, the fearful people must see what is happening, expecting of course a confrontation, maybe some blood . . . . They climb on whatever they can-walls, roofs or trees-to see what is going to happen between the good Francis and the mean wolf.

They will not be disappointed. Francis and his companion have not been walking long outside the city when the wolf runs toward them, looking fierce, with its mouth wide open. The brothers are not terrified. Francis simply makes a sign of the cross. The wolf slows down and closes its mouth. Then Francis addresses the wolf: "Come here, brother wolf, and on behalf of Christ I want you not to hurt me or my companion." The witnesses cannot believe it! The wolf comes and quietly lays down at Francis's feet, as gentle as a lamb.

"Brother wolf," says Francis, "you have been doing a lot of terrible things in this area; you have been ruthlessly killing and devouring God's creatures, not merely animals but even human beings made in God's image. Now the whole city is against you and wants you dead. But I want to make peace between you, brother wolf, and those people, so that from now on you do not hurt anybody anymore, and the people and their dogs stop hounding you."

The wolf, moving its body, its tail, its ears, its head, clearly shows that it totally agrees with Francis. So Francis goes on: "Brother wolf, since you agree with this peace pact, I promise you that I will have the people of that city pay attention to your needs for the rest of your life. For I realize that all the harm you did, you did because you were awfully hungry. So, brother wolf, I will get you that favor, but I want you to promise me that from now on you will do no harm to anybody, animal or human being, ever again. Do you promise?"

Again, the wolf nods, showing its agreement. "Brother wolf," Francis says then, "I want you to give me a mark of your word, so that I can truly believe that you promise." And as Francis extends his hand, the wolf lifts its right paw and puts it gently there, giving him the sign he was seeking. "Brother wolf," says Francis, "in the name of Jesus Christ, I now want you to come with me. Be not afraid, we are going to make that peace in the name of the Lord God."

Trusting Francis, the wolf follows him back to the city. The people who have been watching cannot believe it, of course. They quickly broadcast the news, and it does not take long before the whole town gathers together on the public square where Francis and the wolf have arrived. Francis addresses the crowd, inviting them to change the way they live. The fact that a single animal is able to spread such huge and general terror is a sign that something is not right. "Listen, my dear friends," he tells them, "our brother wolf that you see here in front of you promised me and gave me a sign it wants to make peace with you. It will not hurt you any more if you, in turn, promise to pay attention to its needs every day. And I can personally vouch that the wolf will steadfastly observe that peace agreement."

The people of Gubbio do not hesitate and promise to feed the wolf every day. Then in front of everybody Francis turns to the wolf and asks: "And you, brother wolf, do you also promise to observe that peace agreement and not to hurt anybody, animal or human being?" In answer to that, the wolf kneels, nods, and clearly indicates with motions of its body, tail and ears that it will observe the agreement.

"Brother wolf," continues Francis, "as you gave me your word when we were out there, please show me again in the presence of those people that you truly promise and that I can trust you." Again the wolf lifts its right paw placing it in Francis's hand.

Sr. Ann Bauer

The people are flabbergasted. They explode in joy. They thank Francis. They praise Jesus Christ who sent him. The peace between the wolf and the people of Gubbio is wonderful, a real miracle.

According to the tradition, the peace agreement was truly observed. The wolf never hurt anybody again. The people made sure it had always enough to eat. Even the dogs were friendly with it. After two years, the wolf died of old age and his death was regretted by all the people.

The Story's Meaning in Franciscan History

It would be difficult to interpret the silence of the thirteenth century documents since we do not know if their authors were aware of the story of Francis and the wolf in Gubbio. But we can see the meaning and the importance the story had for the authors of the *Actus* and the *Fioretti*. The latter has a particular taste for the wondrous, the marvelous, as is stated in the beginning of the text: "This book contains several little flowers, miracles and devout examples of Christ's glorious little poor, sir saint Francis, and of some of his holy companions." Through his legendary tales the author of the *Fioretti* wants to edify all who hear the stories. History proved him successful. The *Fioretti* have carried Franciscan virtues throughout the ages.

Rather than focusing on miraculous aspects of events, the author of the *Actus* is more down-to-earth. When he tells his stories, it seems that he wants to teach models of action, guidelines of Franciscan behavior and attitudes in particular situations. That is probably why the *Actus* speak more to us in these days.

