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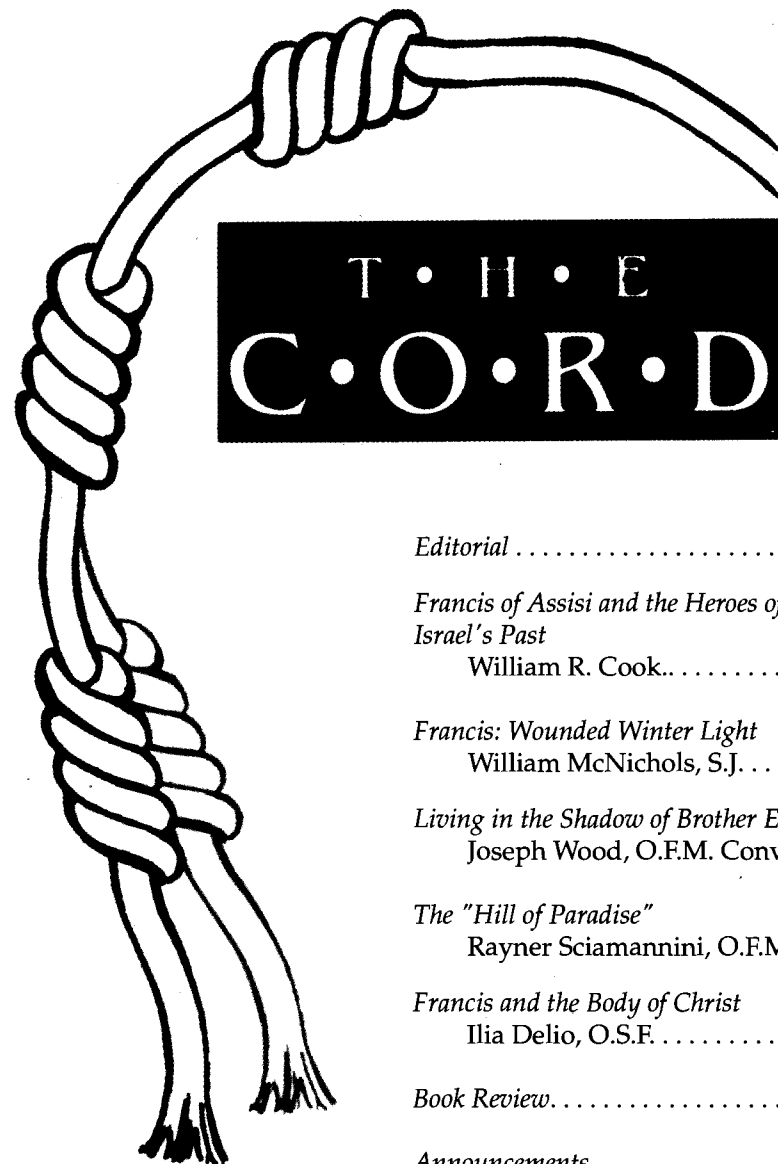
FRANCISCAN IDENTITY AND POSTMODERN CULTURE  
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**THE CORD**  
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1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
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3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.  
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4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:  
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## Editorial

It is hard to believe that a full year has passed since my first "solo" with *The Cord*. Truthfully, it has been a year of learning the ins and outs of a different computer system and publishing program (with their very real pluses and just as real minuses), discovering the mishaps that can befall any editor or proof-reader, enjoying moments of success and relishing the sense that this journal nourishes over a thousand subscribers, who like me, are "on the journey."

In the past year several new authors were introduced and some "old reliables" also graced these pages. It is my hope that a similar mix of new and old can continue in the year ahead. To that end, four of this year's issues will have "dedicated" topics: May/June will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Secular Franciscan Rule; July/August will again focus on Clare and Franciscan women; September/October belongs to Francis and the life of friars minor; and the November/December issue will be reserved for material about Third Order Regular life. As always, submissions will be happily received and evaluated! It seems to me that I can never have too many manuscripts from which to choose....

We begin 2003 with an issue that is a bit eclectic, bringing together a broad selection of articles ranging from a rich study of biblical sources used for sermons about Francis to a reminder about the importance of Brother Elias, to background of the place where the basilica dedicated to *Saint* Francis now stands, to a powerful reflection on the likeness of the Body of Christ and that of Francis . . . and their similar understanding of the meaning of suffering. Our authors offer us an immensely challenging view of the influence one person can have within a lifetime and in the centuries beyond.

Lastly, a request. There are two graphics for which I have no information (see pages 9 and 30). These items have no artist's name that I can identify. They were in the file and may have been used years ago; even so, I felt that they fit the current essays. If anyone has information about their origins, please let me know and I will give proper acknowledgment in a future issue.

May the God of peace and justice be with us!

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*

## Francis of Assisi and the Heroes of Israel's Past

William R. Cook

When we consider St. Francis, we often think of him not only as an individual Christian hero but also in relation to other holy men and women. Francis is placed with Clare, Anthony of Padua, and other early Franciscans in numerous works of art in the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi and all over the world.<sup>1</sup> Dante describes Francis as one of the two re-builders of the Church, the other being St. Dominic.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes Francis is thought of in the company of other great founders of religious orders; thus in Giotto's Last Judgment in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Francis is in heaven with Augustine, Dominic, and Benedict.<sup>3</sup> Francis is considered a martyr because of his stigmata and was often represented with great martyrs of the early church, especially the deacon martyrs such as Stephen and Lawrence since Francis was also a deacon. There are of course many other categories in which we discover Francis. A few years ago, for example, I authored a book about the saint in a series called *The Way of the Christian Mystics*,<sup>4</sup> other volumes in the series were about holy men and women as diverse as St. Patrick, St. Ignatius Loyola, and Edith Stein.

From the thirteenth century until today, people have also associated Francis with a variety of biblical figures. Francis and Peter are often thought of together. While Peter the simple fisherman became the devoted disciple of Christ, so did Francis the simple merchant. And since the friars were often regarded as new apostolic men, it was obvious to parallel the prince of the apostles with the founder of the new apostolic order. Although it sometimes seems odd to people today, a number of medieval authors related Francis to Paul. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes of being crucified with Christ and of carrying Christ's wounds in his body. Of course Paul was not speaking literally in these passages; but these words of Paul were regarded as appropriate to describe the stigmatized Francis. Most obviously, Francis was likened to Christ himself. Bonaventure does this in a variety of ways in his Major Legend. More graphically, the artist who decorated the nave of the Lower Church in Assisi depicted

five stories from the life of Francis opposite five stories from Christ's passion.<sup>5</sup> Francis came to be referred to as an *alter Christus*, and in the late fourteenth century, Bartholomew of Pisa wrote a work that shows a one-to-one correspondence between events in Francis's and Christ's lives.<sup>6</sup>

In the thirteenth century, Francis was sometimes thought of in relationship to great men of the Old Testament. For example, in Gregory IX's bull of canonization of July 19, 1228, the pope relates Francis to the obscure Judge Shamgar and refers to Francis as a new Samson. Sometimes the early biographers made direct comparisons between Francis and Old Testament heroes, including, perhaps more obviously than Pope Gregory's choices, David and Elijah. In the fresco cycle of Francis in the Upper Church in Assisi, often ascribed to Giotto and most likely dating from the early 1290s, there are implicit links between Francis and Adam, Noah, Abraham, and others since their stories are frescoed above the first thirteen scenes from Francis's life.

There are several reasons for making such comparisons. One, of course, is simply to say that sacred history is still in progress and not limited to biblical times; there are still heroes today who have as much grace as the great figures of old. In our own time, when all public figures are inspected so carefully and continuously, it is difficult to imagine that anyone has the stature of a George Washington or a Francis of Assisi, let alone an Abraham or a Moses. In the Middle Ages, however, the age of heroes was not a matter only of the past. Another reason to draw relationships between past and present figures is to provide some sense of continuity between past and present. For example, Bonaventure draws a spiritual genealogy starting with David the simple shepherd, continuing with Peter the simple fisherman, and ending with Francis the simple merchant. None had much formal education, but each had a deep understanding of spiritual truth and became a leader in his time. Also, as implied in the example from Bonaventure, the linking of past and present figures is a shorthand way of telling us about the new person. Thus, if Francis is likened to David, we can think not only about their common lack of formal education but also about their struggles to defeat the enemies of God, their joy in the presence of God. Recall David dancing before the ark and Francis singing praises to God while using two sticks as a fiddle, and the hymns of praise that each created—David the Psalms, Francis the Canticle of the Creatures.

### Scriptural Sources for Sermons about Francis

When we ask about the sources that medieval writers used to develop these parallels between Old Testament heroes and Francis, we of course discover that the answer is scripture. Thus, for example, Gregory IX quotes brief passages from Judges when he likens Francis to Shamgar and Samson. It is

reasonable to assume, therefore, that when we find a reference to an Old Testament figure in relation to Francis, we should go to the Old Testament text that contains the most famous version of the story, I and II Samuel for David, I Kings for Elijah, and so on. However, there is good evidence to suggest that although the medieval figures who wrote about Francis knew all of the books of the Old Testament better than we can imagine, they often, in fact, used a rather obscure Old Testament passage as their immediate source.

In 1982, Jacques Guy Bougerol published a list of all the surviving Latin sermons preached about Francis from the earliest ones written in 1228, two years after the saint's death until 1350.<sup>7</sup> There are 540 sermons listed. All but a handful use a brief passage from scripture as the point of departure. Some of the most popular passages and books of the Bible were indeed commonly used as the bases for sermons on Francis. Texts from Matthew and Luke together are the sources for seventy-six of the sermons while sixty-five of the texts are taken from Paul's letters and fifty-six from Revelation. Still, there are some surprises. There is no sermon that takes as its starting point a text from Mark or Romans, and only seven times are texts from John employed. Acts of the Apostles is the source of only one sermon, a surprisingly low number since the friars were regarded as the re-builders of the Church. Although the number of texts from Revelation is not surprising, thirty-one of the fifty-six sermons based on that book use the same text, Rev 7:2, the text describing the angel bearing the seal of the living God. Since Bonaventure identifies the stigmatized Francis as that angel in the prologue to his Major Legend, it is not surprising that this passage is in fact the most often used as the basis for a sermon.

Allowing for a few sermons that have no identifiable text and a few that use two texts, we can count a total of 539 citations in the 540 sermons. While 227 come from the New Testament, 312 texts are from the Old Testament. Five Old Testament books are cited more than twenty times. Ezekiel is cited twenty-one times; however, seventeen of the twenty-one sermons based on Ezekiel use Ezek. 28:12, "You set your seal on perfection." Clearly medieval preachers regarded this text as prophetic of God putting his seal, the stigmata, on Francis.

Three of the most frequently cited books are to be expected—Genesis is cited thirty-one times, the Psalms thirty-five times, and Isaiah 36 times. All of these are long books and ones that still today are regarded as central. However, the book cited most often of all the books of the Bible is Ecclesiasticus, sometimes known as Sirach.<sup>8</sup> Its sixty-five citations are almost double the number of any other Old Testament book and exceed such obvious choices as Matthew, Luke, Revelation, and all the letters of Paul combined. The number of citations of Sirach is not due to one passage being used a great percentage of the time. In fact, there are twenty-seven different citations from Sirach. The

prominence of this book seems odd to modern Christians, for the book of Sirach is not well known or often read today, and, of course, it is not included in the canon of texts in Protestant Bibles.

There are fourteen texts from the first forty-three chapters of Sirach that are used for sermons on Francis;<sup>9</sup> however there are eleven different citations from Sirach 44-50 that begin a total of forty-three sermons. I will focus on this concentrated set of citations.

## The Heroes of Israel and Francis

In the *New English Bible*, this section of Sirach is entitled "Heroes of Israel's Past." This is a good description of these seven chapters. In some ways, these chapters are a sort of "Cliff Notes" of Hebrew history. In summary form, the stories of heroes from Enoch and Abraham to Simon the high priest in the time of the Maccabees are retold. From a modern standpoint, there are some odd imbalances and omissions. Caleb gets about as many lines as Joshua; Jeremiah is praised but Isaiah is not mentioned; none of the judges is named, and collectively they get six lines; Aaron gets more attention than Moses, and the high priest Simon receives more space than anyone.

It is clear from the number of citations to the "Heroes of Israel's Past" in the early sermons about St. Francis that this section of Sirach was well known and no doubt used as a quick reference to the whole of Hebrew history. And while many of the texts were selected because of a key word or phrase and without much regard to context (e.g. Ezek 28:10 discussed above), the passages selected from Sirach 44-50 identify Francis with specific people in Hebrew history and thus tell us something about how Francis was understood and remembered and incorporated into the whole scheme of salvation history.

I will examine each of the eleven texts from Sirach 44-50 selected by preachers on the life of Francis, look at the story referred to, and try to suggest some ways in which the preachers' and their audiences' understanding of Francis was expanded by reference to the heroes of Hebrew history. I will also explain how even today those medieval perceptions of Francis can broaden our understanding of the saint and also other great Christian heroes of the past and of the present.

There is one sermon preached on the first words of the "Heroes of Israel's Past," Sirach 44:1: "Let us now sing the praises of famous men."<sup>10</sup> This is a passage about remembrance. In verse 2, the author mentions that these are the men through whom God has revealed himself in each succeeding age. Indeed, the author of Sirach brings the stories of Israel's heroes up to his present by including Simon the high priest. Just so, it follows this tradition that those who praise Francis continue the practice of celebrating those through whom

God reveals himself to the different ages. The author continues by describing various categories of famous men: kings, counsellors, prophets, composers and writers, the wealthy and strong. Certainly Francis can be understood as a counsellor, prophet and composer and writer. This text also reminds us that although Francis was someone who revealed God in his time and lived in poverty and simplicity, his is not the only sort of life in which God acts to reveal his nature and will to people. This is an important principle for preachers, since many in their audiences would not have been friars.

Eleven sermons were preached on Sirach 44:16: "Enoch pleased the Lord and was carried off to heaven."<sup>11</sup> The text goes on to say that Enoch was an example of repentance for future generations. There is no sense of Enoch as a penitent in the original version of the Enoch story found in Genesis 5:21-24. The addition of the phrase about Enoch as an example of repentance by Sirach is probably why this text and the figure of Enoch drew so much attention from preachers about Francis. Just as one of the earliest humans pleased God by repentance, so Francis, in his day, was the one who so pleased God by repentance; like Enoch he is an example for future generations.

In medieval thinking, Enoch and Elijah were special because they are not described as dying. God took Enoch away, and Elijah ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot. Thus, there were those who expected Enoch and Elijah to return to earth as a sign of the coming apocalypse. Since there were many friars, including many fully orthodox ones such as Bonaventure, who believed that Francis was a sign of the second coming of Christ, there may be an apocalyptic element to the popularity of a connection between Enoch and Francis.

Bonaventure likened Francis to Enoch and Elijah at the end of The Major Legend, where he describes the 1230 translation of Francis's body.<sup>12</sup> According to the Seraphic Doctor, Francis was like Enoch who "had been borne into paradise by the grace of contemplation and carried off to heaven" (LM 15:8). Thus too, in the medieval imagination, Enoch was a contemplative who was taken to heaven. Certainly, too, Francis was a contemplative, especially toward the end of his life. Further, as unlikely as the Enoch of Genesis is as a figure to whom Francis is likened, the Enoch of Sirach and of Bonaventure's understanding of him as a contemplative (probably based on the statement that Enoch walked with God in Genesis 5) make him a figure related to the *Poverello* of Assisi.

There are two sermons about Francis based on Sirach 44:19-20, which begins: "Great Abraham was the father of many nations."<sup>13</sup> In the following verses, Abraham is said to be the most famous of all men. He kept the law, made a covenant with the Lord, his body was marked with the sign of the covenant, and he proved faithful when tested. The remainder of Sirach's account of Abraham deals with his descendants. Of course, Francis was the father of the Franciscan Order, which became enormously large and by the end

of the thirteenth century had friars at the ends of the earth—North Africa and even as far as Beijing. If the surviving art is an indicator, Francis was possibly the most famous of men other than Christ himself, appearing in more thirteenth-century paintings in Italy than anyone other than Christ and the Virgin Mary.<sup>14</sup>

Especially important in Sirach's description of Abraham is that his body bore the mark of the covenant, a reference to circumcision (Gen. 17:11ff). Just as Abraham carried the mark of the old covenant in his body, so did Francis bear the stigmata, the marks from which flowed the blood of the new covenant, in his. And although Francis was not called to sacrifice his own son as Abraham was, he nevertheless was tested with bodily afflictions and concerns about changes in the Order. Like Abraham, Francis remained faithful to God.

In Sirach 45:1-2, the author writes that, "The Lord made [Moses] equal in glory to the angels."<sup>15</sup> Six sermons on Francis use this text as their starting point. Much of the rest of the passage concerning Moses deals with his power. However, there are two mentions of Moses encountering God, references to the meeting at the burning bush and Moses' reception of the law on Mt. Sinai. Sirach also says that God consecrated Moses because of "his loyalty and humility." There is the connection between Moses the lawgiver and Francis the author of the Rule for the friars. However, the relationship between Francis and Moses is more subtle than that. Moses was made equal in glory to the angels, and Francis was prophesied under the image of an angel, the one bearing the seal of the living God (Rev. 7:2). Like Moses, Francis met God in fire (the fiery wings of the seraph) and on a mountain (La Verna, site of the stigmatization). And yet, the virtue of humility is central to the lives of both Moses and Francis. There is even a story of Francis's humility in which a friar has a vision of a great throne in heaven, once occupied by a rebellious angel, but now reserved for Francis because of his great humility. As we read Exodus or watch "The Ten Commandments," we might easily lose sight of Moses' humility before God. This brief synopsis of Moses' life in Sirach wisely reminds us not just of Moses' power and grace but also of humility. Thus, one who met God face to face, who was equal in glory to the angels, and who was chosen for his loyalty and humility can describe both Moses and Francis of Assisi.

Two sermons about Francis begin with Sirach 46:1: "He lived up to his name as a great liberator of the Lord's chosen people."<sup>16</sup> This is the second part of the verse and refers to Joshua, the conqueror of the Promised Land. To us, Joshua the military hero seems to have little in common with Francis the peacemaker. And indeed this section of Sirach mostly deals with his military victories, although it emphasizes that he called on the Lord for help.

In the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Bible used in the Middle Ages, Joshua's name is written as "Jesus Nave," and of course writers would immediately think of the relationship between Joshua and Jesus of Nazareth. Since

Francis is so often likened to Christ, it is natural that writers would look for links between Joshua and Francis. From the time of the first crusade, Joshua was understood as an Old Testament figure of the crusader because Joshua conquered the Promised Land, and the purpose of the crusaders was to reconquer the same territory. Francis, too, is often represented as a knight of Christ, in part because he did have a brief career as a worldly knight. He is also seen as a crusader because of his visit to the Holy Land in 1219 and his encounter with the Sultan. Later, most of the holy sites in the Holy Land were given to the friars.

Francis also lived up to his name. According to 2 Celano 3, Francis was originally named John, later changed to Francis (*Francesco* = the French one) when his father returned from a business trip. Celano explains that Francis lived up to the name John through his ministry. Francis lived an ascetic life, preached penance, and prepared for the coming of Christ, just as John the Baptist did. Celano understands Francis's living up to his more familiar name because of the spread of his fame. Francis's name was "foreign," and thus he lived up to it by his fame spreading beyond Italy. From this part of the Franciscan heritage, we can understand why the text "[Joshua] lived up to his name" was one that would have led preachers to thoughts of Francis of Assisi.

Just as Joshua was a conqueror of land over a physical enemy, so Francis was seen as victorious over spiritual enemies and a conqueror for Christ against his Adversary. As Joshua freed God's people from political and military subservience to a foreign power, so did Francis free people from spiritual subservience to Satan and his army.

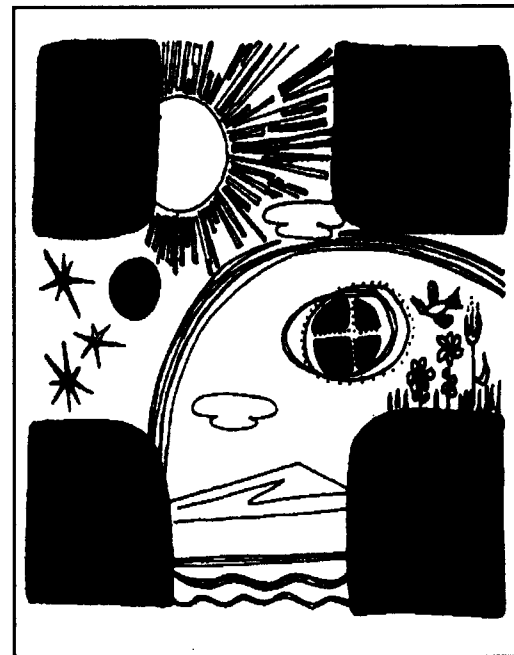
There is a brief passage (Sir. 46: 7-10) that summarizes the life of Caleb, one of two Hebrews from the Exodus who lived to enter the Promised Land. Two sermons about Francis begin with, "The Lord gave Caleb strength."<sup>17</sup> According to Joshua 14, Caleb received strength from God so that he could enter the Promised Land and win possession of a part of it for his descendants, thus showing Israel that it is good to be faithful to the Lord. This is a reference to Joshua and Caleb standing up to the rest of the Hebrews, who wished to return to Egypt.

There is obviously a general comparison between Caleb's and Francis's fidelity to God and a relationship between Caleb's physical strength and Francis's strong faith. However, the version of Caleb standing up to the Hebrews in Numbers 14 may suggest a more specific connection. Caleb went to the Promised Land, returned to the Hebrews in the desert to tell them about it, and then lived long enough to enter the Promised Land again, this time permanently. Francis's mystical life is an interesting parallel. In several mystical encounters, he found himself in the presence of God. In the Upper Basilica there is even a fresco portraying Francis, while still alive, lifted up on a cloud toward

God in heaven. And the stigmatization was a unique mystical encounter with God. But Francis, as Bonaventure says with regard to the stigmatization, always came down from the mountain; that is, to preach and teach by word and example about the kingdom of God. And, of course, Francis finally got there permanently. In a later fresco in the same cycle as the one mentioned above, the soul of Francis is carried to heaven on a cloud. Thus Caleb the spy and Francis the mystic have the same pattern to their lives-exploring the permanent home while still in exile, describing that home and encouraging others to prepare to enter it, and then permanently entering it himself.

Bonaventure in the Major Legend drew a connection between Francis and David (11, 14). So also do two sermons based on Sirach 47: 8: "With his whole heart he sang hymns of praise."<sup>18</sup> This line is toward the end of a fairly lengthy passage about David. It emphasizes that he played with wild animals as if they were lambs, that he was a victor over the Hebrews' enemies, and that he established the festivals that the Hebrews later celebrated. Even these twelve verses hardly do justice to the subject of half of I Samuel and all of II Samuel plus the retelling of his story in I Chronicles. And in the Middle Ages David was regarded as the author of all of the Psalms.

There is a clear connection between David's and Francis's control over wild creatures. There are many stories in the "official" lives of Francis of how he tamed various animals, although probably the most famous of these stories, Francis and the wolf of Gubbio, appears only in the later Little Flowers. The



imagery of triumphing over enemies was no doubt thought of in spiritual terms with regard to Francis, as we have seen in the example of Joshua. However, the text quoted in the two Franciscan sermons refers specifically to David as author of the psalms. In Sirach they are described specifically as praise to God. Not all of the psalms are joyful, but they ultimately all are praises of God. This connection between David and Francis as writers of songs refers principally to Francis as the author of the *Canticum of the Creatures*.

The canticle begins as a song of praise of the created world. It is worth remembering, however, that Francis wrote this famous song in three distinct parts. The first part consists of a series of praises. The second segment was for the reconciliation of the bishop and *podestà* of Assisi and praises God for those who give pardon and bear infirmity and tribulation. The last section was written at the end of his life and praises Sister Bodily Death but also contains "Woe to those who die in mortal sin." Thus there are changes in what is praised and even a warning to those who die in mortal sins. Therefore, the entire Canticum can be read or sung as a mini-psalter.

The Sirach version of David's life also credits him with establishing festivals. If we look at Francis's writings today, we find among them an Office for the Passion, a liturgical work that primarily consists of selections from the Psalter. In this way Francis both uses David's psalms and continues his work in creating "times when the sanctuary resounds from morning to night" (Sir. 45:10).

One of the most popular texts from Sirach for preachers about Francis of Assisi was the beginning of the summary of the life of Elijah: "Then Elijah appeared, a prophet like fire" (Sir. 48:1).<sup>19</sup> There were ten sermons preached on this text. In the verses following the one just quoted, Sirach writes a lot about Elijah's miracles. Although these include raising a corpse from the dead, there is also the miracle of bringing a famine to the land. Sirach also summarizes the prophecies of doom that Elijah called down upon the king of Israel. Although Bonaventure narrates stories of Francis raising people from the dead, most of this Elijah material sounds little like the gentle and humble saint of Assisi. However, Sirach also tells of Elijah being taken to heaven in a fiery chariot and says that Elijah will return to earth to reconcile father and son and to restore the tribes of Jacob.

Francis was a "prophet like fire." Dante refers to him in relationship with the highest order of angels, the seraphs, who are burning with love.<sup>20</sup> Francis's stigmatization followed the vision of the fiery seraph at La Verna.<sup>21</sup> Thomas of Celano told the story of Francis appearing in a fiery chariot in a vision to some brothers at Rivo Torto,<sup>22</sup> but does not specifically liken Francis to Elijah. However, Bonaventure retells the story and specifically refers to Francis as like a second Elijah.<sup>23</sup> In the Prologue to The Major Legend, Bonaventure had already introduced Francis as a man who was "lifted up in a fiery chariot" and who thus "came in the spirit and power of Elijah."<sup>24</sup> These words are borrowed directly not from the Old Testament but from Luke's description of John the Baptist. Furthermore, at the conclusion of the main part of Francis's life, Bonaventure mentions Elijah together with Enoch as the two great men who had been taken to heaven without dying. As suggested above, there are clear apocalyptic resonances in this passage.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the identification of Francis

with Elijah and indirectly with John the Baptist establishes a series of prophets and forerunners of Christ.

The image of Francis as Elijah enters the visual tradition at least as early as 1280 when Francis in the fiery chariot at Rivo Torto is included among eight scenes from Francis's life in a panel painting in Siena.<sup>26</sup> The story is also one of the twenty-eight stories from the Franciscan legend in the monumental fresco cycle in the Upper church in Assisi. Clearly it was the view of the Order that Francis was both a great prophet in the Old Testament tradition and that he was a prophet of the coming of Christ. Furthermore, despite some problems with friars who carried the apocalyptic meaning of Francis's life to extremes, it is clear that Francis was perceived as a figure of significance in the entire history of salvation, and that meant bringing the world closer in time to the reign of God.

There was also one sermon preached on the last words of the passage in Sirach concerning Elijah: "Happy are those who saw you and were honored by your love" (Sir. 48:11).<sup>27</sup> Here the "lineage" is from Elijah to Christ (his words to Thomas in John 20:29 for example) to Francis.

"The memory of Josiah is as fragrant as incense" (Sir. 49:1).<sup>28</sup> This introductory statement to the brief synopsis of the life of one of Judah's great kings was used as the basis of one sermon on Francis. Josiah is remembered as one of the great reformer-kings of Judah, and Sirach ends his description of Josiah this way: "In lawless times [he] made godliness prevail" (Sir. 49:3). Francis was described in quite similar terms in the early accounts of his life. At a time in which the world had grown corrupt, Francis came along to restore godliness. In fact, he is presented as a reformer and not an innovator, a restorer rather than a builder of new edifices. In describing Francis's rebuilding of San Damiano, Celano stresses that he, "did not try to build one anew, but he repaired an old one, restored an ancient one. He did not tear out the foundation but built upon it."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Josiah is described in II Kings 22 as carrying out repairs in the Temple in Jerusalem, and in the following chapter he purifies the Temple of pagan elements that had been added over several centuries. Thus starting with Sirach, a medieval preacher could find significant connections between King Josiah of Judah and Francis of Assisi, for just as Josiah repaired the temple, Francis appeared in a dream to Pope Innocent III, holding up the cathedral of Rome, St. John Lateran.<sup>30</sup>

The final hero from Sirach that Francis is likened to is the High Priest Simon. As mentioned above, his story gets fuller treatment than any of the other heroes, no doubt because he was a contemporary of Sirach. Most of the chapter devoted to his deeds recounts him carrying out his functions in the Temple. The passage that served as the starting point of four sermons on Francis is Sirach 50:6-7: "He was like the morning star appearing through the clouds or the moon at the full; like the sun shining on the temple of the Most High or

the light of the rainbow on the gleaming clouds.”<sup>31</sup> Bonaventure used this passage in the Prologue to the Major Legend:

Shining with the splendour of his life and teaching,  
like the morning star in the midst of clouds,  
by his resplendent rays he guided into the light  
those sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
and like the rainbow shining among clouds of glory  
he made manifest in himself  
the sign of the Lord's covenant.

Here Bonaventure has blended together a number of elements with the text from Sirach. The fourth line of this passage is taken from the end of the Song of Zachariah in Luke. He uses the image of the rainbow from Sirach to refer to the covenant of Noah and then relates that to the stigmata, sign of the Lord's covenant that was manifest in the flesh of Francis.

Francis is thus in some ways a new high priest who protects his people and offers sacrifices. There are two other details in Sirach's version of the Simon story that have resonances with Francis. First, “he stood with his brothers round him like a garland” (Sir. 50:12). This certainly is a fraternal image that would spark a connection with Francis and his brotherhood. Second, he is described after the ritual as “coming down” to pronounce the Lord's blessing (Sir. 50:20). Christ is described as descending from a mountain after the Sermon on the Mount and again after the Transfiguration. Clearly Bonaventure has the latter in mind when he tells of Francis's descent from La Verna after the stigmatization. Just as Simon descended to the people to bless them, so did Francis.

## Conclusion

There are several lessons to be gleaned from an examination of Francis of Assisi and the heroes of Israel's past as presented in Sirach. On a rather simple level, the use of Sirach by learned preachers about St. Francis remind us that biblical books that today appear to be of secondary importance have not always been regarded in that matter. Just the fact that more sermons about Francis are based on texts of Sirach than on any other biblical book of either testament is clear evidence. I suggest that in fact the entire book of Sirach is worth the time it takes to read and meditate upon it. This is especially true of Sirach 44-50, “The Heroes of Israel's Past.” Not only is this a good summary of the highlights of Hebrew history, but it sometimes presents figures somewhat differently than they are presented in the fuller versions of their stories. Furthermore, some of these figures' stories are in rather obscure parts of the Old

Testament (Caleb in Numbers, Simon in I Maccabees, for example) and thus are not very well known today.

Second, we come to appreciate St. Francis in new ways by seeing him in the traditions of the priests, kings, and prophets of the Old Testament. The stories of the great men of Israel's past offer an opportunity to examine *Il Poverello* in ways that seemed obvious to people in the Middle Ages. We sometimes romanticize Francis into a sixties hippie as we find him in Franco Zeffirelli's film “Brother Sun, Sister Moon” or as something of a wimp such as Mickey Rourke's portrayal of the saint in “*Francesco*.” Seeing Francis as in the line of Moses or Joshua or David, hardly hippies or wimps, helps us to recapture a sense of this man's strength and persistence, qualities that often are minimized in popular images of the saint.

Perhaps the most important message of these sermons on St. Francis is a theological one. Modern people are better at seeing discontinuities than continuity. We almost worship change and are attracted to phrases like “totally redesigned.” And we often think of history as a series of essentially disjointed pieces—the ancient world gave way to the Middle Ages which gave way to the Renaissance which gave way to the modern world. Even if we examine history in sacred terms, there appear to be great barriers between the world of the Old Testament, the times of the New Testament, and the world after the Bible was completed. This latter period is certainly prominent in Protestant thought.

However, we learn throughout scripture that God constantly does new things but in ways that are related to God's deeds of the past. Even in God's newness there is continuity. The most obvious example is the coming of Christ, a new thing to be sure, but also not fully comprehended without knowledge of God's work that prepares people for that event. We must hear the prophets and know of the lineage of David in order to grasp fully the work that God has done in Christ. To illustrate this relationship of newness to continuity, let us turn for a moment to Deutero-Isaiah, the anonymous author of Is. 40-55. In Isaiah 43:19 God declares through the prophet: “Here and now I will do a new thing.” This passage is in reference to clearing the way for the Hebrews to return to Israel from exile in Babylon. Yet just before the passage cited, God retells the story of the Exodus, God's great act of leading the Hebrews toward Israel from bondage in Egypt. Clearly what God is doing is new, but it cannot be understood unless in a sense we can also see that God is at the same time doing what God has done before but in a new set of circumstances.

The examination of Francis in light of Israel's great heroes allows us to grasp the biblical relationship between continuity and discontinuity. In a literal sense, Francis is quite unlike any of the Old Testament figures to whom he is likened. He was neither a priest nor a king nor a conqueror nor a spy nor the father of a great people. Francis is something new. Indeed, when Brother Elias



sent a letter to the friars announcing Francis's death, he described the stigmata as "a new thing among miracles." Of course, that new miracle takes its meaning from the marks made on Christ's body at Calvary.

Relating Francis to Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, David, Elijah, Josiah, and Simon is a good way for us to look at God at work in history. God endows certain people with certain qualities and graces that are appropriate to their times. Sometimes those gifts are used to capture a piece of land or defeat an enemy or perform ritual functions. Sometimes those same gifts, for example of humility or perseverance, are used in quite different ways. Francis was a man who sought to capture the Sultan's heart and to win his soul rather than to subdue his land. We see the hand of God at work in all sorts of ways in different times, and we believe that God is always doing new things. Yet those new things are, like the old things, a manifestation of the one God. We must be open always to God's newness, but equally we must be aware of how God has prepared us for what is new in what God has done in the past. To look upon Francis in the light of the heroes of Israel's past is thus not just a way of gaining some new insight into who Francis is but also about gaining insight into who God is and how God is active in space and time.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Examples include Francis and Anthony at the foot of the cross in a late thirteenth-century processional cross now in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria in Perugia and two panels with Francis opposite Clare by Ugolino di Nerio and the Master of Città di Castello now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena. See William Cook, *Images of St. Francis of Assisi in Painting, Stone and Glass from the Earliest Images to ca. 1320 in Italy: A Catalogue* (Florence: Casa Editrice Leo S. Olschki, 1999): #135, #183, #182.

<sup>2</sup>*Paradiso* XI: 28-42; *Paradiso* XII: 31-45.

<sup>3</sup>See Cook, *Images*: #121.

<sup>4</sup>Francis of Assisi: *The Way of Poverty and Humility* (Dover, DE: Michael Glazier and Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989).

<sup>5</sup>For the frescoes, see Cook, *Images* #11.

<sup>6</sup>Earlier in the fourteenth century, the Florentine painter Taddeo Gaddi painted a series of panels for the sacristy of Santa Croce in Florence with corresponding stories from the lives of Francis and Christ. Most of those panels today are in the *Accademia* in Florence and displayed so that viewers can see the parallels that Gaddi constructed.

<sup>7</sup>Jacques Guy Bougerol, "Initia latinorum sermonum in lauden S. Francisci," *Antonianum* 57 (1982): 706-794.

<sup>8</sup>Editor's note: Ecclesiasticus is the name that would have been used by medieval people; our contemporary usage is Sirach. For the sake of familiarity, we have substituted Sirach throughout. The abbreviation used for the remainder of this article will be that for Sirach (Sir.).

<sup>9</sup>8:1, 9:14 (3 Sermons), 10:24 (2 Sermons), 17:1, 24:20 (2 Sermons), 23:38 (mis-cited in Bougerol as 38:1), 30:4 (2 Sermons), 31:9 (2 Sermons), 31:10, 34:3, 36:6 (2 Sermons), 38:28, 43:1, 43:9.

<sup>10</sup>Sermon 246 in Bougerol's catalogue.

<sup>11</sup>Sermons 173 to 184 and sermon 306.

<sup>12</sup>Several of the sermons preached on the Enoch text in Sirach were for the feast of the translation of the relics of St. Francis.

<sup>13</sup>Sermons 4 and 253.

<sup>14</sup>There are about 200 surviving paintings from Italy containing images of St. Francis; they date between 1230-1315. Since it may well be that only about one percent of thirteenth-century paintings survive, that could mean that there were as many as 20,000 images created of Francis in Italy alone within 90 years of his death.

<sup>15</sup>Sermons 128, 129, 390-393.

<sup>16</sup>Sermons 209, 210.

<sup>17</sup>Sermons 121, 122.

<sup>18</sup>Sermons 114, 115.

<sup>19</sup>Sermons 417 to 426.

<sup>20</sup>*Paradiso* X: 37.

<sup>21</sup>IC 94.

<sup>22</sup>IC 47.

<sup>23</sup>LMj 4:4.

<sup>24</sup>LMj Prologue:1.

<sup>25</sup>LMj 15:8.

<sup>26</sup>For a discussion of this panel see Cook, *Images*: #180. There is more discussion of this panel and imagery associated with Elijah in Cook, "The St. Francis Dossal in Siena: An Important Interpretation of the Life of Francis of Assisi," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 88 (1994): 3-20.

<sup>27</sup>Sermon 63.

<sup>28</sup>Sermon 254.

<sup>29</sup>IC 18.

<sup>30</sup>LMj 3:10.

<sup>31</sup>Sermons 329 to 332.

*Francis was a "prophet like fire."  
Dante refers to him in a relation-  
ship with the highest order of an-  
gels, the seraphs, who are burn-  
ing with love.*

William R. Cook

## Francis: Wounded Winter Light



## Living in the Shadow of Brother Elias

Joseph Wood, O.F.M. Conv.

One of the greatest mysteries of love within the Franciscan epic is the role of Br. Elias of Assisi (\*22 April 1253). First the vicar of St. Francis and then his successor as minister general, this character looms large in the puzzling scenes that were played out in the early years following Francis's death. The high drama of those days has intrigued generations of Franciscans and continues to shape our consciousness. Even today.

Elias was a man who was loved by Francis and revered by Clare. He was an ambassador and friend to a pope and an emperor. He was an architect of castles and churches. He promoted missions and education. He was even noted as being "the most learned man in Italy." Francis himself called Elias his own mother and the father of the community. Although many would be at pains to admit it, Francis's health improved whenever Elias was with him (1C 98). At the end, when Francis lay dying, Elias was the one who received a special blessing from the Poverello (1C 108).

But this beloved of Francis has been anything but the favorite son of the Franciscan Family. Controversy swirls around this man whose very name has evoked a shudder of suspicion through the centuries. Given the constantly negative portrayal of Br. Elias in later sources, it would be quite easy to continue casting this friar as the pure villain, the Judas, in the annals of Franciscan development. Elias has curiously become the literary, if not the literal archetypal antithesis of Francis; he is regarded as the antagonist bent on destroying the ideals of the hero. Yet a deeper analysis suggests that it would be historically immature to simply join the chorus of condemnation and imprison Elias as the eminent traitor in the seraphic drama.

Early on, the large number of vocations had unleashed a flood of wandering friars who first begged for food and then quite often returned the favor by feeding heretical ideas to their benefactors. As the minister general of this mostly untrained and undisciplined army of mendicants, Br. Elias took up the

necessary—and terribly unpopular—task of demanding order in the ranks. In return, he was despised by the more free-spirited friars and by the educated clerics who resented a layman having charge over them. These men effectively burned Elias's reputation and his memory at the stake.

Ironically, these flames of outrage never seemed to burn subsequent leaders who went much further than Elias in discipline and legislating structure. At the Chapter of Anagni (1240), the minister general following Elias, Haymo of Faversham, discouraged lay recruitment and legislated against lay brothers holding any position of leadership within the community (even though most of Francis's early followers were educated lay noblemen). From that point on, equality of voice (universal suffrage) was no longer the hallmark of the Friars Minor—a decision only reversed with the Second Vatican Council. St. Bonaventure, whose administrative skills earned him the unofficial title of “the second founder,” planned a *coup d'état* against his minister general, John of Parma. Citing John's heretical Joachimist tendencies, Bonaventure had him confined in the hermitage of Greccio for thirty-two years. As the new minister general, Bonaventure complained at the Chapter of Narbonne (1260) that people were more afraid to meet a friar begging on the road than a robber! (At least they could fight off the robber.) Acting to enforce stricter discipline, “to punish the incorrigible and to prevent schism” within the community, Bonaventure legislated that humane places of detention (prison cells) be erected in all friaries of the Order.

If, then, these succeeding leaders were compelled to impose a stricter discipline, why is Elias still considered the only dour stepmother in the perfect fairy tale of the Troubadours of the Great King?

Consider the following: from the beginning Franciscans had raised spirits and gladdened hearts because they were charged with the common, simple joy of being alive, as well as the simple belief that their founder, as the “angel of the sixth seal” of the Apocalypse, had heralded the new age of the spirit. They were filled with such joy that the friars were later accused of laughing too often, a reference to one side of an on-going debate in the universities that proposed the opposite view: the second person of the Trinity could never have participated in such shallow human behavior.

But Christ had to laugh, the friars zealously proclaimed. Laughter was the great proof of an existence beyond the present confused reality. Laughter became the healing balm for a world grown tired of papal and imperial wars and the sermonizing of natural disasters as being the result of divine retribution. For these merry characters, whether high born or low, even unappetizing leftovers became banquets because the friars were friends together, and because they were free from the burden of their former status.

So, what went wrong? How could the glory of the Order, of being itinerant *jongleurs de Dieu*, of finding God in the marketplace, somehow also become its downfall?

The followers of Francis, reformers sanctioned by papal decree, had been given a precarious gift, a gift that most people of the Middle Ages were not prepared to receive: freedom. One must realize that people of the Middle Ages were bound to each other by a labyrinthine system of dependence. Every person was obligated by a vow to a higher liege—to a landlord—be they civil or religious. One could only escape the mundane limitations of a predetermined social rank by going to war, by going on pilgrimage, or more commonly, through the “freedom” of drunkenness during festivals. Basically, the nobility was bored with life, the merchant class was obsessed with regulating it, the peasantry was exhausted from it. None were enamored of it.

Then, unexpectedly, a new way of living appeared. Suddenly, it was possible to wander anywhere without the responsibility of “belonging” to anyone or any place (or at least, one's superior was far away). At first the followers of Francis could even preach in a diocese without the local bishop's consent. Yet such freedom was an overly indulgent gift for so many with untrained powers of reasoning. Some of these troubadours became intoxicated with their influence, publicly criticizing the clergy and civil officials—perhaps with good reason—but nevertheless, an offense to Francis's desire for reform without revolution. Some friars even began founding new communities of their own. Too many of these free-thinking initiatives were simply out of control, dangerously compromising the integrity of the Franciscan movement, and threatening to make the Order a caricature of itself.

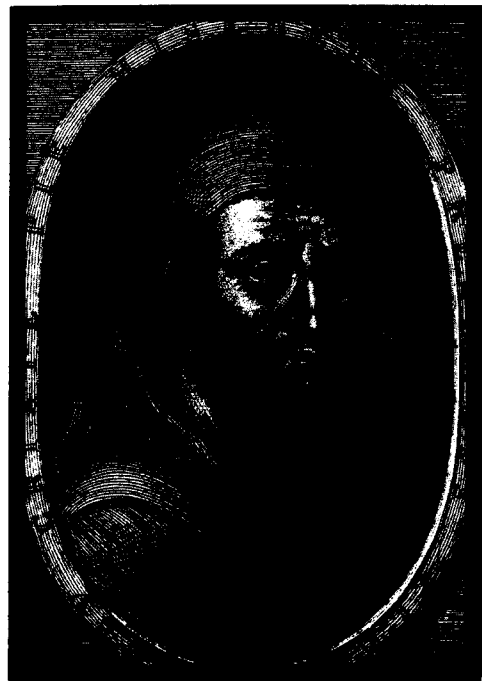
So, what was Brother Elias's sin? After witnessing the contagious lack of discipline in the ranks of the knights of poverty, was he wrong to recognize the expediency of an ordered life quartered in friary-barracks as the necessary reharnessing of reckless energy? Was he unjust when he snatched the friars from their far-flung make-shift hermitages and their irresponsible wandering to make them feed and educate the poor—instead of just begging like them? Like it or not, all Franciscans are the inheritors of that seraphic original sin, that singular traitorous deed of Elias, who dared to institutionalize the charism of the *Poverello*. And even though someone had to do it, woe to him who was its instigator!

Although the “facts” of Br. Elias's generalate are blurred, it cannot be disputed by any party that there was enough discontent to finally warrant intervention by the pope himself. For the good of the community, Elias was asked to step down in 1239. So, without denying any of Elias's personal faults and failings (all of which are either exaggerated or excused depending on the political camp of a given author), we might ask if in fact he tried so hard to follow

in Francis's footsteps that he actually did not require as much structure as his successors necessarily did? Were some of the accusations against Elias heaped upon him because his organization and punishments merely lacked consistency?

Whatever the case, somehow we may surmise it was his early leadership that assured the continued vintage of Francis's refreshing new wine. Elias may have poured the ideals into casks with an immediacy that hurt even some of Francis's earliest friends, but by beginning the maturing process he has enabled countless souls to taste sweetness through eight centuries of time.

The Order has been given the heritage of a great man, but Francis was "the only Franciscan as Christ was the only Christian." And in reality, any-



thing short of genius will appear as glaring mediocrity whenever anyone is compared to him. Elias is not reviled for so many centuries after his death because of anything he did, but rather because of something he could never be, an "*alter Franciscus*."

Because Francis was a light-house of unsurpassed brilliance (somehow, despite his own limitations), whoever took up the reigns of government immediately after his death probably would have failed just as brilliantly.

In his initial, well-performed secondary role, Elias, and each succeeding guardian, provincial, and minister general may, on his own account, be dubbed a knight

and enter onto the field of leadership. But none of them will ever compare to the "once and future" hero-king of selective memory. No one will ever compare to the first love . . . not even the beloved of Francis himself.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The image of Elias is taken from *Fra Elia Compagno, Vicario e Successore di S. Francesco Serafica*, II<sup>a</sup> Edizione riveduta e coretta (Milano: Stab. Pontificio Arti Grafiche Sacre Bertarelli, 1923).

## The Hill of Paradise

From *La Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi*

Fr. Rayner Sciamannini, OFM Conv.  
Fr. Hugh DeCicco, OFM Conv. (trans.)

With the celebration of so many centenaries this year, we are likely to forget a most important one in the history of our Order—the seventh centenary of the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi.

The church in Assisi arose at the express command of Pope Gregory IV who as Cardinal Bishop of Ostia had been a personal friend of the saint and the strongest supporter of the nascent Franciscan Order. On April 29, 1228, with the bull *Recolentes qualiter*, he announced to the entire world that it was his wish that a majestic temple be built on a "piece of territory," so runs the venerable text, "given to Us and the Roman Church for the permanent custody of the blessed body of Saint Francis," reserving to himself the inalienable proprietary rights over it together with the relative rights of immunity. To show his jurisdiction over it, he ordered the friars to renew each year to himself and his successors the homage of a pound of wax, to be given on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

The piece of land was the western slope of Assisi, presented legally on March 29 of the same year by Simone di Pucciarello in the presence of the communal judge, Guido, and six witnesses. The gift was completed the following year with the offering by Monaldo di Leonardo of the woodland stretching from the east to the Tescio River. These were the first gifts—the ones nearest the heart of the Saint since they were given by his own fellow citizens—destined to become a place of veneration for the whole world. On July 17 of the same year, 1228, after the canonization of the *Poverello*, the same pontiff, amid lights and music, laid the cornerstone.

A pious legend has the story that on this spot, popularly called *Colle dell'Inferno*, culprits were executed and buried. Saint Francis, as a last act of humil-

ity, had previously selected it as the place of his burial. Legend has woven a beautiful story about the ugly name of the hill. The hill was called *inferno* only because it was lower than the hill which dominated the city. At any rate, the solemn laying of the cornerstone canceled any apparent unseemliness in the name and transformed it into a veritable *Colle del Paradiso*, a hill of Paradise.

Emperors, princes, cardinals, Assisians, and faithful from all parts of the world visited the wonderful edifice planned and executed by the genius and love of Brother Elias, vicar and successor of the saint. The offerings in money and material literally poured in from everywhere, and in a way unprecedented in the construction of shrines and churches. The Pope himself authorized and solicited alms in a bull granting spiritual privileges to the benefactors. In less than two years, the church was ready to receive the sacred remains of the saint. This seems incredible when we think of the many shrines, begun with a like fervor, the building of which ran on for years or was never completed at all.

On April 22, 1230, with the consistorial document *Is qui Ecclesiam*, undersigned by thirteen cardinals, the Pontiff himself declared that it was his will that the cathedral and papal throne be placed in the Church, which he proclaimed the "Head and Mother of the Order of Friars Minor." He then made it immediately subject to the Holy See. On May 25, 1230, the vigil of Pentecost, the body of Saint Francis was finally transferred from its temporary resting place in the church of Saint George to the new church. The body, still in its stone sarcophagus, was drawn by a team of purple-clad oxen. The entourage was unparalleled. There were men from far and near, says Thomas of Celano, and the nearby hills were filled with their hosannas. More than one miracle occurred that day at the touch of the *Poverello's* bier.

When the procession reached the church, however, the doors were barred. The magistrates of Assisi, jealous of their treasure, did not want the people to witness the actual burial. Accordingly, they lowered the sacred relics into the bowels of the hard immobile rock under the main altar—the exact place known only to them.

Both because of the tremendous love and veneration of the people for Saint Francis, whose body they might have attempted to exhume, and because of the everlasting strife between Assisi and Perugia, such precautions were most necessary. The way in which the burial was carried out may seem to us somewhat violent; as a matter of fact, the pope did lament the procedure. Upon being apprised of the circumstances, however, he expressed his approval of what had been done.

Succeeding centuries proved that the fears of the Assisians had not been groundless. In the repeated invasions of Frederick the Second's soldiers from 1239 to 1246, of the Ghibellines in 1319, of Bracceschi in 1442, and of the Beglinoni in 1497, the body of Saint Francis was marked as prize booty to be taken from the sanctuary and from the city.

Rome, however, was ever watchful over this house of predilection. Innocent IV, leaving his exile in France to which Frederick the Second had constrained him, came to Assisi in 1253 for the consecration of the church. He himself presided over the ceremonies, and remained in Assisi from April to mid-October. It was during this time, also, that he blessed the convent. In the course of the succeeding years, with Alexander IV, Clement IV, Martin IV, the Franciscan Nicholas IV, Martin V, Sixtus IV, came a torrent of gifts and privileges, renewing the immediate jurisdiction of the Holy See over the church. The Franciscan Sixtus V, in 1585, instituted there the Confraternity of Cordbearers. In 1695 a papal bull granted a plenary indulgence to be gained once a day by the faithful who visited the church. This privilege is recorded in large letters inscribed over the door of the lower church.

The jurisdiction of the papacy over the sanctuary of Saint Francis became more and more emphatic. The Constitution of Benedict XIV, March 24, 1754, *Fidelis Dominus*, to dispel any possible doubts, gathered and codified all the rights and privileges granted by his predecessors. With this document, a monument of jurisprudence, the Church of Saint Francis was elevated to the rank of patriarchal basilica and papal chapel, equal to the major basilicas in Rome. Thus the pope became *de jure* the immediate ordinary. A ceremonial was compiled to regulate expressly the papal ritual to be followed there.

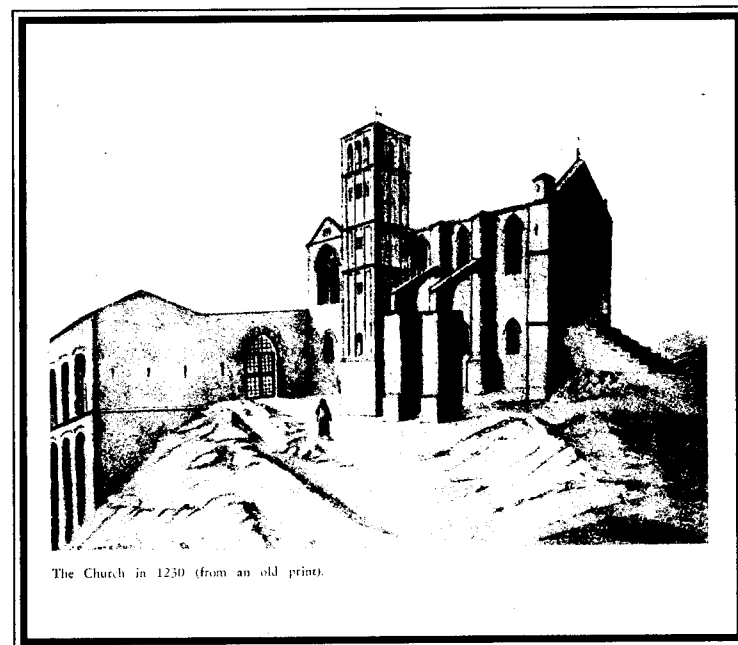
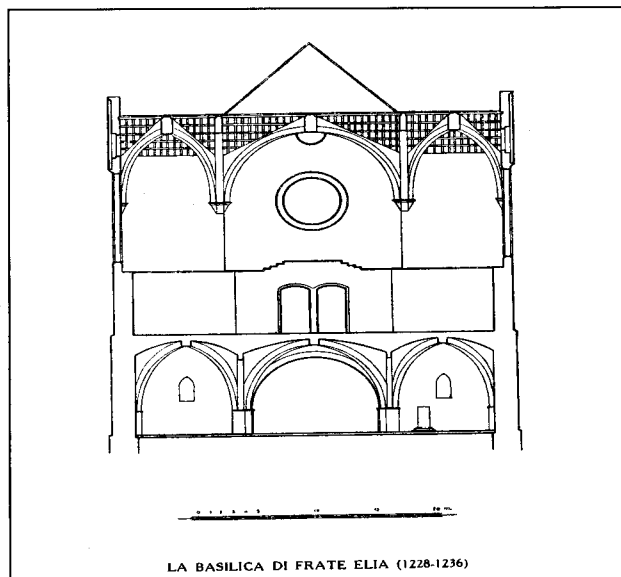
After the interest shown to the basilica by Clement XIII and the Franciscan Clement XIV, there came the revolutionary movements in France at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1798, while Pius VII was subjected to the most trying difficulties, the basilica was invaded by the military hordes of France and despoiled of practically all its gold and silver. In May of 1810 there followed the first suppression of religious orders. As a result, only seven priests with three lay brothers were allowed to remain as custodians of the Sanctuary. But at the fall of Napoleon, December 1814, the religious again took their place in the basilica.

The finding of the body of Saint Francis was the secret joy God prepared for the comfort of his children in their hour of trial. In 1818, at the fervent and repeated requests of the religious, Pius VII allowed the sepulcher of the Saint to be made accessible again to the faithful. The patient and secret search that followed was at length successfully ended. Behind layers of mortar and slabs of stone, an oblong opening was found, about six feet deep and nine feet wide, covered entirely with dark travertine. Deep within, as if buried in the bowels of the earth, and enclosed by an iron gate, lay the limestone tomb containing the body of the saint. To the tremendous joy of the Catholic world, the Pope announced by a brief that "the question of the identity of the body recently discovered under the main altar of the Basilica in Assisi is settled, and without doubt it is the body of Saint Francis, the Founder of the Orders of Friars Minor."

After the visits of Gregory XVI in 1841 and Pius IX in 1857, the Italian suppression brought new trials for the convent in Assisi. It was turned into an orphanage for the children of teachers employed by the government. The Holy See decried this unjust usurpation, invoking the Law of Guarantees. At the recovery of the convent in favor of the religious, October 2, 1927, the friars, with the help of the government and with offerings from all over the world, constructed a new building for the orphanage. Pius XII, finally, with the proclaiming of Saint Francis as the Patron of Italy (June 19, 1939) conferred upon the sanctuary a national character.

Every detail, every stone, every color breathes the august presence of the sovereign pontiff in this Franciscan basilica. The papal presence seems to be a very part of that chair, erected from the beginning, in the center of the tribune of the upper church; it stands as incontestable proof against the usurpers of the apostolic rights. *Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk; and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon* (Ps. 90).

Editor's note: The illustration below is taken from I. B. Supino, *La Basilica di S. Francesco di Assisi*, ed. N. Zanichelli (Bologna, 1924). The image on p. 25 is taken from R. Sciamannini, *The Church of St. Francis and Other Sanctuaries at Assisi* (Florence: Azienda Libreria Editoriale, 1953), p. 13. A similar description of the Hill of Paradise as the one that comprises this article, but not the same translation, is found in the Sciamannini book, pp. 10-13.



Therefore, we ask, counsel and exhort all of you in the Lord, . . . that you intently dedicate yourselves to the divine praises, to honor [the memory of Francis] and humbly implore his protection, so that, through his merits and intercession, we may attain fellowship with him by the help of God, who is blessed forever and ever.

(*Mira circa nos* 10, decree of canonization of St. Francis)

## Francis and the Body of Christ

Ilia Delio, O.S.F.

It is no secret that the body and blood of Christ hold a significant place in the writings of Francis. In no less than seven out of the ten letters he composed he speaks of the body and blood of Christ, although the word "eucharist" is nowhere to be found in these letters.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis on the body and blood of Christ points to the humanity of Christ, the real flesh and blood of God's presence upon earth. In his first Admonition on the body of Christ Francis writes: "As he revealed himself to the holy apostles in true flesh, so he reveals himself to us now in sacred bread . . . let us, as we see bread and wine with our bodily eyes, see and firmly believe that they are his most holy body and blood living and true" (Adm 1).

The emphasis on the body of Christ as real flesh is given new interpretation in Thomas of Celano's First Life. While remaining faithful to Francis's emphasis on the body of Christ, Celano develops the theme of eucharist in the life of Francis as *imitatio Christi*. It is particularly after the reception of the Stigmata that Celano begins to translate the crucified body of Christ into the crucified body of Francis. Although neither Celano nor Francis use the word "eucharist," the meaning of eucharist is present in the image of Francis as an *alter Christus*. Eucharist is the spirit of embracing love that flows from the flesh of a wounded body. Francis is a perfect image of the crucified Christ because, like Christ, he is willing to embrace the other in love for the sake of reconciliation and peace. According to Celano, it is in this sense that Francis's life is a eucharistic life.

### Celano's First Life

The notion of eucharist as the living body of Christ assumes a distinct focus in Thomas of Celano's First Life of Francis. Following a Pauline understanding of eucharist as the crucified body of Christ, Celano develops a rela-

tionship between Christ's crucified body and the body of Francis as the celebration of eucharist. According to Hellenic thought, commitment to the One or unity with God meant an erasure of difference, since the body was to be transcended or denied in the pursuit of spiritual perfection. In his letter to the Corinthians, however, Paul rejects the Hellenic notion that commitment to the One implies disdain for the body. The "One" in whom Paul seeks to locate the unity of all humanity is not disincarnate transcendence but the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ. The "principle" of unity has a name, and the name designates a person with a body that has suffered on the cross.<sup>2</sup> All are made one body of God's children without regard to gender or race because of the cross (cf. Gal. 3:28). Paul writes: "Because there is one bread we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). The "bread" that Paul refers to is the crucified body of Christ, the body that has refused to remain a self-enclosed singularity, but has opened itself up so that others can freely partake of it.<sup>3</sup> Miroslav Volf interprets this Pauline notion of the body of Christ by saying: "The grounding of unity and universality in the scandalous particularity of the suffering body of God's Messiah is what makes Paul's thought so profoundly different from the kinds of beliefs in the all-importance of the undifferentiated universal spirit that would make one 'ashamed of being in the body'."<sup>4</sup> Far from being one against the many, the significance of Christ crucified is the self-giving of the one for the many. Because Christ unites different bodies into one body through his suffering on the cross, it is the cross with its gift of self-giving love that is the basis of true Christian community. The crucified Messiah creates unity, therefore, by giving his own self.

This understanding of the body of Christ as the basis of unity plays out in Celano's First Life where the underlying theme of eucharist is expressed in the relationship between the body of Christ and the body of Francis. The Pauline notion of eucharist as the crucified body of Christ is the background for the meaning of the Stigmata on the mountain of La Verna. Celano describes the event as a visual event whereby Francis "saw in the vision of God a man, having six wings like a seraph, standing over him, arms extended and feet joined, affixed to a cross" (1C 3). Francis was filled with a mixture of joy and sorrow as he tried to discern the meaning of the vision. According to Celano, the meaning of the vision was revealed in the body of Francis himself as he descended from the mountain marked with the wounds of Christ. Celano interprets the Stigmata in light of the Pauline notion of spirit and flesh. True spirituality is the harmony of spirit and flesh. The use of the word "flesh" (*sarx*) in Paul does not refer to the body but rather all those things that stand opposed to God. Francis, conformed to the crucified Christ, became a truly spiritual person because "there was in him such a harmony of flesh with spirit and such obedience that, as the spirit strove to reach all holiness, the flesh did not resist but

even tried to run on ahead" (1C 2). According to Celano, it is Francis's embrace of suffering that enabled his spirit to be set free for God. Thus, it is in light of the wounded body of Francis that Celano describes him as a truly spiritual person. He writes: "According to the laws of nature and the human condition day by day the body must decay though the inner being is renewed. So the precious vessel in which the heavenly treasure was hidden began to shatter all over and lose all its strength. . . . And so the spirit became willing in the flesh that was weak" (1C 2).

For Celano, Francis's frail and weakened body became a source of spiritual strength—salvific—in the same way that Christ's crucified body became the source of healing and wholeness for the world. The spirit that flowed from the wounded body of Christ is the same spirit that flowed from the wounded body of Francis. Despite the fact that his frail and weakened body was dying, Francis still maintained an inner desire to be with Christ for, as Celano writes, "he had not yet filled up in his flesh what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ" (1C 2). Celano, therefore, sees Francis's wounded flesh as a participation in the sufferings of Christ for the redemptive completion of the world. In this way, Francis became the exemplar of the true Christian life because he was willing, like Christ, to suffer for the sake of reconciliation and peace.

## The Body of Christ and the Body of Francis

The body of Francis as the body of Christ is given further emphasis in Celano's description of Francis's body after his death. Here he states that the brothers were filled with both sadness and joy at the sight of their dead father, a description reminiscent of the stigmata scene where Francis was filled with sadness and joy at the vision of the crucified seraph (cf. 1C 2). By juxtaposing the lamentation of Francis with the vision of the crucified man, Celano indicates that the body of Francis was indeed seen as the body of Christ. He writes:

In fact there appeared in him the form of the cross and passion of the spotless lamb who washed away the sins of the world. It seemed he had just been taken down from the cross, his hands and feet pierced by nails and his right side wounded by a lance (1C 2).

Just as the beauty of God shone through the crucified Christ, so too Francis marked with the wounds of martyrdom glowed "with remarkable beauty." Celano therefore affirmed that Francis was viewed as an *alter Christus*: "The wound in his side made them remember the One who poured out blood and water from his own side and reconciled the world to the Father" (1C 2). Just as Jesus was recognized as a son of God after his death (Mt. 27:54: "in truth this was a son of God"), so too Francis was recognized as another Christ. Celano

writes: "People considered it a great gift to be allowed to kiss or even to see the sacred marks of Jesus Christ which Saint Francis bore in his own body" (1C 2).

What makes Francis another Christ according to Celano is not spiritual perfection *per se*, but the excess of love which bore itself out in Francis's willingness to suffer like Christ. This love expressed in the wounds of suffering is "the mystery in which the blood of the spotless lamb, flowing abundantly through the five wounds, washed away the sins of the world" (1C 2). We might say that love transformed Francis's body into a crucified body in the same way that love transformed Jesus into the living Christ. The love that ultimately forged Francis into Christ was "the spring of radiant love that filled his heart within [and] gushed forth" (1C 2). It is through the power of love that Francis, transformed in Christ, became another Christ. For Celano, the visible presence of Christ in the person of Francis was a bodily presence, that is, it was the body of Francis itself which manifested the presence of Jesus. He writes:

He was always with Jesus: Jesus in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, he bore Jesus always in his whole body. . . . With amazing love he bore in his heart and always held onto Christ Jesus and him crucified (1C 2).

While Celano clearly describes the renewal of Christ in the life of Francis, he does not see this renewal as a strict *imitatio Christi*, that is, a renewal of the entire life of Christ. Rather, what seems to undergird Celano's relation between Christ crucified and Francis is a eucharistic theme. The crucified body of the stigmatized Francis is, like the body of Christ, a body given over to others for the sake of the gospel. At one point Celano writes: "he made of his whole body a tongue" (1C 2). It was in and through the body of Francis, who was willing to suffer out of love, that peace and reconciliation were brought about among those who opposed the truth or who were enemies of the cross. Celano writes:

[Francis] confounded the opponents of truth, refuted the enemies of the cross of Christ, led the strangers back to the way, made peace between those in conflict, and bound together those in peace in a stronger bond of love . . . he went asking for terms of peace . . . between neighbor and neighbor, and always between God and the people" (1C 2.5).

In Celano's view, Francis's life was eucharistic because his was the body of Christ given over to others in a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation, and for the sake of unity and peace. In this respect, Celano's description of the crucified Francis as the crucified Christ points to a deeper meaning of eucharist in the life of Francis, one that embraces the enemy in forgiveness. This idea takes



on more profound meaning in light of more recent historical studies on the early Franciscan movement.

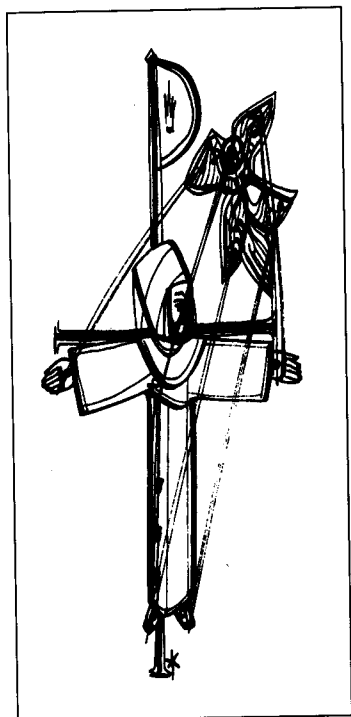
## The Wounds of Brother Francis

The Italian scholar Grado Merlo has described the development of the Franciscan movement as one beginning with the fraternity of Brother Francis and developing into the Order of Friars Minor.<sup>5</sup> When and how the fraternity evolved into an Order cannot be determined with absolute precision, although most of the historical evidence points in this direction. According to Merlo, the acceptance of clerics and theologians into the Order changed the shape and original intuition of Francis. By the time the Earlier Rule was composed,

Francis resigned from government of the Order and began to distance himself from the Order due to deep conflicts with the theologians and lawyers who had entered and were forging a different path, contrary to his desires.<sup>6</sup> His sojourn on the mount of La Verna was a long period of resentful solitude, painfully dissatisfied at how the consequences of his "inspired" way of life were being expressed in the life of the Order.<sup>7</sup> It is in light of *this* experience that Francis received the Stigmata, perhaps facing the decisive and supreme sacrifice of his will by accepting and sharing in the great sufferings of Christ through his personal "passion."<sup>8</sup> Francis descended the mountain at peace, yet a peace which involved suffering, the peace which follows the path of the crucified Christ (cf. Itin., prologue). Descending the mountain of La Verna with the wounds of Christ engraved in his flesh, Francis began to take up again his ministry to the lepers, committed to his original inspiration of minority and fraternity despite

the new obstacles of the Order. At the same time he remained obedient to the leaders of the Order and placed himself into the hands of his minister general (Test 27).

In his *First Life* Celano describes Francis as one who brought about reconciliation and peace "between those in conflict, and bound together those in peace in a stronger bond of love" (1C 2.5). Hidden in Celano's text is the fact that Francis was involved in the conflict, indeed, probably at the center of



divisions in the developing Order. Celano's account, with its *alter Christus* motif, read against the backdrop of Merlo's historical account leads me to suggest that Francis's wounded body of Christ is *wounded* precisely because he had to learn to embrace his enemies within the Order, those who had betrayed his initial ideals. Francis's life became, like Christ's, eucharistic, because he was willing to accept sacrifice out of love for the sake of the Gospel. He became a source of unity and peace precisely because he bore within his own flesh the suffering of forgiveness. Celano's parallel between the wounded body of Francis and the wounded body of Christ, therefore, is no mere piety. Rather, in Celano's view only a wounded body can bring about peace and the spirit of reconciling love.

## Eucharist: Embrace and Forgiveness

In his book *Exclusion and Embrace* the Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf states that the open arms of the crucified Christ signify a space in God's self for the other and an invitation for the enemy to come in.<sup>9</sup> The cross is not merely Christ's passion, Volf writes, but it is God's passion. It reveals the total self-giving love of God that reaches out to estranged humanity and embraces every stranger as the beloved.<sup>10</sup> In the cross we are embraced by the trinity of love who loves us with the same love with which the persons of the trinity love each other. In the cross, therefore, we are taken up in the eternal embrace of the triune God of love.<sup>11</sup> This embrace in love by the crucified Christ in which the arms of Christ are the arms of the triune God is, according to Volf, the meaning of eucharist. "The eucharist," he writes, "is the ritual time in which we celebrate this divine 'making-space-for-us-and-inviting-us-in'." However, it is not simply a being embraced by God but an empowering of God's love by which we are to embrace others, including our enemies. That is, "having been embraced by God, we must make space for others in ourselves and invite them in—even our enemies."<sup>12</sup>

Understanding the eucharist as the internalization of God's love leads to the centrality of the eucharist as the basis of Catholic life. According to Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas the truly catholic personality is one centered around the mystery of the eucharist. In receiving the eucharist each person receives the whole Christ-head and members—so that the entire body is present in each member.<sup>13</sup> In this way, each person who partakes of the eucharist is made into an ecclesial person and all persons are internal to the very being of each other. The eucharist therefore signifies that each member is not external to the other members but rather internally related to the other members of the body of Christ. Our relationship to Christ is our relationship to one another. If we say "yes" to the embrace of the crucified Christ then we must be willing to offer that embrace to our neighbor, our brother or sister, whoever

he or she might be. For the person we willingly embrace has already been embraced by Christ.

Eucharist, as mutual indwelling in the body of Christ, means celebrating the giving of self to the other and the receiving of the other into the self.<sup>14</sup> But this giving and receiving entails suffering. The Spirit of love that unites separate bodies in a unity of love is the Spirit that flows from the wounded side of Christ. It is the same Spirit that Celano highlights in the life of Francis, that is, the spirit of unifying love emanating from the depths of a dying man. If eucharist means being embraced by God and embracing the other in God, then such embrace will bear the marks of the wounded Christ. Francis's Cantic of the Creatures, composed at the end of his life, points to the relation between woundedness and peace: "Praise be you, my Lord, through those who give pardon for your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned" (Ctc 10).

Perhaps what makes Francis's life so meaningful is not the idea that he was a devoted follower of Christ (which he was) but rather that he allowed himself to be embraced by the crucified God and was willing to bear the wounds of reconciling love in his own body. As Volf states, "we who have been embraced by the outstretched arms of the crucified God [must] open our arms even for the enemies—to make space in ourselves for them and to invite them in—so that together we may rejoice in the eternal embrace of the triune God."<sup>15</sup> Francis, marked with the wounds of Christ, became an *alter Christus* because he continued to love his brothers to the end, including those who hated him. Celano writes:

He grieved over those who now sank to the level of what was low and cheap, although they once had striven for higher things with all their desire. . . so he prayed for God's mercy to set his sons free and fervently begged that they persevere in the grace given to them (1C 2).

If eucharist means finding oneself internally related to every other, including one's enemies, and embracing the other in love, then it is indeed the source of a truly catholic personality and the seed of a new creation, whereby all humanity is bound in a unity of love. It is no wonder that Francis's biographers described him as the *vir catholicus*, the one as Bonaventure writes, who symbolically returned to the state of original innocence through reconciliation with each and every thing (LMj 8:1).<sup>16</sup> Francis, living in the body of Christ, became the body of Christ through the mystery of suffering and love. Embraced by God's compassionate love in the cross, Francis strove to respond to that embrace by embracing the other, the leper or his enemy brother, and to receive that other within, even though forgiveness and reconciliation entailed the wounds of suffering.

The example of Francis as the eucharistic body of Christ speaks to us today in a world of violence and hatred. Whether it is enmity within our families or religious communities or the hatred that has spiraled in recent times among religions and nations, such enmity can only be overcome by a willingness to embrace the other in love. Albert Haase, in his book *Swimming in the Sun*, recounts the story of Corrie ten Boom who, with her family, was sent to the concentration camp at Ravensbruck for sheltering Jews. Only Corrie survived. After the war she committed herself to lecturing on the topic of forgiveness and reconciliation. Haase writes:

One day after giving her talk in Munich, Germany, a man came forward to thank her for her talk. Corrie couldn't believe her eyes. He was one of the Nazi guards who used to stand duty in the women's shower room at Ravensbruck. The man reached for her hand in friendship. Her physical body remembered too sharply the horror of the camp and the death of her beloved sister. Corrie was blocked emotionally, stuck in the crippling and debilitating rut of resentment, bitterness, hatred. As Corrie stood there, frozen with shock, the battle raged inside of her. She was torn between the seductive desire to balance the scales of justice with violence and revenge and to heed Jesus' challenge of forgiveness which she herself had preached so often. So she prayed silently to herself, "Jesus, I cannot forgive this man. Give me your forgiveness." As she prayed that prayer and as her mind's eye reviewed the years of brutality, suffering, humiliation, death, her hand suddenly lifted from her side! This former prisoner found herself offering the former shower guard the one thing she thought she did not know how to give. "I forgive you, brother, with all my heart!"<sup>17</sup>

The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said that forgiveness is a form of suffering because it means denying the gratifying desire for revenge.<sup>18</sup> It is a type of suffering that Francis knew as he strove to forgive those who betrayed his ideals, that Corrie ten Boom knew as she faced her prison guard, and Bonhoeffer himself knew in the darkness of a concentration camp. In Celano's First Life Francis became what he received, the body of Christ, broken and poured out so that others might have life. In his own writings Francis challenged his followers to do the same: "Are we not moved by piety at these things when the pious Lord offers Himself into our hands and we touch Him and receive Him daily with our mouth? Do we refuse to recognize that we must come into His hands?" (1LtCl 8-9). Similarly, in his Letter to the Faithful, Francis draws a link between receiving the body and blood of Christ and giving birth to that body in one's own life:

All those who . . . receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . 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. . . . O how holy and how loving . . . to have such a brother and such a son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for his sheep" (1LtF 1, 3, 10, 13).

In a similar letter, he also indicates that it is better not to partake of the body and blood of Christ if we are unable to find ourselves internally related to one another and to embrace one another in love. He writes: "let him eat and drink worthily because anyone who receives unworthily, not distinguishing, that is, not discerning, the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself" (2LtF 24).

Understanding the eucharist as the "fleshly" body of Christ places the eucharist at the center of Francis's way of life. This life is an evangelical life focused on being a "person in relationship" and a sharing among persons of the experience of Christ.<sup>19</sup> Because the mission of evangelical life is to imitate Christ and to make that experience of Christ available to others, it is bound up with the body of Christ and the bodies of all those who follow Christ. In this way, evangelical life is a eucharistic life. It offers to its followers Jesus' words, "do this in memory of me" (1 Cor. 11:25). These words which took on flesh in the life of Francis must continue to take on flesh in our lives today. Haase writes: "By virtue of our baptism, we are the body of Christ on earth. And everyday, in some way, we are challenged to become the bread that is broken for the hungry of the world."<sup>20</sup> Christian life, lived to its full, is a mystery of suffering, love and reconciliation. It is the life that proclaims peace and justice at the heart of the world. Peace is not the absence of violence but the unity of love. It is the love that flows from the wounds of the crucified Christ and the love that embraces us in the eucharist. As followers of Francis, we are called to be that love, that eucharistic embrace of forgiveness and reconciliation in a broken world. Such love may bear the marks of woundedness, but only through the wounds of those willing to suffer out of love will peace be a reality in our world.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>These letters include: Exhortations to the Clergy, 11; A Letter to the Entire Order, 12; Earlier Exhortation, 1-5; Later Admonition and Exhortation, 22-23; The First Letter to the Custodians, 2-4; The Second Letter to the Custodians, 4; and A Letter to the Rulers of the People, 6. See *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 1, *The Saint*, ed. by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New City Press). All citations of the writings of Francis or the other Sources are taken from this volume.

<sup>2</sup>Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 47.

<sup>3</sup>Volf.

<sup>4</sup>Volf.

<sup>5</sup>Grado Giovanni Merlo, "The Story of Brother Francis and the Order of Friars Minor," trans. Edward Hagman, OFM, *Greyfriars Review* 15.1 (2001): 10.

<sup>6</sup>Merlo, 7.

<sup>7</sup>Merlo, 9.

<sup>8</sup>Merlo, 9.

<sup>9</sup>Volf, 126.

<sup>10</sup>Volf, 127.

<sup>11</sup>Volf, 129.

<sup>12</sup>Volf, 129.

<sup>13</sup>John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 58.

<sup>14</sup>Volf, 130.

<sup>15</sup>Volf, 131.

<sup>16</sup>Bonaventure writes: "True piety . . . drew him up to God through devotion, transformed him into Christ through compassion, attracted him to his neighbor through condescension and symbolically showed a return to the state of original innocence through universal reconciliation with each and every thing." Engl. trans. Ewert Cousins, *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey Into God, The Tree of Life, The Major Life of Saint Francis* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 250.

<sup>17</sup>Albert Haase, *Swimming in the Sun: Discovering the Lord's Prayer with Francis of Assisi and Thomas Merton* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993), 162-63.

<sup>18</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1963), 100.

<sup>19</sup>Joseph P. Chinnici, "Evangelical and Apostolic Tensions," 7.

<sup>20</sup>Haase, 144.

God is the fullness of good, all good, every good, the true and supreme good, *[God] alone is good*, merciful, gentle, delightful, and sweet, *[God] alone is holy*, just, true . . . kind, innocent, clean. . . . (ER XXIII 9)

## Book Review

Gerard Thomas Straub. *The Sun and Moon Over Assisi: A Personal Encounter with Francis and Clare*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press. ISBN: 0-86716-393-3. Hardback, 614 pages, \$29.95.

"While historical accuracy was an utmost concern of mine, the story I'm about to tell is hardly a complete history of the two beloved saints. *The Sun and Moon Over Assisi* is simply a bouquet to a friend . . . and [to] his best friend." And what a bouquet this book is! It amazes me how much material Straub has managed to include. By integrating his own pilgrimage to Assisi with Francis's and Clare's pilgrimages to God, Straub's pilgrimage becomes a metaphor for conversion, an inner pilgrimage from the world of agnosticism and atheism, from the power and self-importance of a television producer, to Christ, who is present (as for Francis and Clare) in the poor and rejected of the earth. Straub's recent film, *When Did I See You Hungry?* and a soon-to-be-published book of black-and-white photographs with the same title attest to the genuineness of the impact the Christ of Francis and Clare has made on Straub's life.

*The Sun and Moon Over Assisi* is an artful compendium of just about everything one would want to know about Francis and Clare; about Assisi's art and people and culture; and about a vast selection of books that lead the interested reader to other sources and places that will enrich one's understanding of the Franciscan charism and of Franciscans, ancient and new.

Straub's technique of intertwining essays and his own pilgrimage diary with the outer and inner pilgrimages of Francis and Clare and their followers, the different narratives playing off one another, gives energy and new insights not only into the early Franciscans but also into little personal touches in the Franciscan story.

A pilgrim is a stranger, always on the move, never feeling at home. I miss my own coffee in the morning. . . . Yesterday, I bought some fruit at an outdoor market. I couldn't help but think of the merchant at a fruit-and-juice bar near my home in Los Angeles. Two or three times a week I enter his tiny store. He smiles at me, and without a word he begins to prepare a fruit salad for me, knowing exactly how I like it. (287)

While lying prostrate on a cot, Francis had a very unusual thought: He wanted a sweet cake made by his Brother Jacoba, the noble-woman from Rome who loved Francis and the brothers dearly. Francis knew she would be saddened if he died before she had a chance to say good-

bye. And so he dictated a letter to be given to her. At the same time, Lady Jacoba had a premonition about his impending death, and so she set out for Assisi, bringing with her Francis'[s] favorite sweet dessert, an almond cake known as *mostacciuolo*. (289)

It is evident from the above passages that Straub's hefty volume is about more than his personal encounter with Francis and Clare. Like a true pilgrim, Straub reflects along the way on whatever intrigues and inspires him, from his nephew's wedding in Albany, New York, which Straub remembers while sitting alone in Brother Masseo's cave, to a homeless man sitting on the steps of a church, to Don Aldo Brunacci and the rescue of Jews during World War II; from a soup kitchen in the impoverished Kensington section of Philadelphia to the soap opera, *General Hospital*, and then to the writings of Thomas Merton, Hildegard of Bingen, Meister Eckhart, and a score of others, making this book a pilgrimage of reading, as well, a *Lectio Divina* of texts ancient and new.

Straub also meditates on art. His meditations, for example, on the Basilica of St. Francis and on the Giotto frescoes, in particular, are detailed and informative and provide the reader (by means of words) a visual pilgrimage through the basilica. And as with everything else medieval in his book, Straub includes enough history for the reader to contextualize what he is writing about.

Another interesting dimension of *The Sun and Moon Over Assisi* is the author's deepening understanding of Francis and Clare and their modern counterparts, as well as showing us how that knowledge gradually convinced him that his move from being a television producer to embracing Christ is not enough. Readers are shown by the author how he reaches the conviction that he must himself become a modern pilgrim and go where Francis and Clare found Christ. He begins to notice more and more those whom he passed by when he began his pilgrimage, the poor and the beggars and the homeless.

We know from Straub's subsequent work that when the book ends, he continues his own pilgrimage: he goes among the poor of the world, talks with them, and through word, photograph and film, brings their story back to those who don't know it or who prefer to shut it out of their lives. Though we know this further development only outside the pages of this book, it is the text of *The Sun and Moon Over Assisi* that shows us how that journey began and what it will inevitably lead to if Straub's words are indeed more than words. As he himself writes at the end of the book:

I can't imagine what life will be like without the book as an active part of my life. I will have the rest of my life to try to implement all that Saint Francis and Saint Clare have taught me. It is time for me to shut up and start living what I have written. Pray for me. (594)

And then with an eye once more to the reader, Straub quotes St. Bonaventure's words at the end of *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*: "Be granted the experience of that about which we have spoken." *The Sun and Moon Over Assisi* is a book that illustrates and extends that invitation to the reader in 594 packed pages.

Murray Bodo, O.F.M.

## About Our Contributors

**Murray Bodo, OFM**, a friar of St. John the Baptist Province, Cincinnati, is a priest and poet. He has authored a number of books and is an occasional contributor to *The Cord*, for which he serves on the editorial board. He also serves as a long-time staff member for the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs.

**William R. Cook** holds the rank of Distinguished Teaching Professor of History at the State University of New York, Geneseo. He is the author of three books about Franciscan subjects and is currently editing a book on medieval Franciscan art, as well as making a CD-Rom containing images of the early paintings of Francis found in Italy.

**Ilia Delio, OSF**, a member of the Franciscan Servants of the Holy Child Jesus, North Plainfield, New Jersey, received her doctorate in theology from Fordham University. She presently is at Washington Theological Union, Washington, DC, serving as assistant professor of ecclesial history and Franciscan studies as well as Director of the Franciscan Center. She has also been a visiting professor at the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. Her published works include *Crucified Love: Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1998) and *Simply Bonaventure: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings* (New York: New City Press, 2001).

**William Hart McNichols, SJ**, is a Jesuit priest, poet, artist, and iconographer. The image published here was an original black-and-white line drawing; it is also now an icon which can be found at the St. Andre Rublev Icon Studio site on the world wide web.

**Rayner Schiamannini, OFM Conv.**, is an Italian Conventual friar who edited *The Basilica of St. Francis and the Other Sanctuaries of Assisi*, published in the United States in 1953. The original work was titled *La Basilica di San Francesco e gli altri santuari di Assisi*.

**Joseph Wood, OFM Conv.**, is a friar of the St. Anthony Province. He ministered in Italy from 1990-1998, serving as a retreat and vocation director at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi and as archivist at the General Curia in Rome. He is presently a team member for the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program and an editorial board member for *The Cord*. He is stationed at Marytown in Libertyville, Illinois, a Marian shrine and retreat center.

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## Winter/Spring/Summer Programs\*

Feb. 5 (7:00 p.m.) – 11 (12:00 noon), 2003

### **Retreat... "A Journey into the Paschal Mystery with Saints Francis & Clare"**

Directed by Donald Blaeser, O.F.M.

Cost: \$300, register by Jan. 22 with non-refundable \$50 deposit

Sat., April 26, 2003, 9:30 – 4:00 p.m.

### **Earth Day Celebration...raising consciousness about justice, ecology and peace**

Presenter: William Short, O.F.M.

Cost: \$25, register by April 18 with non-refundable \$10 deposit

June 9 (7:00 p.m.) – 13 (noon), 2003

### **Contemplative Retreat**

Directed by Lillian Kroll, O.S.F.

Cost: \$185, register by May 26 with non-refundable \$30 deposit

August 11 (7:00 p.m.) – 17 (noon), 2003

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Facilitated by Ingrid Peterson, O.S.F. and Kathy Warren, O.S.F.

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Cost: \$300, register by July 28 with non-refundable \$50 deposit

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A DIRECTOR can be available to facilitate either an individual or a small group retreat. Cost will depend on requested number of days and/or person(s) making the retreat.

\*For more information on these or other programs, or to register, write to:

Franciscan Life Office,

116 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.E. Little Falls, MN 56345-3597

Phone: 320-632-0668, e-mail: franciscanlife@fslf.org

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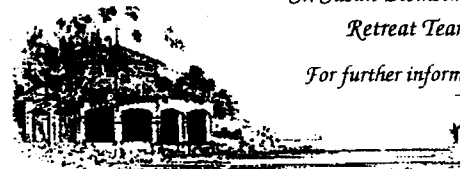
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[globalretreats.com](http://globalretreats.com)*

*Franciscan Spiritual Center*  
609 S. Convent Road  
Aston PA 19014

### **Summer Retreat Offerings**

#### **Preached Retreats:**

**Holy Week With the Beloved Disciple** April 13-20, 2003

Director: Jude Winkler OFM Conv \$310 (\$50 deposit)

**Walking with Franciscan Women** May 25-June 1, 2003

Director: Giles Schinelli TOR \$310 (\$50 deposit)

#### **Directed Retreats:**

**June 10-17, 2003 and July 13-20, 2003**

Directors:

(June 10) Mary Walsh OSF, Frank Doyle OSA, John Malich FMS,  
Julie McCole OSF

(July 13) Celeste Crine OSF, Mary Walsh OSF, Bernard Tickerhoff TOR,  
Mary Killoran OSF

Registration Deadline: two weeks before the retreat \$350 (\$50 deposit)

#### **Guided Retreats:**

**Renewing the Face of the Earth** July 22-29, 2003

Paula Gonzalez SC \$300 (\$50 deposit)

**Following in the Footprints of Francis and Clare**

**July 31 - August 7, 2003**

Anne H. Amati OSF \$300 (\$50 deposit)

**Franciscan Solitude Extended Experience - at Clare House**

June 10-17, 2003 Helen Budzik OSF and Jean Ustasiewski OSF

Registration Deadline: May 26, 2003 \$275.00

For more information on these or other programs or to register, write to the above address, call (610) 558-6152, e-mail "fsc@osfphila.org" or visit our website: [www.fscaston.org](http://www.fscaston.org)

The Franciscan Spiritual Center is situated in the southeast wing of Our Lady of Angels Convent, the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Located about 20 miles south of Philadelphia and just north of the Delaware state line, the Center consists of 21 bedrooms with private bath, 10 bedrooms sharing a common bath, lounge, kitchenette, large meeting space, spiritual direction rooms, prayer room, and a ground-level multipurpose space which houses a second lounge as well as library, listening center, arts and crafts area, and exercise corner. There is an elevator to all levels but a few additional stairs to the multipurpose space and some spiritual direction rooms. The Center is fully climate controlled and is handicapped accessible from the outside. Quiet, shaded grounds provide ample space for walking and solitude. Reservations are requested.

## **ANNOUNCING A NATIONAL SUMMER SYMPOSIUM**

### **BONAVENTURE FEST**

August 7, 2003 (7:00 P.M.) – August 9, 2003 (9:00 P.M.)

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Zachary Hayes, OFM

A Window to the Divine: Creation Theology, p. 25

We welcome you to a very special Symposium designed to help us delight in the remarkable teachings of St. Bonaventure and their implications for the deepest concerns of our times.

Zachary Hayes, OFM, (as keynote presenter), together with Ed Coughlin, OFM; Ilia Delio, OSF; Kenan Osborne, OFM; André Cirino, OFM; Josef Raischl, SFO; and Diane Jamison, OSF, will introduce us to the works of Bonaventure that are key to the worldview we sometimes call "Franciscan." They will share precious insights of our Tradition that sharpen the focus of our response to the many crucial problems that "tear at the heart of humanity, and give us a reason for the hope within us."

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**DATE:** Friday, February 28, 2003 (6:00 P.M.) and  
Saturday, March 1, 2003 (8:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.)

**PLACE:** The Franciscan Center, 2500 Grant Blvd., Syracuse, NY 13208

**REGISTRATION FEE:** \$20.00/person or \$30.00/couple (by Feb. 1, 2003)  
\$25.00/person or \$35.00/couple (after Feb. 1, 2003)

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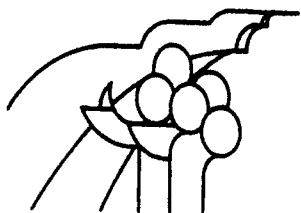
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The PORTIUNCULA Center for Prayer, in collaboration with Mary Elizabeth Imler, ofs, is pleased to add additional opportunities to experience the uniquely Franciscan way of being with God in solitude and in community.

Using Mary Elizabeth's text, *A Franciscan Solitude Experience: The Pilgrim's Journal*, this retreat is based on and uses selections from the Third Order Rule, the writings of Francis and Clare, and readings from our rich Franciscan heritage. This experience is formatted in a way faithful to that of the Rule for Hermitages, providing a time and way for solitude as modeled by Francis, in his imitation of the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness.

Participants are invited into the freedom to simply be, using the journal as a guide, with a theme reflection every ten days and opportunities to be companioned by a spiritual director as one wishes. For more information and brochure packet, contact **Kathleen Anne Copp, ofs** (815)-464-3850 Email [SKACOPP@aol.com](mailto:SKACOPP@aol.com) Fax (815)-469-4880

### THE PORTIUNCULA CENTER FOR PRAYER SUMMER 2003 RETREATS

June 20-26 Come to the Woods: A Directed Retreat Led by a Franciscan  
Team: Tod Laverty, ofm, Marianne Selig, ofs, Joanne Haney, ofs

June 27-July 3 Praying with the Franciscan Sources:

A Retreat with Michael Blastic, ofm conv & Mary Elizabeth Imler, ofs

July 19-25 Enter the Center: A Directed Retreat:

Georgen Wilson, ofs, Kathleen Anne Copp, ofs, Marie Bohn, hm

Contact: Mary Ann Hamilton Ph: 815.464.3880 email: [ORTC4P@aol.com](mailto:ORTC4P@aol.com)

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## The Franciscan Way



*The Franciscan Way is an innovative adult education program that concentrates on the history, spirituality, and theology of Sts. Francis and Clare of Assisi. We hope you will join us for our new Winter programs.*

January 19 - 22

### **POVERTY & JOY ~ The Franciscan Tradition**

*Bill Short, OFM, author of "The Franciscans: Poverty and Joy"*  
*Joe Schwab, OFM, Executive Director of the Franciscan Renewal Center & Ramona Miller, OSF, Director of Spiritual Formation at the Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley, will discuss how Francis & 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 claiming 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?*

February 28—March 2

### **Franciscan Values & Personal Conversion**

*Sr. Madonna Hoying, FSP, a Franciscan Sister of the Poor will focus on Franciscan values such as: conversion, prayer and contemplation, and living as sisters and brothers, with each other and all of creation. There will be conferences that will help make these values practical and there will also be time for sharing and quiet reflection.*

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## On the Franciscan Circuit

### Coming Events 2003

**Wednesday, February 5–Thursday, February 11, 2003**

**Retreat: A Journey into the Paschal Mystery with Saints Francis and Clare.** Directed by Donald Blaeser, OFM. (See ad, p. 40).

**Sunday, February 16–Friday, February 21, 2003**

**Conference Retreat for Sisters.** James Gavin, OFM Cap. Franciscan Center, 49 Jackson Avenue, Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706. Contact Sr. Marie Patrice, OSF. Ph: 914.478.3696 or 914.478. 3930, ext. 121.

**Friday, February 28–Saturday, March 1, 2003**

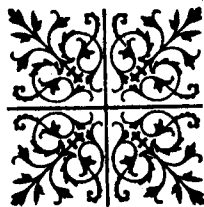
**Meeting Francis and Clare At Home and on the Journey (A Virtual Pilgrimage to Assisi).** Presenters: Anne Amati, OSF and Giles Schinelli, TOR. The Franciscan Center, 2500 Grant Street, Syracuse, NY 13208. (See ad, p. 44).

**Friday, March 21–Sunday, March 23, 2003**

**Lenten Retreat.** Franciscan Center, 49 Jackson Avenue, Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706. Contact Sr. Marie Patrice, OSF. Ph: 914.478.3696 or 914.478. 3930, ext. 121.

**Saturday, March 1–Tuesday, April 11, 2003**

**The 40 Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat.** The Portiuncula Center for Prayer, 9263 W. St. Francis Rd., Frankfort, IL: 60423-8330. (See ad, p. 45).



## Abbreviations

<i>Writings of Saint Francis</i>		<i>Franciscan Sources</i>	
Adm	The Admonitions	1C	The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano
BIL	A Blessing for Brother Leo	2C	The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul
Ctc	The Canticle of the Creatures	3C	The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
CtExh	The Canticle of Exhortation	LCh	The Legend for Use in the Choir
1Frg	Fragments of Worchester Manuscript	Off	The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
2Frg	Fragments of Thomas of Celano	LJS	The Life of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
3Frg	Fragments of Hugh of Digne	VL	The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches
LtAnt	A Letter to Br. Anthony of Padua	1-3JT	The Praises by Jacopone da Todi
1LtCl	First Letter to the Clergy (Earlier Edition)	DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Aliegheri
2LtCl	Second Letter to the Clergy (Later Edition)	TL	Tree of Life by Ubertino da Casale
1LtCus	The First Letter to the Custodians	1MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version
2LtCus	The Second Letter to the Custodians	2MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Larger Version
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful	HTrb	The History of the Seven Tribulations by Angelo of Clareno
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful	ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St. Francis and Lady Poverty
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo	AP	The Anonymous of Perugia
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister	L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
LtOrd	A Letter to the Entire Order	AC	The Assisi Compilation
LtR	A Letter to the Rulers of the People	1-4Srm	The Sermons of Bonaventure
ExhP	Exhortation o the Praise of God	LMj	The Major Legend by Bonaventure
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father	LMn	The Minor Legend by Bonaventure
PrsG	The Praises of God	BPr	The Book of Praises by Bernard of Besse
OfP	The Office of the Passion	ABF	The Deeds of St. Francis and His Companions
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix	LFl	The Little Flowers of Saint Francis
ER	The Earlier Rule ( <i>Regula non bullata</i> )	KnSF	The Knowing of Saint Francis
LR	The Later Rule ( <i>Regula bullata</i> )	ChrTE	The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston
RH	A Rule for Hermitages	ChrJG	The Chronicle of Jordan of Giano
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary		
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues		
Test	The Testament		
TPJ	True and Perfect Joy		
<i>Writings of Saint Clare</i>			
1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague		
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague		
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague		
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague		
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges		
RCI	Rule of Clare		
TestCl	Testament of Clare		
BCI	Blessing of Clare		

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**WHEN**

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**WHO**

We are pleased to announce that **Murray Bodo, OFM**, renowned Franciscan poet, author, retreat director and teacher will be on campus for the Fall 2003 semester and will lead the Theological Reflection Seminar for sabbatical participants.

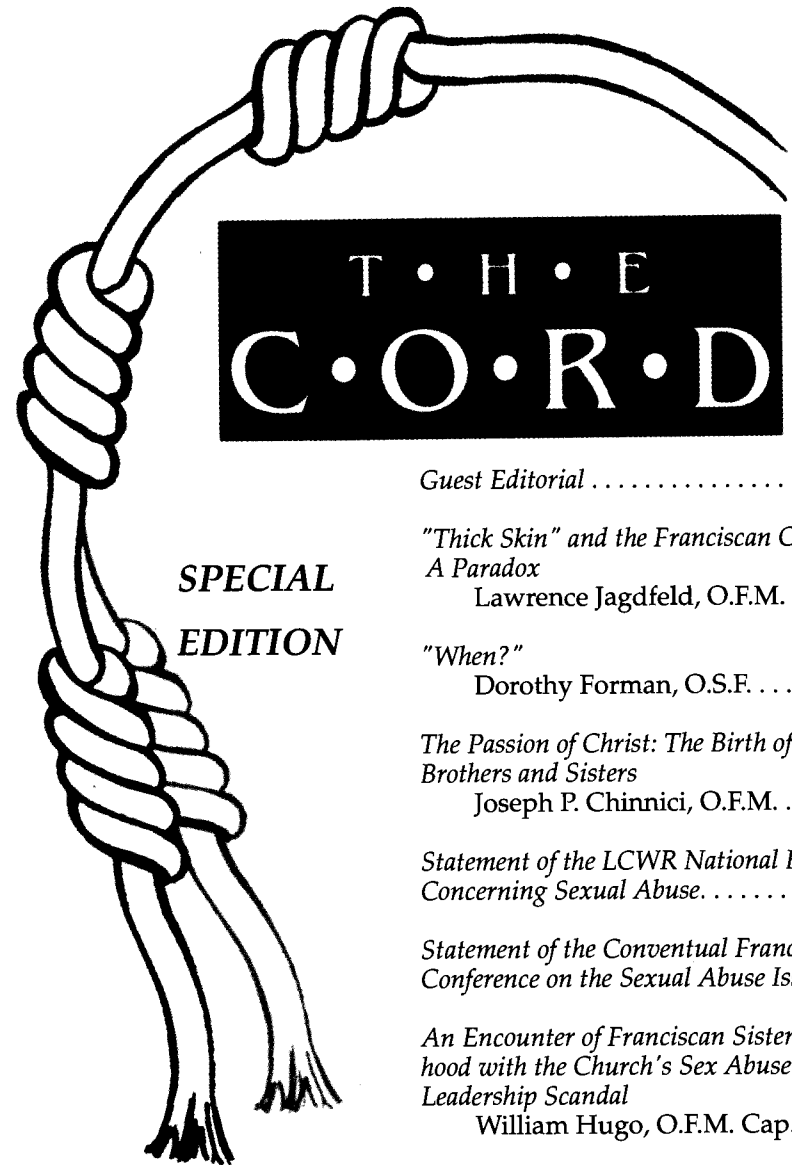
**DETAILS**

For further information or to request a brochure, contact Mary Gurley, OSF, Coordinator of Education Services at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778. 716-375-2106; [mgurley@sbu.edu](mailto:mgurley@sbu.edu)

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EDITION**

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**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. (Email: rmckelvi@sbu.edu)

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*, 14th 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.

*The Cord*, 53.2 (2003)

**Guest Editorial**

**Canice Connors, O.F.M. Conventual**, the current president of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, has graciously accepted an invitation to write the editorial for this issue of *The Cord*.

As a friar who has been involved in many aspects of the current sexual abuse crisis over a period of twenty-four years, I found the aggregate of articles in this edition of *The Cord* as a delicately orchestrated response and a helpful antidote for the low-grade depression that can cripple our spirits in these painful times.


Joe Chinnici's advocacy for an experiential wisdom that harvests the blessing of staying engaged with the realities of our times – not simply reading the signs – but willingly committing ourselves to the Holy Saturday demands of the paschal mystery – is powerful and timely.

William Hugo's plumbing the depths of our common identities in the embrace of God's creative love levels the nasty hills of pride and privilege that so often blocked our perception and appreciation of the suffering imposed by abuse. Tom Washburn's invitation to position our taste of scandal in an historical context prevents the self-pity that waters down the need for our collective involvement in genuine reform. Lawrence Jagdfeld's fraternal dermatology brings the questions down to the real level of everyday comment and conversation in the life space that shapes our attitudes and ministerial response.

I am personally grateful to my confreres for these contributions and challenges to engage this crisis from a Franciscan perspective. Perhaps a complementary consideration might be not to allow our fervor for reform and integral response to victims to mute the telling of the stories of those friars who passed through the thorns of conversion and are witnesses to the liberating power of grace. If we do not celebrate their soul-wrenching change do we not contribute to the heresy that recovery is impossible?

I believe it is also important in our fraternal concern for victims not to ourselves fall victim to a gnosticism of suffering. Victimization is not the end story of redemption but rather recovery and reconciliation – this in no way advocates forgetting but rather anointing a future that is not dictated by the power of sin.

Finally, I am grateful for the editorial inclusion of the Conventual Conference's statement; I tasted the sweet consolation of communal discernment in its realization.



## Note from the Editor

I am very grateful to Canice Connors for accepting an invitation to write the guest editorial for this issue. It has not been comfortable to publish issue after issue in 2002 without addressing in a concrete way the trauma and turmoil in which American religious men and women have been immersed. During the last year, the Church in the United States has been forced to face the complex and painful reality of sexual abuse by clergy, and there has been no vehicle in which material could be brought together in one place so as to work toward a specifically Franciscan response to this crisis. However, as a series of pieces started to arrive at my desk, the possibility of developing an issue of *The Cord* that offered food for reflection and prayer became more and more real.

Thanks to the encouragement of Sr. Margeret Carney, O.S.F., our publisher, this collection of articles now appears. Given that all the major articles come from friars and groups of friars, I needed to insure that this is not perceived as an exclusively "friars' problem." To that end, I have included not only the statement issued last August by the National Board of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, which I believe offers feminine insight and support to all involved; I have also included a poem by Dorothy Forman, O.S.F., which addresses the core Franciscan value of willingness to be converted.

We intend not to open wounds but to stand in solidarity with those who suffer; we intend not to condemn but to challenge all to greater honesty and integrity in our Gospel journey. This issue arrives during the season of Lent, when we all focus more seriously on our inner life and our relationship to God, others, and self. Although no article is dedicated *per se* to Lenten topics, they all are clearly connected to the call to live and love more in the way that God loves us. And, as one way of keeping the season before us, a number of graphics in this issue are centered on the Cross and the Crucified.

May our days become ever more Christ-centered; may our spirits abide in the peace only the Lord can give!

*Rosetta A. McKelvie, OSF*

## "Thick Skin" and the Franciscan Charism: A Paradox

Lawrence Jagdfeld, O.F.M.

I recently had the privilege of celebrating our triennial province chapter with approximately 180 of my confreres. As usual, the gathering included a great deal of reminiscing, much story telling, and conversation that both sought to catch us up with one another as well as jog our memories about times past. We spent a healthy amount of time in prayer, celebrating the Eucharist and the Hours together, expressing our cultural diversity by using our separate languages, music and stories from different societies, vestments that took their colors from dyers and weavers across the oceans. Meal times were punctuated with hearty and warm laughter.

As we gathered around the tables in the meeting room to listen to various reports and to share our opinions about different issues, the conversations were marked by a willingness to listen to the other's opinion, to weigh it carefully with our own. Each day began with a time to share a little of our own story. We were also given opportunities to share our faith with one another as we spoke about the different Scriptures which our Steering Committee offered to us for reflection. Our decision-making was an attempt to reach consensus about the issues at hand rather than simply counting votes to see which side had the majority.

Because this province chapter was held in the year 2002, you can be sure that there was also time devoted to the sad side of our life. We spoke in hushed tones about the sin of sexual abuse and how it had touched our community, especially how it had touched the people we had been called to serve. We were challenged by our administrators to see this issue in the light of the Gospel. We were also saddened to hear the news of our ill confreres, those suffering from terminal cancers as well as those struggling with debilitating strokes and disabling conditions. We prayed with and for them in their struggle to hold on to the quality of human life that we all want for each other. Sadness also marked our remembering those who were no longer with us since the last province chapter, those called home by Sister Death.

All of this is by way of saying that our province chapter was a wonderful experience of community, of fraternal love and sharing. These gatherings bring out the best in us and remind us of who we are supposed to be, who we are called to be by virtue of our Franciscan vocation. As our priorities, outlined for us by the General Chapter of 1997, point out, we are a fraternity in mission, an evangelizing fraternity; we are brothers with a spirit of prayer and devotion who embrace the evangelizing mission of the Church by living in fraternal communion with one another and in solidarity with the poor, constantly remembering that we need to be evangelized first before we can evangelize. Chapter is a time to recall that vocation, to reanimate it, to enliven it. Our "lifestyle" of fraternal communion is the content of our evangelizing mission.

Yet, while we were discerning who among us would best serve on our provincial council, someone made a statement that I have heard before in this and many other contexts and which never ceases to bother me. We were told that one of the qualities necessary in a friar who serves in administration is that he have a "thick skin." At the time that the statement was made, I reflected upon my own experience in province administration (as secretary of the province), and I quietly nodded within myself while feeling ill-at-ease about the statement.

Shortly after that, I found myself preaching a retreat for friars. The theme of the retreat was one that is familiar to all Franciscans: "On the road again, pilgrims and strangers." Whenever and wherever friars get together to discuss the nature of our life, it is inevitable that we will get into discussions of "the Franciscan charism," a subject about which there is no little difference of opinion. As I was preaching to the friars about the charism which is ours, namely to live in fraternal communion with one another, I was haunted by the statement that councilors, indeed all administrators among us, need "thick skin."

This haunting developed even further as I remembered other situations where I have encountered the same kind of attitude. How many times has a sister sought me out for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and told me about the hurts she has received at the hands of and through the comments made by her sisters. Frequently, this outpouring of hurt is accompanied by a statement that goes something like this, "Of course, I have been told by my superiors that I am too sensitive." In other words, she doesn't have "thick skin."

Thick skin is, of course, the defense mechanism that men and women in community develop to protect themselves from the unkind words and judgmental attitudes of others. It is a recommended quality not only for administrators but for all religious because we all inevitably run into judgmental comments and misunderstandings. As a person who has been the butt of jokes and the subject of some insensitive remarks—as well as a person who can dish out a few well-placed barbs—I know the need for thick skin. As a person who has been misunderstood, who has been judged rashly and harshly, I have had to

develop that thick skin which carries us through such ordeals and makes it possible for us to get through life without spending the majority of our time licking the wounds and tending the scabs that could eventually turn into psychological scars.

Nevertheless, I cannot help feel that this is all contrary to who we are called to be as Franciscans. How can we be "sensitive" to the needs of others, how can we respond to the woundedness of our brothers and sisters, how can we bandage the sores of the lepers we meet, if we are people with "thick skin." The Gospel tells us to love one another as we love ourselves. Does it not follow that in order to be sensitive to the fragility of the human ego of the other, we must be sensitive ourselves? Does not our desensitization of our own psyche make it difficult for us to respond to the sensitivities of others?

To illustrate this point on a very practical level: the Church (in particular, the bishops of the United States) has been accused recently of not being sensitive to the needs of the victims of sexual abuse. The media and critics alike have characterized the church as being more concerned about its own image than it is about the hurts that have been sustained by the victims of sexual abuse. Perhaps our skin has developed such a thickness that we can no longer feel their pain.

I draw another example from the life of a confrere who had experienced devastating loss in his life: a mother who was dying and a friend who had died, a change in his ministry and his community of some twenty-two years. One of these situations alone would have introduced a great deal of stress into his life. All of them together were inflicting such pain that he was finding it hard to see or feel God being active in his life. When I confronted him with the need to take time to deal with these losses, his initial response was that he didn't have the time that the recommended therapeutic program was asking of him. No one could accuse him of not having "thick skin." So he simply looked for ways to desensitize himself to the pain until it became so overwhelming that he didn't know where to turn for help.

In my own life (I serve as a formation director for our province) I have recently run into not a few "jokes" about the number of people who have left formation under my watch. It has been said that I "got rid of them." Of course, this is always said with a laugh and a slap on the back, which are supposed to indicate that nothing hurtful was meant by the comment. However, the comments do hurt. Anyone who has experienced such comments knows the truth about such "jokes." When men decide to leave formation or when it becomes necessary to ask the candidate to terminate formation, it is a painful experience for the formator. The pain is only compounded by such insensitivity.

"This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 14:35). The hallmark of the Christian life is love for one another. The Gospel life is a life of love for God and for neighbor. Does it not

follow that the Franciscan life is about love for one another, especially for our brothers and sisters in community? So why should we need "thick skin"?

Thadée Matura, O.F.M., in a piece he wrote many years ago about the Franciscan charism (it may have been a presentation at one of the post-conciliar plenary councils of the Order), made the comment that all of the reforms of the Franciscan Order, and there have been many, have had "poverty" as the center of concern. Indeed, Franciscan literature from the thirteenth century is filled with polemics regarding the place of the radical poverty of Francis's lifestyle in the life of the friars. As the years unfolded after the death of Francis, more and more splinter groups formed as each new reformer tried to outdo the last in the embrace of poverty of life. One would get the impression that the vow of poverty was the defining characteristic of Franciscan life, that it was, in fact, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet we know that this is not the case. Gospel poverty is one way to love God and neighbor. It frees us to the possibility of love. However, it is only one of many values that lead us to that love.

In his article, Matura wonders about the effects of a reform which would have as its center of concern our life of charity. Perhaps we can find the answer to that question in two excerpts from the life of Francis. The first comes from the Legend of the Three Companions:

They loved each other deeply, served one another, and took care of each other as a mother for an only and beloved child. Charity burned so ardently in them that it seemed easy for them to give their bodies to death, not only for the love of Christ, but also for the salvation of the soul or the body of their confreres.

One day, when two of the brothers were walking along, they came across a simpleton who began to throw rocks at them. One of them, noticing that stones were being thrown at the other, ran directly in front of him, preferring that the stones strike him rather than his brother. Because of the mutual charity with which they burned, they were prepared to lay down their life in this way, one for the other (L3C, 41-42).

If any excerpt about the life of Francis speaks of "thick skin," this one surely does. To be sure, the "defending" brother better have it in great quantities.

I do not envision that a time will ever come in the United States where I will be called upon to sacrifice my life for my brothers although I could see it happening in other parts of the world. So how would I live out this kind of charity in my present circumstance. Is it too simplistic to suggest that I should intercept the unkind remarks and rash judgments that are "thrown" at my confrere by stepping in front of him and deflecting them with words of my own? I might do this by speaking of the virtues of my confrere or by praising

his talents. I might also speak of how easily our motives are misunderstood and how important it is to consider those motives before judging another's behavior. Are there not many ways to let the less than charitable speech "strike" me rather than my brother.

Another answer comes from the pages of *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* by Brother Thomas of Celano:

It happened that a brother named Barbaro once threw out an insulting word at another brother in the presence of a nobleman of the island of Cyprus. But, when he saw that his brother was rather hurt by the impact of that word, he took some donkey manure, and, burning with rage against himself, put it into his mouth to chew, saying: "Let the tongue which spat the poison of anger upon my brother now chew manure" (2C, 155).

Certainly, the penance chosen by the "offending" brother in this story is extreme. I wonder again, however, if it is too simplistic to suggest that some sort of penance should be self-imposed when I discover myself guilty of offending a brother or sister or even of disturbing them through my actions or speech. In addition to an apology, some sort of physical penance might just school me in the need to bridle my tongue with charity when it is prone to sarcasm and ridicule.

Perhaps a reform based on the Gospel charism of charity would take the form of a "chapter of faults" in reverse. At our monthly house chapters, we always take the time to let one another know what is going on in our lives: how we are feeling, what we are doing, where we are succeeding, where we are failing. We call it "checking in." How pleasant it is when one of my brothers responds to my "checking in" with words of support and encouragement, with words of gratitude for something I have done, with words of appreciation for who I am. It is truly a blessed balm running over my head.

My starting point was a remark made about the necessity of "thick skin" for those in positions of administration. Here too, I wonder if it is too simplistic to suggest that we need to change our way of thinking about and speaking about our ministers. Rather than criticizing their decisions, perhaps we need to thank them for their willingness to serve in positions of responsibility. (If my discussions with women religious are at all normative, my sense is that the number of people willing to serve in these positions is few indeed. Many simply take their name out of the running during the discernment phase of the election. In our province, this is not permitted. We are required to serve the community when we are asked to do so unless some grave illness, physical or spiritual, prevents it.) Whether we are speaking of local ministers or provincial ministers, it is rare that we know the constraints of their tasks and all the

details of the situations with which they deal every day. Yet we see fit to lob all sorts of verbal missiles at them just as the simpleton pelted the brothers on their way.

In conclusion, let me say that while I understand why "thick skin" is very helpful for anyone who lives in community, let alone for those who have been called to leadership in community, I also have come to believe that it is contrary to our charism of fraternal or sisterly love. If nothing else, I believe we need to work at removing the calluses so that we can feel the pain. Perhaps we would find ourselves being evangelized by the pain of our brothers and sisters and learning the true meaning of the Gospel commandment "to love one another as I have loved you."

## WHEN. . . ?

WHEN . . .

**DID I AWAKEN TO WONDER AND MYSTERY?  
DID I KNOW THE JOY OF BEING ALIVE?  
DID I KNOW PEACE?  
DID I KNOW LOVE?**

**WHEN GOD BECAME THE CENTER OF MY UNIVERSE.**

WHEN . . .

**DID I GROW OLD AND TIRED AND LONELY?  
DID I BECOME A CRITIC AND A CYNIC?  
DID I SEE MY DREAMS BECOME NIGHTMARES?  
DID I KNOW ONLY STRUGGLE AND SUFFERING?**

**WHEN I BECAME THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE.**

*Dorothy Forman, O.S.F.*

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## **The Passion of Christ: The Birth of Brothers and Sisters**

Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M.

The following is an excerpt from an address given June 3, 2002, to the Provincial Chapter of the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph, Detroit, Michigan.

### Introduction

I have been asked to speak about the "evangelical nature of our Franciscan life" with particular emphasis on its deeper connections with evangelization. To begin, let us concentrate on our Gospel way of life as it intersects with the difficulties of being a brother and the realities of our mission in society: **Gospel, becoming brothers and sisters, witness.** I take the fundamental connection between these three dimensions to be that articulated by Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (14):

For the Christian community can never be confined within itself, because its intimate life, that is its zeal for prayer, its hearing of the word and the teaching of the apostles, its exercise of fraternal charity, the breaking of bread, cannot achieve its full force and value unless it becomes a witness and evokes admiration and conversion of souls.

For we Franciscans, particularly those from the Observant and Capuchin reform movements, perhaps the fundamental text of this evangelical way of witness is simply expressed in Francis's Testament (14): "And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the holy Gospel."<sup>1</sup>

We might note in this short passage that the Gospel way of life was revealed to Francis by the Lord only **after** "the Lord gave him brothers." I take this to mean:



a) Francis did not ask for them; they were something with which he had to deal, facts, if you like, of life. They were “given,” just as a difficult and exacting “way of penance” among lepers was given, not asked for (1-4); just as “faith in churches,” which were poor, small, and by the roadside was given, not asked for (4); just as “faith in priests,” whose institutional affiliations and witness obscured and darkened the presence of God, “was and is given,” not asked for (6-13); just as, in the midst of all this, a greeting, not asked for, was revealed to him: “Dominus det tibi pacem” (22).

b) This “giving” of brothers, who came from different states of life, occupations, classes, generations, and participated in the violence, unbelief, and disillusionment of their time—who themselves were walking obstacles and scandals “moved by divine inspiration” (ER 2.1)—we note the juxtaposition of realities: obstacle and grace—set Francis on a path of embracing and questioning. His was a journey of life which could only be resolved through the grace (“revelation”) of the “form of the Gospel” or the path opened to him by the “following in the footprints of Christ,” who himself “had been made an outcast to his brothers and a stranger to the children of his mother” (Off. Pass., v. 8, citing Ps. 68.9).

c) The greeting of “peace,” the last of the “givens” (23) became an effective witness only because it occurred within this matrix where the brother was experienced as an obstacle full of “givenness.” The only way to life was the embrace through Christ of God’s passionate desire to encounter the human and all that lay within it. In other words, the *dysfunctional fraternity itself was the seedbed for the concrete praxis of solidarity and peace and the sine qua non of effective witness.*

Let me now examine the basic trajectory of this contemporary exegesis of the Testament in some of its dimensions: (1) Hope as a path for the evangelical life in today’s Church; (2) Recovering experiential wisdom; (3) Imaging hope.

## Hope As a Path for the Evangelical Life in Today’s Church

Running throughout Francis’s writings is a key theological virtue which demands some reflection, especially at this time in the history of our Church and society: *Hope*. Francis prays for this at the beginning of his conversion: “Illumine the darkness of my heart and give me Lord . . . a certain hope . . .” (Prayer Before the Crucifix). The prayer of “hope” also surfaces in the Office of the Passion, his daily bread in the midst of trials within and without (VI.15), and is connected with the need for a Savior when one appears far distant from experience: “You are my *hope*, Lord, from my youth” (XII.4). His creedal affirmation, a sermon preached to the people, identifies the Savior as the locus of

true *hope* (ER 23.11). He considered the presentation of hope so significant a part of the mission of the brothers that at a Chapter he had the following phrase included in the Rule: “*And they must beware not to appear outwardly sad and like gloomy hypocrites, but let them show that they are joyful in the Lord and cheerful and truly gracious*” (ER 7.16, 2C 128). At the end of his life, in the wake of the Stigmata, his Praises of God (4) shout out in identification with all people, “You are **our hope** and joy.”

Hope, William Lynch tells us in his justly famous book, is an arduous search for a future good which is realistically possible but not yet visible. It requires an exercise of the “realistic imagination”—an imagination which opens up the boundaries of the possible beyond a narrow perception of the present order of things; it breaks down isolation and silence and begins with acts of collaboration, mutuality, relationship, conversation, which connect a person with someone who gives. Because it is communal, hoping is a political act, an act of the public order which channels our wishing and desiring into possibilities which are realizable only with others. While hopelessness, directly expressed in apathy and withdrawal, more frequently appears under the guise of its opposites: denial of the real, over-activity, boastfulness, arrogance, rigidity, fixation, an absolutizing ideology, hope takes the person who is entrapped in routine structures of thought, feeling, and action, or the person who is confused by entanglement in the guilt of others, or the person who is alienated through violence and disappointment, and frees the will for engagement in the task of building relationships and creating a human place to live. Hope takes everything which is experienced—the good and the not so good—and through the involvement of others reconfigures this very reality into a new field of meaning and purpose. Hope takes small steps towards other people.<sup>2</sup> Hope, to return to Francis, is characteristic of God and life in God; it is God’s gift to us in the Savior. Its sisters are joy and freedom; its place of birthing is fraternity; its manifestation is an embodied humanity. Hope, I believe, is the experiential wisdom which we as friars are challenged to give to each other, to the Church, and to the society of our day. I focus in on this particular dimension of Francis’s experiential wisdom for several reasons. Let me mention just two of them, one on the ecclesial scene, one on the cultural scene.

Let’s start with the obvious, the ecclesial scene. Over the last fifteen years, especially after my experiences from 1988 to 1997 as provincial minister, I have begun to look at the Church in the United States as a deeply interconnected spiritual and material body, the action of one of whose members affects the lives and hopes of every other one of the believers. Certainly, we see this to be the dominant experience in the present situation. While beginning with a legitimate presenting focus on misconduct, sexual abuse, and the misuse of power, the common analysis spills over into a discussion (sometimes condemnation) of other parts which are imaged to be intrinsic to this single (corrupt)

system: gender orientation, celibate lifestyle, an unnatural way of life, a priestly vocation. It is presumed that everyone who has one or more of these marks is part and parcel of the problem. We know instinctively that this concentration of so many parts into an indistinguishable whole is not accurate nor a true reflection of reality; but the penchant for absolutizing prevails and feelings of shame, anger, guilt, betrayal, isolation, and mistrust begin to permeate all of our reality. We feel it, and our feelings, while not true in their absolutizing, do, I suspect, contain a profound truth: We are parts, one of another, partners, if you like, in hope or in hopelessness. We who once thought ourselves so independent from the Church, certainly from the diocesan priesthood, and even perhaps from each other, now discover that we rise or fall together.

Confronted with this felt experience of interdependence, albeit a very negative one, are we being told something about the role of our religious vocation in the Church, how we need publicly to articulate it in terms of a universal sense of solidarity with others? The Lord having led us here, what is the Word which is being spoken? Do we not have a role to play in helping others and ourselves break through feelings of entrapment and hopelessness with respect to ecclesial reform, the impossibility of changing our leadership, and the covert actions of our own brothers in our province and in the priesthood? How do we as part of our mission present images of hope, with its sisters of joy and freedom? Surely, we have in this present difficulty a challenge of hope?

On the cultural scene, there is also among people a profound, deep and perduring spiritual hunger for experience, wisdom, embodiment, meaningful ritual, a community of discourse which is able to mediate a spiritual tradition of wisdom in a contemporarily meaningful way. People find the institutional expressions of our faith incredible. Robert Bellah put the case most clearly in the following words:

But our most urgent need at the moment is to open up our deep cultural code so that the sacramental imagination will have a more pervasive influence over our lives. That would probably require a severe reality challenge to our present apparently successful way of life, something like a major depression, and in response, a combination of the Catholic imagination with a kind of Evangelical revivalism.<sup>3</sup>

What I would like to say with respect to these two "signs of the times"—the phenomenon of clerical abuse and the growing in-credibility of our institutional expressions—is that it is precisely this type of environment which gives birth to the evangelical experience of God and the project of hopefulness which is that of Francis and his brothers. It is a fact of our history that our evangelical life, in its true dimensions, flourishes as beauty and challenge at times of severe social mutation, especially at times when people experience a great gulf

between their expectations for life and the ability of the social institutions to embody life; especially at times when everyone is acutely and painfully exposed to the enormous distance between the professed word and the way it is lived, the idea proclaimed and the reality done, the public posture and the private dealings, the outward claims and the inward motivations; especially at those times when the Body of Christ which is the Church appears neither as a Man of Sorrows persecuted from the outside, nor as a Spotless Lamb mediating for the sins of others, nor as the Bride of the Holy One shining with translucent light, but in the shape of a disfigured, mentally challenged, emotionally conflicted, disease ridden neighbor. Problems of institutional violence, the hiddenness of God in structures of deceit, the gap between popular aspirations and ritual expressions, the ability to bridge the ethics, knowledge, and belonging gaps, the turn towards alternate traditions, and the crying need for sacramentality—that is, the felt incarnation of the Spirit in bodily forms and expressions—all of these realities structured Francis's Gospel response. He, his brothers and sisters, flourished in this type of environment. His spiritual genius was an evangelical imagination set free. His task was the embodiment of hope.

But first Francis, his brothers and sisters had to *feel the problem and know the confusing questions that cut through people's own hearts. They had to grapple with their own unbelief, their own alienation, and couple it with the faith which the Lord had given them.* This made all the difference in the world as to the answer they proposed and the hope they embodied. Experience became the terrain on which "givenness" occurred, the "givenness" being a new reality of God as Communal Goodness, a new image of Jesus and his Body in its disfigured shape, a new praxis of "doing by being with" each other, a new ethic of peace. I suspect that today the challenge of hope which is given to us is given so that we can know at first hand, in an experiential way, the profound personal, social, and ecclesial foundations for true evangelization:

The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men [and women] of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts" (*Gaudium et Spes* 1).

The truth is, we must know at first hand the experience of the people of our own time—their alienation, their dissatisfaction, their searching for spiritual experience, so that we can proclaim hope from within their experience not from without; neither from above nor from the side of their experience, but from within it. Such is the way of Francis and Clare, such is the way of the Incarnation, such is the way of the Passion and Resurrection.

## Recovering Experiential Wisdom

Fashioning a path of hope out of the type of experience which I have described can be a difficult and perilous task. I call it the recovery of experiential wisdom. I think I can best illustrate its difficulty by recounting to you an experience I have had, my own encounter with a person of hope. When I was a young definitor [a member of our province council], I heard a talk in February, 1983, at a workshop offered by one of our senior friars. This man was a person of tremendous experience and insight. He was both a master carpenter and a dreamer, combining in himself almost contradictory and paradoxical characteristics. He was an organized visionary, a director of formation, a teacher of theology, a young vibrant pastor blazing a pathway after the Second Vatican Council, a retreat master and administrator, an official visitator to other provinces, a director of province personnel, an intrepid camper, and, when I came to know him best, a very influential vicar provincial. In this particular workshop, which occurred one year before he died, he presented to us, in a completely original schema, the four basic patterns of the Franciscan life, both on the group and on the personal level. It was very clear that he was offering to us the wisdom of his own evangelical experience.

My teacher outlined for us four different patterns and pulls embedded in our Franciscan life and the fundamental choices religious are forced to make at various stages of their journey: **the choice to engage with enthusiasm; the choice to stay committed; the choice to confront and accept personal and collective creatureliness, sin and failure; the choice to be free.** He lined up all of these choices and their opposites: **the choice to disengage, the choice to remain disillusioned, the choice to live from frustration, the choice for apathy.** At a crucial point in his exposition, he came to his decisive image of the evangelical experience of fraternity: Here, he said, the religious makes the choice to strive for a fraternity of (a) free actualized persons, who value (b) equality, (c) mutual exchange, (d) common possessions, and (e) are directed outwards towards mission. He stopped, looked at us and reflected: "At least, I think this is the way it should be. But I do not really know. I have never experienced it. It is a situation which has always eluded me and caused me no end of frustration." He made that last frustrated comment, to some extent, with great irony, a little sadness, obvious freedom, and some laughter!<sup>4</sup>

*John Altman was a man of great experiential wisdom, a man who for many of us embodied hope and spent his whole life trying to build structures and institutions which would support and nourish hope. He made his choice for the Gospel way of life in a world which needed hope. And he persevered.*

What my brother discovered in his journey into wisdom was the fact that our basic choice in life—could I add here, **especially for men**—is to choose to

engage. This is a typically Franciscan analysis. Our basic struggle is not against futility but against not wishing, that part of us that does not want to participate and uses all sorts of excuses to justify abstention from life in its beauty and pain (fear of ostracism, distaste of conflict, tolerance of difference, intellectual disagreement, lack of perfect circumstances). John Duns Scotus (in contrast to Aquinas and the dominant Church tradition) got it right centuries ago when he noted that people can actually choose neither to reject evil nor to affirm the good. They simply *will not to choose, will to do nothing*.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, our friar became a person of wisdom not because he had achieved his goal but because he had learned at some cost to engage life's ambiguities, to embrace imperfection, to read a world and Church of disfigured sacramentality, to learn love by first practicing it. He learned over the years not only to live in peace with certain antinomies but to struggle with them as life-giving. He learned to find perfection in the encounter with imperfection. He learned to stand open-palmed with one hand weary from steadying a heavy, weighted, ecclesial tower of Pisa and the other hand anointing and caressing the beauty and form of this sacramental Body of Christ which houses the human condition. He learned to accept the paradox of love, not the logic of categories. He learned to embrace the realities of our experience as contraries not contradictories, different colors on the same palette of grace, different notes in the same symphony, different works by the same Artist. In his life, the fundamentals which the world divides co-existed in the common field of God's choice to become our Brother. Grace and a lack of the fullness of grace, freedom and limitation, beauty and the not so beautiful, "Nazareth and goodness," The "Son of God and the Son of Man," the divine and the human oscillated like electrons around a nucleus to form a packet of energized matter. And our friar learned to weep—simultaneously tears of love and tears of mourning—over the conjunction of the divine and the human.

Give us twelve strong John Altmans and the evangelical life will rebuild God's house! Give us a community which take this vision seriously and we will see embodied hope.

## Imaging Hope

In a social and ecclesial situation where the presence of "God with us" becomes obscure, in a culture in which the graphic and technological revolutions dominate the daily horizon of our life (especially the youth *who want to see*), we friars are called to a task similar to that of Francis of Assisi, his brothers and sisters: we are called to *show* (*ostendere*, cf. Adm. 1), to make visible and tangible, to embody, to become human and communal images of the Good News as a concrete possibility in the world.<sup>6</sup> This requires that we become persons of free choice, imagination, and action, persons marked by "experien-

tial wisdom." If we had to begin to draw a picture, to imagine this way of life within the context of our tradition, what would it look like? What would be some of its component parts? In this final section, let me just briefly outline for the purposes of our discussion what I think would be some of the lines of development which would mark our path of hope in today's world more clearly.

**Changing our paradigm for Francis and the brothers:** Real images dictate action, shape choices, create cultural possibilities. How do we in our minds image Francis of Assisi, his brothers, and their early fraternity? I would like to suggest that in today's world we focus—from our formative years onwards—not on the early Francis and the allegedly halcyon days of the community (Cf. 1C 38-41), which within today's experience can only stand as an ideal which judges but does not give life, but on the later years, 1219-1226, the "years of torment," as many contemporary historians call them. These are the years of internal conflict among the brothers, struggle for existence within the Church, poor health, the collapse of the initial project, arguments over the Rule, pressures to abandon Clare and the sisters, transitions in leadership, and the changing composition of the fraternity.<sup>7</sup> Here is where reality no longer matched his expectations and the temptation towards abandonment, resentment, and apathy occurred. These are the years when the path of hope had to be chosen not simply followed.