The Story's Meaning for Franciscans and for Friends of Justice and Peace

There is the tendency to ask "Should we take the story of the wolf of Gubbio as historical? Did it really happen? Did things occur the way the story portrays them?" This is probably not the right approach. Let us remember that scientific and rational expression are only two forms of human expression. They are rather modern and western concepts. People in medieval Europe had other ways of expression, very often using symbols, allegories, metaphors, parables and hyperboles to transmit a message.

The story of the wolf of Gubbio is the story of a conflict between two parties in which Francis gets involved. Through the events and Francis's intervention, the author elaborates a whole theory of conflict resolution or peacemaking. As Franciscans and friends of peace, we are deeply interested in such theory to inspire our own action.

The Elements of Franciscan Involvement in Conflict Resolution

Facing a conflict, Franciscans first need to reach out and get involved. After listening to the people of Gubbio and their complaint, Francis felt concerned and decided to go and meet the other party. He refused to condemn and demonize the wolf before meeting it. The level of personal involvement is

clear. Every conflict to some extent affects the whole of humankind because it affects the common good. Individualism is a delusion; we journey together in this world. We may not be responsible for the decisions others make, but we are responsible for the interpersonal atmosphere and climate which may affect those decisions.

The second Franciscan element of conflict resolution is to be unarmed. Using weapons is violent, and violence cannot bring a real solution. Bearing weapons is a threat and calls for another threat in return. Weapons and violence are a spiral that simply needs to be stopped somewhere, some time, by someone. This is far from being easy. Nonviolence requires courage, strength and wisdom. It also requires community. *Væ soli*, woe is the lonely! We need companions. Francis went to meet the wolf without any weapon-but with a companion.

The next element Francis teaches us about resolving conflict is keeping God in the center. Not for the sake of having some magic or supernatural power, but to remember that we are not on top, we are not in control, we do not own this world. We are *part of* a wonderful creation, and wonderfully called to take care of it, enjoy it and share it with respect. That is the common good. Creation is for everyone of us.

The fourth element is a consequence of the previous one and is at the core of the Franciscan movement: we are all brothers and sisters, and we must deal with one another as such. All creatures deserve to be approached as brother or sister, no matter what; that is, as someone we would hate to hurt or lose forever. Then there is room for what is deeply necessary for true conflict resolution: forgiveness and reconciliation from both parties. Francis reconciled the wolf with the people of Gubbio and then he reconciled the people of Gubbio with the wolf. In a conflict there are no good and no bad sides; there are only parties that stand apart for some reason. There is a need for mutual forgiveness to get back on the common journey. There is a need for reconciliation to journey together again without fear and hatred.

However, there is also a need for a change, and this is the ultimate element in peacemaking. Conflicts arise mostly from unjust situations that need to be identified and corrected. Francis realized that the wolf's rage was coming from hunger. The wolf had the right to eat as much as did the people of Gubbio, who had plenty of food. Francis convinced the people of Gubbio that it was just–hence in their interest also-to share their food with brother wolf. If we want peace, we must bring justice into the situation. We cannot *make* peace; rather, peace *flows from* justice. If we agree that Franciscans are by nature peacemakers, as are other disciples of Christ and other people of good will, then we must admit that working for justice is not merely an option. Those who want peace must do justice.

Conclusion

Conflicts happen in all fields and at all levels. We should not be afraid of them. We should not deny them. But do we learn how to deal with them? We can wonder what the million Franciscans around the world have to say to the "wolves" and to the "people" today. The story of Francis and the wolf of Gubbio offers us both inspiration and example.

Endnote

[1]Bibliographic note: The *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius* were first published by the famous French Franciscan scholar Paul Sabatier in Paris, in 1902. Since then more manuscripts have been discovered. A new edition, prepared by James Campbell, O.F.M., was published in Assisi in 1988. The *Actus* was recently translated in English for the first time in *Francis of Assisi Early Documents*, vol. 3, *The Prophet*. This work was edited by Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellman, O.F.M. Conv., and William J. Short, O.F.M. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 435-565. The reference edition for the *Fioretti* is *I Fioretti di san Francesco e d'alquanti suoi santi compagni*, published by Benvenuto Bughetti, O.F.M. and Ricardo Pratesi, O.F.M. (Florence, 1959). The most recent English translation can be found in *Francis of Assisi Early Documents*, vol. 3, *The Prophet*, 566-658.