This is the period when the simple repetition of the Great Commandment, so much a part of the Earlier Exhortation (vs. 1, referring to Mk. 12:30), mutated into something much more difficult:

- Moreover, let us perform worthy fruits of penance. And let us love our neighbors as ourselves. And if there is anyone who does not wish to love them as himself, at least let him do no harm to them, but rather do good (2LtF 25-26).
- And let all the brothers, both the ministers and servants as well as the others, take care not to be disturbed or angered at the sin or the evil of another, because the devil wishes to destroy many through the fault of one; but they should spiritually help [the brother] who has sinned as best they can, because it is not the healthy who are in need of the physician, but those who are sick (ER 5.7-8).
- Let us pay attention, all [my] brothers, to what the Lord says: Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you, for our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose footprints we must follow, called his betrayer "friend" and gave Himself willingly to those who crucified Him. Our friends, then, are all those who unjustly afflict upon us trials and ordeals, shame and injuries, sorrows and torments, martyrdom and death; we must love them greatly for we will possess eternal life because of what they bring upon us (ER 22.1-4).

- Instead let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working, to pray always to Him with a pure heart and to have humility, patience in persecution and weakness, and to love those who persecute us, find fault with us, or rebuke us, because the Lord says: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute and slander you. Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. But whoever perseveres to the end, he will be saved (LR 10.9-10).
- You should accept as a grace all those things which deter you from loving the Lord God and whoever has become an impediment to you, whether [they are] brothers or others, even if they lay hands on you. And you should desire that things be this way and not otherwise. And let this be [an expression] of true obedience to the Lord God and to me, for I know full well that this is true obedience. And love those who do these things to you. And do not expect anything different from them, unless it is something which the Lord shall have given to you. And love them in this and do not wish that they be better Christians. And let this be more [valuable] to you than a hermitage (LtMin 2-7).
- Afterward the Lord gave me and still gives me such faith in priests who live according to the manner of the holy Roman Church because of their order, that if they were to persecute me, I would [still] have recourse to them (Test 6).

This is the period when new images for the "following of Christ" emerged from deep within Francis and the brothers. We have the following stories: "True and Perfect Joy";<sup>8</sup> Greccio (1C 84-87)<sup>9</sup>; and The Stigmata (IC 91-95).<sup>10</sup> This is the period which the companions remember most, when the importance of example becomes paramount, when the Office of the Passion<sup>11</sup> becomes daily bread and the great songs of praise are composed (The Praises of God, The Canticle of Creatures, The Canticle of Exhortation).

It is from this period that we must take our operative images in order to discover experiential wisdom. We also might note that it is from this period

*Let us pay attention, all [my] brothers, to what the Lord says: Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you, for our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose footprints we must follow, called his betrayer "friend" and gave Himself willingly to those who crucified Him. ER 22.1-2*

that the Franciscan theological tradition has built its major themes: Trinity, Incarnation, poverty, etc.

**Broadening “fraternitas”:** What Francis discovers on a more self-conscious level is that in his later years he must choose to engage, to live in the social and ecclesial location where he was first led to “do penance.” The story of the leper remembered at the beginning of his Testament is not so much a recalling of his early years as an *exemplum for the present*, a “narrative of placement” for the friars. Embedded in their hearts as an image of free choice it reminds them that the central political and cultural function of the fraternity in times of social mutation, ecclesial disfigurement, boundary hardening, and moral scapegoating is not one of a *direct prophetic denouncement* but one of a *prophetic announcement which is a mediation*. To make this announcement with credibility the friars are to stand in the demilitarized zone between two warring sides, letting go of neither, but choosing to defuse violence by practicing peace. They must embrace both their Roman Catholicity and their popular catholicity. Becoming brothers is a reality which then emerges from within a life lived not on the margins of the institution, as if the fraternity was a counter-cultural sect, but in the marginal zone between the institution and the people of the times. Becoming brothers is an ethical act which creatively engages antinomies.<sup>12</sup> In our own self-definition it means that we do not have to be alike to belong, but to belong we must engage the other.

- There is no brother without a sister.<sup>13</sup>
- There is no cleric without a laic.<sup>14</sup>
- There is no religious without a secular.
- There is no believer without an unbeliever.<sup>15</sup>
- There is no Order without Church.<sup>16</sup>
- There is no *servus* without a *Dominus*.

What would happen to our institutions, our fraternal life, our relationships with the diocese and the broader Franciscan family if we took this prophetic announcement which is a mediation seriously? Both the way in which we spoke about ourselves—we generally image ourselves without our antinomy—and the social image which we gave to our body would be a cultural language of “redemptive subversion.”<sup>17</sup>

**Developing performative language:** Francis, the brothers, and the sisters engaged themselves in a socially embodied project where transformative praxis bolstered by intellectual reflection became the avenue towards life. They developed a set of disciplines which enabled them to assimilate the tensions and strains of life in the demilitarized zone. We are well aware of the language in our Rule which corrects the offending brother, establishes procedures of penance, admonishes the errant leader, and forbids scandalous behavior (Chaps.

7, 8, 10, 11). Other religious practices were designed to provide life so that this rocky terrain could be negotiated:

- *new internal rituals and prayers*
- *new approaches to asceticism*
- *new disciplinary techniques*
- *a continuing methodology of conversation*
- *new categories of thinking and intellectual reflection*
- *a new hagiography of heroes*
- *new ways of living together*

All of this *regula et vita* emerged precisely because people who were different chose to engage the difficult project of an *announcement which was a mediation*. The adaptation of traditional avenues of performative action (asceticism) and the development of new ones formed a bridge between the friars and the diverse worlds they inhabited. *For people who wanted to see the performance of the Gospel, the friars chose to provide the drama of Incarnation*. In contemporary terms, theirs was a life which took religious practice seriously. *There is no wisdom without experience, no experience without practice, no practice without mission, no mission without embodiment, no embodiment without the taking up of the cross* (see Office of the Passion, XV.13.)<sup>18</sup>

**Focusing Ourselves on the Iconography of the Passion:** Here I would simply like to read to you from that place in our tradition where true fraternity was born:

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother: “Woman, behold your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold your mother.” And from that time the disciple took her into his home.<sup>19</sup>

This text has an image corollary in the Franciscan tradition which may help us to identify the meaning of becoming brothers as a result of the passion of Christ. The image is the San Damiano Crucifix, and together with the passage from John it embodies an *Image/Text* at the heart of our life. There is no word without embodiment; there is no embodiment without the cross. We can have no fraternity without the Office of the Passion.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>My interpretation of the Testament has been stimulated greatly by Grado Merlo, “Intorno a frate Francesco: uomini e identità di una nuova “fraternitas,”” in *I Compagni di Francesco e La Prima Generazione Minoritica, Atti del XIX Covegno internazionale* (Spoleto:

Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1992), 315-338; Felice Accrocca, *Francesco e Le Sue Immagini, Movimenti della evoluzione della coscienza storica dei frati Minori (secoli XIII-XVI)* (Padova: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1997), 15-35.

<sup>2</sup>William F. Lynch, *Images of Hope* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975 (1964), *passim*).

<sup>3</sup>Robert N. Bellah, "Religion and the Shape of National Culture," *America* 181 (July 31-August 7, 1999): 9-14, with quotation from p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>In the exposition above I have taken some liberties in explaining the patterns outlined by John Altman as matters of choice. The reasons for the change are based on my own experience of how his/these insights play out within our history.

<sup>5</sup>For the importance of this issue in the contemporary context see both Lynch, *Images of Hope*, chapter 2, on the origins of hopelessness; and for the Franciscan tradition, Richard H. Bulzaccelli, "Duns Scotus's Third 'Volitional Posture' and a Critique of the Problem of Moral Indifference in our Time," *Franciscan Studies* 58 (2000): 77-109; Mary Elizabeth Ingham, "Practical Wisdom: Scotus' Presentation of Prudence," in Ludger Honnefelder, Rega Wood, Machthild Dreyer, eds., *John Duns Scotus, Metaphysics and Ethics* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 551-571.

<sup>6</sup>This particular approach becomes significant especially in the context of today's youth culture dominated by the media, technology, and advertisement. For the history of the graphic revolution see Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image or What Happened to the American Dream* (New York: Atheneum, 1962); for some contemporary implications see Stewart M. Hoover, Lynn Schofield Clark, eds., *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>7</sup>The shift in Franciscan studies began as early as Raoul Manselli's *Now Qui Cum Eo Fuimus, Contributo alla Questione francescana* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1980), most recently appearing as an English supplement in *Greyfriars Review*. See as even more fundamental Giovanni Miccoli, *Francesco d'Assisi, Realtà e memoria di un'esperienza* (Turin: Einaudi, 1991).

<sup>8</sup>See Andre Jansen, OFM, "The Story of the True Joy: An Autobiographical Reading," *Greyfriars Review* 5.3 (1991): 367-387.

<sup>9</sup>It is not accidental that Greccio is placed precisely at the juncture between Book I of Celano's First Life, which follows the historical sequence, and Book II, dealing with the charity of the passion and the last year of Francis's life. It is a symbolic event showing in picture form the transition towards a deeper following of Christ and an immersion into the contingent human condition. For illuminating comments on the hagiographical tradition see Jacques Dalarun, *La Malavventura di Francesco d'Assisi* (Milan: Edizioni Biblioteca Franciscana, 1996). Now available in English as *The Misadventure of Francis of Assisi* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002).

<sup>10</sup>Fundamental to a reinterpretation of the Stigmata as emerging from within Francis's experience and making visible the "wounds" he received in his baptism as a Christian (Gal. 6:17: "... for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body") is Chiara Frugoni, *Francesco e L'Invenzione della Stimmata, Una Storia per parole e Immagini fino a Bonaventura e Giotto* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993). For an English introduction, see Frugoni, *Francis of Assisi: A Life* (London: SCM Press, 1998, translated by John Bowden).

<sup>11</sup>See the important reflections of D. Gagnon, "The Office of the Passion," now translated in *Greyfriars Review* 7, supplement (1993).

<sup>12</sup>I think this is brought out in a completely different context in Felice Accrocca and Antonio Ciceri, *Francesco e I suoi frati. La Regola non-bollata: una regola in cammino* (Milan: Edizioni Biblioteca Franciscana, 1998).

<sup>13</sup>See Jacques Dalarun, *Francesco: un passaggio: Donna e donne negli scritti e nelle leggende di Francesco d'Assisi. Postfazione di Giovanni Miccoli* (Rome: Viella, 1994), for important observations on the images of women in Francis's writings and their gradual exclusion.

<sup>14</sup>See Roberto Rusconi, "Clerici secundum alios clericos": Francesco d'Assisi e

l'istituzione ecclesiastica," in *Fratre Francesco d'Assisi, Atti del XXI Convegno internazionale, Assisi, 14-16 Ottobre 1993* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, 1994), 71-100, on this tension and the gradual clericalization.

<sup>15</sup>Classic studies of both the believer/unbeliever and the religious/secular antinomies are contained in Raoul Manselli, *Il Secolo XII: Religione Popolare ed Eresia* (Jouvence, 1983). On Catharism and its impact, see most recently Carol Lansing, *Power and Purity, Cathar Heresy in Medieval Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>16</sup>Confer as a beginning Michele Maccarrone, "S. Francesco e la Chiesa di Innocenzo III," in *Approccio Storico-Critico alle Fonti Francescane*, a cura di G.C. e M.D. (Rome: Antonianum, 1979), 31-43.

<sup>17</sup>The concept is taken from Louis Mackey, *Peregrinations of the Word, Essays in Medieval Philosophy* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), in which his chapters on Bonaventure and Scotus show how they refused the contradictories of their times and developed a middle position which embrace alternatives, thus creating a new intellectual discourse, and, I would add, pointing to a new cultural position.

<sup>18</sup>The ascetical tradition of the friars can be easily reframed and understood from the suggestive comments in Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (University of California Press, 1998), 168-98.

<sup>19</sup>John 19:25-27. For a stimulating summary of interpretations and their interface with contemporary feminism, see Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe, Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: The Crossroad publishing Company, 1999), 211-32.



## STATEMENT OF LCWR NATIONAL BOARD CONCERNING SEXUAL ABUSE

We continue to hear with profound sorrow of the sexual abuse of children and adolescents perpetrated by those who were called to minister faithfully to them.

As the National Board of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), representing 76,000 sisters in the United States, we are determined to be agents of healing and reconciliation in our church and society.

We are outraged by the harm done to anyone, especially children, abused by Catholic clergy, brothers, or sisters. We ask the members of LCWR to do all within their power to assure that such harm will never recur.

We grieve with victims and their families and ask our members to listen and respond compassionately to them.

We abhor the behaviors of perpetrators and we desire to see them prevented from doing further harm. Yet we cannot affirm any policy which makes no distinction among offenses committed or possibilities of rehabilitation.

We pledge to respect appropriate confidentiality while also dealing with these matters openly and honestly, and we call our members to do likewise.

We stand in solidarity with those who have been falsely accused and support their search for truth and justice. We support the countless Catholic clergy, brothers, and sisters who continue in faithful service.

We call upon religious leaders, ourselves included, to screen candidates for priesthood and religious life with great care, to provide appropriate formation in human sexuality, and to apply standards of conduct with great vigilance.

We are convinced that the current crisis calls for systemic change, particularly in the exercise of ecclesial power. We call for the inclusion of laity, Catholic clergy, brothers and sisters in the formation of policies and in decision-making which will allow for collaborative renewal of our church.

Our Christian commitment calls us to justice, mercy, and that form of love which is forgiveness. Thus, we call upon our members to join our pledge to continue working from a contemplative stance for reconciliation and for a more inclusive and open church.

(August 24, 2002 – reprinted with permission.)

## **“Where There Is Darkness, Let Us Sow Light”**

### **A Statement of the Conventual Franciscan Conference on the Sexual Abuse Issue Facing the Church to the Membership of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)**

The leadership of the Conventual Franciscan Friars of North America, England and Ireland, representing some 600 Friars who minister in more than 65 dioceses, gathered at Mt. St. Francis in Indiana, June 24-27, 2002, believe we ought to speak to the issue of the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults that has affected our Church, our nations, our ministries, and so many individual laity, religious and clergy.

First of all, as brothers in a vowed religious community we hold chastity and the celibate life as core values, and we re-affirm our commitment to this rich tradition that has been the path to holiness for so many Christians over the centuries.

We recognize the seriousness of the crime of sexual abuse, and abhor the harm that has come to each victim. Each Friar who has met with victims knows their pain, and the Friars as a group wish to offer the support of caring brothers. All victims ought to be helped on their journey toward healthy emotional and spiritual lives. *“Where there is darkness, let us sow light.”*

We have no tolerance for these sins of abuse, while at the same time we experience compassion for the sinner. Competent authority must deal with every abuser on an individual basis, and everyone in the community must seek to minimize risks lest others be harmed. Heinous offenses call for significant, sometimes radical, measures. Yet, when the penitent is a member of our community we need to respond as his family, assisting his ongoing conversion and rehabilitation. *“Where there is injury, let us sow pardon.”*

As the discussion continues in our Church, and as the specifics of implementation of the Bishops’ “Charter for the Protection of Children and



Young People" are determined, we ask that certain issues that impinge upon our way of life be considered and taken into account.

- \* As men who have vowed to live the Gospel life we believe that a broad biblical and theological reflection on celibacy and chastity, on repentance and forgiveness, on the abuse crisis and possible solutions to it is needed. This was not done because of the need for immediate solutions. We recommend that members of our Franciscan community join with members of other religious communities with expertise in biblical studies and theology to assist in such an endeavor.
- \* As inheritors and participants in a Christian tradition that preaches conversion and redemption, discussions of discipline and punitive measures should not lose sight of the message of God's grace and mercy, forgiveness and love. We want no child ever again to be the victim of abuse by a member of the clergy or a religious community, but we also believe in the witness of conversion of our brothers who have demonstrated evidence of reform and renewal of life.
- \* As brothers, our relationship to a fellow brother and to a Minister Provincial, our major superior, is unique. The Minister has a responsibility to place the Friar in a supportive community where his well being and the well being of others will be safeguarded. While adhering to criminal law, and recognizing that public ministry will be impossible for those who have committed egregious offenses against minors, the proper place must often be found within the community for the member who has committed this offense. We trust that future discussions between bishops and major superiors (see Charter Article #15) will respect the right of the Minister and work out mutually acceptable procedures for the placement of the Friar.

We acknowledge the present discouragement in our Church but we look with hope to a better future. Where there have been failures in the past we are committed to updating our policies and increasing our vigilance in light of concern for the well-being of young people and anyone who may be victimized. We commit ourselves to joining with other religious and all people of good will in working to make a better world for those who are most vulnerable. *"Where there is doubt, let us sow faith."*

As followers of Francis of Assisi who heard the call to "rebuild my church" we wish to serve as instruments in that process today. We remain people of hope, aware that the Paschal Mystery can take us through the darkest hours to the brightness of new life. *"Where there is despair, let us sow hope."*

To our brothers in the religious life to whom we address this statement, we extend our promise of prayer and solidarity. We join with you in praying for the bishops who are called to shepherd our Church in this trying hour. *"Pax et bonum – peace and all good things!"*

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**Canice Connors, O.F.M. Conv.**, earned his Ph.D. in psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, and is currently Minister Provincial of the Conventual Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate Conception Province as well as the President of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM). Canice has served as a consultant for religious communities, a retreat director for clergy, and has provided workshops and seminars throughout the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

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(Continued, p. 85)



## An Encounter of Franciscan Sister-Brotherhood with the Church's Sexual Abuse and Leadership Scandal: A Reflection

William Hugo, O.F.M. Capuchin

"... when I am weak, then I am strong" (2Cor 12:10).

"The best way to avoid scandal is to avoid scandalous behavior" (a tax lawyer).

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Lord Acton).

The first half of last year was a wrenching experience for many involved in the Roman Catholic sexual misconduct and leadership scandals. Within a broad understanding, the victims of these scandals are many and varied: the sexually abused, their families and friends; bishops, major superiors and other officials who made poor decisions in the view of that time or in retrospect; bishops, major superiors and other officials who made responsible decisions, but now suffer from the public's general distrust of church leaders; those who have sexually abused others; those falsely accused of sexually abusing others; priests, religious, church workers and their relatives and friends who have always acted morally in these regards but now deal with shame through association or the suspicions of others; the faithful who don't know what to think or do, or why they feel what they do; the public that receives spiritual and social services through church agencies that suffer budgetary shortfalls. Listing so many potential victims widens our awareness of the importance of this crisis. The list is not intended to be exhaustive.

While commentators have reflected upon the crisis from a great variety of points of view, I have yet to encounter a reflection that utilized features of Franciscan spirituality as a point of reference. I wish to do so here, anchoring those reflections in Francis' spiritual intuition of our sister-brotherhood rooted in our common creative source and/or our shared baptismal incorporation into our brother, Jesus Christ. These reflections began before our recent provincial chapter and were refined after it. While others influenced my thoughts, I speak for no one but myself. The nature of my reflections tends toward ways of *understanding* what has occurred and *possible ways of responding*. They are not intended as a critique of others' choices nor do they postulate a "best" or "better" way of understanding or acting. They explore how the Franciscan intuition might invite us to understand and act.

The situation under reflection suggests the usefulness of introducing a new dimension of Francis' spiritual intuition: his understanding of the Trinitarian dynamic of God. The usefulness of this reflection focuses on Francis' understanding of what God is like—an understanding that leads Francis to consider us all as sisters and brothers.

For Francis, God as Father signifies the source of all creation and God's *desire* that all of creation return to him. As the common source of all creatures, this name for God already portends the sister-brotherhood of all creatures. However, as a signifier of God's *desire* that we (all creatures) return, the metaphor of *father* also connects with the biblical idea that true children do the will or desire of their birth, adoptive, or spiritual parents.

Explained in many different ways, God and we creatures find ourselves in an unintended separation. By ourselves, we cannot return. However, God's desire is so strong and undeniable that God does what is needed to overcome the breach.

### Imitating the Humility of God

The Word designates the self-emptying of God that originally disclosed itself in the creation that flowed out of God. Later, in the situation of bridging the gap, the Word designates that same self-emptying but disclosed in the incarnation of Jesus, who is also called the Son in a way that highlights the biblical idea of a child accomplishing the desire of a parent.

Francis referred to this divine self-emptying through the metaphor of the poor and humble Christ. This image helped Francis to plumb the depth of God's desire. Francis located God's poverty and humility particularly in the forgoing of divine prerogative expressed in the incarnation, the fact and manner of Jesus' humiliating death, and then the continuing divine presence under the mundanely common forms of bread and wine.

While the particulars of Francis' reflection seem to focus on Jesus, it is important to understand that they disclose what *God* is like. God was like this before creation, is like this in our present, and will be like this after the end of our world. The poor and humble Christ discloses to Francis a poor and humble God. Thus, in becoming a sister or brother to Christ by fulfilling the desire of the same Father, we actually become God-like, or in the words of Genesis, in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26). Francis called this walking in the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, the Holy Spirit designates the influence of God that allows us to recognize the divine disclosures around us, especially in recognizing Jesus and his various modes of presence.

This Trinitarian approach relates to the full understanding of revelation in Vatican II's *Dei verbum*, i.e., of revelation being constituted as a disclosure of God (the Word-Son) originating in God's desire (the Father) and recognized through the power of grace (the Spirit).

I find Francis' intuition about what God is like to be very helpful in reflecting upon the current church crisis in the United States because both the intuition and the crisis have much to do with *power* and *its exercise*. Within the crisis, those abused have felt manipulated by the moral authority attributed to their abusers. Too often, bishops and major superiors recklessly reassigned dangerous abusers, often without notification to local leaders. Ideas about privacy and confidentiality frequently obstructed victims from learning about church actions taken or not taken, civil officials from prosecuting crimes, and any interested party from knowing the full extent of an individual's abuse by a sharing of knowledge. Oddly, attempts to avoid scandal actually gave scandal. In the end, it appears that some abusers and church leaders did these things to protect themselves, to conserve their privileged and/or leadership positions, and to protect the reputation of the church from the public knowledge of scandalous behavior.

These limited but important behaviors of some ministers in our church are in sharp relief from the disclosed pattern of what God is like: vulnerable to unwarranted anger and death, self-negating of divine privilege, and interested in proclaiming truth even at the risk of reputation. Obviously it is easier today to make these observations with the benefit of hindsight and the clarification of more stringent public expectations. These intensifying expectations are less tolerant of old and continuing questions about who can be rehabilitated, what is a reasonable risk involving re-placement, and how can a rehabilitated abuser be properly supervised.

Francis sought to be a child of God by imitating the humility of God that served God's desire to heal the breach between God and us. Bridging the breach has been called healing, elevation, forgiveness, making whole, fulfilling one's purpose, salvation, redemption, justification, and justice, among other terms.

Francis' chosen way of relating in the world accepted the danger of living as the most vulnerable of his society, eschewing all privileges within church and society, and to always proclaim the truth of our equality as sisters and brothers in creation and/or in Christ. Francis sought to do literally what God did theologically. While most later Franciscans moderated Francis' literal approach, they and we continue to benefit from his intuitions.

How might those intuitions help us to understand what public opinion is forcing us to accept? What choices might we consciously and freely make in light of our shared Franciscan intuition? The following list occurs to me:

- ❖ Let us not be afraid of the truth, in imitation of God who proclaimed the truth to bring us back to our creator.
- ❖ Let us not hide the truth for our supposed benefit when doing so harms or might harm another now or in the future, in imitation of God who risked reputation in order to make every creature whole and to protect every creature from future harm.
- ❖ Let us spend ourselves, our resources, and our reputation to heal the wounds caused by sexual abuse involving church workers or in our society in general, in imitation of God who spent God's self to heal.
- ❖ Let not undo concern for the financial well-being of the province prevent us from acknowledging the grievous mistakes of our members and taking steps that reasonably and responsibly seek to heal the harm caused by such mistakes, in imitation of God who risked all to heal us through the truth of God's love.
- ❖ In the service of healing and truth, let us risk false accusation and its consequences, in imitation of God who accepted false accusation to heal us with the truth.
- ❖ Let our members who have sexually abused others accept the humility of ministerial and social limitations, in imitation of God who humbly forsook divine prerogatives to achieve our salvation.
- ❖ Let our leaders not make decisions calculated to preserve their positions of authority, in imitation of God who humbly gave up the prerogatives of divine authority to bring us back to the Father.
- ❖ Let us find a way to responsibly and within appropriate limits live with our offending brothers whom society shuns, in imitation of God who reached out to the marginalized and included them in the plan of salvation.
- ❖ Let us do something big to help heal the breach over abuse between our brothers and sisters, in imitation of God who did something big to heal the breach between each of us, and between all of us and God.

- ❖ Let us understand that doing these things expresses our sister-brotherhood with others in imitation of God who became our sister and brother through Jesus in order to accomplish God's desire for all and each of us.

Perhaps each of us can compose other statements in the same form: we doing something in imitation of God.

## Conclusion

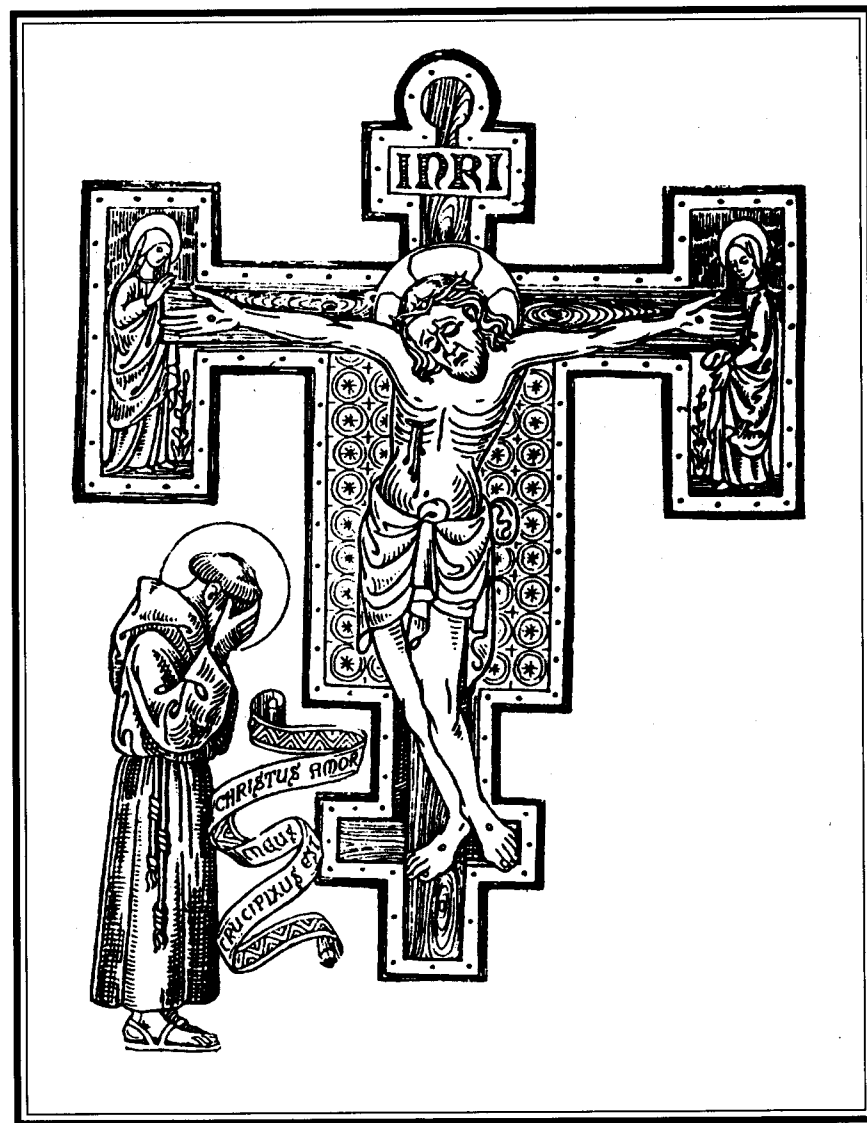
In the end, many others in the church may choose to do identical things. What might make this list Franciscan is its motivation and inspiration. My early reactions to the current crisis displayed strong resistance, sometimes indicating denial. No doubt, these reactions are part of our human condition. These defenses began to moderate when I joined our experience to the example of God in my meditation. Francis' intuition about the dynamic in God helped me to turn a corner toward a healthier acceptance and a positive integration.

While the various congregations and institutes in the church have charisms with different emphases, each group's charism is taken from the multitudinous charisms that constitute the church's life. While various groups might perform similar actions, their inspirations and motivations might vary based on their particular charisms. Francis' spiritual intuition increasingly influences my motivations. In the case of this church crisis, Francis' intuition helped me to understand the implications of Christian living.

While I prefer to understand Francis' spiritual intuition as essentially about the sister-brotherhood of all creatures and those united through Christ, I realize that this paper's ideas might more appropriately display a pre-sister-brotherhood reflection. I say this because my starting point here is not our sister-brotherhood itself, but the dynamic in God that leads to our becoming sisters and brothers. It begins with God's desire. As children of God, we seek to serve that desire. We accomplish this service by imitating it. Thus, our sister-brotherhood is in the middle of the process. Its source and object are God's desire.

Sandra Schneiders uses the archetypes of virgin, virtuoso, and monk to describe how religious in every age and place use their relational autonomy to become gifted specialists in the God-quest (see chapter one of *Finding the Treasure*, 2000). While we may feel as if we are down on the mat with the referee of public opinion taking the count, this is no time to stop seeking to implement our cherished Franciscan intuition of sister-brotherhood. This is the moment for which we have been in training. This is the moment to shine, to find God. However, shining does not simply constitute defensive institutional surviving. Our mission is to witness to the Gospel's sister-brotherhood! To give that wit-

ness now, when it is most difficult, is to get up from the mat and practice everything we have learned through our initial formation in and life-long practice of our Franciscan mission. Our Franciscan drive to express sister-brotherhood is necessarily tied to a contemplation of God's dynamic action. Contemplating the source of our sister-brotherhood helps us to imitate God's dynamic and, thus, realize that sister-brotherhood. Let us never tire of exploring our spiritual intuition and giving witness to it in every time and place. This is why we exist.



## Reflection on the Scandal from Francis of Assisi

Tom Washburn, O.F.M.

"Priests involved in drunkenness and gambling." "Priests violate the chaste life." "Bishops spend night in drunken stupor." "Priests accused of ordering death sentences." "Priests accused of misusing Church property, resources." "Training of seminarians reviewed." "Bishops accused of extorting the faithful."

At first glance one might think that these are headlines from the latest edition of *The Boston Globe* as it continues to cover the sexual abuse scandal rocking the Church. Rather than contemporary news stories, these are the headlines that would have been written were the *Globe* covering the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The point? As a Church, we've been here before. As troubling and downright evil as our current scandal of sexual abuse by priests and bishops and the subsequent cover-up is, the Church has experienced times of great public sin before. And perhaps more importantly, in the past, the Church has stepped up to the plate and named its own sin and put in place the reforms needed to restore dignity, to rebuild trust, to remind all Christians—priests, bishops and laity alike—that our identity lies not in sin, but in overcoming sin and death by following Jesus Christ.

We've endured a year of media attention on these scandals. Most conversations among the faithful and others over this last year has also revolved around the scandal. How could priests do these things? How could bishops move these priests around? How could they all get away with it? Barely in the mix has been the reality that the great majority of priests have *not* committed these heinous acts and instead continue to do the work to which God has called them. During the World Youth Day celebrations in Toronto, Canada this past summer, the Holy Father said:

If you love Jesus, love the Church! . . . The harm done by some priests and religious to the young and vulnerable fills us all with a deep sense

of sadness and shame. *But think of the vast majority of dedicated and generous priests and religious whose only wish is to serve and do good! . . .* At difficult moments in the Church's life, the pursuit of holiness becomes even more urgent.

### Lessons from the Thirteenth Century

As a priest ordained just over two years ago, I find myself and my contemporaries struggling with the question of what it means for us to be priests in the Church today. What will we do in the face of a world that looks upon us with suspicion and presumes distrust? I believe this is where we can actually find some help and guidance from the thirteenth century's reaction to the scandals of their day, and especially from the example of St. Francis of Assisi and his response to these issues.

It appears in the thirteenth century that priestly life in many ways had become a life of debauchery. The council passed canons addressing the abuses of that day forbidding clerics from drunken displays; from pronouncing or executing a death sentence against someone; from holding secular offices or engaging in dishonest pursuits; and clerics were reminded to live chaste and virtuous lives. Clearly, the situation was grim. A sampling of some of the issues the council addressed:

♦ "Many prelates . . . extort from their subjects more than they pay out, and in trying to extract a profit from their losses they look for booty rather than help their subjects. We forbid this to happen in the future" (Canon 34).

♦ "To guide souls is a supreme art. We therefore strictly order bishops carefully to prepare those who are to be promoted to the priesthood and to instruct them . . . if they presume henceforth to ordain the ignorant and unformed . . . we decree that both the ordainers and those ordained are to be subject to severe punishment. For it is preferable . . . to have a few good ministers than many bad ones, for if a blind man leads another blind man, both will fall into the pit" (Canon 27).

♦ "All clerics should carefully abstain from gluttony and drunkenness. They should temper the wine to themselves and themselves to the wine. Let no one be urged to drink, since drunkenness obscures the intellect and stirs up lust" (Canon 15).

♦ "Not only . . . clerics but also some prelates of churches pass almost half the night in unnecessary feasting and forbidden conversation, not to mention other things, and leaving what is left of the night for sleep, they are barely roused at the dawn chorus of the birds and pass away the entire morning in a continuous state of stupor . . . (and

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" (Canon 17).

♦ "We decree that prelates of churches should prudently and diligently attend to the correction of their subjects' offences especially of clerics, and to the reform of morals" (Canon 7).

♦ "In order that the morals and conduct of clerics may be reformed for the better, let all of them strive to live in a continent and chaste way. . . . Let them beware of every vice involving lust, especially that on account of which the wrath of God came down from heaven upon the sons of disobedience, so that they may be worthy to minister in the sight of almighty God with a pure heart and an unsullied body . . . . Prelates who dare to support such persons in their wickedness, especially if they do it for money or for some other temporal advantage, are to be subject to like punishment" (Canon 14).

So, what does all of this have to do with our scandal today? What can St. Francis say about these things? One of the often heard questions in the media today is whether or not the Church can survive this scandal. Many people feel as though this is it for the institutional Church. Perhaps we have too secular a view of institutions and think there is no way to recover. Any historian of the Church—or historian at all—can tell you that this is not the end, this does not mean the Church, its structures, or even the priesthood is done. Instead this can potentially become an opportunity for great reform and pursuit of holiness in the Church.

The thirteenth-century scandals and ours today share something in common: the actions are especially appalling because they violate the identity of who we say we are as Christians and especially as priests. The ordained have publicly embarked upon a way of life that identifies itself so closely with Christ and made public vows and/or promises to live a life worthy of that call. As we hear during the ordination of deacons, "Receive the Gospel of Christ whose herald you now are. Believe what you read. Teach what you believe. Practice what you teach." The scandals witness to a violation of that command.

### Francis of Assisi: Promoter of Reform

St. Francis of Assisi lived in the midst of those scandalous times in the thirteenth century. It is said that St. Francis saved the Church in the thirteenth century. St. Bonaventure writes in *The Minor Legend of Saint Francis* that

"In a dream the Roman Pontiff himself saw that the Lateran basilica was almost ready to fall down, and a poor man, small and scorned, was propping it up with his own bent back so that it would not fall. . . . [H]e said, 'Truly, this is he who will hold up Christ's Church by what he does and what he preaches.'"

Francis did this very simply, but constantly. Francis is believed to have been present at the Fourth Lateran Council. Francis understood the issues clearly and was one of the most important promoters of reform in the Church calling people, and especially priests, to believe, teach and practice the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Francis was known to have said, "You are what you are before God. That and nothing more." In his writings, Francis repeatedly writes to priests and calls them to remember what they are in the sight of God and live up to that call. It's all about identity.

Rather than simply cursing the darkness of his time, Francis called priests to walk in the light of their call. In his Letter to the Entire Order Francis warns the clergy:

Remember my brother priests, what has been written concerning the law of Moses, how one transgressing even in corporeal things used to die without any pity by the sentence of the Lord. How much greater and worse are the torments one merits to suffer, who has trampled upon the Son of God and reckoned the Blood of the Testament, in which he has been sanctified, to be defiled, and has insulted the Spirit of grace. . . . And the priests, who do not want to keep this at heart, He in truth condemns saying: 'I shall curse your blessings' (Mal 2:2).

But after warning them, Francis encourages priests to pursue holiness:

See your dignity, my brother priests, and be holy, because He himself is Holy. And just as above all others on account of this ministry the Lord God has honored you, in this manner also love, revere, and honor Him above all others. . . . Let the whole man tremble with fear, let the whole world begin to completely quake, and let heaven exult, when upon the altar in the hand of the priest is Christ, the Son of the living God! . . . Therefore keep nothing of yourselves for yourselves, so that He may receive you whole, He who manifests Himself wholly to you.

Francis continually encouraged a healthy and holy approach to reform. He at the same time called priests to live up to their call to holiness and reminded the faithful that despite the trying times in which they lived, they still had access to the salvation offered us through the sacraments. Francis upheld the dignity of ordained life in the hopes that those ordained would live up to that dignity and the laity would respect that dignity. He writes in his Letter to

the Faithful, "We also ought to frequently visit churches and venerate clerics and revere them, *not so much for their own sake, if they be sinners*, but on account of their office and administration of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, which they sacrifice upon the altar and receive and administer to others." Francis also wrote letters to the clergy, to the superiors of religious communities, to the rulers of the world, in addition to personal letters. In every letter, without exception, Francis spoke of reform and challenged the people and religious leaders of his time to adopt reform. Francis believed what he read, taught what he believed and practiced what he taught. This is the formula for reform.

## Franciscan Reform Today

We can learn a great deal from the way that Francis and his followers responded to the thirteenth century scandals. What seems to be missing in the current scandal is that reminder of who we are, what we stand for, what we believe. Instead we seem only to be cursing the darkness. We need to remind ourselves that this situation is scandalous precisely because it is *not* what we believe. These sins are *not* who we say we are. If there is to be hope of moving beyond this current darkness, we must not only boldly, clearly, definitively push reforms as did the Lateran Council, but we must also be reminded of who we say we are—especially we who live a public life as priests, bishops and religious—and live up to that tremendous call that God has placed before us.

The pursuit of reform is undeniable if there is to be change in the future. The Church—both corporately and individually—must confess its sin. Likewise, the Church must also make amends in justice for anything it did that was not only morally wrong, but also criminally wrong.

The challenge remains however, to not jump on the bandwagon of what in some parts seems to be a witch hunt. Remember that many—in fact most—priests and religious strive to live up to their call in a worthy manner. Support them. Pray for them in the midst of this trying time.

As a Church, we have to make substantive change to the way we function to both assure that these things never are allowed to happen again and to involve a larger number of the members of the Church—ordained and lay—into appropriate roles of leadership. One of the perhaps lost canons (Canon 24) of the Fourth Lateran Council regarded the democratic election of pastors. There are models in the Church's past that can provide guidance for the future.

The example of St. Francis of Assisi is striking in its simplicity. Francis reminds us that the solution to the scandals of his time, and of ours, is nothing more than following the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who follow the Gospel try to avoid sin. When they sin, they confess and make things right and make every effort to "Go and sin no more." Gospel followers do not continue in sin, hide the sins of their members, avoid responsibility for their sinful actions.

This is not who we are. Following Francis' example, we must:

- 1) confess the sin in our midst;
- 2) make just reparation for any wrongs, both moral and criminal;
- 3) improve training, screening and response in the future;
- 4) pray for those victimized;
- 5) pray for the Church, for her leaders, for her people;
- 6) build ourselves up on the grace of the sacraments which no sin can ever diminish;
- 7) remember who we are and what we stand for as followers of Christ;
- 8) get the word out preaching these things anywhere and everywhere.

The Church has faced great scandal before and emerged from it more true to who she says she is. The message of the past, and of St. Francis, is that we can once again place ourselves on a Gospel course if only we have the strength to do what must be done.

As Francis said in his *Prayer before the Crucifix*: "Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of our hearts and give us true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge, Lord, that we may carry out Your holy and true command."

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## About Our Contributors (continued)

**Lawrence Jagdfeld, O.F.M.**, is a friar of the Sacred Heart Province, currently working in formation ministry with the candidates for his province. He also works in a ministry to disabled Catholics, and is himself disabled. Lawrence resides in St. John the Baptist Friary in Joliet, Illinois.

**Tom Washburn, O.F.M.** is associate pastor and coordinator of youth ministry at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Derry, NH. He is a member of the Immaculate Conception Province of Friars Minor. Tom holds two master's degrees from Weston Jesuit School of Theology and is part time faculty of Regis College's Ministry Institute in Manchester, NH.

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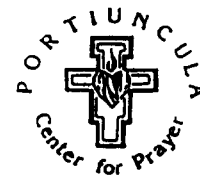
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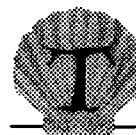
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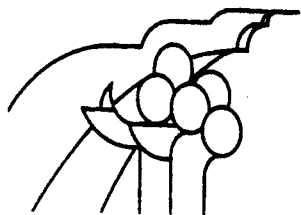
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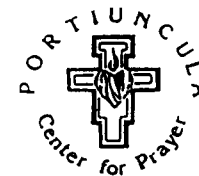
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## On the Franciscan Circuit

### Coming Events 2003

**Friday, March 21-Sunday, March 23, 2003.**

**Lenten Retreat.** Franciscan Center, 49 Jackson Avenue, Hastings on Hudson, NY 10706. Contact Sr. Marie Patrice, OSF. Ph: 914.478.3696 or 914.478. 3930, ext. 121.

**Sunday, April 13-Sunday, April 20, 2003.**

**Holy Week Retreat.** Directed by Jude Winkler, O.F.M. Conv. At the Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston PA. Contact: 610.558-6152 or email: "fsc@osfphila.org."

**Saturday, April 26, 2003.**

**Earth Day celebration...raising consciousness about justice, ecology, and peace.** Sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls. Contact: Franciscan Life Office: 320.632.0668 or email: franciscanlife@fslf.org.

**Tuesday, May 20-Thursday, May 22, 2003.**

**"The Mystery of the Incarnation."** Evening presentations by Kenan Osborne, O.F.M. Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, AZ. (See ad, p. 88).

**Friday, May 23-Sunday, May 25, 2003.**

**"Franciscans and Creation: What Is Our Responsibility?"** At the Franciscan Center of Washington Theological Union. (See ad, p. 86).

**Monday, June 9-Friday, June 13, 2003.**

**Contemplative Retreat.** Facilitated by Lillian Kroll, O.S.F. Sponsored by Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls. Contact: Franciscan Life Office: 320.632.0668 or email: franciscanlife@fslf.org.

**Friday, June 13-Sunday, June 15, 2003.**

**"Canticle of the Creatures."** A weekend of prayer, music, art, quiet time, faith sharing and ritual at the Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, Az. (See ad, p. 88).

**Tuesday, June 24-Friday, July 25, 2003.**

**The 40 Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat.** The Portiuncula Center for Prayer, 9263 W. St. Francis Rd., Frankfort, IL 60423-8330. (See ad, p. 95).

## Abbreviations

### Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BIL	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 to the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule ( <i>Regula non bullata</i> )
LR	The Later Rule ( <i>Regula bullata</i> )
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

1LAgr	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAgr	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAgr	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAgr	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 Jacopone da Todi
DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri
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
LFI	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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St. Bonaventure University  
Sabbatical Program



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#### WHO

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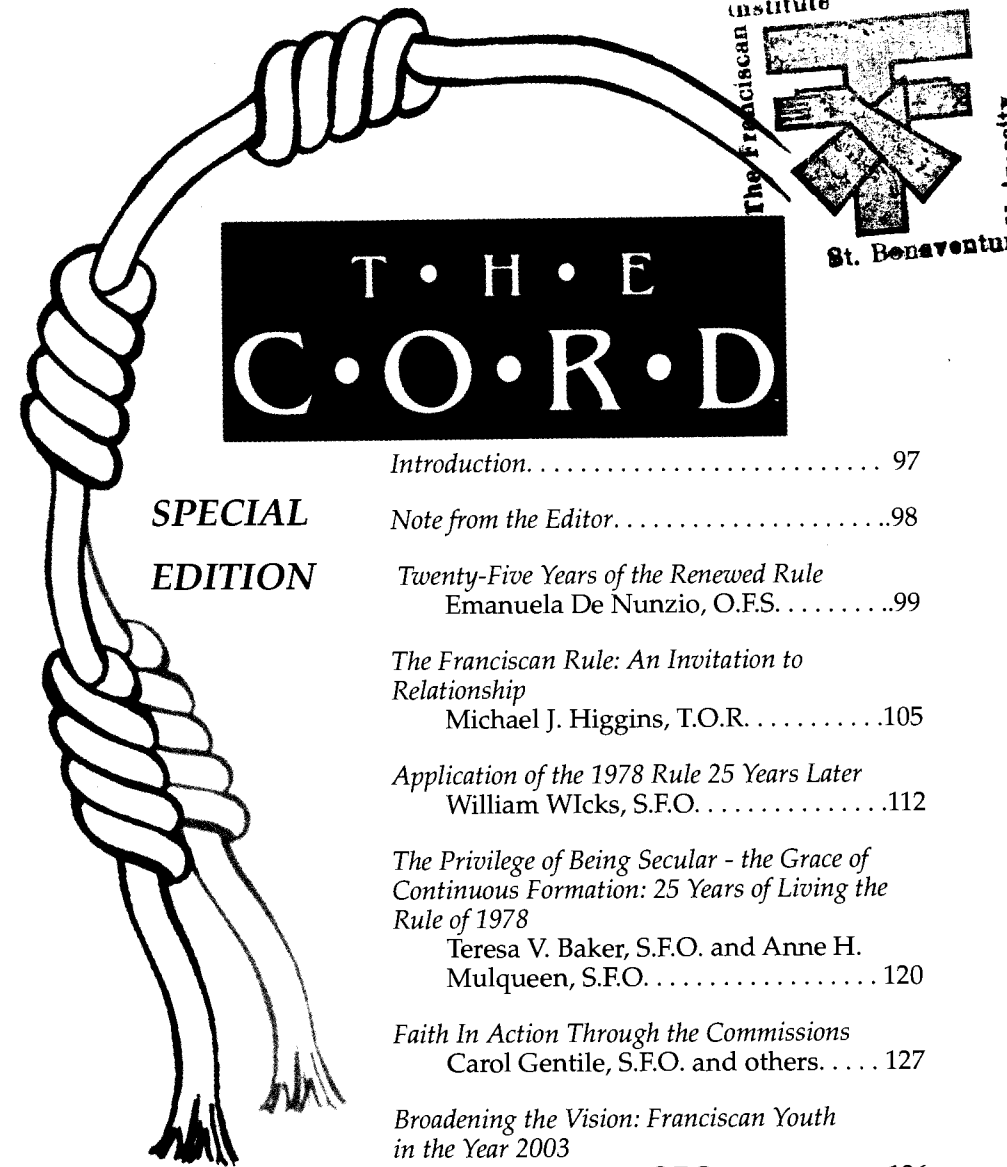
#### DETAILS

For further information or to request a brochure, contact Mary Gurley, OSF, Coordinator of Education Services at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778. 716-375-2106; [mgurley@sbu.edu](mailto:mgurley@sbu.edu)

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**THE CORD**  
**A Franciscan Spiritual Review**

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

1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 14th 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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## Introduction

Encarnación del Pozo  
General Minister O.F.S.

I accept with pleasure the invitation of the National Minister, William Wicks, S.F.O., to write the introduction to this special issue of *The Cord*, dedicated to the anniversary of the approval of the Pauline Rule of 1978, because it gives me, once again, the opportunity of expressing my thanksgiving to God for the gift of "having an authentic treasure in our hands" (John Paul II-1982).

It's been 25 years! We must surely remember, as you are doing, reliving the enthusiasm with which we welcomed it as a precious gift and synthesis of Franciscan spirituality, as a most valid instrument to renew the life of the whole Order.

The Rule makes manifest to us the will of God, reveals our identity in the spiritual Family to which we belong, our connection with the Church, our way of life, how to live the values of the Fraternity. It is a gift that follows us on the way to the Lord and that contains a Prologue – *The Letter to all the Faithful* – beautiful as prayer, engaging with its radical and original guidance for living.

In the footsteps of St. Francis, our Rule helps us to live the Gospel; to make Christ the inspiration and the center of our lives, with God as well as with men and women, witnessing with our lives and our words; the Rule helps us to look for it in each brother and sister; to believe firmly in the divine seed present in each human being; to experience the transforming force of love and of forgiveness; to be bearers of peace, having, in the reality of this moment in our history, the courage to engage ourselves in "courageous initiatives" in harmony with our Franciscan vocation.

This celebration should enable us to continue discovering all the values within our "treasury," eminently evangelical, as St. Francis of Assisi wished, and whose authentic way of life the Church hopes for and asks of us.

Our Rule **must now be made alive** in many of its aspects, as our General Chapter has pointed out (November, 2002): in the life of secularity; in the growth of reciprocal and vital communion and mission of the Franciscan Family. I invite you to dedicate effort and creativity, today and in the immediate

future. It is required of us not to disappoint God's trust, the Church's hopes, the most profound and true needs of our hearts.

Congratulations! For your initiative and the good job you are doing, I express to you, from the bottom of my heart, my admiration and fraternal love.

### About our Contributor

**Encarnación del Pozo, O.F.S.**, is the current Minister General of the Secular Franciscan Order. She is from Spain.



### A Note from the Editor

You hold in your hands a special edition dedicated to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the promulgation of the 1978 Rule for Secular Franciscans. This issue is the result of much planning and involvement of Secular Franciscans, and would not have been possible without the dedication of Bill Wicks, the National Minister of the SFO in the United States. Bill coordinated the invitations to the authors, the forwarding of the material to this office, and was most attentive to the needs of the editor in terms of formats and so on. I am most grateful to Bill and to all those who have contributed to this historic issue. (A point of information: the abbreviation used in Europe to show SFO membership is O.F. S.; in the US it is S.F.O.)

*Rosemarie A. McKelvie, O.S.F.*

## Twenty-five Years of the Renewed Rule

Emanuela De Nunzio, O.F.S.

Past General Minister

Every anniversary naturally leads us to think about the event being commemorated, to evaluate it in the light of its later repercussions, to look back over the progress made since that time or to draw up a balance sheet of its effects.

For us Secular Franciscans the twenty-fifth anniversary of the approval of the renewed Rule is, first of all, a time of deep gratitude to those who, in a spirit of faith, with profound insight and immense generosity, committed themselves to the task of restoring vitality to the ancient and enduring tradition of the lay Franciscan way of life.

Of course, this Rule did not spring up overnight, like a flower in the desert. It was preceded by the longing of so many enlightened persons – members of the Third Order Secular and the Franciscan religious who loved and guided them – who felt an urgent need to give the members new momentum and to restore to the Rule its original vitality. Its growth was fostered in the climate that prevailed among the Catholic laity after Vatican II, a climate that found expression in the rise of new forms of association and attempts to renew the pre-existing forms.

The author was part of that small group of tertiaries gathered in the chapel of the Capuchin Poor Clares in Rome to receive the text of the new Rule from the hands of Fr. José Angulo Quilis, who acted in the name of the Conference of the Franciscan Ministers General. How can I begin to describe the emotion of those unforgettable moments? Although the ceremony was a very simple one, everyone present realized that this was an historic event that would, one might say, mark a change in the spiritual life of hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters and which would require a radical transformation of all the fraternities throughout the world.

A change . . . a transformation . . . How well we know that no document, no matter how inspired or authoritative it may be, is enough to produce a transformation in the life of any individuals or groups; it would take a long time to mature and settle. A quarter century has gone by, and perhaps that time of

maturation and settling is not yet over. But what progress has been made!

First of all, it should be noted that the updating of the Rule implied the adaptation of the whole of the legislative *corpus* of the Secular Franciscan Order and its entire structure, at every single level. We immediately set to work on revising and obtaining approval for the Ritual (1981) and began the lengthy and complex process of rewriting the General Constitutions. This latter task required the involvement of those serving in positions of leadership within the SFO (both laity and religious), the National Councils and the International Councils, all aided by experts in canon law; this whole process enjoyed the support of the Franciscan Ministers General. The Constitutions received experimental approval on September 8, 1990 and were approved definitively by the Holy See by a Decree of December 8, 2000. On a parallel track, the particular Statutes – both at the national and international levels – were also revised; only then could we say that the normative aspects of the updating of the Rule had truly been completed.

All of this work, however, would have been nothing but an intellectual exercise had it not been accompanied by an authentic process of *inner* renewal within individual local fraternities; this is where the spiritual and community life of the secular Franciscans is shaped, and it is from the local fraternities that it spreads out in mission in the Church and society. From this conviction is born the priority that the International Executive Committee and the National Councils have given to formation.

No General or National Chapter was held, no fraternal or pastoral visitation was conducted at any level that did not have formation as a topic for discussion, analysis, development or planning. And the results were visible. The twelve years I served as Minister General of the SFO took me all over the world, from one continent to another, from one culture to another; every place I visited I could appreciate the quality of the formation teams; in every place I could see that the various groups were producing ever more valuable formation tools, all of them adapted to the various cultural environments; in every place I could observe the interest with which a large part of the members participated in gatherings, seminars and renewal courses. These initiatives were even more interesting and beneficial when they were aimed not only at the Secular Franciscans but also at the Franciscan religious, not only at the adults, but at the members of Franciscan Youth as well. Thus they produced an exchange between generations and between Franciscans of different vocations, an exchange that reinvigorates both groups and gives a certain existential value to that “vital reciprocal community” upon which the very concept of the Franciscan family is based.

This concept of the Franciscan family, into which the General Chapter of the SFO delved, deserves some special attention because it is a truly prophetic insight provided by the new Rule. It takes and applies to our spiritual family

the “ecclesiology of an exchange of gifts” that is one of the fruits of the Council. It sheds new light on the relationship between secular and religious Franciscans and opens up surprising perspectives for the development of a Franciscan apostolate in a troubled, constantly changing world.

Nowadays we hear more and more people speaking with ever greater conviction about the need for collaboration between the laity and religious in facing the challenges of the Third Millennium. In late November, 2002, the Union of Superiors General met in Rome to discuss this very topic. There were 128 General Superiors of various orders and congregation of men religious and a number of heads of lay movements, including the SFO. This authoritative gathering strongly affirmed the conclusion that in a globalized world and in a Church that has focused on a *spirituality of communion*, it is necessary to overcome every form of narcissistic isolationism. All the baptized, according to our respective vocations, should realize that we are called to join forces in building up the Kingdom and in the mission that God has placed in our hands. In his introductory talk, Fr. Benjamin Romo, General Councilor of the Lazarist Fathers, stated that:

The action of the Holy Spirit has asked the Church to find new ways to live Jesus Christ's plan of salvation fully. With a sense of being Church, the lay faithful and the religious should have an ever growing awareness of the necessity of fulfilling the mission in collaboration with each other. As a consequence of this, they will share their own riches with one another, and this will become transforming energy in society.

To tell the truth, in the Franciscan Family, it is not really a question of a *new way* because from the beginning there has been a close and intense communion between the Franciscan seculars and religious; this has grown out of an awareness of their common origins and charism, tracing back to their common founder and model, St. Francis of Assisi. However, the current SFO Rule has brought about a radical and profound change in the vision of this relationship. We have gone from a *paternal solicitude* on the part of the religious and a corresponding *filial submission* on the part of the seculars, to a relationship of “life-giving reciprocity” which also extends to the Franciscan women religious – both active and contemplative – and confers equal dignity on all the components.

In this area too, much progress has been made since 1978. Perhaps we still have a long way to go, but in the various parts of the world I have felt a climate of genuine fraternity between the religious and the seculars and I have seen truly exemplary initiatives based on cooperation. I could give a few examples, but that would mean ignoring others that are equally deserving of mention



and acclaim. What should increase, in my opinion, is the initiatives begun by the seculars, which should not be limited to presumptuous claims, but should responsibly offer proof that the commitment demanded of the Spiritual Assistants (and their religious communities as a whole) is not a waste of their constantly diminishing energies, but is really an investment of their resources, an investment that will yield an ever broader and more fertile apostolate, with greater potential for their works and even an increase of religious vocations.

Here, too, the relationship with the younger generations comes into play. Sometimes the area of Franciscan vocation ministry becomes a battleground or an area of misunderstanding between the friars and the seculars, almost as if they were in competition for attracting young people to their own way of life. However, in my opinion this is a rather myopic tunnel vision, which does not leave room for the working of the only One who calls anyone to any vocation, that is, the Holy Spirit. Our task is to offer – more by our witness than by our words – the idea of a form of Christian spirituality, the one we have embraced because of our attraction to Francis. Will we be credible? Will we be convincing? Everything else comes from the Spirit, and it is the Spirit who will evoke the response in the various individuals.

I realize that what I have just said could be interpreted as an all too facile dismissal of our relationship with the Franciscan Youth, which also involves questions of organization, formation and serious, responsible involvement so that the groups of young Franciscans can be adequately accompanied by adult Secular Franciscans. Our fraternities would be incomplete and sterile if each of them does not seek to create *lateral* groups of young people (and children and adolescents as well...) with whom they can share the joy and hope that the Franciscan option has given us. The greater spread of Franciscan Youth throughout the various parts of the world is also a result of the new Rule to the degree that it broke down the intimist and devotional ideas of the Third Order Regular and opened wide the doors and windows so that a new wind could blow away the dust that had accumulated over the centuries.

Of course, today the Franciscan Youth are more numerous and flourishing in the National Fraternities of the young countries (in Africa, Asia and Latin America), but this does not exempt the other countries from trying to



counterbalance, by offering a program of great spiritual breadth, the tendencies to secularism, consumerism, and hedonism that weigh heavily on the affluent societies. How can the SFO offer a response to the existential questions that people have always asked, and which today are being asked with even greater urgency? It is obvious that in proclaiming and bearing witness to the value of the Cross, the Fraternities can help the young people to discover that human freedom and dignity are not exalted through economic success or career, but in the conscious acceptance of sacrifice and in the struggle against adversity of every kind.

By becoming a promoter of new places and forms for this intergenerational encounter, the Fraternities will help the young people to overcome their sense of fear in confronting a violent society. This violence is not only a physical violence against persons and property, but also includes that subtle violence that the mass media impose by their life styles. In the face of this violence the weak and those who do not have a solid upbringing often feel inadequate.

Here it is often a question of complex and delicate interventions that require a thorough knowledge of problems that are typical of young people, also making use of the insights and tools furnished by the psychological sciences. These are skills that those responsible for leading the Franciscan Youth groups need to acquire within the perspective of a continuing formation that allows them to change, modify and even challenge their own certainties.

Theory and praxis, however, must be integrated together because, although it is true that the young people are the ones being taught, our work should not be done *for them* but *with them*. If not, our work may be futile and rejected. Thus the young people will become active participants who, of course, need support, but who also have some ability and potential to contribute to the solution of their own problems if they are concretely involved in the process. In this way we can help the young people get rid of the idea of an SFO which, in the best-case scenario, does some charitable activities or offers occasional help. It is precisely in the area of *sharing with the lowliest of society* that the adult Secular Franciscans will bear witness to the love they bear, giving credible example that incarnates authentic Gospel values. In this way the young people, even those who seem disinterested in religion, can be nourished.

Analogies could be drawn for other types of activity which are suitable for the SFO: care of the environment, cooperation in the development of the emerging countries (helping out in the work of the Franciscan missionaries), extracurricular or out-of-school activities for children in poor neighborhoods, etc. All of these can be counted among the "courageous initiatives" to which the renewed Rule calls us.

To celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary, each Fraternity, even the small

fraternities or those composed of elderly members, should undertake some new form of "active presence" or give new impetus to an activity they have already begun. Thus they will celebrate not only in words, but also in deeds, an event in which we will feel more involved in the deepest fibers of our heart.

### About Our Contributor

**Emanuela De Nunzio, OFS**, was born in Trieste, in northern Italy, in 1929. She graduated in law at the University of Naples and spent her worked in public administration where she was involved in the Social Security of workers. Married with no children, she became a widow at a young age and dedicated herself entirely to the Secular Franciscan Order which she had entered when she was 20 years old. In the Order she served in different offices nationally and internationally until, in 1990, she was elected General Minister. She served in that office for 12 years visiting almost all the national fraternities on the five continents.

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this:  
to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ  
by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi,  
who made Christ the inspiration  
and the center of his life with  
God and people.

(SFO RULE, 2.4)

## The Franciscan Rule: An Invitation to Relationship

Michael J. Higgins, T.O.R.

This year marks a major anniversary of the new rule for the Secular Franciscan Order. This document, approved by Pope Paul VI in 1978, is the latest in a series of rules granted by the Church to the Order since its founding in the early thirteenth century. It is significant as it is the only rule for the Secular Franciscan Order which was written with the active participation of the women and men who profess it. The process of writing the new rule also occurred during the time of a renewed appreciation and discovery of writings by and about St. Francis and the resulting document can truly be said to be the best "Franciscan" rule in the Order's history.

As in the previous rules of the SFO, the *Rule of 1978* invites the brothers and sisters of the Order to share life with God and with one another. In this way it is essentially an invitation to relationship with God and with fellow brothers and sisters. In this reflection, I would like to examine more closely the founding moments of the original Franciscan rules in light of St. Francis' invitation to relationship, and to make some applications to the life of the Secular Franciscan Order today.

The first Franciscan rules were developed in response to the needs of the women and men who followed Francis relative to the requirements of the Church and not as a result of a well thought-out or deliberate process. At the beginning of Francis' conversion, while he lived alone, there was no need for a highly defined "rule" of life. After he had embraced the dress and lifestyle of a hermit in 1206, it is safe to say that Francis lived an austere, prayerful life guided by the hours of prayer, manual labor, and ascetical practices. His use of time was discretionary and flexible. If other companions joined him, they wished to live as he did. In a sense, Francis himself can be understood to be the first rule of life for the fledgling community. The early companions looked to Francis to guide their lives: how are we to pray? Look at Francis and do as he does. How are we to work? Look at Francis and work as he does. What and how are we to eat, to fast, to preach, to dress . . . ? Again, look at Francis. It seems that

he was comfortable with this and was an example to the brothers, someone they could look to and emulate.

Francis did not tell his earliest companions to identify themselves as his followers. Rather, if the brothers were asked who they were or where they came from “they responded simply that they were penitents originally from the city of Assisi” (L3C 37). It is well accepted today that Francis and the followers of the movement he ignited saw themselves as part of the penitential tradition of the Church. This was primarily a lay movement dating back to the fourth and fifth centuries of the Church. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the penitential movement was not organized with a set juridical or administrative structure. The penitential tradition applied to a wide range of spiritual movements of the time which attempted to encourage their members to live vibrant Christian lives. It was this spiritual climate to which Francis was first drawn and it provided his early community with its identity during their formative years.

Francis was convinced that his rule of life was that of the Gospel, and most especially to embrace a way of living that closely matched the life of the disciples of Jesus. Through the years, many religious orders have taken as their model the wonderful experience of the early post-Pentecost Church in Jerusalem. These early Christians were of one mind and heart, were attentive to the



teaching of the apostles and shared everything in common; so too were those called to religious life. John Cassian (360-434), an early monastic writer, went so far as to state that the life of the early Christian community was monastic in nature and that all monks are challenged to recapture that spirit. Francis, on the other hand, did not feel called to recreate or recapture the life of Jerusalem's early Christian community. Instead, he was convinced that his way of life was to be based on the Gospels and on a close following of Christ, not on the Acts of the Apostles. In Francis' view, the followers of Jesus were the ones to be emulated, not the early community of Christians. The ideal life for Francis was to give all to the poor, to follow Jesus and His teachings literally, to preach the Gospel, and to pray and love as Jesus prayed and loved. While Francis' first followers looked to him as the guide for their lives, Francis looked to the Christ and the Gospels. The dynamic of this way of life gave a decidedly “evangelical” flavor to the Franciscan movement. By realizing that Francis' inspiration was Christ's own life and His teachings, it is easy to understand why Francis sent the friars out, two-by-two, to preach. This is one of the essential elements of the evangelical enterprise.

In light of the Gospel life, the emphasis Francis placed on the importance of preaching is understandable and laudable, especially in view of his challenge to follow the example of the itinerant Christ and His closest disciples. Because of the constant threat of heresy in the later part of the twelfth and early part of the thirteenth centuries, the Church placed a strict prohibition against preaching by lay people. Therefore, it was dangerous for Francis and his early community to focus their time and effort on preaching because they could very easily be mistaken for heretics and severely punished. With this in mind, Francis turned to Rome when the fraternity reached eleven members. He approached the Vicar of Christ, Innocent III, one of the most powerful popes during the medieval ages, for permission to preach and live penance. With the support of his local bishop, Guido, and that of a member of the Roman Curia, Cardinal John of St. Paul, he was granted an audience with the Holy Father.

The stories that surround the encounter between Francis and Innocent III are filled with drama, dreams and visions. It is clear to see that the event was highlighted and embellished over time, taking on an importance and meaning that Francis never gave it in his own reflections. His summation of this event is found in two lines in his Testament:

And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me (Test 14-15).

Unfortunately, what Francis had "written down simply and in a few words" no longer exists. We can only surmise that they were the Gospel passages which implored those who wanted to be perfect to sell everything, follow Christ, and preach the Gospel.

It is important to keep in mind that Francis did not ask Innocent III for permission to establish a new religious community. The growth of the movement came, it seems, as a wonderful and challenging surprise to him and its establishment as a recognized order in the Church would take several more years. Francis did, however, ask and receive permission for himself and his followers to live a penitential, Gospel-based life and to be allowed preach. Neither Francis, nor the majority of his companions were clerics; therefore, their permission to preach would not have included the freedom to preach doctrine and theology. Rather, their preaching would have been simple and straightforward.

The legends state that Francis started preaching soon after his meeting with the Pope. Given what we know of Francis' personality, it is not hard to imagine him walking down the streets of thirteenth century Rome exhorting the inhabitants to love God, to love one another, and to turn away from sin. Apparently, these words seemed to fall on deaf ears or hard hearts; the Romans were perhaps too jaded by the varieties of preachers and religious who regularly came to the city on pilgrimage or to seek some special favor from the Pope and so were not moved by this shaggy man from the country. Whatever the circumstance, Francis did not stay long in Rome after his meeting with Pope Innocent III, heading back to Assisi with his followers and preaching as they went.

Francis and his followers returned joyfully to Assisi, preaching and encouraging others to turn away from their sins and to embrace the tremendous love of God. The force and enthusiasm of their preaching, backed as it was by the holiness of their lives, fell like a match on dry timber. Thousands of people responded to the challenging message of love and conversion. It became clear to Francis that as the community grew, it was necessary to establish more structure and order than he could reasonably give it through his personal example and witness. Chiara Frugoni, in her biography of the Saint, states that this "was a time of apprenticeship and trial and error. Francis experimented with numerous 'rules,' none of which has come down to us, different ways of life which he tested in practice with his companions before making them normative principles."

The document entitled *The Early Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (which has been adapted as the prologue for the rules of both the Secular Franciscan Order and the Third Order Regular) may very well con-

tain the seeds of one of these experiments to provide a "way of life." The letter was written by Francis to encourage his followers to respond fully to the invitation of an intimate relationship with God. In this document Francis highlights five elements of his understanding of penance: love of God, love of neighbor, hatred of sin, receiving of the Eucharist, and living a life that produces worthy fruits of penance. He then goes on to promise:

O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them, because the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make Its home and dwelling place among them, and they are children of the heavenly Father Whose works they do, and they are spouses, brother, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (1LrF 5-7).

The invitation to a Gospel life was, for Francis, an invitation to a personal and intimate relationship with God in which women and men are invited to recognize that they are children of the Heavenly Father, have Jesus as a brother, and are filled with the Holy Spirit. In this sense they can be understood as happy and blessed. What a wonderful way Francis uses to express a spirit-filled Gospel life!

It is significant that the editors of the new translation of the Franciscan sources date the *Earlier Exhortation* to between 1209 and 1215. This is years before the Second Order received its rule from Cardinal Ugolino in 1219 and the First Order received the canonical approbation of the *Later Rule* in 1223. This later rule can truly be said to be a document addressed to all in the movement - the friars, the sisters, and the lay people - and not just to a specific group.

With respect to the elements of penance found in Francis' early writings, and especially in the *Early Exhortation*, it is important to note what he indicates as the importance of mercy in his own conversion experience. One day, while traveling close to Assisi, he encountered a leper on the road. Rather than flee in disgust, he was moved to approach the leper and to embrace him in love and compassion. This was a crucial point in his conversion experience; he wrote shortly before his death:

The Lord gave me, brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world (Test. 1-4).

It is significant that the key moment in Francis' turning to the Lord was the act of showing mercy to one who was in need. According to the Saint, this

was the catalyst for him to "leave the world," to definitively abandon the lay state and embrace a life of prayer and service as a religious. Franciscan life is based on love of God and neighbor, a life nourished by the sacrament of the Lord's body and blood which leads one to despise the tendency to sin. It is a life lived as if all this makes a difference. The instigator in this life is God, who touches men and women with mercy and compassion and challenges them to reach out to others, especially to the poor and marginalized, with that same mercy and compassion.

The life of penance as expressed by Francis in the Early Exhortation and the Testament provides a framework for us to understand the essential elements of the way of life that the Secular Franciscans have promised to live. It is interesting to note that the *Rule of 1978* is replete with terms that refer to relationship and sharing of life. In the English translation of the text, the quintessential Franciscan terms "fraternity," "community," and "brothers and sisters" appear eight times each. It is hard to find an article in the text that does not contain at least one of these terms. For the sake of brevity, I would like to focus only on the all-important phrase: "brothers and sisters." A more in-depth study of how these are used and understood in the text of the *Rule of 1978* would be an excellent exercise for a local fraternity as part of its ongoing formation program.

Of the 26 articles in the body of the *Rule of 1978*, eight contain the phrase "brothers and sisters." The last three of these articles are found in Chapter III, "Life in Fraternity," and deal with the acceptance of new brothers and sisters into the fraternity (art. 23), the assurance that communion with dead brothers and sisters continues with the fraternity's prayers for them (art. 24), and the requirement that all the brothers and sisters should contribute to the fraternity according to their means (art. 25).

The first five articles of the *Rule* highlight the relationship that is to be fostered in the life of the Secular Franciscan. They provide a wonderful insight into the kind of life that is encouraged for the seculars. As brothers and sisters, the members of the Secular Franciscan Order are to be "led by the Spirit" and to "strive for perfect charity in their own secular state" (art. 2). They are to "seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity" (art. 5). By means of their vocation as brothers and sisters, which is "motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel," secular Franciscans are called to "conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls 'conversion'" (art. 7). This allows them to be "free to love God and their brothers and sisters" (art. 12) so that "Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit (can) accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ" (art. 13).

Franciscan spirituality is not a call to a private "me and God" experience. It is an invitation to an intimate and active relationship with God and with a group of women and men who wish to support each other in a vibrant and mindful spiritual life. The *Rule of 1978*, which is the guiding spirit of the Secular Franciscan Order, is a challenge to all who embrace it to live in this kind of vibrant relationship. Let us begin, for up to now we have done very little . . .

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>John Cassian, *Conferences* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) XVIII:5.

<sup>2</sup>Chiara Frugoni, *Francis of Assisi: A Life* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 71.

<sup>3</sup>Regis J. Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann, and William Short, eds., *The Saint*, Vol. 1 of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (New York: New City Press), 41.

<sup>4</sup>Margaret Carney, *The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and Her Form of Life* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), 70.

Note: The image on p. 106 is borrowed from the Franciscan Museum of the Istituto Storico dei Capuccini in Rome, and is found on the cover of Mariano D'Alatri's book *Aetas Poenitentialis*, published in 1993.

## About Our Contributor

Fr. Michael J. Higgins, T.O.R., currently serves as the vicar General of the Third Order Regular and is stationed at the basilica Sts. Cosmas and Damian in Rome. He has worked with the Secular Franciscan Order for many years on the local and regional levels in the United States. In addition to his duties as Vicar General, Michael is also the General Spiritual Assistant to the SFO for his congregation.

***Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. . . . Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives.***

***(SFO RULE 2: 14-15)***

## Application of the 1978 Rule 25 Years Later

William Wicks, S.F.O.

In addition, the places to which the masses came conferred to the preaching a new character and could more directly place it in contact with daily life: the piazzas of the city and those of the villages, the country farm yards, and the roadsides were often substituted for the more clerical and solemn areas of the Church, in a more human dimension, more real and concrete, which resulted in being more congenial to the listeners.<sup>1</sup>

These words, taken from Prospero Rivi's manuscript, *Frances of Assisi and the Laity of His Time*, define the environment in which our Seraphic Father, our founder, became God's instrument in rallying, perhaps unintentionally, the religious fervor of those times. A spectacular paradigm shift was taking place in the understanding of a spirituality that became available to all. One did not have to become a hermit or a clergyman to seek holy perfection. The penitential movement was blossoming and the Church was taking a serious look at it, partly because of its popularity and partly because of heretical offshoots. Francis connected this movement to our Church, and thereby provided its blessing.

The hope of renewal hinges upon returning to the origins and to the spiritual experiences of Francis of Assisi and of the brothers and sisters of penance who received from him their inspiration and guidance. *This renewal also depends upon the Spirit in the signs of the times.*<sup>2</sup>

Our 1978 Secular Franciscan Order Rule was written following the timely and prophetic events of the Second Vatican Council.

We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its expectations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteris-

tics. . . .Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and people. Hence, we can already speak of a true social and cultural transformation, one which has repercussions on a man's religious life as well.<sup>3</sup>

Out of this atmosphere, the 1978 Rule emerged. According to Robert Stewart, OFM, the foundation set by the Ministers General for generating a new Rule is the Rule of Pope Leo XIII promulgated in 1883.<sup>4</sup> Well, one does not have to look at a comparison very long before one notices the radical difference in the two texts. If one studies both Rules, without knowing the history, there is no way that it can be concluded that the Pauline Rule came out of the Leonine Rule. So, what happened? The Holy Spirit is what happened.

### Structure and Processes

So, let us see how the Holy Spirit has worked through the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) in the United States to help make manifest this Rule in the life of the members of the Order 25 years after its promulgation.

**REGIONALIZATION:** The first official event was a radical change in structure. "*The Secular Franciscan Order is divided into fraternities of various levels – local, regional, national and international.*"<sup>5</sup> At the time the Pauline Rule was promulgated, the fraternities in the United States were organized in a way that was based solidly on their being connected to friar provinces. A process of Regionalization, begun in 1989, was completed in 1997. This major feat is a credit to the secular leadership at that time, with the gracious cooperation of the friars.

**LEADERSHIP:** All levels of leadership are improving as the ministers and councils come to understand the role of servant leader, the spirit of our Rule of Life, and become educated in the General Constitutions<sup>6</sup> and the International<sup>7</sup> and National Statutes.<sup>8</sup> Fraternal and Pastoral Visitations offer an opportunity for Friars and Seculars to work with fraternities at each particular level to help in the animation and guidance of those Franciscan communities.

**FRATERNITY:** The local fraternity, ". . . becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of Church, the community of Love."<sup>9</sup> Fraternities meet periodically, at least once a month. A successful fraternity meeting should have four ingredients: prayer, business, ongoing formation and social interaction. A member should find at the fraternity meetings a community of love, an oppor-

tunity for conversion, support for apostolic activity and a place for enlivening evangelical life.

**FORMATION:** With the 1978 Rule being thrust upon the Order, it became the challenge for all to become educated to this new calling, this new direction. The burden of this challenge fell mainly upon Formation: a National Formation Commission was formed. The Formation Commission continues to be the most important element of our structure in implementing the initial and ongoing formation processes at all levels of fraternity. There are educational opportunities in Franciscanism. The Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life (ICFL) is a distance learning offering out of St. Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania, and the Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University offers courses and seminars.

**APOSTOLIC COMMISSIONS:** "There can never be personal conversion without also working for social transformation."<sup>10</sup> SFO members are called, through this structure of the Apostolic Commissions, to works as exhorted in paragraphs 19 & 15 (Peace & Justice), 16 (Work), 17 (Family) and 18 (Ecology) of our Rule of Life.

**YOUTH:** One of the six priorities for further attention for the Order noted by the outgoing Minister General, Emanuela de Nunzio, O.F.S., is Youth. Our Rule calls us to "meeting with other Franciscan groups, especially with youth groups."<sup>11</sup> Our Constitutions call us to ministry with youth in Articles 96 and 97. Our Franciscan charism should be very appealing to youth who seek a unique spiritual life within, and even outside of, our Catholic church.

**SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE:** "*As a concrete sign of communion and co-responsibility, the councils of various levels . . . shall ask for suitable and well-prepared spiritual assistance . . . from, the four Franciscan families, to whom the Secular Fraternity has been united for centuries.*"<sup>13</sup> The paradigm shift in the understanding of the relationship between the SFO and the friar communities has been a blessing to both parties. The shift from the position of friars directing fraternities to being an equal member of those fraternities is, in effect, a vote of confidence that the Order belongs to the Seculars. This is evidenced recently by the friar support of the recent changes in the General Constitutions that have eliminated their voting right in chapters of election; the Friars do not wish to influence the outcome of our elections. In effect, we are, as called out in Article 1 of our Rule, in "*life-giving union with each other.*"<sup>14</sup> Another breakthrough is the certification of Secular Franciscans as Spiritual Assistants.

The International Presidency (CIOFS) communicates with the National Fraternities via a CIOFS bulletin and *Koinonia* from the Conference of Gen-

eral Spiritual Assistants. At the international level there is a Conference of the Franciscan Family that includes our minister general, friars of the four Obediences, a Poor Clare, a member of the religious Third Order Regular Sisters. In our country, a Franciscan Family Council that includes representatives of each obedience meets periodically to talk about ways that the whole Franciscan family can come together. There is a reciprocating spirit with the TOR Franciscan Federation: we attend each others' events. The Poor Clare members of our family have committed to pray for their friar, religious and secular members of the family. Some are spiritual assistants to nearby fraternities.

**FRATERNAL LIFE:** Life in fraternities is of extreme importance. A committee is assigned to correlate and process the visitation reports and, with gleanings from these reports, provide suggestions to the national executive council which will be of help to regional and local fraternities. The committee also responds to, and helps resolve, conflicts, always honoring the rule of subsidiarity.

**MULTICULTURAL AND ECUMENICAL:** Two important committees are in place in the United States: a multicultural committee and an ecumenical committee. I believe that St. Francis would look at things, not from a standpoint of tolerance of, or sensitivity to, race, religion, gender, state of life and personality but, from a point of view, as the rule underscores, of the Divine Seed that he knew, and we know, is in all of God's own, created in His image and likeness. Given that, we need to recognize, appreciate, and draw forth the special gifts that come to us from the cultures and other religious communities, and affirm them. We have close connection with the Anglican Third Order Society of St. Francis; we attend their gatherings and invite them to attend ours.

**COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS:** The national fraternity newspaper, TAU-USA, published quarterly, presents an excellent paper that provides articles on ongoing formation, on regional activities, national fraternity news in general and personal interest articles. Regional fraternities and local fraternities have excellent newsletters and many have web sites. The national fraternity has a very comprehensive web site with links to other Franciscan family sources. Many inquiries are made by vocation prospects using the web site. There is a 1-800-FRANCIS number serviced by our Vocation Director. A national database provides addresses for mailing our national newsletter to each professed member of our Order. The database will also record the date and place of profession for posterity. E-mail and a national List Serve are used extensively for business and communication. A national fraternity archive is in the advanced planning stage and archival material is being collected.



FINANCE: Article 25 of our Rule calls for financial support: "*Regarding expenses necessary for the life of the fraternity and the needs of worship, of the apostolate, and of charity, all the brothers and sisters should offer a contribution according to their means.*"<sup>15</sup> The annual budget of the national fraternity council is, at this time, approximately \$150,000. All members of the national fraternity leadership work pro bono; there are between five and ten full time volunteers.

## Future Direction for Living the Rule

Indicated above is the state of the SFO in structure, progress and process. What, then, do I see as the future direction for our Order? First, let me say that we, as Christians and SFO members, are still being transformed to a post-Vatican II way of life; we still have not absorbed completely the essence of the new Rule of Life, but we are getting there. We must embrace our *secularity* since this connects us with the world in a loving way. We must understand the *vernacular of today* if we are to connect with the world. We must be intently *inclusive* to help build a more fraternal and evangelical world. And we must understand that the *Divine Seed* is indeed in each person that we encounter. Following are quotes from texts that best define these four prophetic areas.

SECULARITY: A breakthrough in the development of the 1978 Rule was produced by the International Congress at Assisi (year?) when they proposed Motion 9. Item 11 of that motion is, "*To have a spirituality of a secular character.*"<sup>16</sup> We are *Secular* Franciscans. The vast majority of us are lay people. We are deeply imbedded in the world that we live our life in. And, we are all good people. We have spouses, most of us are parents, we drive our children to soccer and little league games. We work, sometimes at jobs that we don't particularly like, to support our family. Some of us decide not to marry. Some have lost their life's partner. We all have unique experiences peculiar to our secular lifestyle. *We have to know that this life is holy, graceful and grace-filled.* Elements of this life are described by Prospero Rivi, and others.

This is probably the highest teaching of Francis: if in the living of each day a Christian is able to grasp the immanent and continual presence of a God who became incarnate because he loves us, and because through his grace alone he has made us his children, his living – in all its aspects – will assume a supreme importance and value. The crowds of believers had demonstrated their need for this . . . that is, for someone who could help them to recover and restore a Christian meaning and value to their daily life: to their personal and social commitments, to matrimony, to work, to commerce, to the daily effort . . . everything newly illuminated by the Gospel and tied to the central mystery of the Incarnation as an indestructible foundation for the value of

human life, and at the same time an incentive and continual drive toward conversion and transcendence.<sup>17</sup>

Our goal is to be a spirituality connected to this world in every aspect, seeing the Divine Light shining through the mundane, the ordinary, the physical, the material . . . That's the synthesis that I believe healthy Christianity is leading us toward. 'When that day comes, the very bells on the horses will be inscribed with the words, sacred to Yahweh, and the cooking pots of the house of Yahweh will be as holy as sprinkling bowl before the altar' (Zachariah 14:20).<sup>18</sup>

One cannot stress enough the importance for [S.F.O.] ministry of this sense of belonging to the world. There is a capacity to be moved to pity and a quality of showing kindness, exemplified in the story of the Good Samaritan, that can only come from a genuine identification with the world and its suffering people. This identity is called forth in us when we feel that we are at one with the human race, not when we set ourselves apart from, or above others.<sup>19</sup>

VERNACULAR: Ron Rolheiser, OMI, tells us that, if we are to evangelize, we must know the vernacular of the day. Francis "generally made use of the vernacular to give voice to the strong religious instincts of the people."<sup>20</sup> If we are church-bound Christians we will not know how to communicate with today's culture. If where we find our holiness is only in Church, or only at meetings, we are self-containing ourselves. We need to go out and find Christ through that Divine Seed which is in everyone, although it may be deeply hidden through layers of bad experiences, sin and misdirection. Both Jesus and Francis preached in the vernacular.

INCLUSIVENESS: In his book, Prospero Rivi wrote that Francis did not only seek out the poor, although they were the disenfranchised. But, as Jesus did, he included all in his presentation of the Gospel life.<sup>21</sup> His time with the Sultan bears that out. We are well on our way to an inclusive approach to viewing the world. We are welcoming and we are open to being welcomed. We have a wonderful Rule that calls us to live the Gospel that, calls us, in turn, to help build a more fraternal and evangelical world. Can we embrace the truth of the following passages?

We need to see what we can do for others in life if we are to have joy within us. For it is in living lives open to others that we find our true selves, . . . 'One must choose to live or to narrate' John Paul Sartre. . . We must learn to accept people not only for who they are, but also for their right to be where they are – even if, especially if, they are not where we want them to be!<sup>22</sup>





Love people even in their sin for that is the semblance of Divine Love and is the highest love on earth. Love all of God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the Divine mys-

tery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love.<sup>23</sup>

**DIVINE SEED:** The Holy Spirit is working in our Church. The Holy Spirit is working in the world. It would be nice if we could connect the two. That is what St. Francis did. That is our challenge. Francis recognized the Divine Seed in everyone. Article 19 of our Rule calls us to "trust in the presence of the Divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon." I exhort you to go into the garden of the world. Meet the people. Connect with their Divine Seed. You do this by listening to the heart of those who you encounter. The first act of love is to listen. St. Bernard tells us, "[If] you wish to see, listen." You have heard that the Kingdom of God is within you. *Yes*, the Kingdom of God is within you, *and within the other*. There is something deeply sacred about every presence. If we are aware, every song of life is an Emmaus - every encounter is potentially grace filled.

### Closing Comment

*"In addition, the place to which the masses came conferred to the preaching a new character and could more directly place it in contact with daily life": the malls, the offices, the factories, the parks, the beaches, the homes, the supermarkets. . . . Preach the gospel at all times in all places and to all people. Use the vernacular.*

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Prospero Rivi, OFM Cap., *Francis of Assisi and the Laity of His Time*, trans. Heather Tolfree (Greyfriars Review, Vol 15 2001, Supplement), 48.

<sup>2</sup>The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, excerpts from: "Letter of the Ministers General of the Franciscan Family."

<sup>3</sup>*Gaudium et Spes* Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 4.

<sup>4</sup>Robert M. Stewart, OFM, *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretations*, (Roma: Instituto Storico dei Capuccini, 1991), 243.

<sup>5</sup>Rule, Article 20.

<sup>6</sup>General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order, December 8, 2000, available from <http://www.ofs.it/sfo.htm>

<sup>7</sup>Statutes of the International Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, November 18, see <http://www.ciofs.org/doc/kia2/sia2enb4.htm>

<sup>8</sup>National Statutes of the Secular Franciscan Order available from <http://www.nafra-sfo.org>

<sup>9</sup>Rule, Article 22.

<sup>10</sup>Pope Paul VI.

<sup>11</sup>Rule, Article 24.

<sup>12</sup>Rule, Article 26.

<sup>13</sup>Rule, Article 1.

<sup>14</sup>Rule, Article 25.

<sup>15</sup>M. Habig O.F.M., *Essential Elements of the Third Order Rule*, Franciscan Herald Press, 52 (1973), 42 - 48.

<sup>16</sup>Rivi, 53.

<sup>17</sup>Richard Rohr, OFM, *Hope Against Darkness* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2001), 14.

<sup>18</sup>Elizabeth A. Dreyer, *Earth Crammed With Heaven* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1994), 111.

<sup>19</sup>Rivi, 47, 48.

<sup>20</sup>Rivi, 80.

<sup>21</sup>Robert Wicks, *Living a Gentle Passionate Life* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1998), 134, 62.

<sup>22</sup>Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (NY: Vintage, 1991), n.p.

### About Our Contributor

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

## **The Privilege of Being Secular – The Grace of Continuous Formation 25 Years of Living the Rule of 1978**

Teresa V. Baker, S.F.O. and Anne H. Mulqueen, S.F.O.

On June 24, 1978, Pope Paul VI approved and confirmed the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, abrogating the former rule of the Franciscan Third Order. We have had twenty-five years to reflect on the significance of this name change from “Franciscan Third Order” to “Secular Franciscan Order.” The question is, “Have we fully grasped the magnitude of our obligation to the Church and the world that this new name has bestowed upon us?”

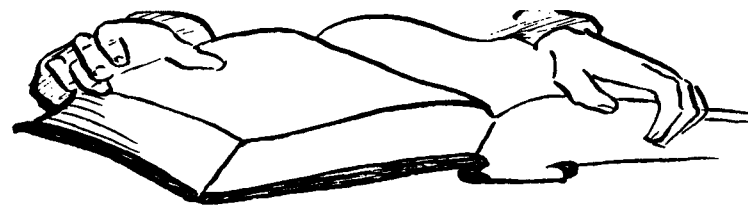
Our Secular Franciscan identity, if fully embraced, will provide us ample opportunity for ongoing conversion. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the *Rule of 1978* has refocused our vision on that of our founder, Saint Francis. Therefore, if we aspire to live the gospel life in the world, we can count on continuous opportunities for growth in our Franciscan calling. It is our belief that being a Franciscan, who is called in the secular life, is inseparable from experiencing ongoing conversion and growth from image – into likeness – of Jesus Christ.

This conversion and growth are aided by the continual process of being formed into the person God has called us to be. For us as Secular Franciscans, this call is to take the charism of our father Francis into the world in which we live. Our goal is to flow “. . . from gospel to life and life to the gospel” (SFO Rule, Article 4). It is accomplished by continuous formation in the form and format of Franciscan life, beginning with our initial contacts, continuing to profession and extending throughout our life. In order for this process to be a complete immersion into Franciscanism, formation must involve all aspects of our being; it must be three dimensional. It must be informational, formational and transformational. Although not totally distinct from one another nor necessarily progressive, each of these aspects has its unique role in our becoming properly formed Secular Franciscans.

## **Informational**

From the opening words of our Rule, the need for the informational component is seen. We are called to be members of an Order “. . . as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church” (Article 1). In discerning our vocation, a knowledge of the other Orders will help insure that Francis is the proper guide on our path for spiritual growth. If Franciscan is our calling, we are “. . . to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi” (Article 1). A careful reading of his life, both from the source materials and from modern biographies, will help us understand the charism we are being asked to take into the secular world. A reading of the life of St. Clare and the lives of the Third Order saints will help us see how this charism was integrated by others before us. We are further called to interact with other members of this Franciscan family. “. . . [I]n life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church” (Article 1). An appreciation of how the branches of this family exist together historically and pragmatically is necessary if we are going to live and work in harmony with our sisters and brothers in the First, Second, and Third Orders. We are also reminded in Article 3 that this Rule is one of several that have guided the Order down through the ages. Therefore, an understanding of our history and what brought about these changes is beneficial.

We are told how we are to live this way of life in Article 4. The only “book” necessary for this journey is the Gospel. We cannot separate the Rule from the gospels because to live the Rule is to live the Gospel. “Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel” (Article 4). Our Rule continuously points us to the gospels as our road map for living. Therefore, an up-to-



date understanding of how to read, interpret and understand the Scriptures properly is a basic tool in the Franciscan way of life. However, an informed knowledge of the Scriptures is not all that is required. Additionally, we must know how to take the gospel and make it part of our being; therefore, meditation on the Scriptures is also necessary. One way to access the Scriptures and incorporate them into our lived experience is *lectio divina*. Pope John Paul II commends both:

The Church forcefully and specially exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn "the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures . . . Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and the reader. . . . Holiness of life and effective apostolic activity are born of constant listening to God's word. . . . Acquaintance with the Scriptures is required of *all the faithful*, but particularly of seminarians, priests and religious. They are to be encouraged to engage in *lectio divina*, that quiet and prayerful meditation on the Scripture that allows the word of God to speak to the human heart. This form of prayer, privately or in groups, will deepen their love for the Bible and make it an essential and life-giving element of their daily lives (*italics added*).<sup>1</sup>

Both methods of interacting with Scripture, understanding the Scripture passages and absorbing their message, are necessary if we are to integrate these powerful commands of our Lord into our daily lives.

Article 6 calls us to be in union with the Church, to ". . . go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by [our] life and words to be her witnesses to the world." Knowledge of her teachings better affords us a solid foundation for our beliefs, and a firm grasp of them better equips us to pass them on. Familiarity with her documents and teachings prepares us to speak her message in our homes, our local communities and our workplace – wherever these values are being sought, questioned, challenged or debated.

Daily participation in ". . . liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church" is suggested in Article 8. A detailed presentation of these various prayer forms adopted by the universal Church and a thorough teaching as to how to use these formats are necessary components of formation.

## Formational

At the All Commissions Conference held at St. Bonaventure University in July, 1999, Fr. Matthew Gaskin, OFM and Fr. Anthony Carrozzo, OFM, at separate times, mentioned that the only two things necessary to be a Franciscan are the Gospel and community. If the Gospel is the book from which Franciscans are formed, then the community, the local fraternity, is the fertile ground in which the seeds of this message are nurtured and grown. As stated in Article 22, the local fraternity ". . . should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members." It is within the local fraternity that the formational aspects of this process begin to take place. It is within the local fraternity

that we are formed, molded, and shaped into Secular Franciscans by the lives and example of those who surround us. It is within fraternity that "the entire community is engaged in this process of growth by its own manner of living" (Article 23). We come to fraternity to share the joys and the trials of living our gospel centered life. Who can better understand and support us than those who are called to live the same life? The fraternity council is to ". . . adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life of fraternity" (Article 24). In addition, it calls us to share ". . . with other Franciscan groups, especially with youth groups." We come to fraternity to be nourished in our Franciscan vocation and to go forth from this graced encounter to be leaven in the world around us. The primary persons to whom we take this leaven are those within our own families. With them, we are to ". . . cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for life" (Article 17).

The apostolic activities we are engaged in must be an outgrowth of our call to live the gospel, to be present to those around us, and to share the goods we have received from God with others. In all aspects of life, we as Secular Franciscans both ". . . individually and collectively [strive to be] in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of [our] human lives and courageous initiatives" (Article 15). No matter the circumstances in which we find ourselves, the search for justice should be our primary aim. Article 19 calls us to be "bearers of peace . . . [and] messengers of perfect joy." Being bearers of peace is not an easy task in today's society. It demands that we be firmly rooted in our relationship with the Lord, that we have a solid grasp of gospel values, and that we allow our actions to speak as loudly as, if not louder than, our words. Within the secular sphere, we are to ". . . esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community" (Article 16). We do this by remembering that we are invited by God to share in his creative endeavors, and that Francis exhorted all of his friars to work with their hands.

In his Canticle, Saint Francis was inspired to call all creatures, animate and inanimate, brother and sister. We are called to reverence all creation as a visible reflection of the invisible God: ". . . they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship" (Article 18). In like manner, we are to ". . . seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying [our] own material needs" (Article 11).

## Transformational

Above all things, Article 7 reminds us of the unique purpose of our calling: "United by their vocation as brothers and sisters of penance, and moti-

vated 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*." This daily conversion is the transformational aspect of formation.

The Prologue to our present Rule tells us that conversion is a gift and a grace, that it is personal and ongoing, and that it is the way to the Father. "Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things [produce worthy fruits of penance] and persevere in doing them, because the 'spirit of the Lord will rest upon them' and he will make 'his home and dwelling among them'. . . ." Therefore, when we profess the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, although fully immersed in the world, we choose to make a leap of faith into the arms of a loving God, trusting that God will sustain us, yet knowing intuitively that our attitudes, values and behavior are counter-cultural. By our very presence in society, we invite opportunities for ongoing conversion both for ourselves and others.

We experience another example of the grace of ongoing conversion in Article 10 of our Rule which tells us to ". . . follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness[ing] to him even in difficulties and persecutions," because this witness demonstrates a commitment to God above all else. Article 10 restates the words of Jesus:

Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you (Matt. 5:11-12).

Following Saint Francis of Assisi, our Rule exhorts us to live in the world and love it into salvation. Article 14 of the Rule requires

Secular Franciscans . . . to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively . . . [and to] exercise [our] responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service.

It is Jesus we imitate when we make choices in the best interests of others rather than ourselves. It is His self-sacrificial lifestyle that we are called to follow in our secular state, as we continue our journey from image into the likeness of Jesus.

A well-known gospel example of the blessing of penance is the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Here Jesus engages this very worldly woman in a dialogue which ultimately leads to her conversion and the conversion of many others: "Many Samaritans of that town believed in him on the strength of the woman's words of testimony . . ." (Jn.

4:39). So too, Secular Franciscans are to ". . . set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters" (Article 12). In this gospel story, as in our lives, conversion leads to receiving the good news and self-centeredness is transformed into concern for others.

## Conclusion

Those of us selected for the ministry of formation often find ourselves in uncharted territory. Each person we encounter has a different set of life experiences and life circumstances. If we reverence the process taking place between the Holy Spirit and the individual, we will be able to live expectantly in spite of uncertainty, believing that God will honor our intentions to assist in the formation process. The grace of formation, both initial and ongoing, flows from a common source, our commitment to ". . . follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi" (Article 1).

The answer to the question raised in the beginning of this article, "Have we fully grasped the magnitude of our obligation to the Church and the world that this new name has bestowed upon us?" is obviously, "No, not fully." Life is a process. Knowledge that becomes understanding is a process. Being formed into living examples of the goodness contained in the *Rule of 1978* is a process. Being transformed into the image and likeness of Christ is a never-ending process. As we continue our faith journey, our experiences of continuous formation and ongoing conversion will deepen and become more meaningful. The Holy Spirit will continue to bestow these graces on us whenever we open our hearts to receive the blessing of a life of penance.

Robert M. Stewart, OFM, wrote, not that long ago, "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." To this we add, not only will we be blessings to the Church, but also to the world in which we live and breathe and have our being.

So let us go forth to continue to love and serve the Lord and give flesh to the *Rule of 1978*.

## Endnotes

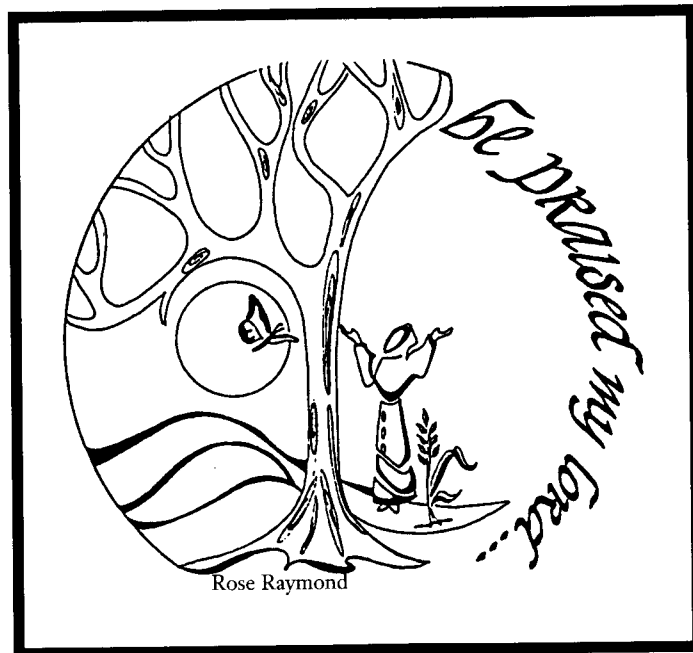
<sup>1</sup>Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Oceania: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, 22 November 2001, 38.

<sup>2</sup>Robert M. Stewart, OFM "De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam" *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* (Roma: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1991), 364.

## About Our Contributors

**Teresa V. Baker, SFO**, Co-chair of the National Formation Commission, is a member of the Greccio Fraternity in St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region. She resides in Derry, NH, with her husband, Raymond; they have two sons. She has authored *Gospel Living Every Day of Our Lives: A Formation Guide to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* and has co-authored *Come and See* with Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap. She travels around the country giving workshops and retreats.

**Anne H. Mulqueen, SFO**, is co-chair of the National Formation Commission of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States and a board member of the Duns Scotus Formation Trust Fund. Anne has been an active member of Mary Our Queen Fraternity in Baltimore, Maryland since her profession in 1984. Anne serves as a board member of the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life at Saint Francis University. She and her husband Bill have two daughters and two grandchildren and reside in Kingsville, Maryland.



## Faith in Action Through the Commissions

Carol L. Gentile, S.F.O.

Come. You have my Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me* (Matt. 25:34-36).

Living the Gospel in the manner described by our Rule of Life is the central theme of our existence as Secular Franciscans. Our goal is to absorb the Gospel into the very fabric of our being, making the Rule the corner post of our very self.<sup>1</sup>

Our Rule calls us to go from Gospel (being) to life (doing) and from life back to Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

Like Saint Francis, we are called to rebuild the church, to see as Christ would see, to act as Christ would act, to love one another as Christ loved us. Franciscans are called to spread the Gospel and witness to Jesus Christ through our actions. Scripture tells us in James, "So it is with the faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless" (James 2:17). "In other words, what they (we) do in His name and by His authority makes them (us) a tangible extension of Jesus and His Ministry."<sup>3</sup>

Secular Franciscans are called to make their own contribution, inspired by the person and message of Saint 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.<sup>4</sup>

Having said this, we turn to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order which clearly describes that we are to use our special talents, competence and responsibility to bring others to experience God. Articles 14 through 19 of the Rule vividly communicate these areas of concern: Peace and Justice, Work, Family, and Ecology. The following is a short synopsis of each of the areas.

## Peace and Justice in the SFO Rule

Dan and Sarah Mulholland, SFO

In one sense, our entire Rule calls Secular Franciscans to live a life of peace and justice, for that is the Gospel life. There are, however, two articles that address Peace and Justice specifically.

**Justice:** "Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith." - Article 15

Our Rule calls us not only to act justly ourselves, but also to be in the very forefront in promoting justice, including in the public forum of politics, business, economics, etc. As we strive to emulate St. Francis, like him we are to be both witness and prophet. Our lives and actions are to motivate and encourage a sense of justice in others.

Justice seeks right relationships. Justice sees all creation as one. Franciscans work for justice because we live in relationship with each other and with God. We value all life because it all comes from God. When Francis and the early brothers left Assisi to live among and minister to lepers, they were performing corporal works of mercy. But they were doing more. They also made a social statement because of their justice perspective. The townspeople of Assisi saw lepers as outcasts, banished from their town. But the Franciscans knew the lepers as brothers and sisters. Their decision to work with the lepers was indeed a work of mercy, but it was also a rejection of injustice and an affirmation of equal, fraternal relationships.

We too must see our acts of charity stretched to become actions on behalf of justice. This means we must question the structures that create the injustice. We must work to empower those who are victimized, oppressed, or dehumanized by injustice because we are all in fraternal relationship with God and with each other.

**Peace:** "Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in every-

one and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others." - Article 19

There are many other approaches that could have been taken to resolve the dilemma the townspeople of Gubbio felt when the wolf was attacking their town and eating their chickens. Today, someone would probably suggest killing or imprisoning the wolf. But it was Francis who was called to deal with the situation in Gubbio. Because he recognized the dignity of the wolf as one of God's creatures and remembered Jesus' words "Love one another," Francis saw the need for dialogue, for nonviolence. Through the transforming power of love and pardon Francis brought reconciliation between the wolf and the townspeople of Gubbio.

There are many wolves of Gubbio in our world today, many polarized situations - in our personal lives, and in our collective lives. We know that we must address such situations. Like Francis, we must be reconcilers. It is not simple. Injustice does exist. Evil exists. Sin exists. But because we are Franciscans, even when confronting sin and evil, our goal must be transformation through bringing and witnessing God's love.

We must not dismiss the "other," or only see them as the "enemy," because whoever they are, they too are children of God. They are our brothers, our sisters, our neighbors - and we are told to love them. When through love we are reconcilers, everyone wins.

## Work Within Franciscan Spirituality

Pauline Cahalan, SFO

Article 16 of *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* tells us we need to "esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community." In the Rule of 1223, written for the First Order friars, Saint Francis describes work as a grace and warns the brothers against idleness.

As you read this, you can begin to get the idea that to follow this Article one has to be counter-cultural in much of U.S. society. Many people see work as something one does to have money to keep food on the table, a roof overhead, and to do other things. People may not see their work as a grace or contribution they are making, as stewards of God's world, to its continual functioning. To "esteem work as a gift" is a real stretch for many folks. The last thought on their mind would be, "Thank God it's Monday so I can return to sharing, redeeming, and serving the human community by the use of my talents in whatever job God has provided me at this time."

Francis's idea of poverty was to depend totally on God and his, (Francis's) own ability to work. Therefore, it was part of the fraternal responsibilities of the members to work regularly, and beg only when necessary for enough to keep the members fed and to carry out their work with the poor, especially lepers. Francis saw work as a grace and gift from God. We must be receptive to the grace and nurture the gift through prayer and openness to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Just as St. Paul admonished the Christians of Thessalonica (2 Thess. 3:8-10) that those who refused to work shouldn't eat, so Francis dismissed a brother because he wouldn't work. Francis' dying words convey our responsibility: "I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you what is yours."<sup>5</sup>

We are here to do God's work with Jesus and Francis as our human role models. You may see some Secular Franciscans wearing the plain Tau cross as a symbol of their profession. Others wear the Tau cross with a hand on each side of the cross. One hand symbolizes Christ's hand, the other symbolizes the hand of St. Francis. Before Francis died he received the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, in his own body. The Tau with the hands can be a reminder to us that we are Christ's hands in the world now and it is up to us to do His work to make His world function and to bring His presence to others. How do we figure out what God's plan is? Franciscans do this through prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit. Both of these can be very hard because we take a risk that God, through the Holy Spirit, will ask us to do work we don't feel qualified or capable of doing. God will provide the strength and means, if we are willing.

## The National Family Commission

Jaime and Sonia Bernardo, SFO

The mission of the National Family Commission focuses on Article 17 of the SFO Rule:

In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ. By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives in particular should bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for his Church. They should joyfully accompany their children on their human and spiritual journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child.

Never has this admonition been more relevant than at the present time when our society is becoming more secularized and many forces of evil are trying to undermine the family. These people who do not believe in the exist-

ence of God would like to destroy the family because they know that if they succeed, they will weaken, if not totally destroy, the world and the Church, which is their ultimate goal. The family "is the first and vital cell of society."

As Christians and Franciscans we should ever be vigilant. As Franciscans we are called to act with a deliberate awareness of the presence of God in the center of our lives. Pope John Paul II reminded us that, as the domestic church and the most basic community, we are responsible in building the Body of Christ within us. Our families are the starting point of evangelization. It is the primary place where individuals are affirmed and their gifts developed. It is through the family that children are gradually introduced into the community and the people of God. The habits we learn and live in the family are the habits we bring to the community and to the outside world. Each of us is called to be leaven in the transformation of the world – a light for the world. To embrace this mission, although at times there will be struggles, we should strive to communicate effectively, to love each other unconditionally, to forgive often and to share values with one another. The most important way to exude a spirit of warmth, unity, peace and love is to pray often and together. Family prayer draws together all members to be in union with God our Father. It is really the key to the success of family ministry. But family prayer according to Benet Fonck, OFM "has to be woven in the very fabric of family life from the beginning. It has to become the way of family togetherness and sharing. . . It must become the frequent, regular, and expected means of experiencing the presence of God."<sup>6</sup> We need to live what we say we believe. We need to bring Christ into all our daily routines and all of our daily interactions with one another.

Our chief responsibility as parents is to accompany our children in their "human and spiritual journey." This means taking our children by the hand to lead them, not dominate them, toward the Kingdom of God. Bishop Chaput in his address at the United States Council of Catholic Bishops' symposium, stressed that "we need to teach our children that we do become who we are. We need to share more and acquire less. We need to unplug a little from the network of noise that surrounds us. We need to create the room for a silence that we can fill with conversation with each other and with God."<sup>7</sup>

## Respect for Creation – Rule, Article 18

Jane DeRose-Bamman, SFO and William Fontenot, SFO

Francis of Assisi had a deep love and respect toward all creatures for the sake of the Creator. Thomas of Celano recounts the following about Francis:

He spares lanterns, lamps, and candles unwilling to use his hand to put out the brightness which is a sign of the eternal light.

He walked reverently over rocks, out of respect for Him who is called the Rock . . .

When the brothers are cutting wood he forbids them to cut down the whole tree, so that it might have hope of sprouting again . . .

He picks up little worms from the road so they will not be trampled underfoot . . .<sup>8</sup>

This respect and love for God's creation is the basis for the Secular Franciscan's calling to "respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which 'bear the imprint of the Most High,' and . . . strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship."<sup>9</sup> How do we go about incorporating this calling into our attitudes and way of living?

The first step is to realize that God created everything and thus everything bears His imprint and thus deserves respect. To deepen our level of respect, we need to take the time to get to know God's creation . . . to develop a relationship with it. Notice the details of God's handiwork . . . the intricacies of a rock, the amazing features of the tiniest insect, taking time to personally praise God on the spot for each new discovery.

Universal kinship means that all of creation has value because God created it; it also means that we are related or interconnected in such a way that any and all actions that we take have impacts on another part of creation.

Our actions have impacts all over the world. It is true that God gave us creation for our use. However, when we succumb to the temptation of exploiting creation, when we are not good stewards of God's creation, we are sinning.

The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation...Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation.<sup>10</sup>

To be truly committed to living according to this aspect of the SFO Rule,

The Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners...<sup>11</sup> and "...should collaborate with efforts to fight pollution and to conserve all that is valuable in nature."<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

Carol Gentile

As we come to full knowledge about the commissions, the Secular Franciscan brings the image of Christ to all. The commissions put the Gospel into action. "Saint Francis invites people into doing. The doing is serving and when we push ourselves to do, we feel the presence of God."<sup>13</sup> As ambassadors for Christ, we have this opportunity to serve the Christ within our brothers and sisters. When the image of Christ in you meets the image of Christ in me, the Word of the Lord is made flesh and together we can form the perfect Body of Christ.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Richard Morton, "National Minister's Report," *The Newsletter of the National Fraternity*, Fall 1996.

<sup>2</sup>William Wicks, "Being/Doing - Connection?," *The Newsletter of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States*, Autumn 1999.

<sup>3</sup>Therese and David Ream, "Apostleship: Sent Forth to Proclaim Christ by our Life and Words," *The Newsletter of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States*, Spring 2002.

<sup>4</sup>Benet A. Fonck, OFM, "Called to Build a More Fraternal and Evangelical World," *The Cord*, 52.3 (2002): 116-117. Previously published as part of internal Franciscan document: Cahalan, P. (2001) *Franciscan Spirituality and Work* (Lindsborg, KS: Barbo-Carlson Enterprises).

<sup>5</sup>Thomas of Celano, "The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul" as found in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents II: The Founder*, 386.

<sup>6</sup>Benet A. Fonck, OFM, *Called to Follow Christ, Commentary on the Secular Franciscan Rule* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1997), 83.

<sup>7</sup>*Origins*, Volume 31, 39.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas of Celano, "The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul," 353-354.

<sup>9</sup>Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, Article 18.

<sup>10</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1993), Second Edition, 580, paragraph 2415.

<sup>11</sup>SFO General Constitutions, Article 15-3.

<sup>12</sup>SFO General Constitutions, Article 18-4.

<sup>13</sup>Robert Stewart, OFM, keynote address at the Secular Franciscan All Commissions' Conference, "Forming the Body of Christ - Bring Forth the Kingdom of God." July, 1999.

## About Our Contributors

**Carol L. Gentile, SFO**, is a Secular Franciscan member of Portiuncula Fraternity in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. She serves the National Fraternity as Coordinator for the Apostolic Commissions. She has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing, and a Masters of Education in Health Educa-



tion. In 1996, Carol received "The Woman of Distinction in the World of People Award." Carol is a seasoned presenter. Noteworthy among her speaking engagements are the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome, Quinquennial Congress in Delaware (1997), The First World Conference on Family Violence in Singapore (1998), Franciscan Federation Conferences in Columbia, Ohio (1999) and keynote at the 2002 Secular Franciscan Order 16th Quinquennial Congress in New Orleans.

**Sarah and Dan Mulholland, SFO**, were professed as Secular Franciscans in 1989, following Sarah's conversion and Dan's return to the Church in 1985, and their marriage on October 4th, 1986. Currently, Sarah is formation director and Dan is treasurer of their local fraternity, St. Anthony of Nagasaki, which they helped to start in 1989. Dan is also treasurer of the St. Margaret of Cortona Region. They have 7 grown sons and 10 grandchildren. Dan is an Engineering Consultant and Sarah is a Manager for the American Psychological Association. They have been National Peace and Justice Co-Chairs since 1997.

**Pauline Cahalan, SFO**, was professed in Nov. 1987, in Woodruff, WI. She retired from a 34 career as an RN and now teaches English as a Second Language to adult immigrants in St. Paul, MN. She has held various positions with fraternal councils, helped organize the Los Tres Compañeros region, was Regional Work Commission Chair, and has been the Chair of the NAFRA Work Commission for 2 years.

**Sonia Bernardo, SFO**, serves as Co-Chair of the National Family Commission, SFO. A member of St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity, Rockville, MD. Sonia has served as minister, formation director and editor of *The Angelus*, the fraternity's monthly newsletter. She holds a M.S. in Family & Community Development, a graduate certificate-masters in Gerontology, and a Master of Library Science from the University of Maryland. She presently works as a Librarian both for Holy Name College, Franciscan Friary in Silver Spring, MD and Capuchin College, Franciscan Center in Washington, D.C. Sonia also publishes *Living By Faith*, a monthly letter distributed to the ill, the elderly, the shut-in and the handicapped SFO members.

**Jaime Bernardo, SFO**, serves as Co-Chair of the National Family Commission, SFO. Jaime, a member of St. Mary of the Angels Fraternity in Rockville, MD, is currently serving in the Pastoral Council of St. Catherine Laboure Church in Wheaton, MD. Jaime also served as the past Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus, in Silver Spring, MD. He presently ushers for the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C. He holds a B.S. in Architecture from the University of Santo Thomas in Manila, Philippines.

**Jane DeRose-Bamman, SFO**, earned a B.S. degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Notre Dame. Her career has focused on

environmental protection through working with the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. She has developed and implemented regulatory programs geared towards minimizing or preventing the pollution of surface and ground waters. Jane resides with her husband, Brian Bamman, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**William R. Fontenot, SFO**, earned a M.S. degree in Freshwater Fish Ecology at the University of Louisiana and has worked as the curator of Natural Sciences at the Lafayette Natural History Museum and Nature Station in Lafayette, Louisiana since 1986. As a writer, Bill has been contributing weekly articles in a nature column for the local newspaper for the past 17 years, and has authored numerous papers dealing with ecological restoration issues, as well as three books: *Native Gardening in the South*, *A Cajun Prairie Restoration Chronicle*, and *Birds of the Gulf Coast*. With his wife, Lydia, they have operated Prairie Basse Native Plant Nursery and Ecological Consulting since 1987.

Elizabeth of Hungary,  
Third Order Member

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## Broadening Our Vision: Franciscan Youth in the Year 2003

Kathy Taormina, S.F.O.

The mention of the words "Youth Ministry" is enough to put fear into the hearts of the most stalwart Christians, and those same words can bring low most of us adults who believe that we "have it all together." We feel that only those trained, or those so lacking in the knowledge of what lies ahead, are usually brave enough to venture forth into the world of today's youth. We may believe it takes a special calling to journey with the youth of today through this ever-changing world, but have courage, even the faint of heart can share the gift of their Baptisms and the joy of their faith with those youth who are searching for a place in this society.

Before Vatican II, Franciscan youth groups existed in the Third Order fraternities. In 1956, there were as many as 120 youth fraternities nationwide, most of them in Catholic high schools, colleges, seminaries, nursing schools and hospitals. They were guided by Franciscan spiritual directors and religious brothers and sisters. Between the years 1954-1975, twelve successful Congresses were held, coordinated and run by Franciscan religious under the sponsorship of the North American Third Order Federation.

Some of the Franciscan leaders of today began their journey as Franciscan Youth: Marie Amore, SFO, National Vice Minister; Diane Halal, SFO, National Councilor; Anita Bidleman, SFO, Holy Trinity Regional Minister; Mary Ann Julian, SFO, Father Solanus Casey Regional Minister; Paul Juniet, OFM; and Sr. Margaret Carney, OSF, Director of the Franciscan Institute.

Sadly though, by the 1990s, there remained only a handful of Franciscan youth groups scattered throughout the U.S.A. In 1993, the Secular Franciscan Order, with the prompting of our Minister General, Emanuela De Nunzio, OSF, began research into the history and the activities of the Franciscan Youth in the U.S.A. Richard Morton, SFO then National Minister, selected Mary Mazotti, SFO to complete this research. After two years of fact-finding, on October 14, 1995, Mary and Anthony Mazotti, SFO were officially appointed as co-chairs of the newly formed Youth/Young Adult Commission of the SFO-USA. And thus, a new era of Franciscan Youth was born. The Commission's

goal was to continue with the Franciscan charism that had carried those earlier groups, and to learn how to carry that spirit into the years to come.

In the Secular Franciscan Order today, we are called to broaden our vision concerning today's youth and realize that youth leaders must come from our own ranks. Our General Constitutions state: "The SFO by virtue of its very vocation, ought to be ready to share its experience of evangelical life with the youth who feel attracted to St. Francis of Assisi and to seek the means of adequately presenting it to them." The leaders must be dedicated persons who like working with the idealistic youth, understand their needs, and have the necessary maturity, durability and spiritual know-how to do so. They should be eager to challenge youth toward living for a higher purpose than what the media relentlessly promotes.

There appears to be a resurfacing of a hunger among youth for a deeper meaning and purpose for their spiritual lives. There is a strong and true desire among them to make our world a better place for all. The youth are looking for solid direction by believable leaders. For Catholic youth, St. Francis of Assisi has the timeless spiritual "makings" they can believe in and imitate.

To better understand the needs of the youth and youth ministry today, we must first delve into the study of "*The 5 'W's' of Franciscan Youth Ministry: Why, Who, When, Where and What.*"

### Why?

The first question we should ask ourselves, personally and in our fraternities, is, "Do we want to work with youth for their sake or for ours?" We must have the basic understanding that we are not out to recruit "baby Franciscans," but that we are to support and share with the youth in the places and mindsets that they are now living. Although by title we may be called "leaders," it is only by "journeying with" the youth that we will ever truly minister to them. We must get over the notion that we may never see the fruition of our time and effort or energy spent with the youth, and that it may take years for the ideals and lessons we share with the youth to become evident in their lives. As the old adage goes, we are the "seed planters."

We are not "working with youth" because it is the popular thing to do, or because it is demanded of us by some authority. Rather, we share our lives and experiences as Franciscans with the youth because it is the right and just thing to do. Our Rule of Life calls and invites us to do this. Article #24 calls us "to foster communion among members . . . organize regular and frequent meetings . . . *especially* with youth groups." The word "especially" is used, meaning that we should give special consideration and interest in this area.

We must realize though that not all Secular fraternities, or Secular Franciscans, have a calling to work with youth. This does not make them less

of a Franciscan. It just means they have gifts in other areas. Those who do feel called to work with youth must be open-minded enough to alter their perspectives and methods to truly minister where they are needed.

## Who?

Who are the youth of today? What age groups and societal levels are we referring to when we say the word "youth"? The European YouFra groups have a much broader sense of youth than we do in the U.S.A. Their youth may be as young as pre-schoolers, or older than college graduates. In Portugal, the age limit is 35, while in most other European countries it is around the age of 25; each country sets its own age standards. The official age limit of the Franciscan Youth is stated as "at the moment the young person makes adult life choices (i.e., marriage, graduation from college, acceptance of a definitive life job, child-bearing and raising)." Here in the U.S.A., although we have younger groups such as the "Friends of Francis," the most common age is that of the high school years ranging from age 14 to 18, and into college, ages 19 to 24. The age of the young person is not as important as the ability of those in leadership to provide age-appropriate formation and apostolic work for them according to the existing realities in today's various countries.

In the U.S., we need to broaden our vision of who the youth are and how we can best minister to them. The Franciscan Youth of today do not necessarily have to be a group unto themselves. They can be our children, the children of our fraternities, or a local youth group at a parish. They can even be an ecumenical group of youth who are led by the Spirit to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis. The National Youth/Young Adult Commission's Mission Statement and Goals reads, "to introduce the Catholic Youth of America, and other interested young people, to St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi."

By our unique vocation as Secular Franciscans we are given the ability and the blessing of having our own children. Fr. Brad Milunski, OFM Conventual, calls my children my "little sacraments." Although that is hard to perceive on some days during parental distress, the reality is that we do live and minister in the world and thus are always surrounded by youth. If our vocation is the single or religious life, we still have the blessings of brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews and friends' children, as well as the youth of our parishes. We do not live and act in this world only within our respective age groups.

## When?

In this time of family commitments, employment, sports and leisure time constraints, we must be willing and able to be flexible and inventive in our planning with youth. Different age group levels will, of course, have different

needs, and those needs must be met conveniently and appropriately to have the participation of the youth. Thinking that "if we will plan it, they will come" is a fairy tale which often leads a disappointment for the adults preparing any of the activities. The reality of the amount of time that the youth are willing and able to be truly present must be taken into consideration in all planning, and the attendance of youth at these planning sessions is a must. They must feel that they have an active voice in the present activities as well as in the future of their group. By doing this, the Franciscan Youth group becomes their own. They value it and cherish their time with others.

Alternative gatherings are another way to share our Franciscan spirit with youth, not within the conventional gathering or meeting setting, but in a time and place that answers the needs of the youth. For instance, participation in a yearly retreat weekend, mini-retreats spaced throughout the year, or a day of joint gathering with the local SFO fraternity are ways of interacting and sharing our Franciscan life. It does not have to be an ongoing gathering, but gather we must! Gatherings can sometimes grow into something more. Getting a feel for the lifestyles of the youth will enable us to see which methods will fulfill their needs the best.

## Where?

Youth Ministry of today has an ever-changing face. No longer are youth groups meeting only in church basements or youth rooms of local parishes. They gather in homes, coffee shops, sports arenas, parks and on college campuses. They bring their brand of ministry alive by sharing their faith with other youth, and the world at large. You can find them in nursing homes, detention centers, elementary and secondary schools and in religious education programs in many neighborhoods. You can find them involved at food banks, at women's and homeless shelters, and on picket lines.

The youth of today hopefully get enough classroom time for education and religion, but they are anxious, and more than willing, to take their faith "to the streets." By sharing our faith and Franciscan charism with the youth only by talking and teaching, we are selling both sides short. By actively putting into practice our Franciscan charism, let alone our Baptismal calls, we are truly following in the footsteps of Saints Francis and Clare. "Gospel to life and life to Gospel" is simply stated. The sharing and learning times are important factors and are not to be underestimated in their value. Our goal should be actively putting that knowledge into our lives with events and apostolic endeavors that will touch and transform the participants.

## What?

While the meetings, gatherings and prayer groups of the past still have

their places in our Order, the old tried-and-true methods of youth ministry are outdated. "Thus says the Lord: Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new!" (Is.43:18). We must be in tune with our world and the environments of the youth we journey with and become able to share with them the knowledge, skills and beliefs that will fit and have meaning in their world of today.

Just as the media and mass-marketing companies spend millions of dollars annually to research what youth want, or to convince the youth of what they want, we must be willing to put time and energy into understanding the youth's needs in this time. We must update our methods and activities to fit their world of technology and the ever present peer pressure that face today's society and offer them alternatives to what society is holding out to them.

In conclusion, we must acknowledge there is a true vocation present in the Franciscan Youth movement, and it is up to us as Franciscans to nourish this vocation. Pope John Paul II tells us, "You are not alone in this demanding journey of human and Christian formation, because Franciscan Youth is by its nature a vocation to grow into fraternity." There is a thirst in the youth of today that we as Secular Franciscans have been given the elixir to quench. We have been given the Spirit by our Baptism and the fire by our Franciscan profession. Let us use our gifts for and with the youth, who are not just the future of our Church . . . but for those who are the Church of *today*!

### About Our Contributor

**Kathy Taormina, SFO**, is married, has four children and has been working with parish youth for 24 years, and Franciscan Youth for 9 years. Professed in 1994, she has been a Minister and Formation Director at the local level of the SFO. Since 1996 she has served on the SFO National Youth/Young Adult Commission, and in October of 2002 became its new Chairperson. She attended the 1997, 2000 and 2002 World Youth Day celebrations and represented the USA as the SFO delegate during the Franciscan World Youth Day meetings.

### About Our Artists

**Robert F. Pawell, OFM**, is a friar of the Sacred Heart Province. While working in New Orleans, he co-founded Project Lazarus, a residence for persons with AIDS and developed retreats for those affected by HIV/AIDS. His work appears in *The Cord* often.

**Sister Rose Raymond Wagner, OSF**, is a member of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis of Syracuse, New York. She taught high school art for many years.

## Family Ties

Lester Bach, O.F.M. Cap.

In 1993, on the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Secular Franciscan *Rule* of 1978, Matthew Gaskin, OFM, wrote an article for *The Cord* commemorating that event. He focused on the role of the Spiritual Assistant in the life of the Secular Franciscan Order. He did a fine job in portraying the way in which a spiritual assistant is called to share with the Seculars. The role of a spiritual assistant involves fraternal, pastoral, canonical and ecumenical dimensions. His article stands on as a support for the relationship between the spiritual assistant and the Secular Franciscans on different levels of our common life. On this twenty-fifth anniversary of the SFO Rule, I would like to build on that foundation by focusing on the family ties between the SFO and the rest of the Franciscan family.

I admit to a prejudice against speaking of the three Orders of Francis as being a family. There are many ways in which it does **not** resemble a family. Ordinarily we don't live together. We make a personal choice to be a part of this Franciscan family which is not true of our blood family. Our Franciscan bond comes from a common call to follow Francis rather than being an individual brought into a family circle. We generally get to know each other as adults with none of the common, growing-up family experiences of a blood family. I suggest that we use the term "family" with an awareness of its limitations.

In our Franciscan family we need to know each other on a healthy personal basis. However this is done, it is essential for developing the family ties we wish to achieve. With this knowledge/relationship comes a sense of where the other person stands with regard to theology, worldview, flexibility, openness and gospel living. I do not speak of monolithic agreement. Rather I look for a willingness to deal with issues without clobbering one another because we disagree. A family learns to live with disagreements over issues and still maintain communication. Hopefully, there will be a change/conversion in people on all sides of an issue. To act otherwise is to nullify the idea of being a Franciscan

family where conversion happens day by day. Spiritual assistants contribute to creating this atmosphere.

Spiritual Assistants avoid imposing either ultra-liberal or ultra-conservative ideas on the family. Imposition is a bad word for Franciscans. Franciscans create the atmosphere that permits the freedom to express ideas without being dismissed out of hand. It requires a willingness to listen to other voices. The Franciscan family comes to a place where their Franciscan growth is not stymied by arguments over theological ideology. A good spiritual assistant needs qualities that allows him/her to help (assist) build a listening attitude among the family members. It may seem obvious, but if we are going to know one another, presence is required of a spiritual assistant.

A spiritual assistant should be present at Secular Franciscan gatherings of the fraternity which he/she serves. It is easy to evade presence by being busy with many other things. That may seem obvious. An important quality for a spiritual assistant is the ability to balance time in a realistic way. Showing up only for prayer time at a gathering is never enough. Popping in at the end of a gathering in order to say, "*I was there*," hardly speaks of significant presence. If a fraternity is such that its gatherings are boring, the spiritual assistant, together with the council, needs to address that issue and improve family life. That is what "assistance" means. Otherwise the spiritual assistant is a useless appendage rather than a contributing family member.

The development of healthy family life depends on training, formation and inter-action among the members. Understanding our Franciscan heritage, theology and its implications in today's world is the norm. A spiritual assistant cannot remain in a theological isolation booth and expect to assist the family in living the Secular Franciscan Rule with a gospel spirit. A spiritual assistant who remains untouched by developments in Franciscan research, Franciscan theology and spirituality, is not likely to be much good for the Franciscan family. Indeed such a spiritual assistant may well contribute to diminishing Franciscan family spirit. Remaining sharp and in touch with healthy growth in theology, scripture and Franciscan spirituality is expected of a well prepared spiritual assistant. Similarly, a spiritual assistant (as well as the council) needs to sense movements in society that need to be addressed by Franciscans, such as the struggle for peace in our world; the desire to provide a life of dignity for poor and marginalized people; a desire to stimulate good discussion on political issues; and the proper use of ones' power and influence in the workplace. Such dialogue is critical if we are going to influence society with a gospel spirit.

A spiritual assistant who engages in "turf wars" will not be a blessing to the Franciscan family. Rather, one who recognizes that he/she is simply brother or sister among brothers and sisters will function well. There is no need to dominate and become dictatorial in serving the Franciscan family. Rather, the

spontaneous sharing of gifts, ideas, insights, vision, and prophetic ideas with the Secular Franciscan family is vital. That is true for the Secular Franciscans as well. With a collaborative spirit good things happen. Without it, unhealthy dependence on one or the other person can be a detriment to family development. Spiritual assistants discover quickly that they have much to learn from the Seculars. The authority of a spiritual assistant is a servant authority. Jesus was clear on that when he washed the feet of the disciples at the last supper (John 13:12-17).

Normal families have conflicts. Put two or more human beings together and conflict and controversy can easily surface. Our Franciscan family is not immune to conflict and controversy. What distinguishes us is the way we handle such issues. A spiritual assistant is not the fraternity problem-solver. But he/she can assist in using skills and ideas that deal with conflict. If skills are lacking, spiritual assistants and council work together to find competent people who can help resolve the conflicts. Once again, the skills of a spiritual assistant are at the service of the Seculars. Such assistance is given in collaboration with the appropriate council of Seculars. Spiritual assistants do what they can to engage in dialogue without destroying the dignity of the people involved. Developing competency is important. This is family business and the family council engages its gifts to bring healing and unity to the fraternity.