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From Violence to Wholeness presented by the Pittsburgh Regional Pax Christi Team. This is a retreat based on the study program in the practice of nonviolence developed by the Franciscan Pace e Bene Program in Berkeley, CA. **February 21-22, 2003**

A Spirituality of Storytelling presented by Fr. Bernie Tickerhoof, TOR. We learn who God is in the stories we tell and the stories we live. This evening program can be attended in combination with the following program. **March 21, 2003**

Into the Woods: A Jungian Approach to Fairy Tales presented by Dr. David Cordisco. As children, we found them entertaining; as adults, we discover that the world of fairy tales addresses the deepest riches of the human psyche. **March 22, 2003**

Encountering the Heat of Jesus in the Gospel of St. Mark Conference Retreat presented by Fr. Thomas Bonacci, CP. As we reflect on the Sunday readings from Mark's gospels, we discover the love and compassion of God in the flow of our daily lives. **June 2-8, 2003**

Directed Retreats: ***June 13-20, 2003*** Fr. Bernie Tickerhoof, TOR
Sr. Rosemary Napolitano, FSR
August 12-19, 2003 Fr. Bernie Tickerhoof, TOR.

Guided Retreat: The Women Mystics presented by Sr. Therese Elias, OSB. As we listen to the voices of the Christian mystics, perhaps we will experience an awakening of the mystic that sleeps in each of us, and discover direction and support for our own journey to God.
August 12-19, 2003

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André Cirino, O.F.M. *author, contemporary Franciscan itinerant preacher, Franciscan Pilgrimage Program guide, and lecturer* present the theme of the retreat, "Spiritual Motherhood," by inviting us to discover how we could spiritually conceive the Son of God, give birth to him, name him, seek and adore him with the Magi and family, and finally, present him to God in the Temple.

January 19-22, 2003

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Bill Short, O.F.M., author of The Franciscans" Poverty and Joy, *Joe Schwab, O.F.M., Executive Director of the Franciscan Renewal Center and Ramona Miller, O.S.F., Director of Spiritual Formation at the Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley,* will discuss how Francis and Clare of Assisi discovered poverty, chosen for the sake of love, as the key to joy and freedom in following Christ. They will explore what it means for these saints and for us to live "without anything as my own." How does such a way of living reflect the God who is All Good? What is the connection between generosity and asceticism? How can Francis speak of God's poverty?

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Michael Crosby, OFM Cap., is a member of the St. Joseph Province of the Capuchin friars, Detroit, Michigan. Michael currently is involved in giving retreats, workshops, and lectures on peace and justice issues.

Jean-François Godet-Calogeras is a well-known philologist and Franciscan scholar. He is the Associate Editor for Franciscan Institute Publications, teaches and does workshops around the world, and has been involved in peace and justice work for many years. His article first appeared in Haversack some years ago.

Ellen Lamberjack, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin, Ohio. For the last three years she served as the President of the National Board of the Franciscan Federation.

Marie Lucey, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Decades ago Marie asked elected leaders of Franciscan Third Order congregations in the U.S. to attend to justice issues. She has also, in the past, served as an elected leader in her own congregation.

Maria-Elena Martinez, OSF, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Redwood City, California. She currently serves as Provincial Minister for her province. She has also served in various roles and worked in several countries other that the U.S.

Robert F. Pawell, OFM, is a friar of the Sacred Heart Province. He co-founded Project Lazarus, a residence for persons with AIDS and developed retreats for those affected by HIV/AIDS in New Orleans. His art work appears frequently in *The Cord.*

On the Franciscan Circuit

Thursday, November 9 - Friday, December 22, 2002

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Friday, December 13 - Sunday, December 15, 2002.

Advent Retreat. With Father James Gavin, OFM Cap. At the Franciscan Center, 49 Jackson Avenue, Hastings on Hudson, NY. Contact Sr. Marie Patrice, OSF, at 914-478-3696 or 914-478-3930, ext. 121.

Tuesday, December 31, 2002.

End of the Year Retreat. With Sr. Lorraine Campanelli, OSF. At The Franciscan Center, 49 Jackson Avenue, Hastings on Hudson, NY. Contact Sr. Marie Patrice, OSF, at 914-478-3696 or 914-478-3930, ext. 121.

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