Spiritual assistants assist the Seculars in maintaining a healthy idea of Church, Gospel, the role of theology, the integration of gospel and life, and honesty in challenging people to new growth and life. There are certainly dangerous issues in our world, e.g., theologies that might be misleading or worse and ideas that are less than gospel oriented. A spiritual assistant is not expected to become a fear-inducer so that everyone is afraid to speak lest they be judged unorthodox by people with narrow views of gospel life. A healthy orthodoxy is part of our life. But an over-zealous spirit of "catching" people in something (judged by these "experts" to be unorthodox) does little to promote a Franciscan spirit. Reasonable care and consistent reflection on gospel ideals and values are more important than looking for "what's wrong here!"

Franciscans are light-giving people, engaged in life-giving issues. To overspend energy on negatives can only diminish our energy for good. If we know the truth and live it, gospel freedom is a gift from the Spirit. If we become policemen and women among ourselves, family trust is forfeited. Franciscans trust both the Holy Spirit and the Spirit working within the faith-community (Church) to guide us to faithfulness. Pure negativity tends to induce fear, promotes ignorance by shutting out fresh insights and clamps a veil of silence on family discussions. Spiritual assistants and councils must consistently develop fraternities with a positive outlook. The persistence and courage of St. Clare is needed. She argued with the Church for 30 years before receiving approval for

the Rule the Spirit had prompted her to live. Good spiritual assistants, together with the council, work together to build a positive fraternity atmosphere.

I presume all of us realize that a family atmosphere does not happen by accident or osmosis. It takes creative planning and a welcoming response by all the Secular Franciscans. If this is going to be one of the hallmarks of Franciscan fraternity life, everyone needs to be engaged in some way. A spiritual assistant assists the council and fraternity in this search for integrity. Creative planning requires gatherings with space where people can freely express their ideas. Creativity is often a victim of busyness in our lives. Spiritual assistants and council members need to carve out time for solitude and un-pressured space/time to reflect on how best to continue the process of worthwhile ongoing formation.

Ongoing formation requires spiritual assistants and council to engage in serious conversation about the particular needs of a fraternity. When there is too much self-satisfaction, people tend to keep doing the same things over and over again. Someone once defined insanity as "doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." As an aside, you can begin to see that when the same people are consistently elected to council offices, the possibility of fresh ideas gradually dies a lonely death. The collateral damage touches the whole fraternity. Ongoing formation becomes an unfulfilled dream. Fraternity life grows stale. People on the outside see nothing to attract them to such a fraternity. Ultimately, it can lead to death of a fraternity.

Spiritual assistants and council must address the lack of fresh ideas and develop plans to change that situation. Together they tackle the issue of absent or inadequate ongoing formation at gatherings. There are many helps from Regional and National levels. But someone has to communicate and enter into dialogue with higher councils as well as assessing the needs of the fraternity members. Failure to do this is an invitation to passive fraternity life where members expect to be entertained without taking responsibility for the growth of fraternity life. Good Franciscan family life requires shared responsibility. Both the spiritual assistant and the fraternity council will seek ways to achieve solid ongoing formation for all the members.

If fraternity family life is to blossom, initial formation is an essential ingredient. When new people are called to our way of life, we have an obligation to be both honest and total in forming them in the Franciscan way of living. Spiritual assistants and councils must take care in implementing the initial formation program. There are numerous books and other materials available. Initial formation—Orientation, Inquiry, Candidacy—leads to Profession and cannot be done half-heartedly or without competent people to conduct the program. Formation directors should be known for their understanding of and actual living of the SFO *Rule of 1978*. Spiritual assistants and council

members need to attend initial formation sessions with some regularity to get acquainted with newcomers. This time is crucial for sharing the spirit of Francis and Clare, for understanding the Rule, for becoming acquainted with Secular Franciscan people and processes. Bringing new people into our Franciscan family means helping them feel at ease with our family and its traditions, practices, and requirements. The spiritual assistant plays an important role in this process. Being with the new people as they walk through initial formation is part of the family role of a spiritual assistant.

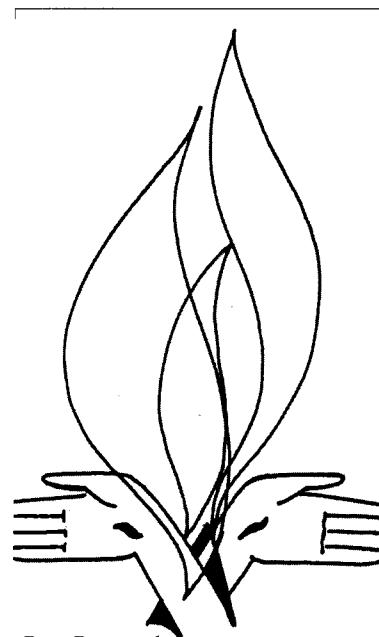
The old cliché "The family that prays together, stays together," has ramifications for our Franciscan family. Fraternity life includes praying together. But since prayer is a means to intimacy with Jesus, it carries with it a responsibility to read and reflect on the gospel. Good prayer practices help us understand different forms of prayer, offer a variety of prayer forms at gatherings, develop a sense of contemplation and quiet prayer as well as using prayers like the liturgy of the hours.

Obviously, a "spiritual" assistant offers a healthy variety and varying forms of prayer through the input he/she offers at fraternity gatherings. It does not take a genius to recognize that the prayer life of a spiritual assistant has something to do with the ability to share a sense of prayerfulness with the fraternity. This dimension of Franciscan family life ought to be stimulating and deepen the desire of the members to be faithful to their profession. Prayer and action are partners in living our Franciscan family life. At their

best they support each other and develop true Franciscan integrity. It would be a sad fraternity that uses only one form of prayer at their gatherings. The richness of our Franciscan tradition as well as our Church traditions cannot tolerate such a monolithic prayer form at our regular gatherings.

I have written about the elements that are part of being a spiritual assistant to the Secular Franciscans. Here are some official writings about these elements.

As a concrete sign of communion and co-responsibility, the councils of the various levels in keeping with the constitutions, shall ask for suitable and well-trained religious for spiritual assistance. . . . To promote fidelity to the charism as well as observance of the rule and



Rose Raymond

to receive greater support in the life of the fraternity, the minister or president, with the consent of the council, should take care to ask for a regular pastoral visit by the competent religious superiors . . . according to the norm of the constitutions (SFO Rule - 1978 - Article 26).

Article 89.4 of the General Constitutions of the SFO - 2000, allows for others, including trained and certified Secular Franciscans, to serve as spiritual assistants.

The purpose of spiritual assistance is to foster communion with the Church and with the Franciscan Family through witness and sharing of Franciscan spirituality, to cooperate in initial and on-going formation of secular Franciscans and to express the fraternal affection of the religious towards the SFO. (Article 2.3 - Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral assistance to the SFO - 2002.)

The principal task of the assistant is to foster a deeper insight into Franciscan spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing formation of the secular Franciscans. In the council of the fraternity and in elective and ordinary Chapters, the assistant will be respectful of the responsibilities and role of the secular Franciscans, giving them priority with regard to the guidance, co-ordination, and animation of the fraternity. (Article 13.1, 2 - Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO - 2002.)

The assistant participates actively and votes in the discussions and decisions taken by the Council or the Chapter. He or she is specifically responsible for the animation of liturgical celebrations and spiritual reflections during meetings of the Council or of the Chapter. (Article 13.3 - Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO - 2002.)

The spiritual assistant is by right a voting member of the council and of the chapter of the fraternity to which he or she gives assistance and collaborates with it in all activities. Only in economic matters and in elections at any level does he or she not enjoy the right to vote. (Article 12.3 - Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral assistance to the SFO - 2000.)

The spiritual assistant connects the First Order and the TOR with the family members known as Secular Franciscans. Whatever he/she can do to enrich that relationship is important. Encouraging the friars to share with the SFO and to recognize their gift to us is part of that family responsibility. In short, whatever can be done to make us one family, living and ministering with

one Franciscan spirit, will enable us to have a greater impact on our world. In our day and age it is obvious that the spirit of Francis and Clare is needed. We have been given that spirit, we are called to live that spirit, we help each other deepen that spirit in our lives. Our family ties invite us to enrich each other so that our gift to the Church and the world may find daily expression wherever we are.

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven (NRSV - Matthew 5:14-16).

### About Our Contributors

**Lester Bach O.F.M. Cap.** belongs to the Capuchin Province of St Joseph. His ministry included nursing home chaplaincy, various levels of formation work, Province house of Prayer, Isaiah 43 parish mission program and Capuchin Mission band. He was director of a retreat center in Michigan for several years. He has worked with the S.F.O. for about 35 years in various roles. He has published a number of S.F.O. formation books including *Catch Me a Rainbow Too* which is also published in Korean and Spanish and is presently being translated into Vietnamese. Together with Teresa Baker, S.F.O. he wrote *Come and See* for the Orientation and Inquiry phases of initial formation. He presently resides at and is on the staff of Monte Alverno Retreat Center in Appleton, WI. He serves as local, regional and national spiritual assistant to the S.F.O. as well as being Provincial spiritual assistant in his province. He is delighted to share Franciscan "good news" wherever he can.

**Fr. Ivan Matic, O.F.M.,** is a member of the Province of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Croatia. Since 1992, while still a student, he has worked with the Franciscan Youth and since 1995, as a priest, he has dedicated a great deal of time to his pastoral activities at the service of the Franciscan Youth, as well as accompanying various groups of students and adults. Fr. Ivan has been the spiritual assistant of the SFO for four years, from 1996 to the end of August, 2000, when the General Minister, Fr. Giacomo Bini, nominated him General Assistant for the Secular Franciscan Order. He is the author of the following article, beginning on page 148.



## Active Presence of the Secular Franciscans in the Church and the World

Fr. Ivan Matic, O.F.M.

### Introduction

We celebrated the Tenth General Chapter of the S.F.O. in Rome from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2002. It can be said that the Chapter concluded a very important process, that of the revision of the S.F.O. legislation, on the one hand, and opened up a new period marked by the demands and challenges of today's world to the vocation and mission of the S.F.O., on the other hand.

During the Chapter we had the joy and grace of meeting Pope John Paul II in private audience. With Him and all the Church, we had the opportunity to thank the Lord for the gift of the Franciscan vocation and, in a special way, for the gift of the Secular Franciscan Order, whose members, through the profession of the gospel life, try to live the Franciscan charism in a secular state in the Church and world, as laid down in their Rule.

The Pope, in his message to the Chapter Members, underlined: «In this General Chapter you have brought to a close the up-dating of your fundamental legislation. You now have in your hands the Rule, approved by my predecessor Paul VI, of happy memory, on June 24, 1978; the Ritual, approved on March 9, 1984; the General Constitutions definitively approved on December 8, 2000; and the International Statutes approved in this Chapter. It is now necessary to look to the future and to set out: *Duc in altum!*

The Church expects from the Secular Franciscan Order, one and only, a great service in the cause of the Kingdom of God in the world of today. The Church desires that your Order should be a model of organic, structural and charismatic unity on all levels, so as to present itself to the world as a "community of love" (*Rule of S.F.O.* 26). The church expects from you, Secular Franciscans, a courageous and consistent testimony of Christian and Franciscan life, leaning towards the construction of a more fraternal and gospel world for the realisation of the Kingdom of God.

The words of John Paul II put into relief, in a prophetic and profound way, what the specific mission of the Secular Franciscans is in the Church and world of today.

### The 25th Anniversary of the Rule

In this spirit of joy and filial obedience to the Church, the General Chapter and the new Presidency of the CIOFS especially, remembering that this year is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the approval of the New Rule of the S.F.O. by the Church, recalled the need to remember this anniversary in the Fraternities, on all levels, with opportune and involving celebrations.

The Rule, in fact, was approved on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 1978 with the Apostolic Letter "*Seraphicus Patriarcha*" of Paul VI. The Pope, on that occasion, wrote:

We are happy that the 'Franciscan Charism' today is still a force for the good of the Church and the human community, despite the infiltration of doctrines and tendencies that alienate people from God and from the supernatural. With praiseworthy initiative and with common accord the four Franciscan families have striven for ten years to prepare a new Rule for the Franciscan Third Order Secular, or the Secular Franciscan Order, as it is now called. This was necessary because of the changed conditions of the times and because of the teaching and encouragement given them by the Second Vatican Council. Therefore, our dearly beloved Sons, the four Ministers General of the Franciscan Order, have requested that we approve the Rule presented to us. Following the example of some of our predecessors, the latest being Pope Leo XIII, we have willingly decided to grant their request. In this way, we nurture the hope that the form of life, preached by that admirable man of Assisi, will gain a new impetus and will flourish vigorously. Having consulted with the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, which has diligently examined and carefully evaluated the text, we approve and confirm with our apostolic authority and sanction the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

The S.F.O. Rule is the concrete proposal that the Church makes to the Secular Franciscans to live, in these our times, their form of life as an authentic witness to the growth of the Kingdom of God. It was necessary for the Church to approve the new Rule for the S.F.O. because of the changes in the conditions of the times and the dispositions and encouragement, strongly underlining the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world, given in the proposals of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.



## Priorities of the Secular Franciscan Order

In the Chapter recently celebrated, the need was seen for discerning that which is essential today so that the Secular Franciscans might participate efficiently and, as such:

... build up the Church as the sacrament of salvation for all and, through their baptism and profession, made 'witnesses and instruments of her mission,' secular Franciscans proclaim Christ by their life and words. Their preferred apostolate is personal witness in the ambience in which they live and serve in building up the Kingdom of God within the situations of this world.

It is in order to respond to such demands and to identify new ways for a more active presence of Secular Franciscans in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God in the reality of today that the Chapter, after an attentive labour of reflection, chose some priorities that, according to the Chapter Members from all parts of the world, indicate the essential paths to be followed with renewed impulse at the present time and in the near future of the life of the S.F.O. The priorities for the S.F.O. approved by the Chapter and which should be studied seriously are as follows: Formation, Active Presence in the world, Franciscan Youth, Finances, Spiritual Assistance and Communion in the Franciscan Family.

In accordance with the spirit of vital and reciprocal communion, which is characteristic of the reality of the Franciscan Family, the Conference of Assistants General has also thought of giving its contribution to the study of the S.F.O. priorities during the Rule's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations through various reflections that will appear in future numbers of *Koinonia*.

## The Vocation of Secular Franciscans

It is impossible to reflect on the *active presence of the Secular Franciscans in the Church and world* without being aware of the nature and identity itself of the vocation of the Secular Franciscans. Responding to the call of God, the Secular Franciscans choose, through the profession of the Rule, to become part of a Fraternity, of an Order, and to live a specific form of life in the Church and in society.

And what is this form of life? We are helped to understand it by the S.F.O. Documents, especially by the Rule and General Constitutions where we can find, in a systematic and synthetic way, the answers for all that concerns the form of life and apostolic activity of the Secular Franciscans.

In this reflection we will take up only some of the articles from the second chapter of the Rule and Constitutions that are significant for understanding the form of life and mission of the Secular Franciscans. In Article 4 of the

Rule, we read: "The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the centre of his life with God and people."

Here we find a fundamental response. The specific form of life is to live the Gospel according to the example of St. Francis, by putting Jesus Christ at the centre of life as the inspirer of a real relationship with both God and one's neighbour. In this way, we learn the why and the how of living, loving and suffering. We can say that here the Secular Franciscans touch on the whole of the reality and depth of their call, which is activated as a specific vocation in the Church and social realities.

The privileged places where the Secular Franciscans are called to live and give witness to their faith are the family, the world of work, dialogue and meeting with people since all are brothers in the same Father, their presence and participation in social life, fraternal relationships with all creatures, etc.

## Participation in the Life of the Church

One topic that we justifiably consider fundamental to the life of the Secular Franciscans is that of their presence in the Church and which is the theme of ecclesiality. This has its historical foundation in the personal attitude of St. Francis. Each stage of his vocation is marked by a great love for the Church, beginning with the encounter with the Crucifix in the church of San Damiano, where he heard the words of the Lord: "Francis, go and repair my house that, as you see, it is in ruins." From that moment on Francis set about carrying out, with great love, the desire of the Lord.

This ecclesial spirit of Franciscan spirituality, based on the personal example of Francis, is characterised not only by a commitment to strict obedience and submission to the authority of the Church, but especially to love, affection, to the desire to serve the Church and to support its pastoral work for the good of souls. It is founded especially on the vision of faith that sees the presence of God in the Church and, that is, its supernatural dimension.

As living members of the Church, the Secular Franciscans, with their form of life, are called by the Spirit to be at the service of the Kingdom of God in the reality where they live, continuing in this way the work of restoration of the Church. "Buried and raised with Christ in baptism, they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words."

By restoration of the Church, we should not think of great things, but simply see the reality where we live as Franciscans and there, in that reality,

begin to re-construct with faith and love all that is found to be "in ruins." So, where there is hatred, sow love, where there is discord bring peace, etc.

The Secular Franciscans, by giving testimony to this spirit of communion and love, will find the strength first of all in the close sacramental communion within the Church. We read in the Rule:

Called like Saint Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, let them devote themselves energetically to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests, fostering an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and creativity. . . . Let them participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist. Let them join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, reliving the mysteries of the life of Christ."

### Participation in the Life of Society

We have seen, with the various quotations from the S.F.O. documents, how much importance the Church gives to the Secular Franciscans in giving a more visible and active testimony in both the Church and the world. Certainly the topic of a more active participation in the life of society is adequately gone into because it is a matter of a very special field where the Secular Franciscans live their vocation on a daily basis: in the area of the family, of work, of public life, etc.

The Pope, in his recent message, said:

You Secular Franciscans, by vocation, live belonging to the Church and to society as inseparable realities. Therefore, you are asked, above all else, to bear personal witness before all in the environment in which you live: 'in your family life; in your work; in your joys and sufferings; in your associations with all men and women, brothers and sisters of the same Father; in your presence and participation in the life of society; in your fraternal relationships with all creatures' (*General Constitutions S.F.O.* 12.1).

Reflection on this topic and these words of the Pope we wish to identify together, by re-reading the Rule and Constitutions, the suggestions that could give a new impulse to the apostolic mission of the Secular Franciscans in the world of today. We therefore need to re-discover first of all the specific nature of the Secular Franciscan vocation in so far as it deals with a particular form of life.

The need is urgently felt in the world in which we live to give an authentic Franciscan testimony by sharing life with the poorest and weakest, recognising

in them the face of God. This seems to be one of the priorities that the Secular Franciscans must have present in their formation and Fraternities, on all levels, remembering what the Rule says:

The Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.

In order to construct a more just and fraternal world, the Secular Franciscans, through their various tasks and the responsibilities that they carry out in society, can offer a valid contribution in the field of justice and peace, making a courageous choice, both individually and in community, for promoting this spirit of peace and reconciliation.

### Some Challenges

In the times in which we live, there is need of people disposed to being witnesses of peace through the example of their own lives in order to construct a new environment where one can live without the sense of fear, without discrimination of any kind, without conflict between peoples of different cultures and religions and without wars.

This constitutes a challenge for us, to which we are called to respond and, at the same time, it is a sign of a real and deep need of present-day men [and women]: to create a more fraternal world based on reciprocal respect, of putting [a person] at the center as a living image of God, despite the cultural differences, be they religious or of any other kind.

#### *Being instruments of peace*

Consecrated to the service of the Gospel in accordance with the charism and example of St. Francis of Assisi, the Secular Franciscans, with the power of the Holy Spirit, are called to be instruments of peace in the Church and world. Like all the baptised, the Secular Franciscans also announce Jesus Christ as the true peace. He is our peace that through his life and presence gives us pardon and peace. We saw in the Rule that the Secular Franciscans are called bearers of peace and fraternal dialogue, seeking out ways to unity among people.

These can be the specific tasks of the Secular Franciscans in so far as their vocation is constantly to become instruments of pardon and peace, to promote justice and always to seek the path of dialogue between people of different

cultures and diverse religions and to live the Franciscan spirit in the Church and world in communion with the whole of creation in a spirit of joy, hope and peace.

As members of the great Franciscan Family, the Secular Franciscans, together with the Franciscan religious in "vital reciprocal communion," should serve the cause of peace. In this way the testimony of life, based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, becomes a common testimony.

### *The ecumenical task*

Another important task for the Secular Franciscans is that of ecumenism. Indeed, John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, reflecting on the present situation, invites all the faithful to take a concrete step into the area of ecumenical commitment, saying:

And what should we say of the urgent task of fostering communion in the delicate area of *ecumenism*? Unhappily, as we cross the threshold of the new millennium, we take with us the sad heritage of the past. The Jubilee has offered some truly moving and prophetic signs, but there is still a long way to go. Christ's prayer reminds us that this gift needs to be received and developed ever more profoundly. The invocation "*ut unum sint*" is, at one and the same time, a binding imperative, the strength that sustains us, and a salutary rebuke for our slowness and closed-heartedness. It is on Jesus' prayer and not on our own strength that we base the hope that even within history we shall be able to reach full and visible communion with all Christians.

For this reason the Secular Franciscans "should be ready to promote common initiatives or participate in them with the religious of the First, Second and Third Orders, with Secular institutes, and with other lay ecclesial groups that recognise Francis as a model and inspiration in order to work together to spread the Gospel, remove the causes of marginalisation and serve the cause of peace."

Following the words of the Pope on the path to unity, one task of the Secular Franciscans in this new page of history that is opening up with the new millennium, is undoubtedly the ecumenical task. The General Constitutions highlight this task especially through the non-Catholic associations that draw their inspiration from St. Francis.

### *Interreligious dialogue*

Another point, which also represents a great challenge to the Secular Franciscans in the world of today, is undoubtedly the need to enter more actively

into interreligious dialogue. The example of St. Francis, who went to the Sultan to preach the Gospel, helps us to understand that there is need to go out to meet people of other religions, with hearts open to dialogue and to sharing in the same social reality. Being open to this dialogue with our brothers of other religions can be a great sign of hope and a new impulse for setting out courageously on a path of dialogue for a better future.

Let us accept the invitation of the Pope as a prophecy and urgent task to be carried out:

It is in this vision that the great challenges of interreligious dialogue, in which the new century will see us still committed along the lines indicated by the II Vatican Council, is also placed . . . This dialogue must continue. In the climate of increased cultural and religious pluralism that is expected to mark the society of the new millennium, it is obvious that this dialogue will be especially important in establishing a sure basis for peace and warding off the dread spectre of those religious wars that have so often bloodied human history. The name of the one God must become increasingly what it is, *a name of peace and a summons to peace*.



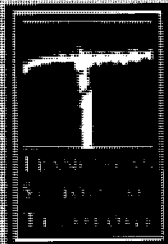
### Conclusion

The novelty that Jesus Christ brought with his preaching, the Good News that Francis discovered in the Gospel, is this: Our God is a Father-God, Father of all and all are his children. Therefore, the conclusion by Francis was this: If God is our Father, then all of us, created in his image, are his children and, therefore, brothers and sisters among ourselves. This thought must guide the whole life and activity of the Secular Franciscans. This is the source from which the strength to become real and authentic witnesses to peace must always and on every occasion be drawn. We are never alone on this journey. We have our Fraternities, our brothers and sisters who live the same vocation and seek with great anxiety new ways to respond to the demands of our times in order to construct a more fraternal and evangelical world.

---

The image of Sultan Malik al-Kamil is extracted from the fresco of Francis before the Sultan, in the Giotto cycle in the Upper Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi.

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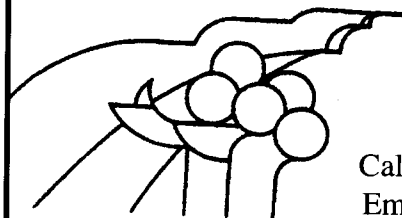
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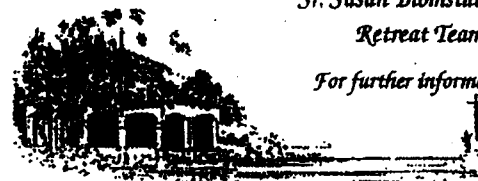
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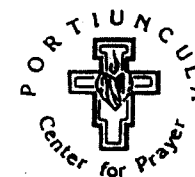
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A Window to the Divine: Creation Theology, p. 25

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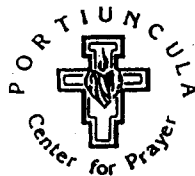
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## Abbreviations

### *Writings of Saint. Francis*

Adm	The Admonitions
BIL	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
OP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule ( <i>Regula non bullata</i> )
LR	The Later Rule ( <i>Regula bullata</i> )
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 Verified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches
1-3JT	The Praises by Jacopone 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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St. Bonaventure University  
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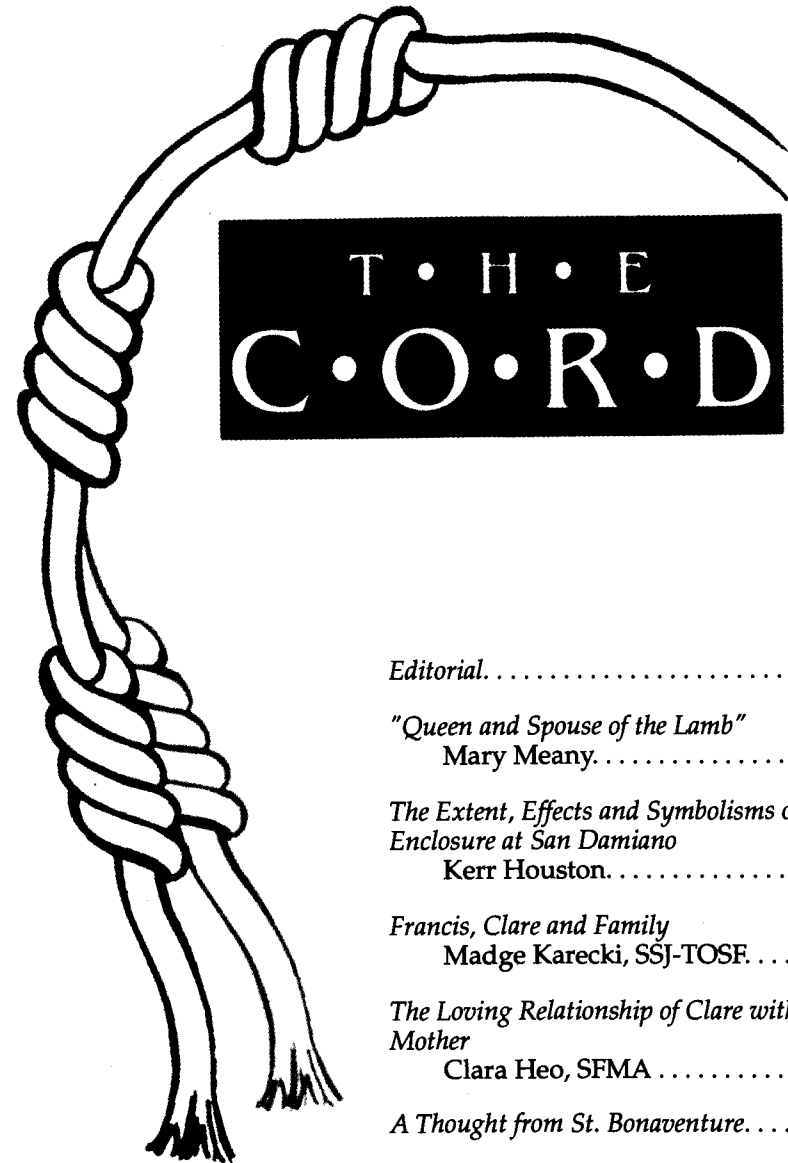
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**THE CORD**  
**A Franciscan Spiritual Review**

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1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 14th ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.  
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4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:

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

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

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*The Cord*, 53.4 (2003)

**Editorial**

It seems not that very long ago that many of us were converging on LaCrosse, Wisconsin, to celebrate "Clarefest '93." Can it really be ten years? Must we now move from awareness of the 800th anniversary of her birth to remembering the 750th anniversary of her death?

Much has changed in these ten years, yet much remains the same. Clare is, perhaps, even more significant to Franciscans than she was in 1993. Certainly, we can say that we have been given many opportunities to better know her, embrace her teaching, and emulate her sense of commitment to those with whom she lived and worked at San Damiano. Here at St. Bonaventure University we are about to complete a three-year cycle of "Poor Clare Enrichment" programs, attended by over 70 Clares from around the world. We have met new Sisters, laughed well and frequently, and prayed intensely over this time, and cherish the experience in many deep and inexplicable ways. It will be sad to see it end.

But will it *really* end? I think not, no more than the influence of Clare ended on August 11, 1253. She lives in every Franciscan heart, although we sometimes might forget that . . . Clare is our sister, our mother, our healer, our intercessor before God. We may not attend to her presence, but she never forgets us.

This issue, oddly enough, contains nothing written by a Poor Clare. Rather, it is comprised of articles from writers of widely varying persuasions: two American historians not members of the Franciscan Family in any canonical sense, and two Third Order Regular Franciscan women, one of whom ministers in Southern Africa, and one of whom has just completed studies in this country and returned to her native South Korea. It seems to me that in publishing their articles I am affirming both the breadth and depth of Clare's significance for people who do not live the form of life handed down by Clare and for the multitude of those who do.

Sometimes a point of view not internal to the tradition can open our eyes and stretch our perspectives in ways we do not expect. It was with this hope that the selections for this issue were made. In honoring Clare in this way, we join with the poet John Donne (and the apostle Paul) in asking, "O death, where is your victory, where is your sting?"

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*

## "Queen and Spouse of the Lamb"

Mary Meany

"You took a spouse of a more noble lineage . . . [Now you are] Queen and Spouse of the Lamb."

This sentence, put in Clare's mouth, uses phrases from her extant letters to Agnes of Prague. Clare's use of the image "Queen and Spouse of the Lamb" is the key to Clare's understanding of the life she and Agnes have chosen. They deliberately rejected family status and an advantageous marriage in order to espouse themselves to the poor Crucified Christ who is, in fact, the triumphant Lamb.

We have four of Clare's letters to Agnes, but none of Agnes's letters to Clare; we have letters from Agnes to other correspondents, in particular to her brother King Wenceslas I of Bohemia, and to Popes who sought her intercession with her brother and, later with his successor, her nephew, Otakar I. Clare probably wrote her first letter to Agnes in 1234, when Agnes founded and entered the Monastery of the Most Holy Redeemer in Prague. The second and third letters from Clare belong within the context of Agnes' struggle for papal acceptance of her renunciation of involvement in a hospice, also of her foundation, whose endowment was to support the monastery. This struggle ran from 1235 until 1238 when Gregory IX accepted the renunciation. Clare wrote the fourth letter from her deathbed in 1253. Not surprisingly, it voices eschatological themes.<sup>1</sup> Each of Clare's four letters belongs in the context of the women's quest for "the privilege of poverty,"<sup>2</sup> and this context provides one key to understanding Clare's use of the image of spouse of the Lamb.

Timothy Johnson has demonstrated that Clare's letters belong in an epistolary tradition particularly important for women. He shows that these letters were not only an expression of Clare's friendship with Agnes but also were carefully designed to be read aloud to others. They express friendship, a friendship that is public as well as private. Letters were a way for women to establish the kind of personal network they might not be able to establish

through face to face encounters.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, for Clare and Agnes such a network could be created only through correspondence. These women were geographically distant, with responsibilities to the women with whom they lived in community. Their letters expressed and fostered spiritual insights; that is, insights into the particular Christian life each had chosen. Clare's letters do have coherence, but one can also see development from the first to the third. The fourth letter is a wonderful summation of Clare's spiritual insights. The loss of the full correspondence between these two women is our loss, indeed.

## Biographical Background

Clare of Assisi, born 1193 or 1194, was the daughter of Offreduccio and Ortolana di Favarone, a family of the Assisian *maiores*, prominent enough to have been forced into exile in Perugia when Clare was a child.<sup>4</sup> The story of her conversion, her decision to enter into the "form of life" Francis of Assisi was developing is too well-known to need re-telling.<sup>5</sup> Some time in 1212 or 1213, Clare settled at the Church of San Damiano and essentially remained there until her death in 1253.

Agnes of Prague, or Agnes of Bohemia, born 1211, was the daughter of Premysl Otakar I, king of Hungary, and his second wife, Constance; she was sister to Wenceslas I, also king, and cousin to Elizabeth of Hungary, a "Franciscan penitent," famous even in her own lifetime for her care of the poor and sick and of those stricken by famine. Agnes had been betrothed as a child to Henry, son of Frederick II. Later her father negotiated marriage alliances, first with Henry III of England, and, then, it seems, with Frederick himself. Agnes, meanwhile, had fallen under the influence of Franciscan friars, and finally appealed to Pope Gregory IX for permission to found a house of women who would live by the Franciscan form of life. Gregory granted his permission, and Clare sent five sisters from a monastery in Trent to join Agnes who was professed in 1234, becoming Abbess of the Monastery of the Most Holy Redeemer.<sup>6</sup>

Thus stand our two correspondents: women of good families who had, of their own volition, sought a life of religious virginity and poverty. Note that they might have chosen a life of religious virginity in a traditional monastery, an option that was socially acceptable, but each pursued a more radical consecrated life, following the example and inspiration of Francis of Assisi.

Clare died in 1253, worn out by fasting and by service to her sisters and to the community of Assisi—that is, by service to Jesus Christ. Agnes died in 1282, worn out by hunger and disease, by service to the poor, sick, hungry Bohemians who fled to the Monastery of the Most Holy Redeemer—that is, by service to Jesus Christ.

The circumstances of Agnes's death require some familiarity with the situation in Bohemia. Agnes's nephew Otakar II had succeeded her brother Wenceslas. Otakar led Bohemia into war against Rudolph of Hapsburg, dying in battle in 1278. Rudolph granted lordship of Bohemia to Agnes's great nephew Otto, the margrave of Brandenburg, who had no real ties to Bohemia. Otto imprisoned Otakar's immediate family and seized royal and ecclesiastical property. War, violence, floods, famine, inflation, and epidemic illnesses resulted in widespread poverty. The Monastery of the Holy Redeemer became both a center of resistance and a refuge for the hungry and sick. Agnes and her sisters shared what they had, but themselves suffered hunger, sickness, and oppression. Worn out, Agnes died. The Minister General of the Friars Minor presided at her funeral, but a crowd of the poor attended her to her grave.

Clare was canonized in 1255. Agnes was beatified in 1874 by Pius IX. John Paul II canonized her Nov. 12, 1989. In Prague the canonization triggered a popular novena to Agnes, and on the last day of that novena the Communist government of Czechoslovakia resigned.<sup>7</sup>

These two correspondents chose and fashioned a radical religious life. Agnes played, perhaps, a more important part on the political stage of her time, but Clare shines as *magistra*, theologian and spiritual director. In the corpus of her writings and of the writings about her, Clare's letters to Agnes draw us into the dynamics of the choice she and Agnes made by developing the theme of the heavenly spouse, the desirable lover who is the eschatological Lord.

## Traditional Spousal Imagery

Spousal imagery pervades medieval preaching and devotion. Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the *Song of Songs* was the magisterial text, and some women mystics used bridal imagery to describe their experience of union with Christ. In her letters, however, Clare develops this theme in her own fashion. Bernard of Clairvaux drew on the *Song of Songs* in a series of sermons for his monks, for religious men whom he encouraged to imagine themselves in a marital union with Christ the Bridegroom so that they might engage in an affective union with Christ the Savior and Lord. Bernard's understanding of the Bride is, however, multivalent: the Bride may be the Christian soul, Mary, the Church.<sup>8</sup> Later preachers and male writers adapted the image of the Bride of Christ to designate religious women as the "brides of Christ." Barbara Newman has shown, however, that the themes these male clerics picked up from Bernard and elaborated for women religious are not adequate to explain the development of women writers' description of their own erotic experiences of Christ. These women adopted, Newman argues, the language of the courtly

lyric and romance, in which the male protagonist pursues the lady.<sup>9</sup> This charged, affective spirituality, whether in the classical Bernardic form, or in the more fervid courtly tradition was widely popular to express affective union. In these letters she uses traditional vocabulary, but speaks in a personal voice, from her lived experience.

## Clare's Spousal Imagery

While Clare develops Bernard's themes of bridal love and desire, and plays with the erotic imagery of the courtly tradition in her letters to Agnes, she also introduces the familial element, the status the Bride acquires through marriage. Acquisition of status is central to Clare's description of the alliance she and Agnes enter into with their noble Spouse. They reject the acquisition of status and the establishment of familial alliances in rejecting marriage. In doing so, they have won a new status: they become the spouse of the Lamb.

Clare's letters begin with her use of the theme of a *sacrum commercium*, an exchange, a bargain. The first letter introduces that theme. In the second and third letters Clare unfolds the meaning of the *commercium*, the exchange, by developing the importance of poverty as their bond with their Bridegroom. Finally, in the fourth letter, Clare describes the Bridegroom, the Lamb, the eschatological Lord.

Barbara Newman points out that bridal imagery did not always "evoke the refinements of mystical union; it could appeal to very earthly motives."<sup>10</sup> Newman cites Alain de L'Isle (d. 1202/03):

If you want to marry an earthly husband for riches, consider that earthly riches are deceptive and transitory. . . . Therefore, marry him whose treasures are incomparable . . . immutable. If you want to marry an earthly man for beauty, consider that either sickness mars beauty, or old age destroys it, or at the very least, the moment of death annihilates it. Therefore, marry him at whose beauty the sun and moon marvel.<sup>11</sup>

Clare refers to this kind of "earthly motive" especially in her first letter to Agnes, when she describes Agnes's spouse as stronger, more generous, more beautiful, tender, courteous than any other, and reminds Agnes that her spouse will give her jewels and pearls. Clare then goes on to affirm that in espousing this Person, she can remain chaste, having loved him; more pure, having touched him; virginal, having accepted him.<sup>12</sup>

Could one also suggest that Clare may have been writing with a certain sense of humor, a sense of humor shared between one virgin and another, between two virgins who had found their own way to celibacy? Is it not possible to read vv. 9-11 of "The First Letter," as a play on the boasting a young lady

might make about her betrothed? He is powerful, generous, handsome, tender and courteous; he makes her presents of precious gems and pearls.<sup>13</sup> That is frivolous, but the *commercium* is serious, so Clare reminds Agnes that the result of her exchange of an earthly prince for a heavenly King means that she will be Queen because she will be the Spouse of the Lamb.

### Queen and Spouse: the *Sacrum Commercium*

Joan Mueller has demonstrated that Clare drew on three sources in these letters, the liturgical office of Agnes of Rome, the "primitive Franciscan climate," and the papal "Privilege of Poverty."<sup>14</sup> Mueller's work informs my reading of the letters, although she does not highlight the image of the Lamb as I intend to do.

Writing to Agnes, a young woman courted for dynastic reasons by more than one powerful prince, Clare translates the bridal imagery into familial, spousal terms relevant to Agne's status. "Agnes is [taking] a spouse of a more noble lineage," even than the Emperor whose marital alliance her family had sought through her.<sup>15</sup>

In his bull *Sincerium animi* (1234), establishing the Monastery of the Most Holy Redeemer, and naming Agnes as its Abbess, Gregory IX praised Agnes for "rejecting all things transitory [so that] she might choose with a clean heart her heavenly Spouse . . . and become a handmaid instead of a Queen."<sup>16</sup> In contrast to Gregory's praise of Agnes' self-abasement, Clare reminds Agnes that she will be, the "spouse of Jesus Christ, and therefore, the very distinguished Queen" precisely because she is the spouse of Jesus.<sup>17</sup> Not debased or humiliated, Agnes is elevated in status. Clare's first letter praises Agnes for the decision she has made to reject the imperial suitor for the "nobler spouse, the Lord Jesus Christ." (1LAg7). Rejection of worldly power and wealth in order to attain higher benefits is a topos of the *commercium*.

Mueller calls Agnes's first letter "a hymn to the 'sacred exchange'," <sup>18</sup> to the practice of abandoning one's status and possessions precisely in order to obtain an eschatological reward. This abandonment is made with confidence that God will provide earthly necessities, a confidence that Francis dramatically embodied.<sup>19</sup> Clare develops the theme of the exchange precisely in the context of love. In her description of the generosity of her Beloved Lover, she brings together hope for the eschatological reward and her confidence in the Lover's present protection.

Clare creates a marvelous interplay of contrasts between poverty and riches, bringing this to a climax in her focus on the poor Crucified Lover who is the heavenly King and who "reigns from the Cross," as Laurent Gallant says.<sup>20</sup>

The *commercium* structures the first letter. Verses 5-7 introduce the theme of the spousal exchange. Verses 8-11 describe the benefits which the Lover

confers on His Beloved: chastity; gems, especially pearls, symbols of purity; and the crown which carries the seal of holiness. Verses 15-16 connect poverty with eschatological hope. Verses 19-24 develop the theme of the fundamental *commercium*, the Incarnate Word's kenotic entry into the Virgin's womb so that humans might enter into heavenly riches: Verse 30 states this meaning clearly, using the word *commercium*. It is indeed a great and praiseworthy exchange [*commercium*]:

To give up the temporal for the everlasting,  
To merit the heavenly rather than the earthly,  
To receive a hundredfold instead of one,  
To have a happy, eternal life.<sup>21</sup>

When Clare opens her first letter to Agnes by saying that Agnes could have enjoyed worldly status but made a different choice, we remember, of course, that women of Agnes's or Clare's familial status were usually disposed of in marital alliances, or in convents, for the benefit of the family. We should try to read Clare's statement in the first letter as serious praise, not a conventional acknowledgement:

You have rejected [the magnificence and honor and dignity of the world, and marriage to the illustrious emperor], and have chosen with your whole heart and soul a life of holy poverty and destitution.<sup>22</sup>

Where did Clare find this theme of the *commercium*? The theme was common enough, but where did Clare pick it up? In *Light Shining through the Veil*, Edith Van den Goorbergh and Theodore Zweerman show the relationship between Clare's letter and the Franciscan text known as the *Sacrum Commercium*,<sup>23</sup> and Michael Cusato has suggested that the author

of the *commercium*, whom he identifies as Caesar of Speyer, in fact was involved in the writing of this letter.<sup>24</sup> It is not clear how the line of influence connects Clare and Caesar. The image may have been Clare's, or she may have picked it up from Caesar who then developed it into an allegory, using his knowledge of the history and affairs of the Church. What seems clear is that Clare and Caesar belonged to the same "circle of discourse."<sup>25</sup>

Clare's own experience included a direct knowledge of the importance of family status and family alliances. It also included familiarity with texts celebrating the *commercium* a professed Virgin made with Christ when she exchanged her family status and marital alliances.<sup>26</sup> Mueller has demonstrated that liturgical texts celebrating this exchange; specifically, Mueller shows

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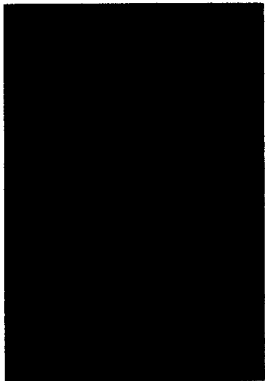
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that Clare drew on the Office of St. Agnes of Rome, and that she knew the *Legenda* of Agnes.<sup>27</sup>

## Desire and Decision

Ordinarily, families arranged marriages, but Clare reminds Agnes that they have made this bridal bargain themselves because of "a burning desire for the Poor Crucified."<sup>28</sup> This burning desire, love, is the most important note Clare sounds in the letter, the note which echoes through the four letters. By her fourth letter she elaborates more fully, enriching her description of desire. Contemplating the mirror, the Crucified on the Cross, Agnes must "burn ever more strongly with the fervor of charity."<sup>29</sup> Here Clare turns to the *Song of Songs*. "Your left hand is under my head, and your right arm blissfully embraces me, and you kiss me with the most blissful kiss of your mouth. . . ." (Cant. 2:6, 1,1).

While the *Song of Songs* was enormously popular in medieval devotions, it may be possible to be more specific about Clare's source. These verses appear in the liturgy for the Nativity of Mary, and Clare would have known them from that Office. Mueller makes a more interesting connection, however. The descriptors "blissfully" and "blissful" do not appear in the Scriptural text, nor in the liturgical text. In the *Privilege of Poverty*, however, which describes the Bridegroom's left arm as His protection of the Ladies in this life, and His right arm as His promise of eternal reward, the right arm "more blissfully rewards" the Spouse.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, desire for the Bridegroom is explicitly related to poverty, and to the reward for making the nuptial agreement Clare and Agnes have negotiated. They have desired this Lover, and they have chosen with their whole heart and soul, the life of holy poverty. Their desire for poverty results from their desire for the royal Bridegroom. They profess the life of poverty because they decide to espouse the royal, poor King. Clare's reflections on the espousal of a Queen to the Heavenly King who is the Lamb resonate with the spirituality of poverty, that is, of a King and of a Queen who chose poverty rather than power, and, further, with the theological and eschatological undertones of the image of the Lamb.

Ingrid Peterson's seminal study, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study*, demonstrates that Clare's spousal imagery focuses on the poverty of the bridegroom.<sup>31</sup> The powerful, rich, generous King "chose to appear despised, needy, and poor in this world."<sup>32</sup> To emphasize the importance Clare gives to following the poor Jesus, Peterson cites Clare's Second Letter to Agnes:

The King himself will take you to Himself in the heavenly bridal chamber . . . because you have despised the splendor of an earthly kingdom. . . . Instead, as someone zealous for the holiest poverty, in a

spirit of great humility and the most ardent charity, you have held fast to the footprints of Him to Whom you have merited to be joined as spouse.<sup>33</sup>

As Peterson points out, the connection of spouse and poverty is focused through the lens of union with the Crucified, especially as developed in Clare's second and fourth letters. In the fourth letter, as we have seen, Clare uses the *Song of Songs*, "[instructing] Agnes in an intelligent, affective understanding . . . as a preparation for contemplation. . . . Prayer . . . must be affective, for the Word who comes to visit will be clothed in beauty, as is the soul's bridegroom."<sup>34</sup> Using the common image of the mirror, the *speculum*, and relating this to the soul's desire for the bridegroom, Clare urges Agnes to look into the center of the mirror, the mirror of poverty, where she will find "the Crucified Lover who redeemed humanity on the wood of the Cross." Clare's desire for this bridegroom is desire for the Poor and Crucified Christ.<sup>35</sup>

Peterson further makes the point that "For Clare, poverty primarily meant identity with the poor Christ." Francis undertook participation in the kenosis, the poverty of Christ, as an imitation of Christ's life of service, of humility; Clare focused on her spousal relationship with the King who had chosen to be poor. As his Bride and Queen, she is also poor, follows Him in poverty. Maria Victoria Triviño, O.S.C., makes this point in the context of a contrast between Clare's understanding of what constitutes appropriate clothing for a "Poor Lady," arguing that Clare understood the habit as the dress of a spouse, a bride awaiting her bridegroom. Since the Bridegroom is the Poor King, the appropriate bridal raiment is a poor garment.<sup>36</sup>

Clare does not enter into the life of poverty as a life of mortification but as an act of love. The identity she seeks is the union expressed in the metaphor of the embrace. This is characteristic of Clare's spirituality as we know it from her Rule, from the *Acts* of her canonization, and from the *Legenda*. She desires, follows, the Crucified, giving up earthly status and wealth to be his Spouse and Queen. She urges and encourages Agnes to embrace this Bridegroom.<sup>37</sup>

For Clare, this is not an act of abasement because the Bridegroom, the Spouse is King; Crucified, he is the Lamb of God, the eschatological Lord. Clare's image of the Spouse is akin to Francis's celebration of the Trinity, of the triumphant Lord, a theocentric spirituality which did not, in fact, dominate later Franciscan devotion, but which has been reintroduced to our attention, most notably in the Franciscan Institute's publication of *The Geste of the Great King*,<sup>38</sup> with its attendant commentaries.

## The Figure of the Lamb

It is, of course, obvious that the lamb, *agnus*, is a suitable image for Agnes of Rome in her *Office*. Mueller's study provides evidence for the importance of

the story of Agnes of Rome, famous in medieval devotional literature as the fourth century Christian Roman virgin of noble family who refused marriage to "the Emperor's son." Mueller directs attention to Clare's use of the *Legend of St. Agnes* in her letters to Agnes of Prague. Like Agnes of Prague, Agnes of Rome chose a "nobler spouse," who gifts her with jewels and is a chaste, magnificent lover. When Clare reminds Agnes of Prague of the benefits of having chosen such a spouse, she draws very directly on the language of the *Legend of St. Agnes*, using not only the readings from the annual liturgical *Office of St. Agnes*, but also material from the fuller legend.<sup>39</sup>

In her fourth letter to Agnes of Prague, Clare explicitly plays on the name Agnes and the *agnus* to whom she is espoused, like the other virgin Agnes:

... I rejoice and exult for you . . . , spouse of Christ, because like that other most holy virgin, Saint Agnes, you have been in an astonishing way espoused to the immaculate Lamb.<sup>40</sup>

In the *Legenda*, and in the first lesson for the octave of the feast of St. Agnes of Rome, Agnes's parents see their daughter amid a "crowd of virgins, all clothed in robes of state woven in gold, . . . standing at her right hand a Lamb whiter than snow."<sup>41</sup> They see their daughter follow the Lamb. While this is not bridal or spousal imagery, in her fourth and last letter, the letter written at the end of her life, as she writes to the new Agnes, Agnes of Prague, Clare moves beyond the image of Agnes of Rome following the Lamb in the company of virgins. In an original, classic insight, Clare associates the Lamb with the Spouse of the first letter, with the poor Crucified of the second and third letters, thus making Agnes of Prague not the follower (Gregory IX's handmaid), but the Spouse of the Lamb.

In the Book of Revelation the Lamb is an eschatological figure, and in *The Legend of St. Agnes* and in the liturgical *Office* for the Feast of St. Agnes, the Lamb is associated with the Virgin. Christian commentaries on Exodus and on Isaiah associate the lamb with Christ, with the *locus classicus* being John 1:29: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (. . . *agno immaculato, qui tollit peccata mundi*).<sup>42</sup> This immaculate lamb is the sacrificial, Paschal Lamb, and that is a theme that the later Franciscan author of the *Meditaciones vite Christi* will use when he writes for a Poor Clare nun, a later daughter of St. Clare.<sup>43</sup> Clare herself highlights the poverty of the Bridegroom, but not in the context of the image of the Lamb. The Lamb functions in these letters not as a sacrifice, but as a figure of glory, as in Revelation 14: 1-5, 9-11:

Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mt. Zion! And standing with Him were 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. . . . [Those] who have not defiled

themselves with women, for they are virgins, follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb. [The third angel who appears in the series of visions described in 14:1-20 cries out] with a loud voice [against those who worship the beast and receive a mark and] drink the wine of God's wrath . . . [in] the cup of His anger . . . . They will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the presence of the Lamb.

This is the text that Clare uses in her fourth letter to Agnes:

To her . . . the illustrious Queen and Bride [sponsae/ spouse] of the Lamb of the eternal King: to the Lady Agnes, [Agnae . . . sponsae/ dominae Agneti] . . . Clare, an unworthy servant of Christ, and a useless handmaid of His handmaids in the monastery of San Damiano of Assisi: health, and [a prayer] that she may sing a new song with the other holy virgins before the throne of God and the Lamb and follow the Lamb wherever he may go.<sup>44</sup>

We note that Clare does not cite the text of Revelations as it stands. First, obviously, she changes the Scriptural reference to virgins who do not defile themselves with women, to include women who are virgins. This was probably not a conscious change since Clare knew the use of this form of the text to describe Agnes of Rome. In this liturgical use, the virgin is female, because she is Agnes. Second, Clare does not use the bloody, vengeful image of those marked with the sign of the Beast who drink the cup of wrath, suffering in the presence of the Lamb. This image has nothing to do with the point she is making to Agnes. Clare is reflecting on the desire, the joy, the triumph of betrothal to the Lamb.

Clare is directing Agnes's attention to the Resurrection and Ascension, the Triumph of the Lamb, in order to remind Agnes that she will share in this Triumph, as the Spouse of the Lamb. The Scriptural text does not include a *sponsa agni*, nor does that image appear in the *Legenda* or office of Agnes of Rome, but Clare uses it as the culmination of the theme of the bridal imagery which first sounded in her first letter.

### Francis's "Office of the Passion"

Clare's understanding of the Lamb as an icon of triumph, of eschatological lordship was inspired, or at least stimulated by, Francis's *Office of the Passion*, a "votive or devotional Office" Francis composed over the course of several years as he developed his own meditations on the Liturgical Office. In 2001 the Franciscan Institute published a marvelous edition of this text, under the carefully chosen title *The Geste of the Great King*.<sup>45</sup> The newly published text



made its academic debut at the International Congress of Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, Michigan. As part of the presentation of the text, Sr. Margaret Carney, Director of the Institute, delivered a paper on Clare's use of this devotional Office. As Carney said, Clare appropriated this text, made it her own, owned it by praying it regularly. The *Legenda Sanctae Clare Virginis* dwells on Clare's devotion to the Crucified Christ, and Carney explicated that in the context of Clare's life in Assisi, drawing on the *Legenda Sanctae Clare Virginis*.<sup>46</sup> I am suggesting that Clare's *Letters to Agnes* show us another dimension of Clare's appropriation of Francis's text: the triumph of the Lamb.

In 1978 Laurent Gallant, in his dissertation aptly titled *Dominus Regnavit a Ligno*,<sup>47</sup> edited and commented on Francis's *Office of the Passion*; this dissertation became the nucleus of the commentary in the Franciscan Institute volume. What we learn from this scholarship is that Francis, and then Clare, did not dwell on the suffering of the Lamb, but on the triumph. The *Office* begins with Francis's "Praises to Be Said at All the Hours," which draws on the text of Rev. 5:12, and sets the tone for the entire Office:

Worthy is the slain Lamb to receive power and divinity  
And wisdom and strength, honor, glory and blessing:  
Let us praise and exalt God above all forever! <sup>48</sup>

As Gallant says, here Francis "[sings] the conquering mystery of Christ, the conquering Lamb."<sup>49</sup> The full Scriptural context is the vision in Rev. 4 and 5 of the one seated on the throne, surrounded by the living creatures and the elders, and of the Lamb standing between the throne and the creatures, the Lamb who had been slaughtered, but who takes the scroll sealed with seven seals and opens it. The chorus of creatures "sing a new song," culminating in

the verse Francis uses. The title of the Franciscan Institute edition, *The Geste of the Great King*, unites the figure of the Lamb worthy of praise with the Hero who defeats his enemy. The Bridegroom Clare describes in the first letter as

handsome, generous, desirable, is the Lamb who has hung on the Cross. Now he appears as the Lamb who reigns from the Cross, the hero who has triumphed over the enemy and now reigns in heaven.

### Clare's Use of the Image of the Lamb

In choosing the image of Spouse of the Lamb, Clare draws on this triumphant image. Further, in this

Fourth Letter, having called Agnes spouse of the Lamb, Clare also specifically calls her the spouse of Christ, and of the King. Ingrid Peterson, as cited above, has shown us that Clare urges Agnes to relish marriage to the Poor Christ; but here, at the end, Clare reminds Agnes that marriage to the slain Lamb is marriage to the Triumphant Lamb. She further reminds Agnes that the eschatological triumph is reserved for those who are Poor in Spirit for they shall inherit the earth.

Clare's spirituality of Queen and Bride of the Lamb reflects her engagement in the "circles of discourse" among the friars and sisters. Their discourse evolved "in the primitive environment" of the early Franciscan world, shaped by the "Privilege of Poverty," by the liturgical hours, especially those celebrated for Agnes of Rome and for the Purification and Nativity of Mary; and by the devotional hours Francis developed in his own meditation on the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus the Lord. As she wrote over several years, Clare increased her understanding of the decision she and Agnes had both made to exchange a worldly suitor and husband for the heavenly spouse, her understanding of the importance of the poverty of the King they wed, her understanding not only of the religious relationship of the Spouse to the Lamb, and of the Person of the Lamb. Clare developed her own eschatological insight into the gospel dictum, "the poor shall inherit the earth." Praying Francis's *Office of the Passion* through the years, she came to understand the Passion as Christ's triumph and to associate herself with that triumph as His spouse.

The four letters we have work together to reveal Clare's deepening insight. In the first letter, she celebrates the choice, the *commercium* she and Agnes have made. Their desire for the Bridegroom dominates their lives: they reject earthly spouses in order to enjoy the embrace of the Beloved; they choose of their own volition the heavenly Spouse. In the second letter, Clare encourages Agnes as she enters into the bridal chamber, a heavenly chamber. In the third letter Clare directs Agnes to contemplate the image of Christ in the mirror and to reflect on her mission in the Church, comparing the enclosure to the womb of the pregnant Virgin. In the fourth letter, Clare returns to the theme of desire, desire for the embrace of the Beloved whose left hand supports them, whose right arm brings them to the heavenly embrace, who kisses them blissfully. But then, sharing her deathbed insights, Clare identifies the Spouse with the image of the Lamb, evoking both the eschatological triumph, the glory, the Lordship and the kenotic poverty of the Lamb. Here Clare explicitly affirms that those who are poor will inherit the earth, but does not focus on the mortification of the poor. Instead, she focuses on their triumphant inheritance. "You are Queen and Spouse of the Lamb" remains an epitaph equally suitable for Clare of Assisi as for Agnes of Prague.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Joan Mueller, *Clare's Letters to Agnes: Texts and Sources*, (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 2001), pp. 27, 53, 73, 89. Regis Armstrong ed. and trans., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (NY: Paulist Press, 1988), pp. 33, 43, and 47. Hereafter cited as *Clare: Early Documents*.

<sup>2</sup>Mueller, pp. 207-249.

<sup>3</sup>Timothy Johnson, "To Her Who Is Half of Her Soul: Clare of Assisi and the Medieval Epistolary Tradition," Paper presented at the Thirtieth International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, 1994.

<sup>4</sup>Marco Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press of Quincy Univ., 1993), p. 13, points out that the tradition of Clare's nobility was not a literary hagiographical device.

<sup>5</sup>Roberta McKelvie, "Clare's Conversion: A Counter-Cultural Choice," *The Cord*, 41 (July-August, 1991): 202-207.

<sup>6</sup>Mueller, pp. 5-11, summarizes Agnes's biography.

<sup>7</sup>Mueller, p. 11, points out that Agnes was acting as a peacemaker in the twentieth century as she did in the thirteenth.

<sup>8</sup>E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity*, (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), devotes a chapter each to the Church, the soul, and Mary as the Bride of Christ. Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Mysticism*, Vol. II: *The Growth of Mysticism*, (New York: Crossroad, 1994), pp. 198-223, summarizes Bernard's elaboration of the image of Bridal Love.

<sup>9</sup>Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature*, Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 138, pp. 137-167, *passim*. See also McGinn, Vol. III: *The Flowering of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), pp. 153-317, esp. pp. 198-244.

<sup>10</sup>Newman, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup>Newman, p. 32, Alain's *Summa de arte predicatoria*.

<sup>12</sup>*Clare: Early Documents*, Letter 1, p. 35.

<sup>13</sup>*Clare: Early Documents*, Letter 1, p. 35.

<sup>14</sup>Mueller, pp. 107-252, provides essays on each of these sources. Her work informs my reading of the letters throughout this paper. The "Privilege of Poverty" refers to the letter of 1215 or 1216 in which Innocent III permitted Clare and her sisters the privilege of living as a community without property. See "The Privilege of Poverty of Pope Innocent III," in *Clare: Early Documents*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>15</sup>*Clare: Early Documents*, p. 35, n. 3, on the question of whom Clare means by her reference to the *Caesar* whom Agnes refused. Mueller, pp. 6-7 describes Agnes's father's negotiations for her marriage.

<sup>16</sup>Qtd. Armstrong, "Starting Points: Images of Women in the Letters of Clare," *Greyfriars Review*, Vol. VII, (1993), p. 350.

<sup>17</sup>2Lag, 1. Mueller, p. 55, n. 4.

<sup>18</sup>Mueller, p. 27.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas of Celano *The Life of St. Francis*, Book I, chp. XIV, *Francis of Assisi Early Documents*, rds. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellman, O.F.M. Conv. and William J. Short, O.F.M. Vol. 1: *The Saint* (New York: New City Press, 1991), p. 213.

<sup>20</sup>Laurent Gallant, O.F.M. *Dominus regnavit a ligno: L' "Officium Passionis" de saint Francois d'Assise*. (These pour le Doctorat en Science Theologique), Institute Catholique de Paris, U.E.R. de Theologie et Sciences religieuses, Institut Supérieur de Liturgie, 1978.

<sup>21</sup>1Lag, 30, Mueller p. 37. "Magnum quippe ac laudabile commercium." I have slightly modified Mueller's breakdown of the text.

<sup>22</sup>*Clare: Early Documents*, p. 35, n. 3.

<sup>23</sup>Edith van den Goorbergh and Theodore H. Zweerman, *Light Shining through a Veil: on St. Clare's Letters to St. Agnes of Prague* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), n.p.

<sup>24</sup>Michael Cusato, in conversation, May, 2002.

<sup>25</sup>Cusato, as above.

<sup>26</sup>Clare does not situate this exchange in the context of the woman's status in the Church.

<sup>27</sup>Mueller, pp. 107-148. Mueller prints Julia Fleming's English translation of the *Legend*, pp. 251-265.

<sup>28</sup>1Lag48.

<sup>29</sup>4Lag27. Clare refers explicitly in v. 28 to the *commercium*.

<sup>30</sup>Mueller, pp. 102-103, notes 34-36. In *Clare: Early Documents*, p. 84, *felicitas amplexabitur* in the *Privilege of Poverty* is translated "more happily," and in the translation of the phrase in Clare's Fourth Letter, p. 50, n. 10, directs attention to Innocent's use of the adjective in the *Privilege of Poverty*.

<sup>31</sup>Ingrid Peterson, OSF, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993).

<sup>32</sup>*Clare: Early Documents*, Letter 1 p. 36.

<sup>33</sup>*Clare: Early Documents*, Letter 2, p. 40, cited in Peterson, *Biographical Study*, p. 292. Peterson points out, p. 177, that "this passage . . . is a recurrent theme of Clare's writing." Peterson, p. 295. Peterson acknowledges the similarity of Clare's reading of the *Song of Songs* to Bernard's reading. She does not address the question of what sources Clare actually used. I remain convinced that Clare did not use Bernard directly from his texts.

<sup>34</sup>Peterson, *Biographical Study*, p. 294, citing Letter 4. In this Letter Clare urges Agnes to study the mirror which is Jesus Christ: in the border she will find the poverty of the infant; in the surface, she will find the labor Jesus undertook, as well as his humility and poverty; in the depth, or center, she will find "the ineffable charity that led Him to suffer . . . and die." *Clare: Early Documents*, Letter 4, p. 48-49, see p. 48, n. 5, and Armstrong, "Clare of Assisi: The Mirror Mystic," *The Cord*, 35 (July-Aug., 1985): 195-202.

<sup>35</sup>Peterson, *Biographical Study*, p. 177.

<sup>36</sup>Maria Victoria Triviño, O.S.C., "El Compartir Esponsal de la Pobreza de Clara de Asis," *Selecciones de Franciscanismo*, Vol. VIII (1979): 393, 399, 414-415. I am grateful to Rev. Joseph Chinnici, O.F.M., for bringing this article to my attention, and to Brother Brian Belanger, O.F.M., for translating the article for me. I have discussed Clare's understanding of religious dress more fully in a paper presented at a meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Denver, 2001.

<sup>37</sup>Commentators have speculated that Clare was concerned to encourage Agnes who might have become discouraged by the hardships of the life of poverty. Clare's letters could bear that interpretation, especially the second letter which suggests that Agnes rely on advice from Elias of Cortona, at that time minister general of the friars. Other evidence, however, indicates that Agnes was actively engaged as mediator between the papacy and her brother Wenceslas, arguing to her brother that he support the pope in his conflicts with Frederick II. The price of her alliance was papal support for Agnes's program at Prague: divestiture of the endowment connected with the hospice, acknowledgment of the friars' responsibility to act as chaplains for the sisters, and authorization for fasts. Agnes does not seem to have been uncertain or reluctant in her constant efforts to secure the "privilege of poverty." Joan Mueller, "Agnes' Contribution to the Acceptance of Clare's Rule," International Congress for Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, May 2002.

<sup>38</sup>Laurent Gallant, O.F.M. and André Cirino, eds., *The Geste of the Great King: Office of the Passion of Francis of Assisi* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2001).

<sup>39</sup>Mueller, p. 107-49, esp. 120-122, and 134-137. Clare uses the Office, but also the full *Legenda* which she assumes Agnes will recognize, p. 144.

<sup>40</sup>Mueller, p. 91.

<sup>41</sup>Mueller, p. 263, p. 141.

<sup>42</sup>"The Bestiary of Christ," in *Dictionnaire d'archeologie chretienne et de liturgie*, vol. I (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1913), col. 877-878.

<sup>43</sup>Mary Meany, "The *Meditaciones vite Christi* as a Franciscan Text," paper given at the Thirty-seventh International Medieval Congress, Kalamazoo, Michigan in May, 2001.

<sup>44</sup>See Armstrong, *Letter IV*, p. 47; Mueller *Letter IV*, p. 91; see p. 90 for the Latin.

<sup>45</sup>Laurent Gallant, and Andre Cirino, ed., *The Geste of the Great King: Office of the Passion of Francis of Assisi* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2001), p. 194.

<sup>46</sup>Margaret Carney, presentation at the 36<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, May, 2001. Sr. Carney cites in particular *Legenda*, 30-32. See *Greyfriars Review*, 1993.

<sup>47</sup>Laurent Gallant, *Dominus Regnavit a Ligno: L' "Officium Passionis" de saint Francois d'Assise*, as in note 20.

<sup>48</sup>*Geste*, repeated at the beginning of each Hour.

<sup>49</sup>See Mueller, n. 4, p. 100: "In this letter, Clare refers to Agnes as Queen or Spouse of Christ or of the king seven times, *4Lag*, 1, 4, 7, 8, 15, 17, 27.

Continually  
cleave to God  
who is  
our possession  
of eternal value.

St. Bonaventure to the Clares of Assisi

*The Cord*, 53.4 (2003)

## The Extent, Effects, and Symbolisms of Enclosure at San Damiano, 1212-1253

Kerr Houston

The subject of enclosure at San Damiano has inspired a relatively extensive literature, but studies on the subject have tended to focus on legislative policies and norms, instead of the concrete meanings, for the sisters, and the symbolic meanings, within medieval Italian culture, of these policies.<sup>1</sup> Two recent articles by Caroline Bruzelius thus mark an important contribution to the field, as she relates early Clarissan sisters' limited visual access to the liturgy to contemporary interest in the elevation of the host, and to a broader medieval prioritization of the unseen over the seen.<sup>2</sup> And yet, her focus on the fourteenth century means that her comments on San Damiano are brief, and her emphasis on the Mass renders her conclusions necessarily partial; after all, the Divine Office was more common than the Mass within the sisters' routine, and sermons and meditation were also usual in early Clarissan houses. In short, then, an evaluation of the contours, and of the consequences, of enclosure among the first Franciscan sisters remains a *desideratum*.

What follows is an attempt at just such a discussion, rooted in comments about the first Clarissan house: San Damiano in Assisi. Although heavily altered, San Damiano still stands, and a number of extant documents—early legislation, canonization hearings, and contemporary Franciscan writings—can be used to reconstruct the limits of, and attitudes towards, enclosure in the convent. Generally, then, the sisters seem to have practiced, by 1219, a conservative brand of active enclosure that restricted them to the monastery and denied them any view of the adjacent church. And yet, the boundary between convent and outside world was apparently not absolute; several early sources indicate that friars and the severely ill occasionally entered the monastery, implying a flexible, or pragmatic, attitude towards passive enclosure. Furthermore, San Damiano seems to have hosted a lively, dynamic oral culture, as sisters could listen to sermons delivered in the convent church—or, less commonly, listen as Clare spoke to laity gathered on the other side of the wall between monastery and church. In fact, it is also clear that the opaque divi-

sions between convent and church did not obviate a lively visual culture in the convent; denied a view of the liturgy in the church, the sisters could nevertheless view a refined pyx that housed the consecrated host, within enclosure. Ultimately, however, such devotion seems to have been tempered by an emerging Franciscan emphasis on the unseen: an emphasis that offered, in turn, a powerful justification of the enclosure practiced by the Damianites, who became, in their very isolation, emblems of a discrete sanctity rather than victims of perceived deprivation.

San Damiano is a difficult structure. Lying among olive groves on the slope of Monte Subasio, the convent is a modest and yet complicated complex, due to a series of changes in form and function. Built on the remains of monastic structures that likely date from the seventh century, the complex originally housed a Benedictine farming community, and later served as a small parish church. In roughly 1206, the church was modified by Francis, who shouted to a group of nearby peasants, in French, to "Come and help me in the work [of building] the monastery of San Damiano, because ladies will again dwell here who will glorify our heavenly Father throughout His holy, universal Church by their celebrated and holy manner of life" (Test Cl 13-4).<sup>3</sup> Those ladies arrived in 1211 or 1212, when Clare and then her sister Agnes were led to San Damiano after being tonsured. Clare and Agnes were soon joined by other women, and the community of sisters remained at San Damiano for nearly half a century, finally ceding the complex to local friars after the completion of Santa Chiara. To this day, the structure, though damaged by the earthquake of 1997, houses a small group of Franciscan friars.

This complicated history renders an attempt at an exact reconstruction of practices in the convent thorny, and architectural historians have differed in their treatments of the convent's exact morphology.<sup>4</sup> It does seem likely, however, that Francis made significant changes to the complex in readying it for female usage, and a combination of pragmatism and archaeological evidence suggests that the dormitory, located directly above the nave of the church, was one of the first additions. The room would have answered one of the new community's most pressing needs, and the generous application of mortar in the elevation of the western wall seems to point to a quick campaign, or to the hand of an amateur mason. Further early additions included an oratory, built above the eastern end of the church and connected to the dormitory by a door, and the sisters' choir, which stands on ground level and abuts the apse of the church. The dormitory and the oratory still survive, largely unchanged, but the choir has apparently undergone severe alterations; originally, it probably wrapped around the entire eastern end of the church, and communicated with the apse through an opening in the wall.<sup>5</sup> This opening still exists, but has been dated variously, and in any case now corresponds to a portion of the monastery used by the friars, rather than to the diminished choir. Such changes,

accompanied by persistent frictions between posited chronologies, temper the usefulness of the extant structure as a piece of evidence regarding the precise extent of enclosure at San Damiano.

Early written sources are somewhat more helpful, but still far from conclusive. The convent seems to have operated without a proper rule until 1215, instead following, at least as far as was feasible, the same precepts as the friars. Indeed, it may be true, as John Moorman has suggested, that Clare did not originally intend to practice strict claustration. The Franciscan ideal, after all, necessitated travel, and Clare may have left San Damiano to perform acts of charity in the earliest years of the house.<sup>6</sup> Two early anecdotes seem to support such a possibility. Franciscan historians have long read the saint's stated intentions to travel to Morocco in 1219, after the martyrdom of several friars, as evidence that the saint did not consider herself bound to the convent, and the account of Clare and Francis sharing a dinner at the Portiuncola would seem to offer evidence in the same direction. Furthermore, Francis wrote a formal rule for the sisters in 1215, and although the document, like the first rule of the friars, has long since been lost, the few portions known through oblique references in other documents certainly do not advance a strict policy regarding enclosure.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Clare's own rule of 1253, which may well reflect practice at San Damiano, includes a passage that permits sisters to travel outside the monastery in the event of "a useful, reasonable, evident, and approved purpose" (RCl 2:12).<sup>8</sup> None of these sources obviates the possibility of a rigid brand of enclosure, but they do leave open the possibility that enclosure, in the early years of the convent, was not considered absolute.

Such claims, though, should be fully contextualized before they are taken too far. If anything, the fact that Clare never did travel to Africa may be as important as, or even more so, than the fact that she even considered the voyage. Celano, in his life of Clare, claims that she never left the convent, and at least one of the sisters interviewed in Clare's canonization proceedings supported his contention: a Sister Cecilia stated that she did not know anyone cured by the saint, apparently because she had always been enclosed in the monastery (ActsPC 6:9). The legend of the dinner, likewise, dates from a relatively late source, and in any case refers to a unique event, rather than a typical occurrence. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, strict active enclosure had become a rather explicit focus in 1219, with the introduction of Cardinal Ugolino's rule. Written for the Damianites, the cardinal's rule was intended to supplement the Benedictine form. As a result, Ugolino's additions to the ancient rule would seem to represent especially pressing concerns (at least in his view). And these concerns clearly included a strict degree of enclosure, as Ugolino stated that the sisters were not to be granted "any permission or faculty to leave, unless perhaps some are transferred to another place" (RCH 4).

Even Ugolino's rule, however, did not explicitly bar the sisters from entering the convent church; it prescribed a material separation from the world and the laity, but refers generically to enclosure, rather than to specific portions of the complex. This silence regarding the precise extent of enclosure, is frustrating in relation to San Damiano, where the church might fairly be viewed as part of the monastery, or, equally validly, as a purely public space that lay beyond the bounds of enclosure. Of course, Ugolino's silence regarding the church might well be read as indicating a common consensus; perhaps the cardinal assumed that the boundaries of the monastery were quite clear, and thus did not need to be spelled out. If this were indeed the case, then it seems likely that he thought of the church as beyond the boundaries of enclosure, for several earlier medieval policies, remote in point of origin but broadly influential and probably known to Ugolino, had already equated enclosure with the monastery buildings but not the adjacent church. In the *Regula ad virgines*, for example, written in 513 by Caesarius of Arles for his sister, the church stands outside the realm of permitted motion: "If a girl leaving her parents desires to renounce the world and enter the holy fold to escape the jaws of the spiritual wolves by the help of God, she must never, up to the time of her death, go out of the monastery, nor into the basilica where there is a door." Along the same lines, the Capitulary of Theodulf, an important document of Carolingian reform, notes that the faithful are to come to the church to hear the mass and the sermon, with the sole exception of the enclosed female religious, who are not to circulate in public, but rather to remain within the monastery.<sup>9</sup> In both of these early cases, which seem to be typical in their assumptions, the enclosed sisters are denied all use of the church, and Ugolino's notion of strict enclosure may well have relied upon a similar premise, restricting the sisters to their choir and living quarters.<sup>10</sup>

If the sisters at San Damiano did not leave their convent, though, was access to their convent denied to outsiders? Early accounts suggest, in fact, that the boundaries between the convent and the outside world were occasionally permeable. Although Clare's well-known thaumaturgic work seems not to have carried her outside the house, and thus did not involve a violation of active enclosure, it did require a rather flexible interpretation of passive enclosure, as Celano describes a stream of unhealthy pilgrims who made their way to, and occasionally also into, San Damiano. One particularly intriguing anecdote involves a friar Stephen, who had gone mad and was thus sent to Clare in the apparent hope that she could cure him. Clare, indeed, made the sign of the cross over him, and then, according to Celano, "she let him sleep a little in the place where she herself usually prayed" (LCI 32). Although vague, Celano is probably referring to the oratory, or possibly to the saint's own cell. And while the seriousness of the friar's illness might explain the obvious violation of enclosure, the presence of a friar within the boundaries of enclosure

does not seem to have been completely exceptional; Celano also notes that at least two friars stood by her bed as Clare died (LCI 45). Finally, he also offers a striking description in his second life of Francis of an appearance before the sisters by Francis; after being asked to preach to the sisters, Francis instead remained temporarily mute, raising his eyes to heaven, and then sprinkling ashes upon his head. This was clearly witnessed by the sisters, and—assuming, again, that they were not in the church—likely took place in the monastery proper, with Francis thus within the boundaries of enclosure (3C 207).<sup>11</sup>

Even a relatively flexible interpretation of the sisters' enclosure, however, cannot deny the fact that visual relations between the church and the convent were extensively regulated. Cloistered in their convent, the sisters may have greeted, in exceptional circumstances, the sick, but conservative architectural design and applied policy meant that the sisters were not only unable to move freely into the church, but were also denied any clear view of the world beyond their convent walls. At San Damiano, the small opening in the wall that stood between the sisters' choir and the apse represented an important site of potential interaction between the sisters and the world beyond the monastery. But the size of the window and the disposition of the choir may have limited this contact. In her first treatment of the choir, Bruzelius stressed the position of the three banks of oaken choir stalls, which line the southern end of the choir. From such a position, the sisters could not have viewed the celebration of the mass in the adjacent church; the low angle between the stalls and the opening, and the distance between the seated sisters and the apse would have rendered the priest's gestures invisible to the enclosed sisters.<sup>12</sup>

Such an argument is not entirely convincing. The stalls, after all, may well have been moved in the reconfiguration of the choir; again, the original layout of the choir, and the relationship between choir and apse, have been modified, rendering conclusions regarding viewing angles suspect. Furthermore, the sisters were not bound to their stalls, even during the Mass. In fact, Celano, in his life of Clare, indicates that the saint, when receiving the consecrated host, left her seat:

When receiving the Body of the Lord, however, she at first shed burning tears and, approaching with trembling, she feared [Him who was] hiding in the Sacrament no less than [Him who was] ruling heaven and earth. (LCI 28).

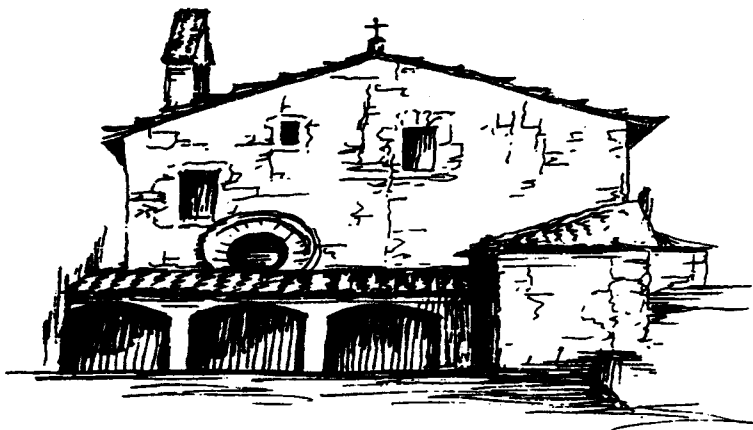
Even if the sisters did approach the opening, however, it is unlikely that they could have witnessed much of the church beyond. The small window was furnished with an iron grille that survives as part of a collection of early Franciscan objects in Santa Chiara, and which features an imposing design and conservative apertures that seem designed to frustrate any communica-

tion between the church and the choirstalls.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, as Bruzelius has noted, the relevant legislative passages are explicit regarding the subject of visual relations between choir and church. In his rule of 1219, Ugolino stipulated that conversations should be conducted through the grille only “for a reasonable cause or when necessity demands it.” Furthermore, he insisted that “cloth should be placed on the inside of these iron grilles in such a way that no sister is able to see anything in the chapel outside.” Finally, the grille was to feature wooden doors with iron bars, which could be closed except when approved sermons were delivered in the adjacent church (RCH 12). Clare, in turn, would accept these standards in composing her own rule in 1253, writing that a curtain was to “be hung inside the grille which may not be removed except when the Word of God is preached or when a sister is speaking with someone” (RCI 5:10).

How strictly was this followed? Interestingly, early sources do mention one moment in which the curtain and the grille were apparently removed. In his 1229 description of the funeral procession of Francis, Celano describes the stop made at San Damiano:

When . . . they came to the place where he himself had planted the religion and order of poor ladies and holy virgins, they placed him in the church of San Damiano. They paused there, and the little window—through which the servants of Christ were accustomed to receive the sacrament of the Body of the Lord at the appointed time—was opened. So, divided between sorrow and joy, [the sisters] kissed his most radiant hands, adorned with the most precious gems and shining pearls. (1C 116).

Nearly twenty years later, a testimony sent in response to a call for further materials on the life of Francis (the so-called Assisi compilation of 1246) included a similar, but slightly different, description of the scene:



The iron grating through which God's servants used to communicate and at times hear the word of God was removed. The brothers took the holy body from its bed and, for a good hour, held it at the window in their arms. Meanwhile the Lady Clare and her sisters received the greatest consolation from him... (AC 109).

The two accounts, although they differ in their exact terminology, agree that a window, presumably the one between church and choir, was opened in order to facilitate greater access to the body of Francis; the shared implication, of course, is that the window, or grate, in its normal position would not have allowed a similar degree of access. In short, then, it seems safe to conclude that even if the sisters neared the grate, the small size and narrow gauge of the grille must have resulted in a fragmented view of the world beyond. And this severely limited access did not only apply during liturgical moments; rather, it was a constant that regularly delimited the experiences of the sisters. Modified at an understandably unique moment in Franciscan history, the opening between convent and church was, at less exceptional moments, apparently a solid barrier.

But this broad claim can be refined. For instance, the Assisi compilation states that the sisters heard the word of God through the grated opening. This parallels the wording of Clare's rule of 1253, which stipulated, as noted above, that the curtain hung inside the grille was only to be removed “when the Word of God is preached or when a sister is speaking with someone” (RCI 10). Bruzelius assumed that Clare, in referring to the word of God, meant the Mass, but it seems more likely that she was referring to the sermons that often took place at San Damiano.<sup>14</sup> Clare's fondness for sermons is well documented; Celano, in fact, gave a chapter of his life of Clare to a description of her “eager desire to hear the word of holy preaching,” and notes that she made sure that, through preachers, the sisters received “the nourishment of the Word of God” (LCI 37). Thus, when Gregory forbade friars to visit San Damiano without his permission, Clare protested by citing reduced opportunities to listen to the friars speak. It seems reasonable to assume that some of these sermons were delivered in the church, rather than the convent; in turn, it would seem that the grated openings did not, in fact, preclude the passage of spoken words. Even more interestingly, such passage was not necessarily unidirectional. San Damiano, even after the arrival of the sisters, continued to serve as a parish church, and it seems clear that Clare, at least at times, spoke to the uncloistered laity. In Clare's canonization hearings, Cecilia stated that she had professed partly due of the exhortations of Clare, and another nun, named Filippa, claimed that Clare had spoken regarding the Passion (ActsPC 6:1 and 3:1). The spoken word, then, could create a measure of shared experience in a realm in

which the two primary populations were separated by walls and irreconcilable visual experiences.<sup>15</sup>

But were the visual experiences of sisters and laity in fact completely divergent? In this vein, it is important to note that the sisters were hardly unique, in early thirteenth-century Italy, in finding their view of the church or the altar obstructed. Bruzelius, in fact, wondered if the mass, in the thirteenth century, might not have been intended primarily for the clergy; her question is a good one, and one that can be answered, in some cases, relatively specifically.<sup>16</sup> Admittedly, this is tricky terrain due to the loss of much relevant physical evidence, but it seems true that lay access to the eastern ends of churches was commonly limited by concrete physical barriers. A long tradition of veils and shrouds, with its origins in early Judaic practice, continued to influence medieval practice, and the altar was often framed by curtains hung from rods, and by a backing reredos, thus hiding the altar from lay view, at least at times.<sup>17</sup> Other thirteenth-century churches were divided by sizable screens that stood between the nave, or the congregation, and the altar end of the church. The best evidence for such screens, interestingly, stems from mendicant churches: stone barriers once straddled the naves of Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella in Florence, and it is now clear that the nave of the lower basilica of San Francesco in Assisi was also divided by such a screen.<sup>18</sup> As the thirteenth-century symbolist William Durandus implies, such screens may have represented an alternative to the veils, but both achieved a similar end: "*interponatur velum aut murus inter clericum et populum*."<sup>19</sup>

This division between laity and clergy was often echoed, in turn, in gendered divisions. The famed fresco, in San Francesco, of the mass at Greccio is too often treated as a transparent document of medieval practice, but it seems basically reliable in its placement of the women beyond a firm screen. Thus Durandus notes that men usually occupied the southern side of the nave, which was associated with temptation, but adds that some thinkers insist that the men should stand to the east of the women.<sup>20</sup> This latter arrangement, documented in medieval miniatures, relegated women to the western end of the church, leaving them to follow the liturgy from a distance by peering over the heads of men, if not through even more imposing barriers. Practice at tiny San Damiano, where there is no hard evidence of a screen, or even veils, may not have been as rigid, but the point stands: the visual divide between church and convent at San Damiano was rooted in, or related to, broader *duecento* divisions.

Interestingly, such divisions may help to explain certain patterns of thirteenth-century devotion, as they seem to have intensified, rather than frustrated, lay and convent interest in the eucharist.<sup>21</sup> Thus, it is possible that the gesture of elevation (which likely originated in the 1100s, but was only institutionalized in the *Indutus planeta*, dated variously between 1243 and 1260) may

have stemmed from a desire to render a portion of the largely unseen mass visible to the laity.<sup>22</sup> And in this regard, too, practice in the convent of San Damiano seems to have echoed lay behavior. Within the bounds of enclosure, the sisters enjoyed clear access to a pyx that contained the consecrated host and was kept in a niche to the left of the oratory apse. Celano describes the pyx in his account of the arrival of the Saracens; he writes that Clare appeared before them, carrying a silver pyx "enclosed in ivory in which the Body of the Holy of Holies was most devotedly reserved" (LCl 21). Although built around an exceptional event, Celano's summary points to a developed cult of the eucharist—and, one might argue, to a developed visual culture—within the walls of the convent. Walls did not frustrate, in short, an interest in seeing.

Quite probably, however, the host within the pyx was likely not visible.<sup>23</sup> And this, in turn, points to an important tendency in early Franciscan thought, which often devalued the plainly visible in favor of direct experience and private meditations. In his introduction to Clare's breviary, Leo wrote that Francis had once stated, "When I do not hear Mass I adore the Body of Christ in mental prayer; and I worship just as much as when I see it at Mass."<sup>24</sup> The mind's eye thus seems to be the equal of the eye physical. And neither, according to Alexander of Hales, a Franciscan writing in the 1240s, necessarily paralleled direct experience; upset by lay emphasis upon the elevation of the host, Alexander denied that viewing the host could replace sacramental communion.<sup>25</sup> Related to claims that images were useful to those who could not understand the written word (as in Gregory the Great's famous formulation), or to children (as in Giovanni Dominici's later comments), this Franciscan emphasis on meditation regarding, or on direct experience of, the body of Christ, paralleled a Roman emphasis on the actual reception of the host.<sup>26</sup>

Viewed in this context, the experiences of the enclosed sisters of San Damiano suddenly seem to imply a level of perceived privilege, or sanctity, rather than rote deprivation. Although their visual access to the mass may have been blocked, they often communed more often than the local laity—Clare's rule, in fact, prescribed twelve annual communions, where many laypeople received the host only once a year—and were able to follow scripture closely, through sermons and private study. At the same time, however, the very separation of the sisters seems to have been commonly read as a sign of their spirituality. The sacred was often, as Richard Trexler has argued, that which was set apart, and sisters, through isolation and virginal activism, could render a naturally profane space "attitudinally sacred."<sup>27</sup> Such an attitude can be found in medieval characterizations of the cloister as a paradise, and in the claims, in the slightly later canonization hearings of Clare of Montefalco, that a refusal to be seen by and to see the outside world was a sign of sanctity. Remoteness could act as a proof, it would seem, of piety, and the sisters of San Damiano were thus **improved**, rather than deprived, by their isolation.



Practice at San Damiano, an ancient, inherited structure occupied by Clare for several years before the Lateran Council established in 1215 norms of enclosure, was perhaps inevitably unique. Governed by the Benedictine Rule and a series of *addenda* issued by Cardinal Ugolino, the convent seems to have hosted an evolving set of attitudes towards enclosure—a set of attitudes that was rooted in traditional ideas but also influenced by Clare, a woman familiar with the real needs and contingencies of life in a monastery. But this very process of evolution may help to explain the broad applicability and influence of Damianite policy, inextricably related to contemporary attitudes about access to the sacred and characterized as it was by an interest in both Franciscan tradition and local necessity. Attitudes towards enclosure at San Damiano were both responsibly orthodox and understandably relevant. As a result, when Clare was given in 1253 the rare chance to forge her own legislation, she made no broad changes to the policies that had governed life at San Damiano. And so ideals that had evolved at San Damiano—a strict active enclosure, buttressed by concrete visual partitions and softened by a love of the word of God and an understanding application of passive enclosure—came to shape one of the most influential orders in late medieval Europe.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>The speculative literature regarding the degree of enclosure at San Damiano is often very interesting; see John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 38, for a summary of early opinions. Two other works also deserve mention in this regard: S. Mary Angelina Filipiak, "The Plans of the Poor Clares' Convents in Central Italy from the 13<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup> Century," (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan, 1957); and Chiara Lainati, "The Enclosure of St. Clare and of the First Poor Clares in Canonical Legislation and in Practice," *The Cord* 28 (Jan.-Feb., 1978): 4-15 and 47-60.

<sup>2</sup>Caroline Bruzelius, "Hearing is Believing: Clarissan Architecture, ca. 1213-1340," *Gesta* 24, no. 2 (1992): 83-91; and "Sisters in Space: Strict Enclosure and the Architecture of the Clarisses in the Thirteenth Century," in Ingrid Peterson, ed., *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman*, Clare Centenary Studies, VIII (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1996), pp. 53-74.

<sup>3</sup>All quotes from Clarissan sources are from Regis Armstrong, ed., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1988). For a quick overview of the pre-Franciscan history of the complex, see Anita Volland, "Thirteenth-Century Poverty and the Life of the First Poor Clares," in *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman* Clare Centenary Series, VIII (Saint Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1996), 35.

<sup>4</sup>See Antonio Cristofani, *Storia della chiesa e chiostro di S. Damiano* (Perugia: Santucci, 1876); Leone Bracaloni, *Storia di San Damiano in Assisi* (Tipografia Tudertino, 1926); Angiola Maria Romanini, "Il Francescanesimo nell'arte: l'architettura delle origini," in I. Baldelli and A.M. Romanini, eds., *Francesco, il Francescanesimo e la cultura delle nuova Europa* (Rome and Florence: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1986): 181-192; and Marino Bigaroni, "S. Damiano, Assisi," *Franciscan Studies* 47 (1987): 45-97.

<sup>5</sup>Bracaloni, 62, notes that the current disposition of the choir must date to after 1504, and agrees that it once stretched behind the apse. The position and appearance of the earliest sisters' choir is uncertain, but Bruzelius, in "Hearing Is . . ." 84, suggests that it may at first have been located in the easternmost of the three rooms that stand to the south of the original nave, and which seem to predate Franciscan intervention.

<sup>6</sup>Moorman, 36. Similarly, Bruzelius, in "Sisters in Space," 73-74, n. 6 writes, "If Clare had wished for strict claustration, there were many such convents near Assisi she could have chosen to join instead." Such an assertion, though, while true enough, overlooks her ties to Francis.

<sup>7</sup>See Moorman, 34-35, for portions of the text that can be reconstructed through one of Clare's letters to Agnes of Bohemia. Of slightly less direct relevance here is the reference, by Jacques de Vitry, to the "Lesser Sisters" of Umbria. Jacques mentions the evangelical work done by the sisters, and explicitly states that the women traveled into cities and villages by day, and then retired to their hermitages at night.

<sup>8</sup>Clare's insistence on the privilege of poverty was, of course, difficult to reconcile with a policy of strict enclosure; without institutional finances, the sisters were forced to beg, or to rely upon someone who could beg for them. They soon did the latter.

<sup>9</sup>Jane Tibbetts Schulenberg, "Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience," in J. Nichols and L. Shank, eds., *Medieval Religious Women*, Vol. 1: *Distant Echoes* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publication, 1984), p. 54.

<sup>10</sup>Admittedly, the degree to which Ugolino's legislation was actually followed at San Damiano is far from clear, and modern historians have occasionally questioned the local relevance of the cardinal's rule. But Clare's later rule, of 1253, although it employs a slightly qualified language, does indicate that the saint accepted Ugolino's standards. See too Lainati, pp. 4-5, who cites the reference to enclosure in Cardinal Rainaldo's letter of introduction to Clare's rule as evidence that the saint had accepted Ugolino's standards.

<sup>11</sup>Marion Habig, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), p. 527: "But when the sisters had come together, according to their custom, to hear the word of God, though no less also to see their father, Francis raised his eyes to heaven, where his heart always was, and began to pray to Christ. He then commanded ashes to be brought to him...."

<sup>12</sup>Bruzelius "Hearing Is," p. 83.

<sup>13</sup>See here Filipiak, 100, who, like Bruzelius, argues that the sisters were "deprived of any visual assistance" during the Mass, but stresses the form of the grille rather than the location of the choir stalls.

<sup>14</sup>Bruzelius, "Sisters in Space," p. 61, seems to assume that Clare's reference to the Word of God being preached is meant to indicate Mass, rather than a sermon. Ugolino's earlier reference to preachers who had been approved, however, implies that Clare probably meant to refer to sermons.

<sup>15</sup>It seems possible that the fabric of San Damiano was modified, in certain ways, to accommodate the spoken word and facilitate verbal communication between otherwise separate spaces. A small aperture in the vault of the nave, now used as a light fixture, originally opened onto the floor of the oratory above, apparently allowing events in the church to be heard, if not seen, in the upper chambers of the convent; see Filipiak, 101. Similarly, a second, larger window cut into the right side of the nave vault opens onto the small garden above the cemetery.

<sup>16</sup>See Bruzelius, "Hearing Is," n. 41.

<sup>17</sup>On the use of veils in synagogues and the early Christian church, see Frederick Bligh, and Bede Camm, *Roadscreens and Roodlofts*, Vol. 1 (London, 1909), 4ff. With



time, veils appear to have been replaced by screens and rails, but surviving images suggest that the use of curtains was widespread through the fourteenth century.

<sup>18</sup>Marcia Hall, "The Tramezzo in Santa Croce, Florence, Reconsidered," *The Art Bulletin* 56, no. 3 (Sept. 1974): 325-340, and "The Italian Rood Screen: Some Implications for Liturgy and Function," in S. Bertelli and G. Ramakus, eds., *Essays Presented to Myron Gilmore*, Vol. 2 (Florence, 1978): 213-18. On Assisi, see Irene Hueck, "Der Lettner der Unterkirche von San Francesco in Assisi," *Mitteilungen der Kunsthistorischen Institute in Florenz* 28 (1984): 173-202.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Francis Bond, *Screens and Galleries in English Churches* (New York, 1908), 9.

<sup>20</sup>A. Davril and T.M. Thibodeau, eds., *Guillelmi Duranti Rationale Divinorum Officiorum I-IV* (Brepols, 1995: Corpus Christianorum CXL), 27: "Secundum alios uero uiri in parte anteriori, mulieres in posteriori parte manent, quia uir caput est mulieres ideoque dux eius." The barrier at Santa Croce may also have separated men from women; see Hall 1974, 339, for a documentary reference to a door at the center of the screen erected in the basilica, which was said to divide "the place of the men from the place of the women."

<sup>21</sup>See, for example, Caroline Walker Bynum *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 59: "The more church architecture, liturgical practice, and priestly power contrived to make the elements seem distant, the more some people luxuriated in them in private, ecstatic experiences."

<sup>22</sup>The history of the gesture has been traced several times, with different results. See especially Edouard Dumoutet, *Le désir de voir l'hostie et les origines de la dévotion au Saint-Sacrament* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1926), and Hall 1978, n. 10, 218.

<sup>23</sup>G.J.C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 63 (New York: Brill, 1995), p. 288, notes that reliquaries included peep-holes as early as 1215, but that the eucharist was generally stored in closed containers until roughly 1300.

<sup>24</sup>Habig, 1874.

<sup>25</sup>Dumoutet, 19ff.

<sup>26</sup>For further comments of a general late medieval interest in moving beyond images, and sight, in worship, see Jeffrey Hamburger, "The Visual and the Visionary: The Image in Late Medieval Monastic Devotions," *Viator* 20 (1989): 161-82.

<sup>27</sup>Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 53ff.

**Practice at San Damiano, an ancient, inherited structure occupied by Clare several years before the Lateran Council established, in 1215, norms of enclosure, was perhaps inevitably unique. . . . [T]he convent seems to have hosted an evolving set of attitudes towards enclosure—a set of attitudes that was rooted in traditional ideas, but also influenced by Clare, a woman familiar with the real needs and contingencies of life in a monastery.**

## Francis, Clare and Family

Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF

This article is based on a paper delivered at the 2001 Franciscan Convention, LaVerna Retreat Centre, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa.

### Introduction

In the post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* (EA), Pope John Paul II summarized the discussion about the African church using the image of the family. He wrote:

The Synod Fathers acknowledge the image of the Church as God's Family as an expression of the Church's nature particularly appropriate for Africa. For this image emphasises care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships acceptance, dialogue and trust. The new evangelisation will aim at *building up the Church as Family*, avoiding all ethnocentrism, and excessive particularism, trying instead to encourage reconciliation and true communion between ethnic groups, favouring solidarity and sharing of personnel and resources among particular Churches without undue ethnic considerations (EA 63).

Anyone who is aware of the ethnic, political and economic strife on the continent of Africa would agree that this is a visionary and prophetic challenge for the church in Africa. The bishops gathered for the synod on Africa recognized that the concept of family is an important one for building a sense of identity, solidarity and belonging among the people of Africa. I would add that this concept is an important one for the whole church because of the rampant individualism which is dominating life in almost every country and because it is what we are intended to be by reason of our baptism: the family of God.

My task in this essay is to reflect on Francis's and Clare's understanding of family. I want to do this with that text from EA in mind because the evangelisation which the synod mandated is urgent and it is the task of each of us who bears the names Christian and Franciscan. I have organised my reflection in terms of three points and hopefully, at the end of the essay, you will be per-

sualed that we, as Franciscans, have a unique opportunity to give witness to our charism by being "examples and mirrors" (TestCl 6) to the church and the world of what it means to live as a Franciscan family.

## The Families of Francis and Clare

Clare and Francis were members of two very prominent families in Assisi. Unfortunately, their families did not share the same loyalties and so were rivals in shaping the society in which they grew up. Though Francis's family was part of the *nouveau riche* merchant class and Clare's family belonged to the Assisian aristocracy, their families endowed each of them with a strong spirit of commitment and idealism which served them well throughout their lives. But what do we know of the concrete circumstances of their families? Contemporary research has enabled us to piece together some important data by which we can get a sense of the values that shaped their respective families in spite of the fact that we do not have much historical evidence of their lineage.

### The Bernardone Household

Though surnames as we know them today were not used until the end of the thirteenth century, we are able to trace at least some of Francis's family tree through his paternal relatives. The names *Pietro* and *Bernardo* seem to have been favorites in the Bernardone clan. Besides Pietro Bernardone, Francis's grandfather had two other sons, Angelo and Benencasa. We know nothing of these two uncles of Francis except that Benencasa's name appears as a witness on some legal documents in the archives of Assisi.<sup>1</sup> Pietro seems to have been the only one of the brothers who married. He had two sons, Giovanni (Francesco) and Angelo. We know the course which Francis's life took, and Angelo seems to have followed in Pietro's footsteps and assumed responsibility for the family business.

As for Pica, Francis's mother, we know far less. What we do know is that she was most probably named Giovanna, and Pica was a nickname given to her by Pietro as a sign of his affection not for her, but because the land of Picardy was the area in which Pietro had been able to make a sizeable fortune. Pica seems to have been a woman of considerable grace and charm which has led some authors to conclude that she came from a family that belonged to the ranks of French gentry. Fortini believed that Pica was "pious and fully attuned to the things of God" as well as "gentle and fragile."<sup>2</sup> Joan Mueller, commenting on the relationship between Pietro, Pica, and their eldest son made this point:

Most ascribed Francis's innate charm and gentility to his mother, the refined and pious Pica. It was true that he had her delicate features,

beautiful dark eyes, and radiant smile. Not that Pica Bernardone had many occasions to smile. Both mother and son were frequent victims of Pietro Bernardone's volcanic anger—Francis because he did so well at play and so poorly at work, and his mother because she attempted to defend him.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond this speculation about the personalities of Pietro and Pica, we have no firm evidence about their lives. The only other thing that we know from historical records is that Francis's brother Angelo had two sons, Giovanetto and Piccardo. It seems that Giovanetto was a devout Christian and served as a procurator for the friars at the Sacro Convento. Piccardo married a woman named Bonagrazia and had two children, a boy and a girl.<sup>4</sup> Nothing more is said in the early documents and historical records of the archives of Assisi about the family.

Whatever can be said about Francis's family, it seems that he did not have the acquisitive character of his father. Francis's first biographer, Thomas of Celano, trying to demonstrate Francis's need for conversion, described Francis not in terms of rapaciousness, but as a squanderer of money:

He was an object of admiration to all, and he endeavoured to surpass others in his flamboyant display of vain accomplishments: wit, curiosity, practical jokes and foolish talk, songs, and soft and flowing garments. Since he was very rich, he was not greedy but extravagant, not a hoarder of money, but a squanderer of his property, a prudent dealer but a most unreliable steward (1C 2).

Francis's affable disposition made him likeable to many people and opened him to grace, but also angered his father. We know from the rest of Francis's story that after his conversion Francis could not identify with the values which were so ingrained in Pietro's personality and that eventually they parted under very painful circumstances. This rupture in familial relationships became the field in which the seed of a new family lineage would be sown in Francis's heart through the work of the Holy Spirit.

### The Offreduccio Household

Clare's family belonged to what has been called the new urbanised aristocracy of medieval Assisi.<sup>5</sup> They were members of the class of landed gentry and had enough money to have a home within the city walls and wealth invested in land holdings in the countryside. The gentry were an elite class of about twenty families who managed to keep their lands and titles with the help of the Perugians.

Clare's father, Favarone, came from a family of knights. Marco Bartoli contends that he was the second oldest of the Offreduccio sons; Monaldo was

the eldest and therefore head of the family when Clare was born.<sup>6</sup> There were seven brothers in all and each of them had their own homes and estates. It was a tightly-knit family which was organised along the line of male descendants. Fortini maintained that the Offreduccio clan "surpassed all others in power and wealth, courage, prudence and wisdom."<sup>7</sup>

Clare's mother was also a woman of some status as can be seen by her exploits:

Ortolana was far from being a woman of no importance. She had herself come from an aristocratic family and been given in marriage to Favarone, a member of one of the most important families of Assisi. In addition to this, she was well travelled. She had been to Rome, to St. James at Compostella, to St. Michael at Monte Gargano, and finally to the Holy Land.<sup>8</sup>

This text confirms Clare's social status as a member of an aristocratic family, but her father passes out of the story of the family and it is her uncle Monaldo who exerted authority over and took responsibility for her family. Despite the patriarchal structure of the family and Monaldo's dominance, it was Ortolana who emerged as the strongest influence in Clare's early development. Clare's first biographer noted that:

From the mouth of her mother she (Clare) first received with a docile heart the fundamentals of the faith and, with the Spirit inflaming and molding her interiorly, she became known as a most pure vessel, a vessel of graces (LegCl 2).

The same author noted that Ortolana devoted herself to divine worship and to works of piety (LegCl 1). Though Bartoli, commenting on the *Legenda*, noted that "the link between holiness and nobility of blood" is a constant theme in medieval hagiography, I think that something more is being expressed, namely, that holiness has to do with nobility of spirit and generous self-giving, especially to those in need.<sup>9</sup> Clare's first "mirror" was her mother from whom she learned not only how to maintain an organised household and the virtues expected of aristocratic women, but the ways of the Spirit and the grace that comes to one who is serious about "putting on Christ." Ortolana was a woman who was aware of the religious renewal taking place in thirteenth century Christendom. She imbibed the spiritual energy of the age with enthusiasm and devotion and conveyed to Clare through her personal dedication Christ, her serious concern about spiritual growth and her generosity to poor people. In this way she prepared the ground in which the little plant of Francis could take root.

Aside from the facts that we can obtain from historical records about the Offreduccio family, we know that Clare had two sisters, Catherine and Beatrice.

In less than three weeks Catherine joined Clare in her pursuit of a new way of evangelical life at Sant' Angelo in Panzo where a small group of women were leading a penitential life. Years later at San Damiano Beatrice joined her sisters as did Ortolana herself. There was a remarkable and attractive power about the community of San Damiano that drew young women from the elite of Assisian society. Like Francis these seekers of truth found that the early community did not "shirk deprivation, poverty, hard work, trial, or the shame or contempt of the world – rather they considered them as great delights" (TestCl 27-28) and so the community grew from strength to strength.

Both Clare and Francis were shaped by their biological families. The unique mix of personalities in each extended family had its effect on their lives as did the particular context in which they lived. Both families were caught up, albeit in different ways, in the power relationships that were brought to bear on life in Assisi. Francis and Clare were called to extricate themselves from that web of relationships so that their lives and their communities could witness to another kind of relationships based not on power, but on life in Christ. Their conversion stories serve to illustrate this point very well.

## Clare's Conversion

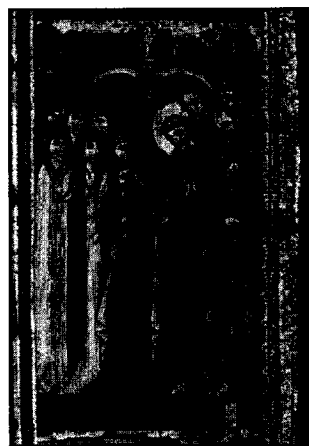
Given what we know about Clare's growth and development, can we say that Clare had undergone a conversion? We can speak of Clare's conversion because she herself mentioned it twice in her *Testament*. The first instance is in sentence 8 where she expressed her conviction that God was working in her through Francis even before her conversion while she was "still living among the vanities of the world" (TestCl 8). The second reference to her conversion was made in the context of her retelling how she and the early community promised obedience to Francis and how the "Lord gave them the light of His grace through Francis's wonderful life and teaching" (TestCl 27).

So what was the nature of Clare's conversion? Donald Gelpi, a Jesuit, has outlined five types of conversion: the intellectual, personal-moral, affective, socio-political and religious.<sup>10</sup> These types can be helpful, I think, in taking a fresh look at Clare's conversion.

As she matured in faith she learned the real value of things and was able to "place a worthless price upon worthless things" (LegCl 4) which is a concrete indication that an **intellectual** conversion through the "wonderful life and teachings" of Francis had taken place. In light of this interpretation it becomes obvious why Clare met with Francis in the company of her friend, Bona di Guelfuccio, for over a year before fleeing from her family's home. Francis articulated for her his own religious experience and his description made immense sense to her. Clare knew through faith and reason the evangelical logic of Francis's radical understanding of what it meant "to follow in the footprints of Jesus."

The **personal-moral** dimension of conversion requires one to act on the strength of her/his convictions and to make ethical decisions about important matters in life, realising that these always have some impact on social relationships. This kind of conversion does not allow one to simply "follow the crowd." It engenders a commitment to values and respect for human rights and duties. It builds strength of character and endows the person with courage.

The fruits of this aspect of conversion are obvious when we look at Clare's life. The decisions that she made in regard to fidelity to the charism are confirmation enough of the courageous ethical stance she adopted when the friars and church leaders tried to dissuade her from her commitment to the vision which she and Francis had given birth to in their lives and communities.



The **affective** dimension of conversion is concerned with healthy intuitive perceptions of reality and for this reason can animate the other forms of conversion with warmth and feeling. It requires a person to deal with feelings that are living deep within him/herself and see how these feelings are related to conscious behaviour. Affective conversion animates other forms of conversion with a sense of imaginative freedom in which a person experiences a certain flexibility to be open to the yet unknown. It also nurtures a depth of sensitivity to beauty and goodness of life.<sup>11</sup>

Even a superficial reading of Clare's writings would be enough to indicate that she had experienced a conversion at the affective level of her personality. What she had learned intuitively from the example of her mother was expressed in concrete choices and behaviour by which she shaped her life. Clare's letters to Agnes of Prague are embroidered throughout with images of God's beauty and goodness which she knew through her own religious experience. In choosing poverty she opened herself to the riches of God through meditation on the beauty reflected in the face of Christ by focusing her gaze on icon of the San Damiano Cross.

**Socio-political** conversion de-privatizes or makes public the other forms of conversion.<sup>12</sup> It brings to light the social implications of the other forms of conversion. This type of conversion calls for a commitment to some cause of universal, human significance that takes place in the social order. It radicalises religious faith and endows it with a prophetic character. This form of conversion highlights the contextual dimension of faith that will not allow social realities to be obscured.

This description of the socio-political dimension became obvious in Clare's life from the night she left her family home to join Francis and the brothers at the Portiuncula. In choosing to respond to the grace of her vocation made known to her through Francis she took decisive and prophetic action. That action placed her at the margins of medieval Italian society and it spoke loudly and clearly to her contemporaries about the values that lay at the heart of the way of life she desired to live.

Gelpi describes **religious** conversion as a response to an encounter with God that affects one's experience of life. It creates a way of perceiving reality different from any other human mode of perception.<sup>13</sup> In the context of the Christian faith an experience of being in relationship with Jesus Christ enables us to perceive reality intuitively with our hearts. Through the interplay between the grace of conversion and faith we begin to experience the presence of God in our lives. This experience calls for some form of change in our lives; it is inescapable because we cannot be drawn closer to God without being purified. Since this process is never complete, religious conversion like all other forms of conversion is ongoing. Persons grasp the connection between the present and the "what might be" of the future and see their place in God's reign.

Clare expressed her new perception of reality over and over in her letters to Agnes of Prague. In the 1953 translation of *The First Letter to Agnes of Prague* by the late Franciscan scholar, Ignatius Brady, we find this beautiful passage:

You know, I firmly believe, that the kingdom of heaven is promised and given by the Lord only to the poor: for he who loves the things of time loses the fruit of charity; and that one cannot serve God and mammon, for either the one is loved and the other hated, or the one is served and the other despised (Mt 6:24). (1LAg 4)

How well Clare understood the things of time! She grew up in a household where she came into daily contact with issues of status, wealth and property and in the experience of union with God all of reality had been changed for her. She began to see people, things and events through the eyes of faith. This ability to see was the fruit of charity, of Christ's transforming love. In choosing Christ as her spouse and lover nothing was the same for her ever again:

Clare's relationship to the Second Person, the Word made flesh, was spousal: Christ was her bridegroom and she His spouse. Her relationship to the Lord was above all a relationship of spousal love, expressed through prayer, through the following of Christ and through the gift of her whole being to the One she loved. How did she arrive at this spousal love? By the contemplation of the human Christ. Her love, in

other words, was kindled by contemplating Jesus who made visible the invisible, as we read in the Christmas Preface: "In Him we see our God made visible and so are caught up in the love of the God we cannot see."<sup>14</sup>

Clare not only loved Christ, but was in love with Christ. This love sustained her ongoing conversion and enabled her to see not only reality in a new way, but to give birth to Christ in her life. I have spent so much time on the nature of Clare's conversion because it is less well known than Francis's, but it is now time to turn to his conversion and examine its transformative effect.

## Francis's Conversion

Francis's conversion is perhaps one of the most well documented stories among the lives of the saints of the church, but we must always bear in mind the intent of the author writing the account and the purpose of medieval hagiography. Hagiography differs from what we know as modern biography because its intent is "inspired by devotion to the saints and intended to increase that devotion."<sup>15</sup> This is evident in each of the medieval biographies of Francis because each author was working with a common model of sainthood. Hagiographers used accepted models so that they could more easily convince their readers of the holiness of their subjects. For our purposes here we will use the *First Life of Francis* by Thomas of Celano.

The late Duane Lapsanski believed that Celano presents his readers with an account that is "clear and unprejudiced and contains a historically truthful picture of Francis."<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Lapsanski admitted that Celano intended to draw a sharp contrast "between the 'unconverted' Francis and the later 'saint' to show how mightily and effectively the grace of God worked in him."<sup>17</sup>

The conversion of Francis, like that of Clare, could be analysed using Gelpi's typology. Suffice it to say that Francis went through a rigorous process of conversion lasting over a period of six years from 1202 to 1208. During this period he experienced both the subtle promptings and the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Under the Lord's personal tutelage he underwent an **intellectual** conversion during the early stage of his conversion when he was in prison. During that time he began to reassess the values and life-style that he learned from his father and the cultural and economic context in which he lived. Francis learned to look critically at reality and to establish new criteria for making judgements and choices. This new way of evaluating reality in the ultimate truth of the Gospel gave Francis the courage to act on his convictions. This **personal-moral** conversion is quite clearly seen in his ready obedience to the instructions of the voice he heard at Spoleto that told him to return to Assisi (2C 6)

and his embrace of the leper (Test 1-3). These actions called for courage and strength of character which served him well throughout his life.

A change in how a person sees the social order of reality that is associated with the **socio-political** dimension of conversion is clearly evident in what is called the Great Renunciation (LMj 2:4). In this incident Francis renounced his rightful patrimony as a first-born son and committed himself to a life in which he was ever-committed to following in the footprints of the poor and humble Christ. The universal significance of his actions were not immediately clear, but he nevertheless acted on his faith in the Providence of God.

The **affective** and **religious** dimensions of Francis's conversion are immediately evident to anyone familiar with his writings and life. His writings are laced through with the warmth and generosity of one who is on fire with the God of his life. He experienced a new kind of freedom that enabled him to see the presence of God in everyone and in everything. It is the affective dimension of conversion that enabled him to see everything as gift and in response to God's gracious care he was filled with gratitude. We get a sense of this from the words of chapter 23 of the Earlier Rule:

All-powerful, most holy, Almighty and supreme God, Holy and just Father, Lord King of heaven and earth we thank You for Yourself for through Your holy will and through Your only Son with the Holy Spirit You have created everything spiritual and corporal and, after making us in Your own image and likeness, You placed us in paradise (ER 23:1).

Francis was totally taken up with the goodness of God. In the experience of his conversion he knew at the deepest level of his being that everything comes to one by way of God's providential care; we merit nothing, everything is gift, the most precious is the gift of God himself. Francis came to know God as father and in a profound sense of God's generativity he could exclaim, "O how glorious and holy and great to have a Father in heaven" (2LrF 54). This was the reason why Francis continued to be open to whatever God wanted to accomplish in him and through him. He knew the joy of union with the Most High God. This experience of the fatherhood of God led him to shape his vision of Gospel life in a new way. It was a vision that he shared with Clare and together they gave birth to a new religious family in the church.

## Francis and Clare as "Mothers"

Francis's use of feminine imagery in his writings is a well known fact and Clare's writings are clear examples of an understanding of the mystical life from the viewpoint of a woman. Now I want to demonstrate how Francis and Clare patterned their religious family on their experience of God as father and

as a consequence saw all other relationships in this light. This is necessary because it illustrates how they tried to incarnate their religious experience in concrete ways.

Francis's vibrant and life-redefining experience of God as Father engendered in him a new sense of his own identity and he expressed it in terms of feminine imagery. One of the most famous stories in which this is illustrated is the one in which Francis and the brothers go to Rome to seek approval for their way of life from Pope Innocent III. In *The First Life of Saint Francis* Celano gave a straightforward account of the meeting which was arranged through Bishop Guido's friend, Cardinal John of St Paul. This same story is recorded by John of Perugia, but in his account he adds a parable that is believed to have been told by Francis to the pope. Francis and the friars had a meeting with Innocent III during which they described their plan for living the Gospel. The pope felt that their life-style was too rigorous and the poverty they aspired to live too stringent. He urged Francis to spend some time in prayer to discern God's will for the community and then return to tell him what the Lord revealed to him and in turn the pope promised to grant whatever the Lord directed.

After spending time in prayer Francis and the brothers came back to see Innocent III. It was then that Francis told this parable:

There lived in the realm of a great king a very poor but beautiful woman, who caught the king's eye and by whom he fathered many sons. One day that woman began to think to herself: "What am I to do, a poor woman with so many sons? I have no possessions to provide them with a livelihood!" While she was pondering all these things in her heart, her face became sad. When the king arrived, he said to her "What is the matter? I see that you are lost in thought and sad." With her whole heart she told him all her thoughts. The king told her: "Do not be afraid of your dire poverty, nor of the sons you have, and the many you will have. If the many hired hands in my house have their fill of food, I certainly do not want my own sons to die of hunger. No, I want them to have even more than the others."

The man of God, Francis, immediately understood that the poor woman symbolised him. As a result, the man of God strengthened his resolve to observe most holy poverty in the future (AP 35-36).

This parable addresses two points: first, that the approval sought from the pope concerned the question of radical Gospel poverty as one of the foundation stones of Francis's vision of evangelical life. The second point is that Francis had a very clear sense of himself as the "mother" of a family which came to birth through the grace of God, the Father. The image of the mother became integral to Francis's consciousness of his vocation as protector and defender of

the early community. In still another parable Francis compared himself to a mother hen who had constantly to run after her chicks (2C 23-24).

Francis used the image of mother twenty-four times in his writings to describe not only his role in the community, but also how the friars should act toward one another and all others. The relationships in the community were not hierarchical, but familial and all were to give birth to Christ in their lives.

We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brothers, moreover, when we do the will of His Father Who is in heaven; mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience; and give Him birth through a holy activity, which must shine before others by example (2LtF 51-53).

This text reveals Francis's profound conviction that we are spiritually fruitful when we are united to the Lord by the action of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who enables us to give birth to Christ in our lives. Clare expressed the same idea about giving birth to Christ in her letters to Agnes of Prague:

Most beloved sister, or should I say, Lady, worthy of great respect: because You are the spouse and mother and sister of my Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 2Cor 11:2; Mt 12:50)...You have truly merited to be called a sister, spouse and mother of the Son of the Most High Father and of the glorious Virgin (1LAg 12 & 24).

Perhaps the most beautiful expression of Clare's understanding of the dignity of the human person can be found in her third letter to Agnes of Prague. In it she singled out the ability to make a home for Christ within us as Mary did within herself as the greatest honour God could bestow on us.

Indeed, it is now clear that the soul of a faithful person, the most worthy of all creatures because of the grace of God, is greater than heaven itself, since the heavens and the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator and only the faithful soul is His dwelling place and throne, and this only through the charity that the wicked lack...As the glorious Virgin of virgins carried Him materially, so you, too, by following in her footprints (cf 1Pet 2:21), especially those of poverty and humility, can, without any doubt, always carry Him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body, holding Him by Whom you and all things are held together (Wis 1:7) possessing that which, in comparison with the other transitory possessions of this world you will possess more securely (3LAg 21-22; 24-26).

Clare wanted not only Agnes, but also each of her sisters, to exemplify spiritual motherhood in their lives; to give Christ birth through all their actions

and attitudes. We see again the link between poverty, humility and the ability to carry Christ within ourselves. Like Francis, Clare saw God as Father. She saw her vocation and that of the sisters as a gift from God the Father and for which they needed "to express the deepest thanks to the glorious Father of Christ" (TestCl 2). It was a gift of the Father given to them through Francis (TestCl 7) so that together they might give birth to a religious family in the church that would redefine family not in terms of biological, ethnic, cultural or economic bonds, but rather by bonds created among them by the Holy Spirit.

Francis and Clare believed that they were the "mothers" who gave birth to countless sons and daughters because they were overshadowed by the Holy Spirit who made them fruitful. God the Father's, generative love gave birth to all of creation in Christ and they were mothers giving Christ birth in themselves for the good of others. Their new family was not conceived as a juridical entity for the purpose of some apostolic work. Instead they were a family held together in Christ as spouses, brothers, sisters, spouses and mothers with God as Father.

Both Clare and Francis urged their sisters and brothers to care for one another as a mother cherishes her children (RCI 8:16; ER 11:11; LR 6:8) and give witness that they are members of the same family (LR 6:7). Spiritual mothers beget spiritual children who in turn become spiritual mothers. In this way the family is built-up in love, a love that mirrors Christ to the rest of the church and the whole world. In fact, Francis saw these familial bonds extending to all of creation, as is evident in his *Canticle of the Creatures* where God is Father, Earth is mother and all the elements of the created world live in harmony as brothers and sisters. Indeed, these familial relationships are the ideal Francis and Clare believed would restore harmony among all people and the created world. Francis and Clare learned that life in Christ creates the deepest bonds possible between people. These bonds cut across nationality, gender and biological relationships. It is our common origin in God the Father, our spousal relationship with Christ and the love of the Holy Spirit which makes bonds within the Franciscan family possible.

### Some Implications for the Franciscan Family Today

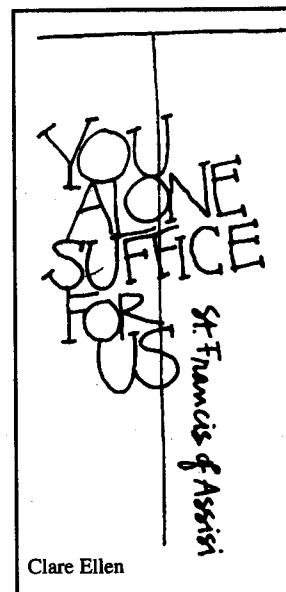
One of the most obvious implications of Francis and Clare's vision of family is that we have to be serious about claiming our unity in Christ Jesus. This is easier said than done because our biological, racial, ethnic and cultural differences are often more apparent. We have to work at building relationships within our communities and fraternities that reflect our common birthright as members of the Franciscan family. Though it would not be healthy to forget

our biological families, we must see ourselves firstly as members of our Franciscan family.

A second implication is that since the spiritual teaching of Francis and Clare about how we give birth to Christ is inherent to an understanding of our charism we need to reflect on the practical challenges this teaching presents to us as individuals and as communities. If we do I think we will begin to see that building-up bonds among ourselves is easier said than done. It takes effort to relate to one another beyond the superficial aspects of our lives and give expression to our deeper unity in our common vocation.

A further implication which Francis and Clare's vision of family presents to us is that of mutuality, working together as equals and as sisters and brothers. Our very charism was born out of the grace given to Francis and Clare for the renewal of the church. Wherever possible we should work together in ministries that will give witness to the fact that we are indeed members of the same family (LR 6:7) because we are not in competition, but see our feminine and masculine gifts as complementary.

Finally, we need to deepen our understanding of our charism so that we can give witness to the family spirit that is needed in the church today. We need to take seriously the writings of Francis and Clare and make them our own so that they become the norm of our life together.



Francis and Clare went through a learning process in which they gradually came to understand that they were called to give birth to a religious family by which the church was to be renewed. They had to struggle with the concept of family engendered in them through their social development. God was able to work within them because like Mary, they consented to the action of the Holy Spirit in their lives. If we are going to give birth to new members of the Franciscan family, especially in areas where the Franciscan Family is relatively new (as in certain parts of the African continent where people will be intent on building up the church in love), then our own conception of family must be as inclusive and as deep as Francis and Clare's; it must be rooted not in our ethnic heritage, but in our life in Christ.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. Helen Moak (New York: Crossroads Publishing Co., 1981), 84.

<sup>2</sup>Fortini, 87-88.

<sup>3</sup>Joan Mueller, *Francis, the Saint of Assisi* (Allen, TX: Thomas More Publishing, 2000), 19.

<sup>4</sup>Omer Englebert, *Francis of Assisi: A Biography*, 2nd ed., trans. E.M. Cooper, revised and augmented by Ignatius Brady and Raphael Brown (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1965), pp. 399-401.

<sup>5</sup>Marco Bartoli, *Clare of Assisi*, trans. Sr. Frances Teresa (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993), pp.13-14.

<sup>6</sup>Bartoli, p.14.

<sup>7</sup>Fortini, p. 328.

<sup>8</sup>Bartoli, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup>Bartoli, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup>Donald L. Gelpi, *The Conversion Experience* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), p. 42.

<sup>11</sup>Gelpi, pp. 43-44.

<sup>12</sup>Gelpi, p. 54.

<sup>13</sup>Gelpi, p. 37.

<sup>14</sup>Sergius Wroblewski, OFM, "Clare, Christ's Spouse," *New Serafika*, 5.1(Nov. 1998): 2-15.

<sup>15</sup>H. Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, trans. Donald Attwater (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962), 3.

<sup>16</sup>Duane V. Lapsanski, *Evangelical Perfection: An Historical Examination of the Concept in the Early Franciscan Sources* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1977), p. 94.

<sup>17</sup>Lapsanski, p. 95.



**CLARE**, a handmaid of Christ and of the Poor Sisters of the Monastery of San Damiano. . . .

**CLARE**, declining the name and office of abbess. . . wished in her humility to be placed under others rather than above them, and among the servants of Christ, to serve more willingly than to be served. . . .

**CLARE**, during the sickness from which she passed from this life, never stopped praising God. . . .

(Excerpts from writings by and about Clare of Assisi)

## The Loving Relationship of Clare with Her Mother

Clara Heo, SFMA

Human beings start their relationship with their mother from within the womb. Women share God's creation through their giving birth to a newborn baby. This creation is not only a physical collaboration but also a spiritual one. Many Asian traditions believe that during her pregnancy a woman has to be discreet and prudent in all her thoughts and behavior because her good or bad thoughts will affect the baby's future thoughts and behavior. For instance, the mother's peace or insecurity goes into the baby's feeling of inner peace or insecurity within the womb.

When the mother accepts her pregnancy, the mother begins to be aware that the embryo is a part of herself. At the same time, the mother is aware that the embryo is a separate individual being. Both mother and baby have their own unique character which is "the self." What is the self? The self is "essentially relational, inseparable from the limiting and enriching contexts of body, feeling, relationship, community, history, and the web of life."<sup>1</sup>

The relationship between the mother and the baby in her womb is fundamental. This fundamental relationship is like our relationship with God. We all came from God, but we are individual. "In the first stage of life, Erickson says that the central goal is the infant's development of a sense of basic trust."<sup>2</sup> The role of mother is important:

because through the special relationship uniting a mother and her child, particularly in its first years of life, she gives the child that sense of security and trust without which the child would find it difficult to develop properly its own personal identity and, subsequently, to establish positive and fruitful relationships with others.<sup>3</sup>

The relationship between Clare and Ortulana is unique and special because their relationship includes not only the biological mother-daughter relationship but also discipleship with Jesus. Their biological loving relationship also developed into a very spiritual loving relationship. Ortulana taught Clare



religious manners and later Ortulana joined her daughter's new religious movement as a sister serving with humility under her daughter's guidance. Recently, the relationship between mother and daughter has been studied by Eichenbaum and Orbach:

Positive interactions between mother and daughter established a pattern of relating and a feeling of closeness between them. As a relationship forms, the mother experiences great pleasure in seeing her daughter's daily developments. Mother's time and care and tiring long hours of work through the day and night have moments of overpowering reward as she sees her daughter grow, and she continues to express her feelings of competence, strength, and ability to care and protect within the relationship. In this nurturing relationship the mother gives her daughter the essential emotional food that helps the infant establish her very sense of existence as well as her security and well-being. The daughter's psychological development is built on the feeling of acceptance and love in this first and most important relationship.<sup>4</sup>

This study shows that the relationship of mother and daughter is reciprocal and affects both lives. The Legend about Clare speaks about this relationship:

From the mouth of her mother she first received with a docile heart the fundamentals of the faith and with the Spirit inflaming and molding her interiorly, she became as a most pure vessel, a vessel of graces.... Thus, from her infancy, as mercy was growing with her, she bore a compassionate attitude, merciful towards the miseries of the destitute (LegCl 3).

Ortulana would follow her daughter into the monastery during her later years. The Bull of Canonization states that "Her mother, named Ortulana, intent upon pious deeds, followed her daughter's footprints and afterwards accepted this religious way of life" (BC 8). It is unusual that a saint's mother was so praised in canonization documents and legend. Not only is Ortulana's name in the Bull of Canonization, it also appears in The Legend of Clare.

The relationship between Clare and Ortulana was profoundly reciprocal and spiritual. Their relationship was dynamic, intimate, and transparent. "The interplay between a woman's conscious and unconscious feeling about being both a daughter and a mother is an essential part of what she brings to the maternal nurturance."<sup>5</sup>

### What Did Ortulana Teach Her Daughter?

Clare had been molded by her mother's holy example and Ortulana had been affected by her daughter's sanctity. Ingrid J. Peterson has said:

Ortulana was a noble, independent, faithful, and extraordinary woman in her time. Ortulana lived on the edge of great social and economic turmoil which empowered her. As other members of society began to gain freedom, so did women. Devotion to the humanity of Jesus changed both religion and culture. Ortulana's pilgrim journeys, her dominant position in a household of knights, and the vagueness of her husband's role indicate that she seized several new opportunities as a woman to become an individual person, rather than to assume the prescriptions for an aristocratic medieval woman.<sup>6</sup>

Ortulana's pilgrimages to Rome, Jerusalem, and the Shrine of Saint Michael at Monte Gargano show that she was not an ordinary person and "indicates her importance as mother of Clare."<sup>7</sup> Ortulana's journey to the Shrine of Saint Michael where she received the prophecy from the cross while she was praying about the child in her womb must have affected her throughout her life. Ingrid Peterson wrote: "Because she had been a pilgrim to the Holy Land, Ortulana may have walked the journey taken by Joseph and the pregnant Mary from Galilee to Bethlehem more than a thousand years earlier. Ortulana's faith demanded this kind of action, for Pacifica described her as a woman 'adorned by religious and holy deeds'" (Proc 1.5).<sup>8</sup> Peterson also has noted:

Clare's mother and the women who surrounded her were models of holiness, for Pietro Di Damiano said it was well known in Assisi that both Ortulana and Pacifica lived in a spiritual way (Proc 19.2). As pilgrims, both were marked as converted women in the social community, penitents, or *conversi*.<sup>9</sup>

Ortulana led women who lived in her house into the spiritual life and stimulated them with the desire to be holy. Among these women was her friend, Pacifica. Before leaving her family home, Clare had already experienced a religious atmosphere among the many women in her own house, including her mother as leader of that group.

### How Clare Emulated Her Mother

Clare was described as independent, honest, kind and affable, courteous, and generous towards the poor. These characteristics are similar to Ortulana, who was also described as "a woman of prayer, dedicated to work, open to acts of mercy, even beyond her own surroundings."<sup>10</sup> Clare's spiritual mothering while caring for her religious sisters and her loving concern for the poor and all people were reflections of Ortulana's good manner of life. Clare's mother was the actual root of the Poor Ladies and "she [Ortulana] was the spring of new life, the protector of women, who having raised her daughters in womanly skills and after joining Clare at San Damiano, was summoned as healer."<sup>11</sup>

Clare learned from her mother as much as she could. "The legend relates that Ortulana gave to Clare what culture could not transmit or measure. At birth, the daughter of Ortulana received more than a noble state in life, for Clare was given the heritage of her mother's sanctity."<sup>12</sup> One study about the relationship between mother and daughter shows us how a mother's role powerfully affects her daughter's growth:

The picture of mother that the daughter takes into herself is complex. Mother is the person who gives her what she needs—feeds her, cuddles her, plays with her, talks to her, responds to her. She opens up wider and wider horizons. At the same time, mother is the person who can say no, who can disappoint or withhold, who can be short-tempered and can misunderstand. Mother holds tremendous power to please and to hurt.<sup>13</sup>

Both Ortulana's physical motherhood, through which she offered herself to her special, precious child and her spiritual manner nurtured Clare throughout her life.

### Clare's Sensitivity to Others

Ortulana's sensitivity for both Clare's physical and spiritual needs led Clare to develop sensitivity towards others' needs. Clare learned these lessons through her childhood from her mother who was both model and guide. Ronda Chervin uses the words of Karl Stern to highlight how women respond in relationships:

An idea of Karl Stern...when men express their ideas, they concentrate on concepts, moving from concepts to concrete examples and then returning to the concept. A woman is concerned about the listener's needs: she hunts for a truth that will be relevant to her listener and explains her thoughts in terms of that truth.<sup>14</sup>

A mother's sensitivity can also be developed by nurturing her baby, but not every mother is sensitive or tender. The relationship between Ortulana and Clare, however, was a dynamic give and take relationship. Their intimate relationship led to their transparent relationship when Ortulana was living in the monastery with Clare. While Clare was alive, many sick people came to the monastery for healing from their sicknesses, and Clare healed them by her sanctity. Sister Amata, who also lived in the monastery, stated that:

A young boy from Perugia had a certain film over his eye which covered all of it. Then he was brought to Saint Clare who touched the eyes of the boy and then made the sign of the cross over him. Then she said: 'Bring him to my mother, Sister Ortulana (who was in the

monastery of San Damiano) and let her make the sign of the cross over him'. After this had been done, the young boy was cured, so that Saint Clare said her mother had cured him. On the contrary, her mother said Lady Clare, her daughter, had cured him. Thus each one attributed this grace to the other (Proc 4.11).

Clare followed her mother's loving relationship with God and others by loving everyone she came in contact with. Clare reflected her mother's caring mothering relationship which was passed down to her religious sisters. Sister Lucia, a fellow sister who testified at Clare's canonization, said that there is no way to tell of Clare's holiness. When she was asked

... what this holiness and goodness consisted of, she replied "in her very great humility, kindness, uprightness, and patience....She had great compassion for the sisters, both their body and soul" (Proc 8.1-3).

Clare's great compassion for the sisters can be seen in her healing them. She healed many sisters within her community while she was alive. Also those outsiders who came to her for healing were all healed. Many sisters testified that "Clare would come to their bedsides in a motherly way to pull warm covers over them as they slept."<sup>15</sup> Clare nurtured others, meeting both physical and spiritual needs just as her mother had done for her and others.

### Clare As Co-worker with God

Clare followed her mother's model of being a co-worker with God. Clare's daily contemplation echoed the lessons she learned when she was young. In the letters of Clare to Agnes of Prague, she addressed Agnes as daughter and mother (4 LAg 4). These feminine images are active, in that Agnes is encouraged to be a co-worker of God. Using Saint Paul's expression Clare said to Agnes, "I consider you as a co-worker of God Himself (cf. 1 Cor 3:9, Rm 16:3) and a support of the weak members of His ineffable Body" (3LAg 8). Clare's deep contemplation led her to see the original meaning of creation. Although society in her time still had class divisions, Clare made all members equal because she knew that human beings are all equal, since they are all part of Jesus' mystical body. Clare believed that a woman's discipleship to Christ could be fulfilled by every woman who is faithful to God as Mary of Nazareth and her mother Ortulana had been.

### Conclusion

The mother and daughter relationship is a life-giving relationship. The love between Ortulana and Clare reminds us of how important the relation-

ship between mother and daughter is. Ortulana's and Clare's relationship started before Clare's birth. This is true for every human being since God had formed the human being before he or she was born—just as God had already planned for Clare's birth while she was in her mother's womb.

Clare learned trusting and caring in her mother's womb. These trusting and caring characteristics affected Clare's relationship with the God she trusted throughout her life. Ortulana and Clare shared their loving relationship with each other and others by nurturing, caring, loving, and nourishing those who came to them. Ortulana and Clare built up their loving relationship as God's co-workers reciprocally and dynamically for the kingdom of God. The mother and daughter relationship is naturally given by God, but it is up to the individuals to build it up lovingly.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Introduction to "Self in Relation" section in *Weaving The Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, Judith Plaskow & Carol P. Christ, eds. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1989), p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>Jean Baker Miller, "The Development of Women's Sense of Self," in *Women's Spirituality: Resource for Christian Development*, ed. Joann Wolski Conn., 2d ed. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986, 1996), p. 165.

<sup>3</sup>Pope John Paul II on *The Genius of Women* (United States Catholic Conference (Washington, D.C., 1997), pp. 13-14.

<sup>4</sup>Luise Eichenbaum & Susie Orbach, "The Construction of Femininity" in *Women's Spirituality: Resource for Christian Development*, ed. Joann Wolski Conn, 2d ed. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1986, 1996), p.187.

<sup>5</sup>Eisenbaum and Orbach, p. 86.

<sup>6</sup>Ingrid J. Peterson, O.S.F. *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993), p. 49.

<sup>7</sup>Peterson., p. 52.

<sup>8</sup>Peterson: p. 36.

<sup>9</sup>Peterson, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup>*Clare of Assisi: Letter of the Ministers General* (Franciscan Publishers, 1993), 12.

<sup>11</sup>Peterson, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup>Peterson., p. 368.

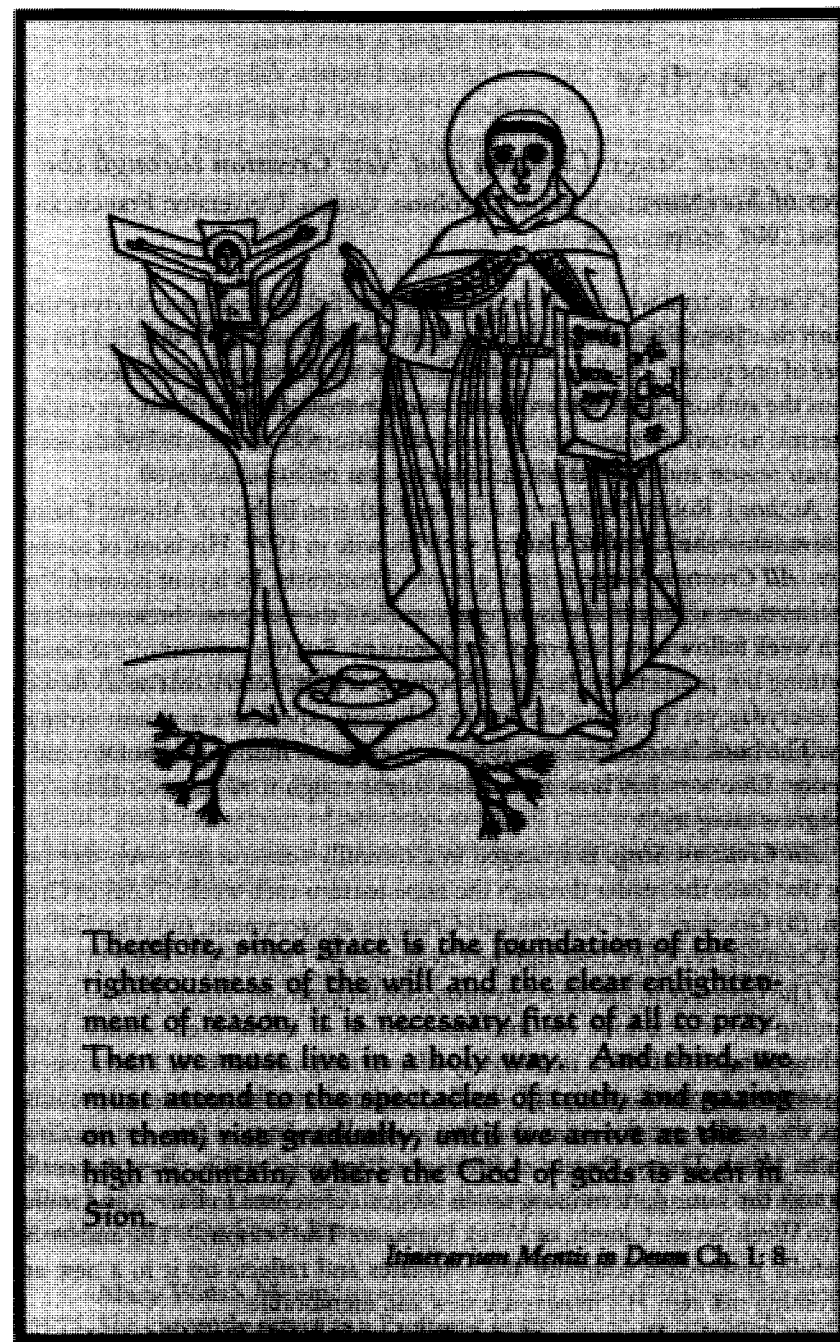
<sup>13</sup>Peterson, p. 368.

<sup>14</sup>Peterson, p. 368.

<sup>15</sup>Eichenbaum and Orbach, p. 192.

<sup>16</sup>Ronda Chervin, *Feminine, Free and Faithful* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 32.

<sup>17</sup>Leo Zanchettin, "The Story of St. Clare of Assisi: A Bright and Shining Light," in *The Word Among Us* (January 2003), p. 54.



## BOOK REVIEW

***All Creation Sings: Creation and New Creation through the Eyes of Scripture.*** J. Robert Jacobson. Quincy University: Franciscan Press, 2002. 567p.

"...(T)ruth is true whether it is natural (scientific) or supernatural (revealed). Truth that lies within the scope of human research and truth that lies beyond it are of one piece...the former concerns *data*...the latter concerns *meaning*...." Thus the author begins the brief introduction to his book with an apt contrast of terms: natural vis-à-vis supernatural; scientific truth or revealed truth; within human reason and beyond human reason; *data* versus *meaning*.

Author J. Robert Jacobson is a retired Lutheran Bishop of Alberta, Canada, received into the Catholic Church with his wife in 1999. His book of meditations, *All Creation Sings*, is itself a book of contrasts. Its layout is careful and precise; there are meditations for every week of the year, and the seven days of each week follow a set pattern of development. But the content of the book is anything but predictable. Jacobson's writing is pure poetry that soars beyond the everyday, yet it touches the depths of human experience in a most ordinary way. The book has the feel of scripture, of poetry, of human psychology and of science. One wonders how a librarian might assign it to just one Library of Congress category!

*All Creation Sings* is arranged in a carefully constructed seven-day outline that leads the reader through the same pattern each week: (i) Act of Creation; (ii) Goodness of Creation; (iii) Creature as Sacrament; (iv) The Fall and the Creature; (v) The Cross and the Creature; (vi) The Creature and Worship; (vii) The Creature in the New Creation. So, for example, Week Thirty-Three: Naming Creatures, took me into the Garden of Eden; then outside Eden; finding glimpses of Eden in everyday life; turning my back on Eden; repenting; seeking reconciliation; and, finally, holding onto the promise of paradise. Lest the reader get the sense that this is usual meditation fare, let me direct you to Week Thirty: Beasts of Burden, wherein Jacobson takes the reader through the same pattern using seven biblical references to burros and mules! Or to Week Seven: Clouds, or Week Eighteen: The Seasons". The author has carefully researched scripture and translates and reflects on it in a new and refreshing manner. His images are new and memorable.

*All Creation Sings* is both delightful and profound and I found myself reading it in multiple ways. I read it simply for its poetic language and images. I found myself—contrary to the author's advice—reading a whole week's worth

of meditations at one sitting, just to find out how the theme would be developed. Often I just lingered over a single line that lodged itself in my heart. And—taking the author's advice—I used the book for daily meditation. In the process my mind cataloged a litany of friends to whom I would like to introduce this book. I have succumbed to its depth and to its magic.

M. Catherine Gurley, O.S.F.  
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778

***In this fallen world there is often a wide gap  
between God's design for us  
and the design we actually live by,  
between God's call to us  
and the voice we actually follow...***

***J. Robert Jacobson, p. 356***

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## About Our Contributors

**Kerr Houston** is an assistant professor of art history at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. His dissertation (2001) studied the placement and gendered aspects of paintings executed for the early Clares. He also has worked on late medieval images of the martyrdom of Catherine as well as on the films of Spike Lee.

**Madge Karecki, SSJ-TOSF**, is a graduate of the Franciscan Institute and serves as the Program Director of the Franciscan Institute of Southern Africa, established in 1994. She has been a frequent contributor to *The Cord*.

**Clara Heo, SFMA**, is a member of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi. The article in this issue is an excerpt from her Master's thesis ("Clare of Assisi: A Study of Her Loving Relationships in Light") written at the Collego of Our Lady of the Elms, in Chicopee, Massachusetts. In June, 2003, she returned to her native South Korea.

**Mary Walsh Meany** received her Ph. D. from Fordham University in 1975. She currently serves as a Professor in the Religious Studies Department of Siena College in Poughkeepsie, NY. Her areas of study include the medieval Franciscan tradition and the *Vita Christi* genre of medieval spirituality.



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## 2003 Fall Programs\*

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Facilitated by Ingrid Peterson, OSF from Rochester, Minnesota. Sister Ingrid will be assisted by Elise Saggau, OSF from Little Falls, Minnesota. The retreat will be based on the new three-volume edition of primary sources, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (The Saint, The Founder, The Prophet) to discover how our present-day understanding of Francis is shaped by the way his story was passed on during the first 150 years after his death. Reflections will focus on the way Francis's story as saint, founder, and prophet reflect our own spiritual journey. While persons who have access to the four volumes are advised to bring them as a resource, they are not required for the retreat.

Cost: \$300. Register by July 28 with non-refundable \$50 deposit.

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 (9:00 AM-3:00 PM) — ST. FRANCIS CENTER Contemplative/Centering Prayer Workshop

Presenter: Sister Joan Tuberty, OSF. Come, spend a day learning about an ancient and contemporary prayer, "Centering Prayer," and "Lectio Divina" (sacred reading)! Explore what Francis and Clare teach us about living our lives centered in Christ and lives that are more "centered."

Cost: \$25 (includes lunch).

Register by September 17 with \$10 non-refundable deposit.

### OCTOBER 10 (6 PM) — OCTOBER 12 (NOON) — ST. FRANCIS CENTER Franciscan Peacemaking and Nonviolence

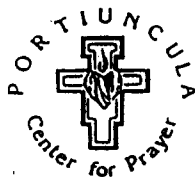
This weekend workshop directed by a team from the Peace & Bene Nonviolence Service in Oakland, California will help participants claim a role as active peacemaker. Franciscans, following the spirit of Francis and Clare, have a strong tradition of peacemaking and reconciliation. The workshop is built on the Gospel and Franciscan value of nonviolence. Participants will be helped to creatively pursue peace by building just relationships based on respect, equality, and a search for harmony.

Cost: \$130 (includes meals and two overnights.)

Register by September 1 with \$30 non-refundable deposit.

\*For more information on these or other programs, or to register, contact:

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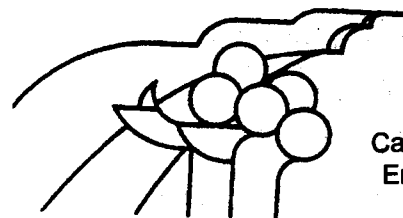


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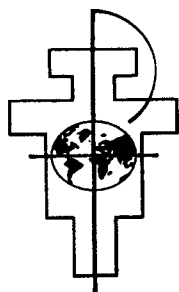
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**Saturday, September 27, 2003. 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** Contemplative/Centering Prayer Workshop. Presenter: Sr. Jean Tuberty, OSF. For more information, see ad, p. 217.

**Friday, October 10, 2003-Sunday, October 12, 2003.** Franciscan Peacemaking and Nonviolence. For details, see ad, p. 217.

**Thursday evening, October 23, 2003-Sunday noon, October 26, 2003.** The Franciscan Connection, with Ann Weltin, OSF and Nancy Miller, OSF. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation, Regions, 4 and 5. At Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort, IL. For more information, contact Sr. Deborah Suddarth at 815.464.3873.

**Friday, October 24, 2003-Sunday, October 26, 2003.** Painting and Poetry: Faces. Mary Lou Sleevi. At the Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. For information, call 610.558.6152 or send an e-mail to fsc@osfphila.org.

**Saturday, November 8, 2003-Friday, December 19, 2003.** The 40 Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat. Portiuncula Center, Frankfort, IL. For details, see ad, p. 218.

**Friday, November 14, 2003-Sunday, November 16.** The Formation of Lay Communities. Darleen Pryds, Ph.D. At the Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, AS 85253. For information, call 1.800.356.3247 or send an email to casa@thecasa.org.

## Abbreviations

### Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BIL	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 of the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
Off	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule ( <i>Regula non bullata</i> )
LR	The Later Rule ( <i>Regula bullata</i> )
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 Jacopone 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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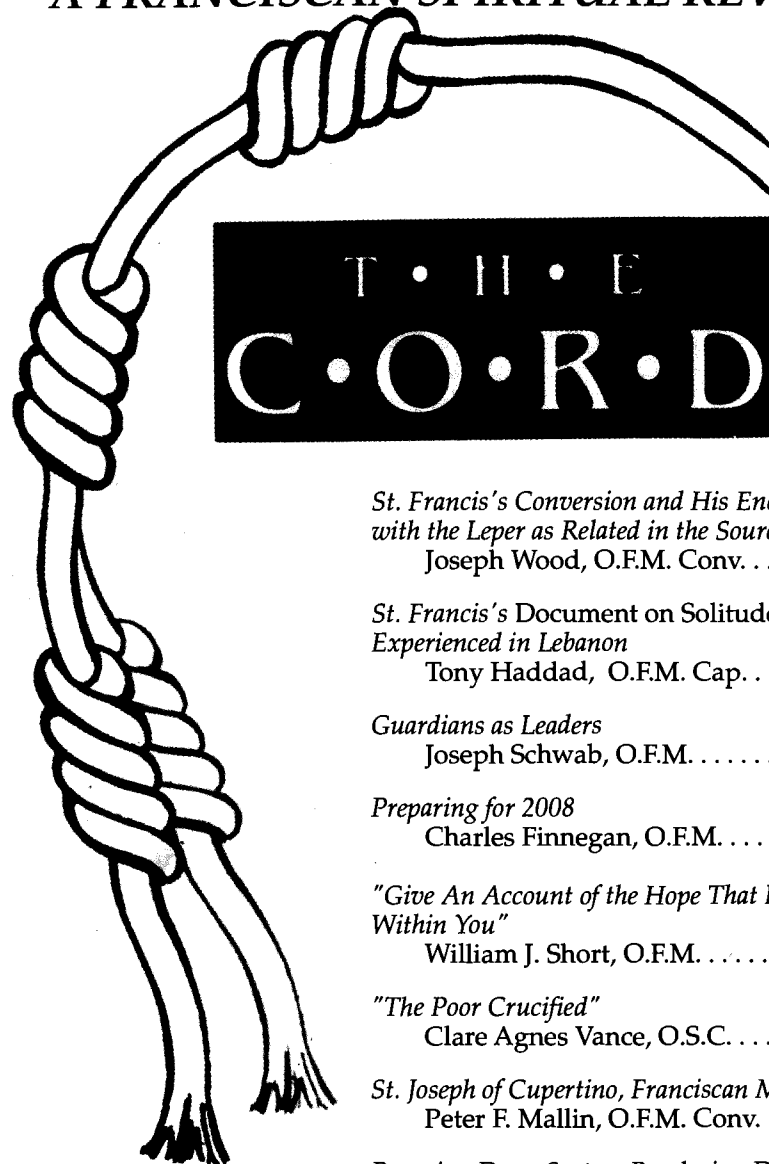
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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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**THE CORD**  
**A Franciscan Spiritual Review**

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

1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 14th ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined. Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:  
(1Cor. 13:6).      (2Cel 5:8).  
(RegNB 23:2).      (4LAg 2:13).

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

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*The Cord*, 53.5(2003)

**Editorial**

By the time the reader opens this issue, we'll have passed the second anniversary of the tragic events of 9/11/01, we'll be six months past the entry of American soldiers into Iraq, and the summer of 2003 will be drawing to its close. . . so much living and dying in the midst of ordinary days. Our lives move on so quickly—and not always smoothly, sad to say. The autumn is a time when both nature and human considerations of the realities of change give pause, because the change that is the dying process clearly manifests itself in beauty all around us. The contradiction is real, the awareness of change inescapable.

It was so for Francis, too, was it not? He and his companions lived through experiences of war, illness, social upheaval, the interior changes we call conversion . . . and the birth of the Franciscan/Clarian forms of life—all of which move to the forefront of our thoughts as Franciscans during the months of September and October.

The following pages are devoted to articles that bring us into dialogue with the consequences of being Franciscan, especially in the context of being Friars Minor. As the July/August issue focused on Clare and her life, so this issue focuses on Francis and his legacy. A piece on Francis's encounter with the leper—the core moment of his conversion—brings together the story as it was told by different writers, and gives us new insight into the generosity of that gesture. Other articles explore the response to the *Document on Solitude* by new followers of Francis in Lebanon; a reflection on the challenges of being guardian-leaders; a Franciscan explication of the theology of hope in our day; a poem to honor the feast of the Stigmata of Francis; a reflection on the Franciscan mystic Jopseph of Cupertino, and then an invitation to rescue the study of the great Franciscan theologian, John Duns Scotus. (This will not be the last we hear of the Subtle Doctor; he shall rise again, in our next issue!)

In presenting these diverse topics, our intention is to enrich and broaden the perspectives from which we see all things. Whether we prefer "lighter" or "heavier" writing, I encourage each of us to embrace with new enthusiasm the example and teachings of Francis of Assisi, who loved his God above all else, and loved his neighbor, wishing each person he met "Peace and all good!" May our Seraphic Father, and all the feasts we celebrate in his honor at this season of the year, show us once again that it is in dying we are born to eternal life.

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*

## **St. Francis's Conversion and His Encounter with the Leper as Related in the Early Sources**

Joseph Wood, O.F.M. Conv.

### **Introduction**

It is unnecessary to state that the Franciscan Order transformed the world in ways of which most people are not even consciously aware. The itinerant friars broke with the monolith of monasticism to take God out of the orderly cloister and dance with him in the messy marketplace. The jovial friars defied the heresy of Catharism and preached the goodness of the body, and the goodness of marriage. The Franciscan pope, Nicholas IV, commissioned the first serious book of medicine in the West, further confirming his community's desire to heal soul and body. Mathematical friars taught accounting and ethics to merchants; diplomatic friars negotiated for peace as ambassadors between princes; charitable friars built orphanages, hospitals, and trade schools; academic friars researched, debated, and clarified the mysteries of God. Thus, the friars confronted tyrants, were honored by popes, made delegates of rulers, sought after as advocates for the uneducated, despised by jealous university professors, and revered by the poor.

And we may also say that such movement, such energy for good and transformation on every level of society, is actually rooted in one man's conversion story. When he was a young man of twenty-three, probably in the spring of 1205, St. Francis of Assisi had a personal encounter with Christ the Lord. And although that meeting may have taken on various forms—a talking crucifix, clothing a poor knight, receiving a dream vision of castles and armor, and embracing a leper—the outcome was the same. Francis met Christ in a personal way and he was changed forever. Even while writing his deathbed Testament, Francis himself focused on the leper as being the culmination of his conversion story.

### **Leprosy in Society and the Church**

I would first like to offer some background information about leprosy so that the audience may better appreciate the depth of courage it took for Francis

to embrace and serve such people. Leprosy has often been confused with other diseases of the skin. Fear of the extreme symptoms of leprosy has caused the public of every age to shudder in fear and disgust. Any hint of contagion has always led the populace of a community to restrict, to alienate and even to abandon such victims.

It was only in 1874 that Dr. Armauer Hansen proposed the bacillus *Mycobacterium leper* as the microbe that causes leprosy. It is after this date that leprosy assumes the more innocuous title of Hansen's Disease. Part of the difficulty in finally determining the microbe was its incredibly long incubation period, which could be between six months to twenty years.

A leper suffers from deformities of every sort. The whole nervous system is affected and damaged. The victim may have a fever for months on end. There is loss of sensation and paralysis of muscles. He may have an inability to close his eyes that causes a scary unblinking stare. The skin sags, it becomes wrinkled, puffy, and swollen. Joints become rigid, limbs become dislocated, and digits on toes and fingers shorten. When the nerve endings decay and one loses the sensation of pain, the victim can easily receive wounds that will go unnoticed and thereby invite infection. Ulcerations will occur on the nose, hands and mouth making the voice raspy. The victim could easily suffocate from growths, swelling and inflammation of the throat.

The New Testament (Lk 5:12) demonstrates Christ's compassion on the sufferer of the disease. A man falls prostrate begging Christ to be healed. Jesus says that he wills that the man be made "clean." He touches him, and the leprosy leaves him immediately.

The Old Testament (Lv. 13:3) made the regulation that the priests were the professionals called upon to examine a patient who showed the signs of the disease. By the Middle Ages the injunction was broadened to include doctors. Sometimes up to six or twelve people could be called in to analyze the diseased person. And even if, in the end, the patient was misdiagnosed, one can say that at least Christianity was able to instill enough of a sense of compassion to insist on a greater number of testimonies. Because of the suffering of some friend or relative it seems that there came about a parallel fear of misdiagnosis. But of course, there was a great discrepancy between compassion and fear from place to place. People were terrified of the disease. Not only did it mean a tortuous and slow death, but it also meant that one would be alienated from one's family and town. There was no regular pattern of caring for lepers. One village may be populated by heartier souls who would charitably aide in bathing wounds and feeding lepers, but in another town, lepers could be hunted down and burned alive.

Leprosy, however, was more than a disease to the medievals. It carried with it the stigma of a punishment from God for some hidden sin of one's own or of a member of one's family, a concept as old as the bible. A physician or

priest therefore could comfort a leper by saying that the disease was a sign that God had deigned to save his soul, but he would simultaneously admonish that the infected person was also a corrupt sinner.

The Third Lateran Council of 1179 obliged that every bishop should establish and maintain leprosariums. The chaplain should be a man of good reputation and mature age. The Council also expected that a ceremony of separation be offered as comfort to the victim. The ceremony would be similar to a funeral. The priest would walk to the altar, sprinkle holy water, and say something comparable to the following: "My dear little poor man . . . by means of great sadness and tribulation . . . one gains the kingdom of heaven . . . where there is no sickness or sorrow, where all is pure . . . and without stain. . . Be a good Christian, bear with patience this adversity and God will be merciful to you. My brother this separation has to do only with your body, the spirit that is more important, is with you as before. . . Charitable men will provide for your lesser needs and God will never abandon you. Take care of yourself and have patience. God is with you. Amen." The priest would then take a handful of earth and sprinkle it three times on the head of the victim, saying, "Die to the world and be born again in God." Toward the end of the ceremony, the priest would offer the person a robe, gloves, a flask for drinking, and then explain the prohibitions he must now maintain. He must not go to any public place, drink from a well or a stream, and he should not marry, except another leper. He should carry an instrument for warning people of his presence, a rattle, a bell, or castanets, either on a pole or on his shoes (Fortini 209).

And believe it or not, there were even some highly placed leprophobes who were intent on making the leper's nightmare even worse. King Henry II of England, who reigned during the young life of St. Francis, had a tremendous influence on the continent because he was also the ruler of most of France at the time. Henry felt that a religious ceremony of separation was unnecessary. He instituted a civil ceremony that included strapping the leper to a post and setting it on fire. His great grandson, Edward I, permitted lepers the comfort of a Christian funeral, but then had them led to a cemetery where they were buried alive.

## Assisi and its Leprosariums

Arnaldo Fortini writes that the hospital for the lepers of the Commune of Assisi stood near the castle of Arce. Recent historians are now considering that there were actually two leprosariums in that location at the crossroads to Assisi. Two stone churches are all that remain. One could have been dedicated to women, the other to men, or some say, one was dedicated to lepers from the upper classes, and the other dedicated to lepers from the lower classes. We are not sure. What is important for us to see here—even before discussing Francis's

encounter—was that these leprosariums (among others in Assisi) were right in the path of the town itself. It was the custom of the ancient Romans to place their funeral monuments on the roads leading to the cities. People visiting would naturally pass by and pray for the city's dead. By the time of Francis those Roman funerary monuments had fallen into ruin but did provide some shelter for lepers—the living dead. Anyone on their way to the town would have to walk very near the leprosariums to reach their final destination.

## The First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano The Leper Episode: 1C 7:17/ v. 1, p.195

N.B.: In order to appreciate the hagiographical portrayal of Francis's encounter with the leper, it is necessary to view it from the broader picture of the events that come before and after it. Thus, if the leper story in First Celano is located in chapter 7, we will review the story from the vantage point of starting in the preceding chapter.

Chapter 6 of First Celano has Francis's mother freeing him from the basement prison of the family home where the father had placed him. Shortly afterward, the father, still upset about Francis's wayward behavior, dragged his son to the bishop demanding retribution. Francis strips himself, and as the text reads "he went out naked and wrestled with the naked" (1C 6:15).

Chapter 7 begins with Francis wandering in the snow half-dressed when bandits attack him. Telling the men that he is the "Herald of the Great King" (1C 7:16) only earns him their ridicule. They beat and mock him. He then walks to a monastery near Gubbio and works in the kitchen. The biographer tells of Francis's continued abuse even by the monks. Francis only begs for some soup and a more substantial covering. But he is offered neither. It is said that "no mercy was shown him" (1C 7:16). Francis moves on, "forced more by necessity than by anger" (1C 7:16). In the town of Gubbio an old friend gives him a cheap tunic, but at least something more substantial than what he had been wearing. Immediately afterward, out of "profound humility," (1C 7:17) Francis goes among the lepers "and stays with them" (1C 7:17). Chapter 8 has Francis at San Damiano rebuilding it for "Holy Virgins," (1C 8:18) as he prophesies.

It is a sad commentary that so many people in a row showed no mercy to Francis, no matter the misunderstanding of his behavior. He is badly treated by his father (his flesh and blood), misunderstood by the bishop (the representative of Christ), roughly abused by robbers (men outside the law), and even by monks (men whose Rule clearly states that they must welcome all strangers like Christ). And yet, after all of that, Francis rejoices. He keeps his wits about him and goes to serve those who have been even more abused than he himself. Francis goes among the lepers, and the text poignantly and compassionately

states, "he stayed among them" (1C 7:17). He stayed among them and served them with great love. He washed and cleaned their sores. He was determined to show more mercy and charity toward them than had been shown to him.

This is abandonment. This is utmost poverty, a virtue that this former merchant is purchasing with a vengeance. The lepers had no control over their lives. They were at the mercy of all external circumstances and elements. Unlike them, Francis had choices. But his free-will choice was to go among the lepers. Francis's feelings of loneliness, of misunderstanding, and abandonment call something out of him to service, not self-pity. No doubt, the suffering of all involved is somewhat assuaged when Francis goes among them, and stays.

After his encounter with the lepers there seems to be a flashback in the text. First Celano begins to write about Francis's progressive conversion. Celano states, as do the other sources, that this event of being among the lepers could have really only happened after a conscious desire on his part toward self-improvement. First Celano records that while being in the world, while being a part of it, Francis was still a helper of the poor. "He extended a hand of mercy to those who had nothing and he poured out compassion for the afflicted" (1C 7:17). First Celano wants to state, or to remind his audience, that Francis was always a "polite" man (1C 7:17), meaning that he was a chivalrous man. As a young man, he had determined never to refuse to offer something to anyone begging in the name of God, the Great King. And it will become clearer that this very ideal of chivalry is what First Celano wants to uphold to his audience. Francis's greatest desire was to be a knight, and in the end he did attain his wish. He became the ideal knight (as Bonaventure and the Assisi Giotto cycle will show later). Francis was actually knighted for bravery (the stigmata) because of the terrible deeds he courageously endured in the name of his Sovereign High Liege (Christ). Francis, the "knight of the Poor Christ," remains faithful to the chivalrous code of honor of serving the Church and caring for the helpless.

To pursue this knightly analogy further, immediately following the leper story and the flashback of an earlier chivalrous commitment, chapter eight introduces the reader to the Lady Clare. Every knight fights dragons and accomplishes heroic deeds for the purpose of winning the hand of a lady-love. Clare, a woman "noble by lineage, but more noble by grace . . . brilliant in name, more brilliant in life, most brilliant in character" (1C 8:18), is however, not a woman for his exclusive love, rather, she "stands as the foundation for all the other stones" (1C 8:18). Like his going among and staying with the lepers, so now Francis repairs San Damiano, staying among the Poor Ladies, women whom he has also helped to free from their prisons of a predetermined life.

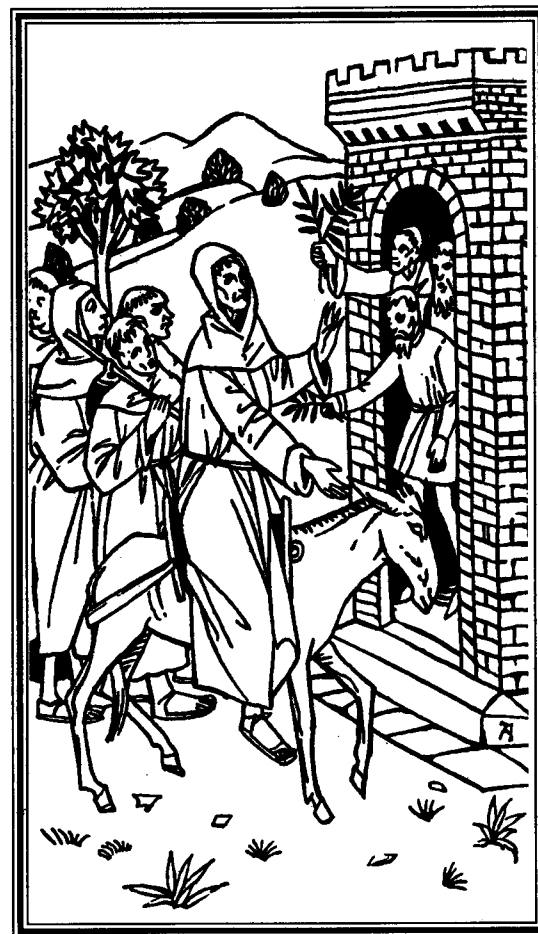
## The Legend of the Three Companions

The Leper Episode: L3C 4:11 / vol. II, p. 74

Chapter 3 of the Three Companions speaks of the Lord visiting Francis's heart for the first time at a large and loud gathering of friends. But Francis's mind wanders. A friend notices his melancholy and asks if he is thinking of taking a bride. Francis answers in his poetically and mysterious fashion. He says that his friend is right. He will soon take a bride. And not just any bride, but one "more noble, wealthier, and more beautiful" (L3C 3:7) than anyone has ever seen.

The story continues with a listing of Francis's virtues. Similar to First Celano, The Three Companions also offers the audience a flashback of Francis's early resolution to be a benefactor to the poor. The Companions state that although he was fanciful in everything else, he was not irregular about his

sincere sense of service. But it was after this moment of sharing his pending nuptials that he "proposed in his heart" (L3C 3:8) that he would never deny anyone asking for something in the name of the Lord. He vowed that if he had no money he would give a beggar his hat or his belt, but one way or another he would make sure that he never sent anyone away empty handed. A further touching note mentions that he would even purchase things for adorning churches and "secretly send them to poor priests" (L3C 3:8). When his father was away, Francis would fill the table with an abundance of bread. After the meal with his mother, he would give the remains as alms to the poor.



This generosity accompanies Francis when he makes a pilgrimage to Rome, to the church of the apostle Peter. There he notices the meager offerings made by so many. Because he believes the prince of the apostles should be greatly honored, Francis enthusiastically throws a handful of coins into the alms grating. Francis, the cloth merchant's son, walks outside the great church and exchanges his clothing with a poor man. Is he playing dress-up or dress-down? He is always changing clothes, changing costumes, changing places. This time he will play the childhood game of pretending to be a prince-in-disguise in imitation and in honor of Peter-the-Fisherman, a prince-in-disguise. When he is finished pretending to be a beggar, Francis retrieves his clothing and returns to Assisi.

The end of chapter 3 states that Francis sought counsel from God alone, and periodically from the bishop of Assisi. This is a very diplomatically worded statement. The Companions want to assure the audience that Francis is divinely inspired while at the same time showing reverence to legitimate earthly authority. The cover letter of *The Three Companions* is addressed to the Minister General, Crescentius. Being written almost twenty years after the death of Francis, no doubt *The Three Companions* wanted to show their absolute loyalty to authority. Only this way perhaps would their version of Francis's life be appreciated and disseminated.

Now that the audience knows that Francis and his followers are reverent to the authority of the Church (St. Peter) and to the authority of the Order (Crescentius), it can fully appreciate his Catholicity when his life's desire of following the Poor Christ is legitimated when he meets the highest authority—Christ himself.

The Three Companions state quite simply “one day he was riding his horse near Assisi, when he met a leper” (L3C 4:11). And although Francis was usually fearful of drawing near anyone with the disease, he dismounted and gave the man a coin. Francis kissed the man's hand, and then went further to offer him an embrace of peace. After a few days he felt compelled to do more. He decided to visit a hospital of lepers. He took a large sum of money with him. He called them together and he kissed the hand of each, then gave them alms.

The Three Companions has Francis meeting one individual leper on the road, and then deciding to go to their hospice where he encounters many at once. First Celano has Francis meeting a large number of lepers intentionally, not by chance. First Celano is also the only legend that has Francis walking to meet the lepers. Every other following source has Francis on a horse. Perhaps it is a more dramatic picture to have someone who is still in the world to dismount. Dismounting shows respect to an equal or a superior. It is a greater action of descending to a lower position than just having Francis walk on a

scene already humiliated, as in First Celano. The Three Companions conclude the episode with Francis's own words in his Testament saying that he “stayed among them and served them with great humility” (L3C 4:11).

It is after the leper scene that Francis, the brave knight, having conquered his fears, turns back into the boy playing at games. He runs off to pray. He cannot just sit still in his father's shop. Something extraordinary has happened. He needs to take action in the extraordinary. The following episode is one of those charming memories that give us a glimpse of the man who remained an innocent boy (at least, forever in the eyes of those “who were with him”). It seems important for *The Three Companions* to speak about Francis's friends as often as they speak about Francis himself. Francis is the first saint whom we know actually had friends (not just disciples). We know their names, we know their personalities. Francis needs to pray. But he doesn't want to be alone. He invites one of his close friends, one “whom he loved very much” (L3C 4:12) to accompany him to a secluded place, telling his friend “that he had found a great and precious treasure” (L3C 4:12). The friend stayed outside, dutifully guarding the cave so that Francis would not be disturbed. As any long-time friend of Francis would have known, there really was no secret treasure, except the pure treasure of being in his company.

Francis had again defeated a dragon, many dragons, in fact. He had met the living dead. Now he needed to purify himself, to be alone in prayer and to reflect on what had happened. But as courageous as he was, he never liked going anywhere without a companion. Francis creates not magic, but enchantment. The Middle Ages were a time when adolescence did not exist, and childhood only lasted until age seven, when a boy would be apprenticed to a trade or to a knight. So this playfulness of Francis, even as old as he was—twenty-three—is charming for us, and no doubt, remained captivating for his own generation.

It is after the encounter with the leper and after prayer in a cave, when *The Three Companions* relate that the crucifix of San Damiano speaks to him. The legend first states how “his companions noticed a change in him” (L3C 5:13). After a few days Francis felt the Spirit telling him to go inside the church to pray. Once inside, he prayed intensely before the crucifix and it spoke “in a tender and kind voice” (L3C 5:13). It said clearly, “Francis don't you see that my house is being destroyed? Go then and rebuild it for me” (L3C 5:13). Upon leaving the church he found the priest sitting nearby. He offered him a handful of coins and instructed him to buy some oil for the lamp so that it should continually burn in front of the crucifix.

The Three Companions relate that this is the culminating moment of union when their best friend chooses which one of them will be his best friend. They concede. The winner is the Crucified. The Companions relate that it

was “after that vision and the message of the image of the Crucified, (that) he was always conformed to the passion of Christ until his death” (L3C 5:15). In his early life, Francis’s good deeds were done in silence. The leper speaks in silence. The cave speaks in silence. But now, Christ from the cross—speaks aloud.

### The Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano: “The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul”

The Leper Episode: 2C 5: 9 / vol. II, p. 248

Second Celano begins with a long and poetic presentation of Francis’s purpose in life as being made clear from his very birth and baptism. He is named “John” after the herald of the Lord. For that is truly what Francis will become. That is what he thought he was when the robbers in First Celano tossed him into the snow. And that is what the contemporaries of Second Celano now also officially believe.

Second Celano moves at a swifter pace than First Celano. There is only a brief paragraph about the war between Assisi and Perugia. Second Celano prefers to dwell on Francis’s captivity after the war because Francis’s baptismal namesake was also “held in an earthly prison” (2C 1:4). Again, every knight must endure a trial. Here Francis is chained and in prison. His fellow prisoners are understandably overcome with sadness in their disgrace. Second Celano says the men wept bitterly over their situation. Francis tries to bolster their spirits and begins to make fun of his chains. However, there is one knight who is unbearable and the other prisoners avoid him. But Francis is determined not to have his patience worn down. “He tolerated the intolerable” (2C 1:4) and restored everyone to peace.

After being freed from prison, Second Celano relates that Francis became even more generous to the needy. Instead of caring for himself and his own needs once back in his comfortable home—as already foreseen in First Celano and The Three Companions—Francis will become super-heroic. He goes beyond what is expected. As in the earlier two sources, Francis is determined never to turn his face from anyone who begs for anything for the love of God.

One day Francis meets a poor and half-naked knight. As a man of true gallantry, Francis appreciates the ordered ranking of his society. He is moved with pity and can feel the man’s humiliation. Once again, the cloth merchant’s son easily removes his finely tailored clothing and gives them to the poor knight. The commentary goes on to compare Francis with St. Martin, a knight of Tours, France. “Both lived poor and humble in this world and both entered rich into heaven” (2C 2:5). The story goes on to relate that having carried out Christ’s command, Francis, like Martin before him, deserved to be visited by Christ in a vision.

Next, Second Celano has Francis going off to Apulia to enlist in a war. His desire for an earthly recognition of honor is too strong to resist. But the dream-vision of Spoleto tells him to turn around and return to Assisi. Chapter 3 has Francis being mocked in the streets by children because of his poorly dressed appearance. In chapter 4, Francis goes on pilgrimage to Rome to the tomb of St. Peter. As in the preceding legends, Francis generously casts his money into the alms grate and then exchanges his clothes with a beggar and begs for a while.

In Chapter 5, Second Celano reminds his audience that Francis had a natural horror of lepers. But one day while riding his horse near Assisi he met a leper on the road. And even though he felt “terrified and revolted” (2C 5:9) he dismounted and ran to kiss the man who was only expecting alms. Here in Second Celano, and also in Bonaventure, we see Francis mounting his horse “and although the field was wide open without any obstructions, when he looked around he could not see the leper anywhere” (2C 5:9). Are Second Celano and Bonaventure saying that there are no longer any obstacles in Francis’s life? Is his mission now clear? Francis is filled with joy and wonder at this encounter and within a few days Second Celano tells us that he deliberately tries to do something even more daring. As in The Three Companions, Francis consciously made his way to the houses of some lepers and gave money to each one and a kiss as well. Second Celano adds The Three Companions’ version of Francis doing more than just meeting one leper by chance. He takes action, and deliberately goes to the battleground of his disgust. The commentary states, “that he took the bitter for the sweet and courageously prepared to carry out the rest” (2C 5:9).

Chapter 6 explains that now with his heart already changed—soon his body was also to be changed. “He was walking one day by the church of San Damiano which was abandoned by everyone and almost in ruins” (2C 6:10). The word “abandoned” may recall that everyone whom he has met thus far in his conversion story has been abandoned: the irritable knight in prison, the poor knight on the road, the leper, and now even a building. Francis again feels moved by the Spirit (as in The Three Companions version), and he kneels down and devoutly prays before the crucifix. Second Celano writes that Francis was shaken by an unusual feeling and something unheard of then happened. The lips of the painted image of Christ crucified spoke to him. Second Celano and Bonaventure say that he was “called by name” (2C 6:10), a reference to the commissioning of Old Testament prophets. Francis now “is” John the Baptist, a herald for a new age. The voice is very clear. It tells Francis to go and rebuild the house of God, which he can see is falling into ruin. Francis is trembling; he is not just stunned, as Second Celano writes. But Francis was prepared to obey and carry out Christ’s command. Celano writes, “from that time on compas-



sion for the crucified was impressed on his holy soul and that the wounds of the sacred passion were impressed deep within his heart though not yet in his flesh" (2C 6:10). However, we may say that the impression of Christ's love had been impressing itself into his heart for some time with all of his conversion encounters.

### The Major Life of St. Francis by St. Bonaventure The Leper Episode: LMj 1:5 / v. II, p. 533

Unlike First Celano, Bonaventure begins his *legenda* by saying that from birth God graciously snatched Francis from the dangers of worldly influences. Bonaventure is reluctant to show Francis starting life as a good man, who although he indulged himself in some pleasure, he still never gave himself over to the temptation of the flesh or to the greed of his profession as a merchant. Bonaventure is holding up Francis as a man of flesh and blood but who maintained a will power for doing the right thing. Francis's example is being upheld as a mirror for a religious community that has grown rather large with individuals who can be exasperatingly self-willed.

As in all of the earlier sources, Bonaventure states that from an early age Francis resolved not to turn a deaf ear to anyone who begged out of divine love. Here Bonaventure, as the earlier authors, is stating that Francis has free will. He is freely choosing to be good. Francis makes a resolution for his young life that will demonstrate strength of character for his whole life. Francis was never manipulated by any majority opinion around him that anyone should be treated as an inferior because of disease or accident of birth. In this we may say that Francis was not acting out of fear, out of a desire for human reward, or compelled by threat of divine retribution. Francis was acting out of love. One can easily sense Bonaventure's crafting of Francis's image as a perfect role model for the community and as a perfect follower of the newly approved Narbonne Constitutions. Bonaventure thus goes on to praise Francis's virtues in superlative tones: his sensitivity, his gentleness, his fine manners, his patience, and his affability. These are all external signs that would naturally single him out as a model young man. This is a far cry from First Celano who speaks of Francis as being wretched, miserable and having squandered his youth (1C 1:2).

Bonaventure does not speak about Francis going to war or being put into prison. He, like Second Celano, moves very quickly through the early life of Francis and leaves out many details. Was he doing this because the community had grown large, and had spread beyond the Alps? Did he think that most of the friars would not be interested in knowing some of the details? Or is he more focused on another agenda? Bonaventure merely states that "the hand of the Lord afflicted his body with a prolonged illness because sometimes affliction can enlighten spiritual awareness" (LMj 1:2). When the strength of his

body was restored, as in Second Celano, Francis meets a poor and badly dressed knight. He is moved to assist the man and thus exchanges his garments with him on the spot.

Bonaventure, like The Legend of the Three Companions, divides the dream-vision of Spoleto into two parts. He says that the evening following his encounter with the poor knight, Francis had a dream vision of a splendid palace with military armaments. He hears Christ telling him that the mercy Francis had shown "to the poor knight out of love for the supreme king would be repaid with an incomparable reward" (LMj 1:3). Francis awoke, and continued on his way to Apulia, confident that the vision meant he would indeed obtain the glory of knighthood. But in a neighboring city he paused for the night again and experienced another dream-vision. He heard the Lord speaking to him in a familiar way. The voice asked Francis "who can do more for you, a lord or a servant, a rich person or one who is poor?" (LMj 1:3). Francis replied correctly. The Lord then asked "Why are you abandoning the lord for a servant . . . ?" (LMj 1:3). The word "abandon" emerges again. Can even the King of Heaven feel "abandoned" if his creatures do not understand and obey his will? This is a very personal God indeed.

Francis returns to Assisi. Bonaventure continues to leave out countless details about how Francis would have been treated once he arrived back home. But Bonaventure seems to be interested in more than the overall story. Could it be more expedient for him to glean only certain events from Francis's life, preferring to transform them into parables with moral lessons that are complete within themselves?

Bonaventure plays on Francis's past as a merchant. He says that Francis is now a spiritual and wise merchant who seeks the correct profit, the pearl of great price. That pearl is now made concrete in his encounter with the leper. As simple and as straight forward as the earlier sources, Bonaventure tells us that one day while riding he met a leper. He was struck with not a little horror, but he rallied his courage and remembered his boyish knightly vow of conquering himself, deliberately overcoming his personal weaknesses with self-discipline and moral choices. He will not turn away from anyone who would beg from him in the name of the Lord. Francis dismounts and runs to kiss the leper. In every legend the verb "run" is used. Francis does not hesitate. He takes immediate action. He is naturally horrified and scared at the chance meeting with the leper, but as if in a knightly quest, he bravely moves forward. Bonaventure follows his notes from Second Celano by repeating the story of the leper disappearing after Francis mounts his horse. Here Bonaventure expressly states that the leper was Christ, as in the biblical image of the suffering servant (Is. 53:3).

As in Second Celano and the Three Companions, Bonaventure has Francis going beyond the expected; he visits the houses of lepers. But Bonaventure

adds one more detail. Besides generously distributing alms, he kissed each leper on their hands and on their mouths. Bonaventure, like Second Celano, begins to enumerate the abundant generosity of Francis, a man who knows no bounds of service. To poor beggars Francis not only gives his possessions but his very self. To poor priests he reverently provides help, especially with the support of new appointments for the altar. He also decides to go on pilgrimage to Rome to visit the tomb to the apostle Peter. Francis has become an *alter Christus*, a mirror image of a generous God. Generosity and love flow like torrents without reserve.

Here I may say that the whole cycle of the upper basilica in Assisi, painted according to the legend of Bonaventure, does not include the leper event at all. Perhaps by 1296, two decades after the death of Bonaventure there are other controversies that need to be highlighted in artistic propaganda. Needless to say, perhaps the near decision to suppress all mendicant Orders at the Council of Lyon two decades earlier may have prompted a decision to train the eyes of both the friars and the faithful on the “manifest usefulness” of the Order. The Giotto cycle of Assisi is filled with images of legitimate authority—knights, nobility, bishops, and popes. Is Francis intentionally being cultivated as a reformer “within” the tradition, a reformer who has respect for the social order, the common view of law, one who honors both civil and religious leadership?

And then again perhaps the leper story is hidden within the third episode of Francis’s encounter with the poor knight. Francis dismounts and offers his beautiful clothing to the poor man (as he dismounted for a leper in other sources). Is the Creator playing a game of dress-down with Francis, the fun-loving merchant’s son who loves to disrobe himself? The supreme clue is from Francis’s horse, a battle animal who bows down before a prince-in-disguise, the Prince of Peace. Thus, the “poor knight” is ultimately recognized as the “Poor Christ.”

And soon, as a faithful knight-errant, Francis will achieve his quest for knighthood. As Francis shares his clothing with his Liege Lord, so will his Lord share his battle scars of love with Francis. In the end, the King of Chivalry will not be outdone in generosity. How can the Lord feel “abandoned” any longer with such a garrison of faithful sons, the friars minor?

## St. Francis’s *Document on Solitude* Experienced in Lebanon

Tony Haddad, O.F.M. Cap.

### Introduction

Last year I came to Canterbury, to the Franciscan International Study Centre, and one of the major experiences that touched me was the solitude experience conducted by Br. André Cirino, O.F.M. It was part of a whole course on praying with Francis and Clare, that included also the so-called *Office of the Passion* and the *Document on Solitude* (or the *Rule for Hermitages*) both written by St. Francis. The course was concluded by a weekend solitude experience, which was a kind of lived application of the whole course.

I was very impressed by this solitude experience for many reasons:

- it was very Franciscan, taken from the experience of Francis and his brothers;
- it was very simple. There is no need to be an expert in order to be a “Martha,” since there is no need for one-on-one sharing, no spiritual direction during this experience;
- it showed me that this document, which is nearly 800 years old, could still be lived now. And I was amazed by the many examples of how it is lived today;
- it is important and a necessary part of our Franciscan life. We are very active people. My first years of ministry were full of work. I couldn’t stop! In this solitude experience, I discovered this more contemplative dimension of our life. And it took me several months to deactivate.

I found that this *Document on Solitude* met my deepest desires:

- my need to discover this contemplative dimension of our life;
- my love for Francis and Clare, and my desire to be able to propose a Franciscan way to others, not only in theory but also in praxis;
- my preference for a ‘quiet’ and silent experience, since I have never enjoyed or preferred preached retreats.

I would like to share with you how I applied this Franciscan *Document on Solitude* when I arrived back in my country, in three different ways with three different types of people in three different situations.

## 1. Solitude with Young Friars in Formation

When I finished my studies in Canterbury and arrived back in Lebanon, I was asked to animate a five-day retreat for our young friars in formation.

### Preparations

The first thing I had to do was to meet the people who were to make this experience. I proposed to them that we try a solitude experience for these five days, explained it to them, and invited them to try it. This first step is very important since Francis emphasizes the free consent of the friars when he writes: "Those who *wish*..."

The second step was to find an adequate place for this experience and to visit it. I had to make sure that the group could eat and pray alone with no other groups around. The place should be conducive to silence. There would be eight "Marys" and two "Marthas," [Lk 10:38-42 *from now on without quotes*] and the only people with whom the retreat house staff could speak were the two Marthas. And I made sure that the Marys would receive no phone calls, no visits.

The third step was to prepare the timetable/schedule. It was very simple:

Quiet time  
8:00 Breakfast  
8:30 Morning Prayer  
Quiet time  
  
12:00 Midday prayer  
12:30 Lunch  
Quiet time  
  
3:00 Coffee  
Quiet time  
4:30 Eucharist  
Quiet time  
  
6:30 Evening prayer  
7:00 Dinner  
8:30 Optional sharing  
Quiet time



## The Experience

The experience started in the Chapel. We read the *Document on Solitude*, and then I explained it briefly to them with all its implications. First it is necessary to deactivate. So to facilitate deactivation we encouraged the Marys after meals not to wash their dishes, leaving this role to the Marthas. They could use a Bible if they wished or the writings of Francis and Clare, not regularly for prayer but only if inspired to look up a certain passage. They were encouraged to use a journal. I emphasized also that it is not a directed retreat and that there will be no spiritual direction and no confessions.

For common prayer we used the *Office of the Passion* in Arabic. Since it was their first time using St. Francis's psalms, I introduced each hour of prayer with a short explanation of his psalms, trying to help them to understand what they were praying. My confrere Michael, the other Martha, was so deeply inspired by this experience that he composed melodies for St. Francis's psalms, his *Antiphon* and for his *Praises To Be Said At All Hours*.

"They can go to their mothers to speak to them," wrote St. Francis. To incorporate this element we offered them an optional evening sharing. All of us, the Marthas as well, had a very profound experience with creation.

One of the Marys shared that it was the first time he experienced spiritual poverty. Without books or tapes to assist meditation, one is left in poverty face-to-face with the Lord. Another friar was facing aspects in his life he couldn't see before. Some struggled in the first few days to deactivate or to deal with their distractions. Having been trained in spiritual direction, I observed them unfolding on this journey, all the while not interfering in any way.

During the solitude experience some friars tried to contact the Marys. We had two visitors and a phone call. One simply wanted to say hello, another brought some cakes, and a third wanted to ask one of the Marys to organize a prayer meeting for him. But Francis states clearly in his *Document on Solitude* that the only people the Marys (or the sons) could see were the Marthas (or the mothers) and their ministers. Since none of these three friars was our minister provincial, we "guard[ed our] sons from every person, so that no one would be able to speak with them."

### Feedback

The Marthas experienced the mother role as significantly demanding, for we never before had to be so attentive to the needs, both material and spiritual, of our brothers and sons, never before had to watch if they had enough food for themselves.

During the optional sharing, we had a refreshing experience of fraternity because previously we had been unable to share with each other at such a deep

level. All of us began to realize the necessity and importance of silence and contemplation in our friaries. It was something to build upon when we returned home.

One of the sons confessed that before he joined the friars, he liked the alternation of the roles of Mary and Martha. He had chosen the Franciscan Order because of this alternation. But he thought that the *Document on Solitude* was a dead document. At the end of the five days he said: "Now I believe that it could be lived!"

## 2. Solitude with Postulants and Novices

From the time I became Postulant/Novice Director, I used to go away with them for a week-end about every six weeks. They needed to get out, to rest, to experience a deeper level of fraternity and experience some solitude. Since the postulants are generally learning about prayer, I concluded that the experience should be different from the one I had with the young friars in formation.

Our timetable/schedule was:

- Friday: we arrived at our vacation house late afternoon. After preparing dinner we had recreation together.
- Saturday: in the morning we engaged in sports until lunch; in the afternoon we had a community meeting and some sharing; then, in the evening, after the evening prayer, the solitude experience began.
- Sunday: we continued the solitude experience and left after dinner.

Undoubtedly, the first time, I had to explain briefly the *Document on Solitude* and how we were going to live it; but the next time, I simply had to remind them of some of its points.

The first two times, I had to integrate this experience with another technique. On Saturday afternoon, the sharing was on a passage of the Bible they prayed with during the previous week. Afterwards, I would give them a couple of passages to pray over during the solitude experience. This was very helpful to them.

What was their feedback? They enjoyed it very much, sensing they needed silence sometimes. They were able to discover creation as well as aspects of themselves that needed attention. These experiences helped form their prayer, or better still, formed them in Franciscan prayer.

## 3. Solitude for Myself

Working in formation, especially with postulants and novices, is very tiring. You don't have much time for yourself since you need to be present for most activities.

Therefore, I decided to take every Friday for myself, no matter what happens! I used to go early in the morning, usually to the Poor Clares (who became my Marthas), spend the whole day in solitude, and then come back in the evening for a prayer meeting with the postulants and so conclude my day of solitude.

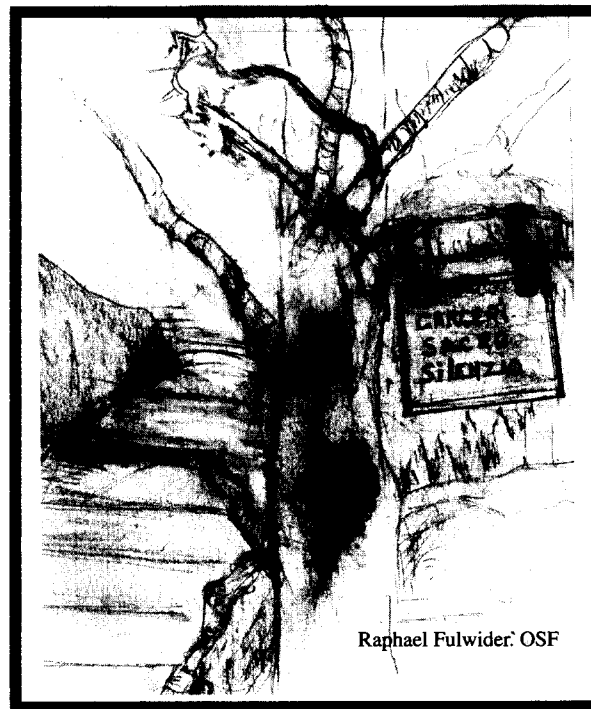
In solitude, I began to see and understand many things in a very different way. When I came back, the postulants—and I myself—knew that something had happened to me during this solitude time. I was refreshed, different. And, as a consequence, they too were refreshed as well.

This experience was very important for another reason too. When I have many things to do, my rhythm accelerates, and I could see that the people for whom I was responsible became very active as well. Having discovered this change in the group's rhythm, I said to my assistant: "Maybe we both should take a break every week." With this encouragement he, too, began to take a weekly solitude day as well.

## Conclusion

The *Document on Solitude* is a powerful tool for renewing the Franciscan Family. We need to start with ourselves, with our postulants, novices, young friars and sisters. Then with this groundwork as a basis, the local and provincial fraternity can also be renewed.

I have offered just three examples of how we could live this simple *Document on Solitude*, but I think one could live it with SFO fraternities, parish groups, young people, anyone. I think it's most important to start to live the experience of solitude yourself.



Raphael Fulwider, OSF

## Guardians as Leaders

Joseph Schwab, O.F.M.

Brothers, as Guardians and Vicars we have the shared responsibility of creating fraternal life within our communities. This responsibility is similar to the one we share with our incarnate God in terms of the created world we live in, for we have the ability to influence the forms of creation. We certainly have the power to shape and influence the development of community life, not to cure all its ills, but certainly to help form it. We also have spiritual elements of light and darkness within us that influence the ways we shape ourselves and our communities. It is either a spirit of hope or indifference, of integration or disintegration, of acceptance or striving for the greater gifts. We have choices to make, and these choices help create the way our provincial fraternal life functions. These choices are based on who we are as leaders. How do we understand the choices we need to make and what are some ramifications for ourselves?

First, I'd like to offer a framework for a definition of a leader. While this will vary somewhat depending on the community size and other particulars of a given situation, I think some parameters will serve as a useful point of departure for discussion. Secondly, I want to raise a concern for us to be aware of and name so that we avoid self-defeating behavior. After this, I propose that we look at two steps in the nature of the interior or spiritual life and how to apply it to leadership.

Leaders are people who have the ability to project their experiences of growth and decay, light and darkness on other people, either through the force of personality, experience, or office. Leaders create situations in which people can grow or die, be enlightened or deprived of light, and therefore have special responsibility to understand their own motives as they lead others within a social context which they substantially help to create. We leaders need to be particularly aware of our own shortcomings and pay careful attention that we do not project them onto others through the ways we operate. Our ability to influence is not automatically holy or growth producing simply because we are called into office. At the same time, we cannot create growth and light-filled communities alone and the input that the others bring to the table is an essen-

tial component of the process. Everyone bears responsibility for the final result, but the leader is responsible for making the growth situation available and known as well as encouraging others to keep trying.

I do have a concern about this which we need to deal with. Often the way we choose leaders is by looking for extroverts who can function very competently in the exterior world (organizational structures, business, social skills, legalities, etc.) without recognizing that we need people who can do at least some of the above without neglecting foundational internal awareness. In other words, we must learn to look for people who can connect external competence with internal awareness. It's a tough job description, but very often we succeed in finding such a remarkable person. However, we need to be concerned that the job is made tougher by the fact that after choosing leadership we frequently withdraw support when we disagree. Honest critique can become criticism, sarcasm or even sabotage. Most of us know what it's like to be on the receiving end of these types of responses. Today, leaders don't get a lot of support. Consequently we may feel the need to strengthen ourselves either by developing exterior talents or focusing on personal spirituality, weakening the necessary complementarity between external competency and internal awareness. The result is a personal dichotomy between the two. Without a sound spiritual life which helps us to integrate the concurrent needs of competency and awareness, a leader in our society won't last long.

If anything, the spiritual life is one concerned with the search for the real, not the abstract. It is a practice—and it demands lots of practice!—of getting in touch with who we really are rather than who we like others to perceive we are. It is a journey toward internal awareness enlightened by the one who leads us in the journey, Jesus the Christ. It is the practice of the awareness of the presence of a Trinitarian God who loves Him/Herself in me. Francis is certainly a model to be emulated in this, but ultimately he points us to Christ as the Way, not himself. It is on the cross that Christ experiences the depths of who he is as a man. Francis mirrors this at La Verna, but he does not replace it.

As disciples, we cannot travel far on the journey without coming face to face with ourselves as we are. Francis very pointedly reminds us that “who a man is before God, that he is and nothing more.” In another place he tells us that “the only thing we can claim for ourselves is our vice and sin.” Hard words, these, but we need not take them negatively. They can spur leaders toward growth if they are used to help us realize that we must begin in the spiritual life by knowing who we are and avoiding the projection of what we don't like in ourselves onto others. This awareness helps us to avoid splitting a community or group of people into “enemies” and “friends.” When we're in the process of splitting and name calling, we've broken communion.

Our leadership must be about the ongoing task of internalizing, that is, of getting to ourselves, through ourselves, and into the field of communion. This

communion is a place where we care about each other even in our brokenness. Our unity can withstand hurts precisely because we form a community of broken people. It is the leader's task to help others find that place and to keep trying. This is the leadership needed for our communal life. The fact that it's hard and that we sometimes fail explains why we so often don't try very hard or get tired of trying. It's much easier to externalize the call into fields of efficiency or competence rather than the field of communion. It's even easier to help institutions develop better systems of communication, accounting, and management (and our culture rewards this) than to internalize the call to communion and then help a community struggling to do the same. There is no way around this. We can ignore the task but it doesn't make it go away. It is our task to recognize it, understand something about it, and get to work. Where do we begin?

Step number one in the spiritual life is the recognition of our own darkness which can take a number of forms. The first form is that we're not all that sure of our own value as leaders. If we're extroverts we hide it well by using extroversion as a cover up. I can be the life of the party, popular, a great conversationalist, an enlivener in many situations. If we're introverts, our hiding might take the form of being busy all the time with many externals. For men, we often identify so strongly with our external function (Guardian, Pastor, Director, etc.) that we lose all sense of identity if the external role is taken away because we collapse our self-worth into our entitled identity. We can be insecure about two things in this self-doubt form: either we suspect that we're not all that good at doing something, or we suspect that we're really not lovable. As a leader I have to do something to heal myself so that I can help others. I

must avoid projecting my insecurities onto other people and the institutional systems of ministry. People, leaders included, need to feel valued because they are God's particularly gifted and loved creation, not because they fulfill a function however useful that might be. This is not an excuse for incompetence, but rather a call to develop awareness of personal motives.

Another form of darkness we have within us is the sense of competition. I have to be better than someone else and have to display that superiority. Yet Francis and Clare lead us to see that consensus and communal decision making are the viable alternative. Success doesn't all depend on me and my personal achievements, and certainly not at the expense



of someone else. Achievement becomes long lasting when the largest possible group has a stake in the methods used to achieve something. I don't have all the answers, but I do have some. I don't need to fix everything and make everything work well, but I can't sit back and pretend that "things will work themselves out." It's important to recognize that we need to do it together and my leadership plays a significant role in this, but only if I know when to get out of the way.

We also have the darkness of rigidity within us and we might respond by being obsessively concerned with written directives, rigid policies and definite "correct" answers to complex questions. We don't want to risk a mistake and so we try to foresee all possibilities. Directives, answers and policies all have their place, but they need to adapt to changing circumstances as the issues they respond to don't remain the same. It isn't hard to find responsive policies, programs, directives and projects that have been dead for years but are maintained anyway in the vain hope that there might be some life in them yet. We can be much more comfortable with our solutions than the issues they respond to, and so we might make the mistake of embracing rigidity as the solution. We can't think of another way to respond than the ones that have already been created. Creativity is stifled by rigidity, and any community that stifles creativity has lost a major part of its soul. It has no will to continue to live, for to live means to change and be transformed. Change doesn't happen without creativity, and that requires the risk of failure. We should honor people who *thoughtfully* risk failure because they challenge us to adapt to the change around us and use it for growth.

Step two in the task of developing the spiritual life involves the need to grow in the spiritual life *together*. If the spiritual life is the practice and journey toward the awareness of God who loves in us, then we are impelled to love ourselves and those we minister with when we have a strong spiritual life. God's love is not self-contained, but rather is self-diffused by nature as Bonaventure teaches us. The Holy Spirit carries the love of the Father and Son into all of creation, thus perfecting the love that is God. The major light we receive from this is that the spiritual life is not my personal treasure to hoard, but rather to give away to my community and others. Too many of our communities are feeling a sense of weakness in fraternal life due in part to the darkness we all carry within ourselves as leaders, that is, we're sometimes insecure, competitive, rigid, afraid of making mistakes. The friars want fraternal life, it works well sometimes and at other times it's weak. How can we stir into flame the spark of spirituality that is alive among us?

A major part of our task as leaders is to recover and claim the light of the energetic and dynamic Holy Spirit that we know is present in the Franciscan spiritual tradition. We have to discover it ourselves and not presume that we ever experience it enough. During the experience of discovery we need to

share it with others so that all benefit from each other's experience. Let each one's experience be his own, but encourage everyone to bring that experience to the fraternity so that the community becomes supportive without being invasive. This offers respect to the uniqueness of the individual's experience of God while maintaining a communal dimension to the journey that we're all involved in at the same time. Avoid the cultural bias we have toward fixing things, including other people. Let each one's experience be his own, and let others find what they need from each other. This encourages the friars to value their own experience and develop faith in it. In this way, our own experience becomes another light-filled gift that we bring as leaders in the task of building fraternal life.

Brothers, we need constantly to begin the task of leadership. It's not only about the competencies needed for external tasks but foundationally about the need to develop the spiritual life in ourselves and others. Ignoring the darknesses and possible pitfalls would be a serious mistake, but not to risk failure is an even greater one. Let us lead by being familiar with our own issues and then help others to do the same. Let us name the gifts of light that we carry within ourselves and those that our brothers bring to the table. We have something to contribute and can help others to recognize what they can give to the fraternity. Finally, let us lead by reclaiming the Spirit of God that lives and breathes in our tradition. This Spirit is the source of dynamic life and growth, the Spirit that we need to enliven our fraternal life as we minister together.

*Our unity can withstand hurts  
precisely because we form  
a community of broken people.  
It is the leader's task to help others  
find that place and to keep trying.  
This is the leadership needed  
for our communal life.*

*Joseph Schwab, OFM*

## Preparing for 2008

Charles Finnegan O.F.M.

There seems to be a consensus among our Franciscan historians that we can trace the origins of the Franciscan movement to the year 1208. It was most likely in that year, perhaps on the Feast of St. Mathias (24 February) that St. Francis discovered his vocation with clarity on hearing how Jesus sent His disciples out two by two to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom. Francis heard those words addressed to him in a very personal way, and we can imagine his excitement as he exclaimed: "This is what I want. This is what I am looking for. This is what I long to do with all my heart" (1Cel 22). Francis had discovered his calling. The Franciscan movement was born that day. On April 16 of that year his first two followers, Brothers Bernard and Peter, asked to join him and were followed a few days later by Br. Giles. Others followed and before the year 1208 was out, Francis and his first followers had set out three times on preaching journeys. All this prepared the way for their journey to Rome the following year to obtain papal approval for their radically new "life according to the form of the holy Gospel."

In the year 2008 we will thus be able to celebrate the eighth centennial of the humble beginnings of our Franciscan family. May this not be a special grace God's providence is offering us, for which we need to prepare? We have some five years to do so. Recall that the bishops of Latin America spent nine years (Pope John Paul II spoke of "a novena of years") preparing for the fifth centennial of the evangelization of the Americas in 1992.

Why should we devote time, energy and resources to prepare for and celebrate our eighth centennial? Two principal reasons come to mind, one *ad intra*, the other *ad extra*.

Firstly, the main purpose of a centennial celebration is necessarily to help us Franciscans live our charism with greater fervor. Our Franciscan family, like the church, is always in need of continual conversion and renewal. At times we allow the vision to grow dim, and fail to live up to the very high ideals Francis and Clare have left us. We need periodically to sharpen our focus. A



centennial is a privileged occasion to look again at St. Francis's original inspiration and the charism with which God in His goodness blessed the church and world in his person. Ours is the task of keeping that gift alive today. When Francis was close to death he encouraged his followers saying: "I have done what was mine to do. May Christ show you what is yours to do" (LM XIV, 3). A good question for a centennial celebration: "What is ours to do?"—today, to keep our Franciscan charism alive, vibrant and full of meaning? A centennial celebration will invite us to make a sincere examination of conscience, without scrupulosity but with honesty. We will discover many positive elements to encourage and foster. We will find less positive elements calling for conversion, individually and communally. As Pope John Paul noted in *Redemptoris missio* (n.47): "We cannot preach conversion [to others] unless we ourselves are converted anew every day."

Secondly, so many of our contemporaries continue to look to St. Francis and St. Clare for inspiration in meeting the challenges that confront our church and world. This is true even of people who do not share our Christian faith. (An example: when President Mohammed Khatami of Iran was received in private audience by the Pope in March of 1999, the devout Moslem statesman affirmed that it is "the spirit of Assisi" (sic!) which should govern the relations among the world's religions and peoples." Some examples of contemporary movements and concerns that look to St. Francis: ecology; justice and peace; human rights; youth; globalization; poverty, starvation and hunger. There are also ecclesial concerns that Francis's manner of gospel living might helpfully address: the ecumenical and inter-religious dialogues; the search for more communal and fraternal models of governance; calls for greater transparency and accountability; the role of the laity and particularly that of women (the example of St. Clare is here especially instructive); the tragedy of ever more communities deprived of the Eucharist; the "new evangelization" and new opportunities for missionary evangelization; the continual renewal and purification of the church, and the unfinished agenda of Vatican II. In addition, there is the quest for meaning by so many people who consider themselves to be "spiritual but not religious" who find so much inspiration in St. Francis. A centennial celebration and its preparation could provide a privileged opportunity to offer a Franciscan contribution in respectful dialogue with church and world as these struggle with weighty challenges we hear about every day.

What to do? In the first place we can prayerfully reflect and discuss this issue at the grass roots. If it has any merit, and if there is interest in an eighth centennial celebration, we can bring this matter up at our chapters. No doubt many of our ministers and leaders are already thinking of the centennial, and would be encouraged by interest in it at the local level. Working together, the eighth centennial may by God's grace be an occasion for all of us to "rekindle

the gift" (2 Tim 1:6) God has given us, and offer our church and world something of the wisdom of Francis and Clare who have so much to offer both church and world.

To meet these goals concretely, one might dare to wonder: has the time come, perhaps, when we could, for the first time in our communal history, hold something like a "General Chapter of Mats" for our Franciscan family, with elected delegates from every branch of our family, in addition to our General Ministers and Superiors and other designated leaders? (Admittedly, working out the logistics of such a gathering would be a formidable—but not impossible—task. Something akin to this happened at the 1996 Assisi international gathering of CCFMC ["Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism" known in North America as "Build With Living Stones"]). Obviously, not all Franciscans would be able to attend a General Chapter of Mats, so regional and local celebrations, prepared and celebrated together as the local Franciscan family, would have their own unique and necessary contribution to make.

The above represents the initial reflection of only one Franciscan, which brings us to the obvious conclusion:

*Reflection Question:* How do you think we might fittingly celebrate the eighth centennial of the beginnings of our Franciscan family in 2008, and how might we prepare for that?



Parrendo



## **"Give an Account of the Hope That Is Within You"**

William J. Short, O.F.M.

Adapted from a presentation on "The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition" at the 2001 Franciscan Forum, in Colorado Springs, Colorado; the audience consisted of people working in ongoing formation and mission-effectiveness areas of ministry.

The First Letter of Peter issues a challenge to an early Christian community. That challenge is worded in this way: "Always be ready to give an account of the hope that is within you with gentleness and respect" (1Pt 3:15).

"To give an account of the hope within us." That is our challenge. . . . We have hope within us, within our intellectual and spiritual tradition. We have a hopeful word to speak to concerns present in today's Church and to crises affecting our society. People are seeking an alternative language, an alternative way of looking at the human person, the meaning of the Church and its place in the world, who God is, what Christ represents, what salvation or creation means in our day. We are holding inside us a word that can speak to these questions. We have the resources hidden away in the attic of the old family home. We have a responsibility to share this with those who are looking for it. We must "get the word out." To do this will require intelligent analysis of the signs of our times, and the hard work and dedication needed to make that "word" become "flesh" in concrete forms of living and acting.

To illustrate what this can look like in practice, allow me to begin with a story from my own experience. The story is about "finding a language," articulating something that was already being done, and the effect this had on an institution.

### **Story of FST Mission Statement**

In the early 1990s I was serving as President of the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley. It was the time of our full ten-year Accreditation Visit from the Association of Theological Schools of the US and Canada (ATS) and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The visit was coming

to its conclusion, and I was hosting a luncheon for the members of the Visiting Team and members of our governing Board. Toward the end of the luncheon, a member of the Visiting Team asked a rather innocuous question, "Don't you wish you were a bigger school, with a large endowment, with your pick of the best students applying to schools on a national level?"

Without thinking very much about it, I said, "No, I don't think so." Looking around somewhat bewilderedly, the visitor saw that Board members were nodding along, in apparent agreement with what I had said. "That seems a strange answer," said the visitor, "could you explain why not?"

I started out by explaining that for Franciscans being "lesser" was something good. We know that we are not Harvard or Yale, and would never want to be. We experienced poverty in not having all the security of endowment that we might like, but that was okay, because it made us depend on each other more, and that was something good. We regularly accepted students who would not have a very good chance at big schools, those who were marginal because of their social or cultural background, or simply because they were poor. We felt very happy to have them. We wanted a mix of men and women, lay and religious, candidates for ordination and those preparing for lay ministry. All of this was a good "fit" with our Franciscan identity. In other words the way the school operated flowed from a clear, inner sense of identity.

At this point, much to my surprise, the entire visiting team started asking questions of me, of the dean, of the trustees, and they all gave their own version of the same basic story. "We know who we are, and the school reflects that."

The chair of the team then turned to me and said, "Your mission statement doesn't say that at all!" "Of course not," I said, "if it did, it wouldn't look like a mission statement." (Like many other institutions, we had simply copied bits of pieces of things from other schools' mission statements, saying things like, "We are in favor of creating an environment of learning," "We believe in reading books"—I'm sure you are familiar with the language). The team chair then gave me an order: "Right now, go and write down as accurately as possible, what you just told us. That is your mission! You know what it is, and we have noticed it being implemented during the visit, but we couldn't understand, because you haven't articulated it in your documents."

That in fact began a long process of circulating a text that eventually became our Mission Statement. Faculty, students, alumni, trustees, friars, religious women, lay men and women: we found out that while we often knew instinctively how to react to questions and situations, it was hard for us to give the reason for our reactions. Even though we were academics, we did not have a language to use in "giving an account" of the hope within us. What I share with you today is in part the fruit of those discussions over the last decade, as we have come to discover a language that fits with our Franciscan experience.

"Giving an account" of the hope within us means moving from an inchoate, unspoken, intuitive grasp of "what fits" for us as Franciscans to an articulated, explicit description of that outlook that others can grasp, question, and appropriate. Our task is not to make others accept our vision, but simply make it available to them—to give them another choice. This requires preparation and discipline—learning our tradition carefully and deeply, then finding the language to express it today: so that we may describe our Franciscan approach to a broad public accurately and simply, in terms accessible to non-specialists.

We need ongoing formation to help us a) to learn the tradition accurately b) to develop techniques, "packages" for the tradition that are faithful to its origins and appealing today. It is the task of our mission-effectiveness programs a) to communicate our Franciscan vision clearly in institutional settings b) to make the tradition known and attractive to a broad constituency of trustees, staff, and donors

"But," you say, "what IS the Franciscan tradition?"

You are not alone in asking this question. How many of us can honestly say that our intellectual, theological or religious formation was explicitly Franciscan? Do we believe that there is some other Franciscan group, somewhere else whose members have been steeped in this tradition, while we have missed out? Rest assured, that is not the case. All of us, lay and religious, men and women of the Franciscan Family, are in the same boat. At a recent meeting of Provincial Ministers of the O.F.M. English Speaking Conference this problem was recognized: we do not know our own tradition. We have been told that it holds great promise for the Church and for the contemporary world, yet when people turn to us for an explanation of this tradition we are at a loss for words. And because of today's decreasing numbers in Franciscan religious communities, and the pressing demands of so much worthwhile ministry, we risk failing to pass on this "patrimony of the poor" to those who will carry it into this next century.

As a response to this urgent need, a Task Force on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition has been established, involving members of various branches of the Franciscan Family. Its purpose is to answer this first, most fundamental question about our Franciscan tradition, "What IS it?" What follows is a sampling, a few examples of approaches to important questions from the Franciscan tradition, suggesting ways in which the insights of the past can be used to address some contemporary issues.

## God

First, the very notion of who God is. A careful analysis of American religious language would, I believe, demonstrate the strong influence of a monistic or Unitarian view of God among Americans generally, whether Catholic or

Protestant. Since my image of who God is interacts with my image of who I am, we should not be surprised to find the individual being identified as the fundamental point of reference in our society. And not only is this God individual, He or It, is also distant, static, the One who has made the world and then retired from it, leaving it as a place of testing for the pre-destined elect.

Can you see how an ideology of the supremacy of the individual finds its roots, at least implicitly, in such a view of who God is? Sameness, identity, uniformity: these are the truly godly characteristics. Difference, dialogue, and diversity become the dirty "D" words.

In contrast, our Franciscan tradition presents a much more complex, interesting and lively image of God. The one God is tri-personal, communal, interactive: in a word, Trinitarian. The image of God is primarily a community of persons in the constant give-and-take of inter-relationship. Sharing in a fundamental unity does not require the suppression of identity, but enhances it. Diversity, in this view, is enriching; dialogue is essential to being; difference is divine. What "word" does this view of interpersonal exchange speak to our notion of society? What would it mean to model our view of human inter-relationship on such a communion of persons in unity? How can this word offer hope to those who cannot accept a distant, alienated, monolithic theism?

## Christ

A predominant view of Christ in mainstream religious discourse, Catholic and Protestant, sees Him primarily as the Savior whose suffering and death cancel the effects of the sin of Adam. Why did Christ come? Because Adam sinned. Human sin is therefore the very core of the entire universe, because it demands the coming of Christ to remedy its damage. I have called this theological view of the world "hamartiocentric," that is, "sin centered."

The practical corollaries of this view are not hard to imagine. Our relationship to God is primarily that of sinners to the All-Just One. The task of human life is to fight sin; we pray to be freed from sin; we examine our lives (and those of others) looking for sin. The human person is, fundamentally, the "sinful creature," whose primary concern must be "being saved from sin." And for this reason Christ is important, because He is the one who saves from sin.

The Franciscan view, far from being "hamartiocentric," has been called "Christocentric." That is, Christ, not sin, is at the center of its vision of the inter-relationship of God, the world and humanity. In the 14th century John Duns Scotus was asked "Would Christ have come if Adam had not sinned?" Contradicting the predominant thinking of his age (and ours), he answered: "Yes." Christ came because the divine Trinitarian communion is lived out as generosity, the sharing of ever greater life with others. The focus is not on "fighting sin" but "giving life."

## Human Person as Divine Image

Francis wrote a lyrical celebration of the dignity of the human person in these words:

Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord placed you: he created and formed you to the image of his beloved Son according to the body, and to His likeness according to the spirit.<sup>1</sup>

This saying, from Francis's Admonitions (his pithy sayings that the friars recorded) points to the great dignity of every human being as a living "icon" of Christ, the image of God. The human person is the living icon or image of Jesus, the beloved Son of God. Just as we approach the images of Jesus with loving reverence, touching them, kissing them (as in the veneration of cross on Good Friday), so we approach those whom the Lord sends to us.

What "word" can this reverent attitude speak to the world of the human sciences? Can anthropology be religiously significant? Does psychology present us with matter for theological reflection? Can sociology become a partner in our exploration of Christology?

## Generosity, the Poverty of God

Let us refer all good to the Lord God Almighty and Most High, acknowledge that every good is his and thank Him, from Whom all good comes, for everything.<sup>2</sup>

This exhortation from Francis expresses his profound insight that everything is a gift. God has everything, and gives everything generously. We live as images of God when we recognize that everything is God's, not ours: this includes our own lives, and what we have been given (talents, health, money, intelligence, family, friends, work). All really belongs to God—and our task is to thank God for the gifts we have, and show thanks by distributing them generously to others. In this way we act out who we really are: we are like God when we share what we have been given.

In our present-day confrontation with the economic neo-liberalism, with the globalization of the world economy, what "word" do we as Franciscans have to speak? How can we engage seriously, from a committed Christian position, in discussions on the right to private property, welfare reform, and the forgiveness of international debts? How do we form our institutional investment policies to become reflections of the image of God?



## All Creation in the Incarnate Word

This reverence for the person is based on an idea of great, fundamental equality: we consider others our brothers and sisters. But these "others," our brothers and sisters, include many more family members than we might imagine. Francis expressed this well in his Cantic of Creatures, in which he went far beyond the human race to include every creature under heaven, from fire and water to grass and flowers in the same loving family: each was brother or sister to him.

Taking its clue from the Prologue of John's Gospel, the Franciscan tradition takes seriously the claim that all was made through the Word, all was created for the Word, all was created in the Word. And in Christ that Word took on flesh, that is, the divine Word took on the form of physical matter. Prolonged and profound meditation on this Word "through Whom all things were made," as we proclaim in the liturgy's Profession of Faith, opens up the material world as a place of encounter with the Incarnate Word.

What vast implications this has for the world of the sciences! Physics and astronomy reveal the face of the divine Word. Biology, botany and zoology have profoundly religious ramifications. The old dichotomies of faith and reason, or religion and science, cannot hold up when we consider all matter as linked, by the very fact of its existence, to the person of Christ the Word. To put it simply, for Franciscans, "Matter matters."

## Church

The "Franciscan phenomenon" took the Church of the thirteenth century by surprise. Here was a group of men and women, somewhat lay and somewhat religious, with many lay members and some ordained, from a heterogeneous social background and very uneven levels of formal education. They did not model themselves on the proven, monastic interpretation of the Jerusalem Church of the Acts of the Apostles, with its stable schedule of Temple worship and orderly arrangement of offices. Rather they looked to the unstable, wandering, fluid pattern of the men and women disciples walking with Jesus through the cities and towns of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. They followed no approved Rule, tested by experience, but claimed to follow "the Holy Gospel" as their Rule. When urged by some bishops, at least two cardinals, and several popes, to accept an older, proven "form of life," both the men, led by Francis, and the women, led by Clare, humbly and obediently refused.

The problems were not long in coming. When the men arrived in Paris, and began to include more priests, the theological luminaries of the university grew alarmed. Who are these people? Who is their bishop? What is the name of their parish? Which specific souls in which limited geographical area have

been entrusted to their care? The itinerant, international discipleship model of the "evangelical life" came face-to-face with the reality of the local, diocesan, "parochial church." These mendicants presented an appealing model of a Church that transcended local or national categories: a refreshing, innovative model of "evangelical globalization."

In today's circumstances, many people fail to find their place within the boundaries of the parish or the structures of the diocese. They have seen only this form of the life of the Church, and it is certainly the most well-known. They have every reason to believe that, for them, there is no other choice than to give up on participation in the life of the Church. Who has ever presented to them a viable, approved, thoroughly orthodox alternative to the "parochial Church?" There is a treasure, stored in a family attic, that would make a wonderful gift to offer to those who are "not yet" or "no longer" members of the Church.

### Ministry and Authority

"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."<sup>3</sup>

We do not cling to "reserved seats" at the Lord's right and left. The Lord Jesus, on the night before he died, removed his cloak, tied a towel around his waist and, taking a basin, began to wash the feet of his disciples. Francis asks that this passage, from John's Gospel, be read as he lies dying at the Portiuncula. Clare reenacts this gesture when her sisters return to San Damiano after walking through the dirty streets of Assisi. Both identify themselves as servants, representing a sacred Eucharistic moment of the Gospel, one enshrined in one of the most solemn moments of the Church's liturgy in the Easter Triduum.

They point out to us that this is the great revelation of the divinity of Christ, as the covering cloak is removed and the veil is removed. It is not a scene worthy of Steven Spielberg in "Raiders of the Lost Ark," full of special effects and dazzling lasers. Here is a truly subversive image of God, one that is quite unexpected: it looks much more like the work of a hospital attendant, or a mother or father caring for a dirty child, or—a modern-day analogy—the work of the almost invisible men and women at the local carwash, or vacuuming the boarding lounge at the airport.

This picture of "the humility of God" is one we enact, we play out, when we put aside high status, rank and power to "become lesser" and thus reveal our own likeness to God.

What "word" can this speak to our approach to ministry and mission in our communities? Specifically, how would this picture of the great Eucharistic moment in John's Gospel shape our understanding of priesthood in the Franciscan tradition? A model of the priesthood based almost exclusively on the Synoptic Gospels, with their focus on Jesus' giving of bread and wine as His body and blood, is probably most familiar to us. What "word" can we speak with a FrancisClarian model of priesthood, characterized by the washing of feet?<sup>4</sup>

### Conclusion

In February, 2001, I accompanied our novices on a visit to our friars living with the Apache people at Whiteriver, Arizona. During a visit with a tribal leader, we learned of the real concern among the older people that young Apaches were at risk of losing their native language. The influence of the surrounding English-speaking culture, the values communicated through films and television: all of these threaten the survival of the ancient Apache language and culture. The tribe has inaugurated a cultural center, with a series of programs designed to help its young people discover the beauty and power of their traditions. The elders teach them the songs, the dances, and the language of their ancestors, instilling in them a sense that they have something unique, something irreplaceable, to offer.

I have suggested a few areas in which our Franciscan tradition offers us the possibility for speaking a "new" language in the Church and society of today. Like the Whiteriver Apaches, we face the erosion of our Franciscan culture and language today. We experience the pressure of the surrounding society, both civil and ecclesiastical, that most often speaks a dominant language that we slowly internalize. We may be the last speakers of the Franciscan language, the last to know its dances and songs. Let us take advantage of this graced moment to learn our language and teach it to a new generation, both inside and outside our Franciscan communities. We can "give an account of the hope that is within us with gentleness and patience." If not us, who? If not now, when?

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Admonition V, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (FA:ED) I, (New York, London, Manila: New City Press, 1999), 131.

<sup>2</sup>Francis of Assisi, Earlier Rule, XVII, in FA:ED I, 76.

<sup>3</sup>Admonition IV, in FA:ED I, 130.

<sup>4</sup>I am indebted to Fr John Corriveau, O.F.M. Cap. Min. Gen., for his insights here, in his address to the 109th General Chapter of the friars of the Third Order Regular (Ariccia, June 3, 2001).

For 17 September

## THE POOR CRUCIFIED

Burning Wings!  
There  
On that green, living mountain,  
He saw,  
Mirror image of his sole desire,  
the wounded glory  
in compassionate Flesh –  
Christ, his Lord.

Hovering Wings!  
And there  
On that green, flaming mountain,  
He gazed,  
Was sealed with five dark signs:  
Clothed in the glory of Passion,  
wounded in flesh.  
Christed – forever.

Folding Wings!  
There  
On that green, hushed mountain,  
He knew  
The unquenchable joy,  
enmeshed in human pain,  
Redemptive love  
released from the heart of God –  
Christ, *his Man*.

Clare Agnes Vance, OSC

## St. Joseph of Cupertino Conventual Franciscan Mystic

Peter F. Mallin, O.F.M. Conv.

During the many times I have traveled up and down the coast of California, I have come across many names of saints that dot the landscape. There are saint-names for towns, counties, and even just inconspicuous spots for weary tourists. I often wondered if people who traveled the same route ever noticed them as well, and if they ever took the time to find out who these individuals were. I remember the words of Pope John Paul II at the conclusion of a Papal Mass in San Francisco in 1987: "*California is blessed to be in communion with the saints and in communion with the angels!*" There happens to be only one Conventual Franciscan saint who has a town in the United States named after him, and that is St. Joseph of Cupertino. His name, and others of our Franciscan movement, pays tribute to the continued Franciscan and Catholic cultural influence which makes up the state of California.

Joseph had a very difficult life almost from the moment he was born right up until the time of his death. His father, Felix Desa, was a carpenter in the village of Cupertino on the Apulia peninsula within the Kingdom of Naples. He was known locally as a good-hearted and charitable man who would often be the guarantor of the debts of his neighbors who were unable to pay. As a result, he was often driven into debt himself. At the time of Felix's death his wife Francesca Panara was pregnant with the future saint. She was incapable of assuming her late husband's responsibilities to creditors. When she could no longer pay the debts of her husband, the creditors drove the young mother-to-be from her home, and she was forced to give birth to Joseph in a stable on June 17, 1603. (Later biographers of the saint would take note of the similarities between the circumstances of Joseph's birth with that of both Jesus and St. Francis!) Joseph's early education at home taught him the virtues of faith and good religious example. As he grew older, he visited church frequently, often praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Later, young Joseph attended school and

a number of stories circulated about his experiences. One says that whenever Joseph heard the organist play hymns, he would lapse into some kind of trance, with his eyes raised to heaven and his mouth wide open. This happened so many times that his classmates' nickname for Joseph was *bocca aperta*, or "open mouth!" His school days were cut short when he developed a painful ulcer on his back; that left him bed-ridden for five years. During those years his devoted mother would carry him to church each morning. Joseph bore his illness with incredible patience. To pass the time, he would dream about the saints in the stories his mother read to him, and the one who made the greatest impression upon him was St. Francis of Assisi. The seeds of his Franciscan vocation were planted during this time. Eventually, the discomfort of his disease was relieved by a local hermit who anointed the sore with oil that burned near a statue of Our Lady of Grace. In his gratitude, Joseph deepened his love for God and resolved to serve the Church.

As the years passed, Joseph engaged in several occupations, including selling vegetables and working as a shoemaker. These were just temporary tasks to prepare him for his ultimate goal: to become a Franciscan priest. He first thought of joining the Conventual friars, where he already had a number of relatives as members, including his uncle, Father Francis Desa. Yet his uncle was not supportive of Joseph's intention due to his lack of education. Then Joseph went to the Capuchin friars, asking to be admitted as a lay brother. He was accepted and sent to their novitiate at Martina Franca in 1620, and took the name "Stephen." He was sent to work in the kitchen, but since he often fell into his trances as his soul became enraptured with Divine Love, he broke dishes and tipped over pots. His superiors thought he lacked proper concentration and was a habitual daydreamer, and so dismissed him from the novitiate. This caused Joseph great disappointment, and he later said, "*It seemed to me as if my skin was torn off with the habit and my flesh rent from my bones!*" When he returned home to Cupertino, he found a not-so-welcoming family to greet him. His priest-uncle ridiculed him as "good for nothing" and at first refused to have anything to do with him. His mother scolded him as well. Another relative, Fr. John Caputo, criticized him even more severely for the seeming lack of effort in all he had undertaken. To make matters even worse for Joseph, his father's creditors were seeking to have Joseph sent to debtor's prison for his father's debts. Joseph found some assistance from one of the other friars of the Order, who hid him in a small attic of the church for six months. His uncles finally took pity on Joseph and, after seeing his persistence, invested him with the habit of a Franciscan tertiary. This allowed Joseph to live as a Franciscan . . . and it also placed him under church law, protecting him from debtor's prison. Joseph excelled as a Franciscan by begging for the needs of the friary and by always being first to serve the sick.

When his uncle (Fr. Francis Desa) learned that Joseph was secretly studying at night, he was quite impressed and proposed that his nephew be accepted as a candidate for the Conventual Franciscans . . . and the priesthood! Joseph entered the Order as a novice at Grottella and kept his baptismal name. He continued to grow in holiness and exemplified the virtues of humility, patience and obedience. However, Joseph continued to find studies very difficult and was often rebuked for making slow progress.

The time came for examinations that would lead him to the diaconate, to be followed by the priesthood. The first exam took the form of reciting and commenting on a passage of Scripture. Joseph grew anxious and prayed to Our Lady of Grottella for help. At the examination the bishop opened the Gospel and asked Joseph to comment on the verse from the Gospel of Luke: "*Blessed is the womb that bore you* (Luke 11:27)!" To Joseph's surprise, that was the only passage he had managed to master during his long preparation. Later, for his final examination before ordination to the priesthood Joseph was unfortunate to have an examiner known for his severity, Bishop John Baptist Deti of Castro. All of the candidates gathered at Poggiardo for the examination and Joseph spent the night in frantic prayer. But once again, Divine Providence intervened. The examinations began the following morning as scheduled, but were interrupted by an important matter which demanded Bishop Deti's immediate attention. It forced him to cancel the rest of the exam and depart. Since all the friars he examined did well, he naturally assumed all of them were as well prepared and dispensed the rest of them. Among those who passed but was never examined was Joseph! He joined his classmates for Ordination to the priesthood the next day, March 18, 1628.

Joseph continued to grow in holiness and the grace of his Franciscan vocation, especially through a life of poverty and prayer. He performed menial tasks around the friary, such as gardening, looking after the animals, cleaning their stalls, and helping in the kitchen. Joseph also had time for deep meditation and was often found wandering in a daze, winding up in different places in the friary, unaware of how he got there. On October 4, 1630, the town of Cupertino held a procession on the feast day of St. Francis. Joseph was assisting in the procession when he suddenly soared into the sky and remained there hovering over the crowd of people looking on at this spectacular sight. When he came down and realized what had happened, Joseph became so embarrassed that he fled to his mother's house to hide from the crowds. This was the first of his many flights, which earned him the name "*The Flying Saint*."

Of course, his life changed dramatically after this incident. The "flights" continued and seemed to become more frequent. In fact, his "flights" were so frequent that his superiors would not permit him to take part in community exercises for 35 years on the belief that it would cause too great a distraction

for the members of the friary. But Joseph could not contain himself. On hearing the names of Jesus and Mary, he would simply go into ecstasy and would remain there until a superior commanded him under obedience to come to his senses. Incidents of his flights also took place when he would hear the sweet singing of hymns, when he celebrated the feast day of St. Francis, or during a Holy Thursday Mass when he was praying before the Blessed Sacrament. The most famous occasion occurred during a papal audience before Pope Urban VIII. When he bent down to kiss the Pope's feet, he was suddenly filled with reverence for Christ's Vicar on earth and was lifted up into the air. Only when the Minister General of the Order, who was part of the audience, ordered him down was Joseph able to return to the floor.

In addition to his flights, Joseph also possessed the gift of miraculous healing. He once cured a girl who was suffering from a severe case of measles. An entire community suffering from a drought asked Joseph to pray for rain, and when it came the drought ceased. He dedicated himself to improving the spiritual lives of his fellow friars. When he accompanied his provincial on visitations, Joseph would fall into ecstasy, thus causing many a lukewarm friar to be inspired to greater evangelical perfection.

Not all of the friars with whom Joseph lived were well disposed towards him. Some superiors would scold Joseph for not accepting money and gifts offered to him for curing people, especially when they were members of the nobility. He would also find himself in trouble for returning home with a torn habit as a result of the people who regarded him as a prophet and a saint taking relics. However, the most difficult time came when Joseph was the subject of an investigation by the Inquisition at Naples. Monsignor Joseph Palamolla accused Joseph of attracting undue attention with his "flights" and claiming to perform miracles. On October 21, 1638, Joseph was summoned to appear before the Inquisition and, when he arrived, he was detained for several weeks. Joseph was eventually released when the judges found no fault with him. After his innocence was acknowledged, Joseph was sent to the Sacro Convento in Assisi, a move which made him very happy. While there, Joseph experienced a spiritual dryness that conflicted with his expectations of being comforted by being so close to the tomb of his Holy Father St. Francis, and it appeared to take a great toll upon him. He experienced no flights during this period, either. Eventually, Joseph overcame his difficulties and emerged with an even greater faith. Two years after his arrival at the Sacro Convento, Joseph was made an honorary citizen of Assisi and a full member of the Franciscan community, where he became a source of consolation to everyone. He lived in Assisi for another nine years; he spent long hours each day in prayer, saying Mass and leading other devotionals. However, his happiness was not to last: eventually he was not allowed to preach or hear confessions, or even join in

the processions and festivities of feast days. When the friars went off to these celebrations, he was left alone in the friary. The isolation from the people left him in a state of depression. Even so, people still sought him out, and soon his room was visited by people from all over Europe seeking his advice. They included Ministers General, Provincials, bishops, cardinals, knights and secular princes.

This would only lead to another cross for Joseph. On learning that he still attracted a huge following, Pope Innocent X decided to move Joseph from Assisi, and place him in a secret location under the jurisdiction of the Capu-

chin friars in Pietrarubbia. Despite being under strict orders to neither write nor receive letters, Joseph continued to attract throngs of people, which forced another move, this time to Fossombrone. Once again, efforts were made to keep his location a secret by putting Joseph under tight security, but local people still managed to discover that they had a saint in their midst. This ordeal ended only when Pope Innocent X died and the Conventual friars asked the newly-elected Pope Alexander VIII to release Joseph from his exile and return him to Assisi. However, the new Pope wanted to keep an eye on Joseph and instead released him to the friary in Osimo, where the Pope's own nephew was the local bishop! Joseph was ordered to live in seclusion there and not speak to anyone except the Bishop, the Vicar General of the Order, his fellow friars, and a doctor in case he needed one. Joseph endured his trial with great patience. He did not even complain when a brother-cook neglected to bring any food to his room for two days!

On August 10, 1663, Joseph became ill with a fever. During the weeks that followed, Joseph's health shifted between being so weak that he could not rise from bed, to experiencing one last "flight" while saying Mass on the feast of the Assump-



tion, August 15<sup>th</sup>. In early September, Joseph sensed that the end was near, and he could be heard mumbling, "*The jackass has now begun to climb the mountain.*" The "jackass" was his own body. After receiving the last sacraments, a papal blessing, and reciting the Litany of Our Lady, Joseph Desa of Cupertino died on the evening of September 18, 1663. He was buried two days later in the chapel of the Immaculate Conception before great crowds of people who were touched by his Franciscan life and witness.

Joseph was canonized on July 16, 1767 by Pope Clement XIII. In 1781, a large marble altar in the church of St. Francis in Osimo was erected so that St. Joseph's body might be placed beneath it; it has remained there ever since. Because of his many "flights," St. Joseph is the patron saint of those traveling by air, and is the patron saint of pilots who fly for the NATO Alliance. In some countries, he is also the patron of those undergoing examinations of any kind. Like the many places he touched in Italy, his name has touched California through a town named after him: Cupertino, California. It was naturally fitting that in 1978, the Province of Conventual Franciscans in California adopted him as their patron. A film was also made about St. Joseph of Cupertino entitled *The Reluctant Saint* and starred actor Maximilian Schnell. This year marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of St. Joseph of Cupertino.

**We face a contemporary world  
that is so deeply broken  
that God can look upon it  
only as Jesus looked upon the crowds,  
like a sheep without a shepherd.  
As Francis responded to  
the needs of his time and  
to the call to rebuild the church,  
so, too, are we called upon to respond  
to the needs of our time  
and help rebuild a broken world.**

**Mary Beth Ingham, *Scotus for Dunces*, p. 148**

*The Cord*, 53.5 (2003)

## **Rescuing Duns Scotus: Re-placing Duns Scotus in the Franciscan Spiritual Tradition**

Seamus Mulholland, O.F.M.

The Inaugural Annual Duns Scotus Lecture  
At the Franciscan International Study Centre  
Canterbury, Kent, England  
November, 2002

Franciscans who do not regard themselves as academics, historians, or scholars of the Franciscan Intellectual-spiritual tradition tend to shy away from Duns Scotus. They know he has something to say to them and to the world, and that it is something important, but they do not know how to gain access to him. They are inspired by aspects of his thought, especially the doctrine of the Primacy of Christ in the Universe, but they leave it to those they consider to be authorities on Duns Scotus to make his thought more easily comprehensible at the popular level of contemporary Franciscan life and thought. Bonaventure and Scotus have always been regarded as the two great intellectual masters of Franciscan tradition: Bonaventure for his grasp of, and writings on, the spiritual life; Scotus for his mastery of philosophical excellence. But in the area of Franciscan spirituality Bonaventure has always held the primacy. Yet, as I will suggest, Scotus too is a great master of the Franciscan spiritual life.

### **The Accessibility of the Spirituality of Bonaventure**

Bonaventure and Scotus both have great visions of God, creation and the Christ. Bonaventure, firmly grounded in the Augustinian, Dionysian and Victorine traditions, expresses the whole of cosmic reality in the terminology of neoplatonic emanation, Dionysian hierarchy, and return. It is through the process of emanation that God brings reality into being and at the center of creation and the Trinity is the Word, the Supreme Exemplar, in whom there is everything that had been, is, and could possibly be conceived by God. Scotus,



a product of a carefully reflected upon Platonism, and a critically approached Aristotelianism, sees all reality as grounded in the univocal concept of Being. It sounds complicated and typically Scotus in its complexity, but it simply means that being, regardless of who possesses it, is the true object of metaphysics (this is known as the Scotus "Doctrine of the Univocity of Being").

Bonaventure's spirituality is more accessible to us. His theology of the Trinity, his vision of the Christ as the Universal Center; his symbolism of creation as a "book" which can be read and God discovered in its "pages," his profound imagery of light, water; creation as containing the "vestiges" of God—all these, and many more, combine to show us how Bonaventure's theology/philosophy is, in fact, a spirituality which can be comprehended with a little perseverance. The spiritual genius of Bonaventure is shown not so much in the actual content of the material, but rather in the way that more ancient traditions are fused with those of his own time and made available to us in our time. His emanation/return metaphors are firmly rooted in the Plotinian ideas as diffused through the Augustinian neoplatonic tradition. His triadic structures, while they may be Trinitarian semiotics, are found in the works of both Dionysius the Areopagite, whose thought had such a profound impact on both Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, as well as the Victorine theology. His Trinitarian theology is contextually situated in the Alexandrian/ Cappadocian tradition as this is worked out in the Augustinian psychological metaphors, and the Victorine Trinitarianism. Bonaventure shows himself to be a literary creative genius whose innovative originality is deeply imbued with, and permeated by, the ancient Christian classical mystical tradition.

### The Place of Scotus: Where is it?

Scotus is much more difficult to place. He has suffered from his reputation as a philosopher of ennobled and unrivalled genius and brilliance of mind, and as the last of the great dialecticians. He certainly has a doctrine of the Trinity, which manifests itself most "spiritually" in the context of the Primacy, but it is so caught up in the metaphysics of dialectic, that it becomes difficult not to suggest that the God of Scotus is the God of the Philosophers (not a very popular view!!) which overshadows the God of Revelation (an even more unpopular view!!). His insistence that the primary object of metaphysics is the study of Being-as-being can suggest that he gives Being a greater reality than God who merely possesses it infinitely, which infinity is then the primary characteristic of God. These ontological explorations of Scotus would find a comfortable place among contemporary Heideggereans (Martin Heidegger wrote his doctoral thesis on Scotus) but what place they are to have in contemporary Franciscan spirituality is more difficult to determine. His famous "formal distinction" is viewed by many as philosophical semantics, proof that Scotus de-

serves his epithet "subtle" in its pejorative meaning. The wonderful "principle of individuation" (*haecceitas*-thisness) is also viewed by many to be no more than a brilliantly clever metaphysical escape from the charge of Pantheism which is often levelled against him. But Scotus stands accused: where is his "Franciscanism" and where is his Franciscan spirituality? Is it really possible to rescue Duns Scotus from so long an over-emphasis on his philosophical extraordinariness, and place him not just among the intellectual giants but the spiritual giants also?

It is certainly true that Bonaventure sits more easily with us in terms of Franciscan spirituality than Duns Scotus. If we wished to take a few books with us on retreat then they might include a copy of the writings of Francis and Clare, 1 or 2 Celano, or our favourite Franciscan text, and a copy of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*, or the Major Life, or *The Tree of Life* or *Triple Way*. But anyone screening our bags would be hard pushed to find a copy of Scotus's *Quodlibetals*, the *Reportata*, the *De Primo Principio*, or Duns Scotus on the Will—such texts, unless we are teachers of philosophy, or explorative theologians, do not fit into the mould of spirituality. To the best of our knowledge Scotus did not write anything on Francis—yet Bonaventure cannot be understood without Francis (and not simply because of the Major Life and the Sermons on St. Francis). Scotus, on the other hand, at least at the level of written text, does not seem to have produced any reflection at all on what it meant for him to be a Franciscan. It is a sad fact that many Franciscans believe that [unlike Bonaventure] Scotus can be understood without Francis. But I wonder if this is really the case and if it is, is it not the fatal flaw that many teachers and historians of philosophy and Franciscans make when they come to Scotus?

### Bonaventure in the Context of Francis

Bonaventure wrote copiously on matters Franciscan; developed the process for studies in the Order more methodically. He preached sermons of Francis, wrote one of the great mystical, theological and spiritual classics in Christian literature on Francis (the Major Legend), was Minister General and is regarded as the "second Founder of the Order," or the "saviour of the Order" (well, even we teachers and students of Bonaventure do not have to agree with everything that is said about him!). In other words, Bonaventure knew and understood what Francis meant to him and what being Franciscan was. Yet at the surface level, Francis does not seem to have impinged upon Scotus at all. But such a view completely misunderstands the role and place of Scotus in the Franciscan spiritual tradition. The seeming absence of any mention of Francis in the works of Scotus does not prove that silence is disinterest either consciously or temperamentally. Bonaventure may be closer in time and, some may think, empathetically to Francis than Scotus—but this is to ignore a salient

fact about Scotus: Scotus was a Franciscan. He joined the Franciscans, his formation was a Franciscan formation, his human, Christian and religious life was a Franciscan life. He was a Franciscan as much as Bonaventure was a Franciscan, and he was a Franciscan intellectually, affectively and spiritually. And in his novitiate he would have learned of Francis's deep love for the human Jesus, his veneration of the priesthood, the "Lord Pope," creation, and these themes permeate the life and work of Scotus.

## The Franciscan Formation of Scotus

The Scotus tradition says he joined the Order at fifteen, entering the friary at Dumfries where his uncle, Elias, was guardian. It is not unreasonable to suggest that this family connection may have had some early formative effect on him. We know of his studies at Oxford and Paris and of the difficulties he encountered in the latter place. Bonaventure had the advantage of studying under Alexander of Hales, "the greatest philosopher of the day," whose embracing of the Franciscan life caused something of a stir. And at Paris Bonaventure found himself in comparable intellectual company, e.g. John de La Rochelle. But Scotus was not bereft of such formative Franciscan intellectual company. At Oxford the Franciscan presence and influence was strong and well regarded, and regardless of what posterity may think of the errant genius of Roger Bacon, the impact of his influence on Scotus was strong and we owe him and others, e.g. William of Ware (who may have taught a version of the Immaculate Conception similar to Scotus's) a debt of gratitude. And Scotus quotes copiously from Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure with whom he did not agree on a whole range of issues. But from Bonaventure he would have learned one important thing, something that seems to have been forgotten in the study of theology today, namely, that a striving for the divine through learning will culminate in a mystical union of love. For both Bonaventure and Scotus believed and taught that the end of all theology is Love, and this has ever been the tradition of Franciscan theology and spirituality.

And therein lies one of the keys to understanding the Franciscanism of Duns Scotus and consequently his spirituality: his formation was a Franciscan formation. By Franciscan formation is to be understood not just the practicalities of ordinary, everyday Franciscan living that we all struggle with, but also his intellectual, affective, and spiritual formation was Franciscan in both ethos and reality. Intellectually Scotus may have embraced more of Aristotelianism than would have comfortably sat with the more conservative Augustinian Bonaventure but he did so as a member of the Franciscan movement. And herein lies another key to understanding the spiritual grounding of Scotus: he belongs to the whole Franciscan movement, not just the OFMs who rightly claim him as one of their own, but to all those who share the vision of Francis

regardless of whether they are "professional" Franciscans or not. Scotus is to be placed not just in the intellectual tradition but also right in the heart of the Franciscan spiritual tradition as one of its great exponents and teachers.

Theologically speaking Bonaventure is known chiefly for his reflections on Christ the Center and Scotus for the Doctrine of the Primacy, so both the great doctors of the Franciscan intellectual tradition are known for their Christological explorations: Bonaventure's Christ-centered emanative cosmos, and Scotus's Christified cosmos both share the same unifying principle—the primacy and priority of the Incarnate Word. Bonaventure may conclude at the end of his speculative Christology that the necessity of redemption is the determinative of the Incarnation, and Scotus that the Incarnation is the determinative of everything that exists, but both hold that the central place in the whole construct of reality is the Word. Hence, Scotus's Franciscan formation emerges primarily in his theological thought as being grounded in the centrality of Christ; the same is true in the case of Bonaventure and both are traceable back to the vision of Christ that Francis has. It is certainly true that we cannot argue for a vision of the universal Christ in Francis in the same speculative theological exposition as Bonaventure and Scotus but all three are intimately united as Christocentric.

## Bonaventure and Scotus: An Unfair Comparison

In many respects it is unfair to compare the approach of Bonaventure and Scotus in areas that we would generally state to be "spirituality," or compare their various writings in terms of "spiritual theology," or how useful their writings might be for us today if we reinterpret them. Bonaventure's vision of the Trinity and Christ owe as much to the intellectual-spiritual climate of his day as Scotus's metaphysical and ontological explorations owe to his. The spirituality of Bonaventure is rich, clear and profound; it soars on eagles' wings to the very heights of mysticism understood in the context of the medieval climate. It is just as valuable to us today as we prayerfully and contemplatively seek to develop our own spirituality of the Incarnate Word leading us to a deeper love of the Trinity, and how we can respectfully relate to creation in its symbolic, sacramental significance.

But in coming to Scotus we are in different waters. Many Franciscans know that Scotus has something to say to them; they know that it concerns his Christology, they know that it is a wonderful vision, yet they are not quite sure how to get access to it. The paradox is that Scotus's absolute genius has been the primary reason why "ordinary" Franciscans, i.e. non-scholars, approach Scotus with some trepidation and this is what leads to frustration. In the popular mind Bonaventure possesses the "language": union, ascent, mystical, illumination, purgation, these are terms still used in contemporary spirituality

and retreat work or explanations for methodologies of prayer. Scotus's language is more remote and found within discussions on meaning and usage: "formal distinction," "thisness," "being qua being," "agent intellect." Though Bonaventure was also a philosopher and used some of these terms himself, Scotus is more known for this type of language and this is not the language of "spirituality" in the commonly understood sense of the term.

Many Franciscans are content, simply, to study about issues in Franciscan history or spirituality, but they shy away from Franciscan theology because they perceive it as too complex, not easily understood, or as not having anything to do with spirituality, as if theology and spirituality were separate. They concern themselves with wanting to know about "mystical" things, about methods of prayer, about what Francis did, how he prayed; what Bonaventure wrote about contemplation and mystical union; or the Trinity or Christocentrism. They shy away from studying the theology of the great Franciscan writers and spiritual masters (and by masters here is meant male and female spiritual masters). This is a shame because they simply reduce the works of these great masters to historical curiosities whose sole purpose seems to have been the construction of a Franciscan spirituality which, without proper theological and philosophical investigation is reduced to an intellectual or spiritual archaeology. Such an approach is both meaningless and unfair and does Bonaventure, and more especially Duns Scotus, a grave disservice because they isolate so-called "spiritual doctrines" from the context in which they were written, and in removing them from their historical context cannot situate them in our contemporary context. They fail to see the importance of Scotus especially; they speak of the "primacy of Christ" without understanding what Scotus is saying and how radical it actually is and what a great sign for a burdened humanity it actually can be.

## Rescuing Duns Scotus

So: can we rescue Duns Scotus and re-place him where he belongs—in the heart of the Franciscan spiritual tradition as one of its most sublime masters? The whole thrust of this reflection has been a resounding Yes!! But how is it to be done? I would like to make the following suggestions:

1. Promotion of Scotist Studies
2. Popularising Scotus's Theology in accessible language
3. Exposing postulants, novices, friars/sisters/laity to Scotus
4. Formation of a Scotus Society
5. Celebrating his feast with a liturgy followed by a lecture/talk on an aspect of his thought/spirituality in the popular vein.

The beatification of Scotus and the completion of the critical edition of his works marked a turning point in Scotus studies and his being known, at least in name, by a greater number of people. The critical edition is an invaluable resource to the serious Scotus scholar but more is needed if Scotus studies are to be promoted among those who are not scholars. What is needed is a new Scotus Society which would promote serious academic research and study on Scotus, but at the same time reinterpret Scotus for our own day (one of the most successful examples of this was Blane O'Neill's wonderful little book *Mary's Architect*). Scotus could not have written what he did unless he had first seen it; in other words, he is an incarnation of Augustine's dictum "You cannot love what you do not know." Scotus knew the splendor of God, the love of God, the God who was Love, and the Christ in whom it was perfectly manifested and returned. He knew them because he had walked the court of heaven in his own prayer, contemplative union, and mystical flights. He has much to say to Franciscan spirituality today and much is being lost because we do not know how to open up the treasure chest of his spirituality which is so vital for us and for our world.

We are a contemporary example of the parable of the Treasure in the Field: we have found the treasure—Scotus—we have buried it and we have come back to claim it—the problem is we have forgotten where we buried it in the first place! Those of us who study Scotus and teach him need to go back to the drawing board and devise a new methodology for making Scotus accessible. Scotus needs to be rescued and placed not in the footnotes of the history of philosophy, but in the center of the heart of the Franciscan spiritual tradition alongside Francis, Clare, and Bonaventure, where he rightly belongs and from which, to the shame of all Franciscans, he has been absent for far too long.

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*Many Franciscans are content, simply, to study about issues in Franciscan history or spirituality, but they shy away from Franciscan theology because they perceive it as too complex, not easily understood, or as not having anything to do with spirituality, as if theology and spirituality were separate. They concern themselves with wanting to know about "mystical" things, about methods of prayer, about what Francis did, how he prayed; what Bonaventure wrote about contemplation and mystical union; or the Trinity or Christocentrism. They shy away from studying the theology of the great Franciscan writers and spiritual masters (and by masters here is meant male and female spiritual masters).*

Seamus Mulholland, OFM

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## About Our Contributors

**Charles Finnegan, O.F.M.**, is member of the Holy Name province. A well-known speaker and retreat director, he currently serves as the director of the San Damiano Spiritual Center, located in the inner city of Philadelphia. He has been a missionary and is on the Ministry of the Word team of his province.

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**Clare Agnes Vance, O.S.C.**, is a member of the Arundel community of Poor Clares, Sussex, England. Prior to her entrance in 1988 she was a teacher in both England and Kenya. This her is first appearance in *The Cord*.

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**Seamus Mulholland, O.F.M.**, teaches at the Franciscan Study Centre in Canterbury, England. He has been a faithful contributor to *The Cord* over a number of years; his last articles appeared in two 2001 issues.

**Joseph Schwab, O.F.M.**, a member of the St. Barbara Province since 1978, received his master's degree in theological studies from the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley. From 1994-1998 he was Vicar and Administrator at Old Mission Santa Barbara in Santa Barbara, California. Currently on sabbatical, his most recent ministerial work was as director of the Mission Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona.

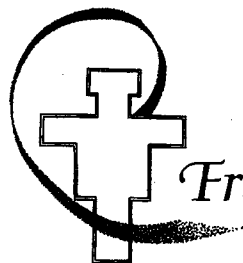
**William Short O.F.M.**, Friar of the Province of St. Barbara CA, serves as assistant novice master, definitor of the province and professor at the Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley CA. Author of *The Franciscans*, Liturgical Press MN, 1989 and *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition* (NY: Orbis Press, 1999), and co-editor/translator of the three volume series, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (NY: New City Press, 1999-2000-2001), Bill is a member of the summer faculty of the Franciscan Institute and has been a presenter for numerous Franciscan Federation seminars and programs.

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...we can conclude that  
all creatures in this world  
of sensible realities lead the spirit of  
the contemplative  
and wise person  
to the eternal God. . .

*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* Ch. 1: 11



## Franciscan Spiritual Center

609 S. Convent Road \* Aston PA 19014 \* (610) 558-6152  
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Weekend Retreats begin Friday at 7:00 p.m. and end on Sunday at 1:00 p.m. \$140.00

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*Mary Lou Sleevi*

**A Child Is Born For Us**  
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*Edward Coughlin OFM*

**An Advent Journey:**  
**Enfolded in the Mantle of**  
**Our Lady of Guadalupe**  
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*Anne Amati OSF*

**Twelve-Step Spirituality**  
January 23-25, 2004  
*Patricia Walsh OP*

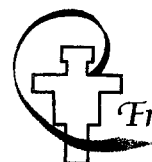
### Special Event

**Instruments of Enduring Peace: A Francis-Fest Finale**  
October 5, 2003 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.  
*Bishop Thomas Gumbleton*  
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*Jean Ustasiewski OSF*  
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*Helen Budzik OSF and Jean Ustasiewski OSF*  
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**Announcing:** 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Franciscan Enrichment Program

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### Contents of program:

The program begins with two weeks of "academic" input/processing/prayer/ritual around the following foundational issues in contemporary theology:

*The Meaning of Creation*  
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*Image of the Unseen God of Compassion.*

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Celeste Crine, OSF (Coordinator)  
Kathleen Gannon, OSF (Facilitator)  
John Hogan, OFM (Chaplain)  
Andrea Likovich, OSF (Liturgist)  
Bernard Prusak, Ph.D. (Presenter)

**Cost:** \$1800

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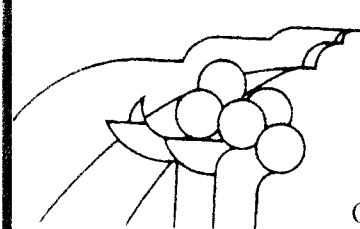
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And whoever observes these things, let [them] be blessed *in heaven with the blessing* of the Most High Father, and *on earth* with the blessing of His Beloved Son with the Most Holy Spirit the Paraclete, and all the powers of heaven and all the saints. And as far as I can, I little brother Francis, your servant, confirm for you what I have said and what I have written.



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**Thursday evening, October 23, 2003-Sunday noon, October 26, 2003.** The Franciscan Connection, with Ann Weltin, OSF and Nancy Miller, OSF. Sponsored by the Franciscan Federation, Regions 4 and 5. At Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort, IL. For more information, contact Sr. Deborah Suddarth at 815.464.3873.

**Friday, October 24, 2003-Sunday, October 26, 2003.** Painting and Poetry: Faces. Mary Lou Sleevi. At the Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. For information, call 610.558.6152 or send an e-mail to fsc@osfphila.org.

**Friday, November 7-Sunday, November 9, 2003.** Guided Retreat Weekend. Led by Sr. Jean Ustasiewski, OSF, at Clare House in Aston, PA. For information, see ad, p. 276.

**Thursday, November 13-Sunday, November 16, 2003.** Here's To Your Health: A Workshop on Healing and Spirituality. At the Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, Pittsburgh, PA. For information, see ad, p. 278.

**Friday, November 14, 2003-Sunday, November 16, 2003.** The Formation of Lay Communities. Darleen Pryds, Ph.D. At the Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, AZ 85253. For information, call 1.800.356.3247 or send an email to casa@thecasa.org.

**Friday, December 5, 2003-Sunday, December 7, 2003.** A Child Is Born For Us. Edward Coughlin, OFM. For information, see ad on p. 276.

## Abbreviations

### Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
BL	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 of the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule ( <i>Regula non bullata</i> )
LR	The Later Rule ( <i>Regula bullata</i> )
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
RCI	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCI	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 Jacopone da Todi
DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri
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
LFI	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

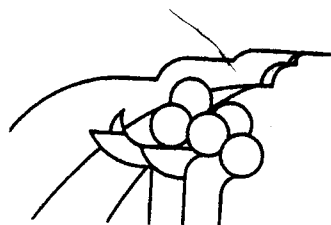
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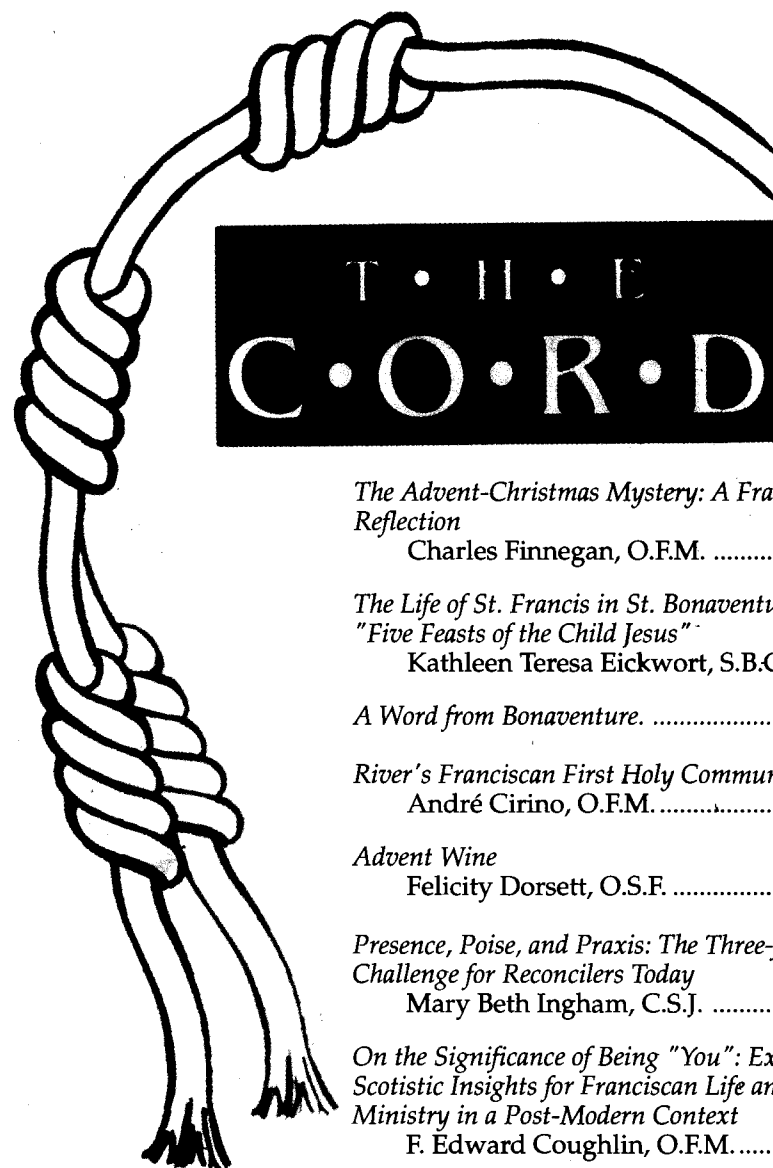
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## A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



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**THE CORD**  
***A Franciscan Spiritual Review***

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

1. MSS should be submitted on disk (or typed on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced).
2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 14th ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.  
Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:  
(1Cor. 13:6).      (2Cel 5:8).  
(RegNB 23:2).      (4LAg 2:13).

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

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*The Cord*, 53.6 (2003)

## Editorial

The seasons have changed once again, and we are in the transition from autumn to winter, and, in the life of Christians, from so-called ordinary time to Advent and Christmas. Which is more important to us? How do we focus on the meaning of the gift of the Incarnation in the midst of preparations for Thanksgiving and the rush of shopping during the holiday season? How do we distinguish the things of time from the things of eternity? Is it possible to make ourselves slow down and be more reflective when we live in a culture that becomes more frenetic and consumeristic at this time of year?

Perhaps this issue of *The Cord* might help. Certainly Father Charles Finnegan offers us a point of entry into thinking about "Cur Deus homo?" – why God assumed a human nature. At the very least, we can find food for meditation on "the human face of God and the divine face of being human." Kathleen Eickwort takes us into the thought of St. Bonaventure and his desire to help all conceive and bring forth Christ in real ways in our world—not a simple thing, most of us would admit. Yet, the very next piece, the dialogue of André Cirino and his grandnephew River, belies our tendency to say "This is too complex for me to understand" when speaking of the gift of the Incarnation!

Having said that, we also include for consideration the profound wisdom of John Duns Scotus as found in the presentations of Mary Beth Ingham and Ed Coughlin given at the Franciscan Federation annual conference held in Detroit in August. Both articles allow us to deepen our appreciation of the beauty of Scotus's philosophical theology, if we are willing to enter into that area of Franciscan thought. Whether we are caught up by the concepts of presence, poise, praxis, or the insights from the characters in *Harold and Maude*, we will find much to challenge us at the deepest level of our personal journeys. For those readers who wish some refreshment of a different kind, we offer the poem "Advent Wine" and two book reviews, which invite us to a sense of reflection and might, perhaps, lead us into additional reading. Lastly, this issue includes the annual index of articles and subjects published in 2003. It has been a very full year for *The Cord*, indeed.

May the coming weeks of Advent and the immensely wonderful season of Christmas bring each of us and all the world into deeper love of God and each other!

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*

## The Advent-Christmas Mystery: A Franciscan Reflection<sup>1</sup>

Charles Finnegan, O.F.M.

Dear Friends:

I am very grateful for the opportunity of sharing with you a Franciscan reflection on the grace-filled Advent and Christmas season that was so dear to St. Francis and St. Clare. If it is true that Easter is the greatest of all Christian Feasts, Christmas is "the dearest." More than any other season, Christmas reveals the "gentle, human touch" of God. Clarence Jordan, who founded the racially mixed Koinonia Community in Georgia in 1942, and wrote the "Cotton Patch Version of the Gospel" liked to say, when speaking of the Incarnation, "God moved in with us."

Advent/Christmas, surely the most poetic of the liturgical seasons, is not a time of make-believe. We do not pretend that Christ has not yet come, or that on the Feast of Christmas we receive Him as a Child. We do not want to trivialize Christmas by over-sentimentalizing it. The event of Jesus' birth from the Virgin Mary in a stable in Bethlehem is, as are all the events in the life of Christ, unrepeatable and unrepeatable. It is on the level of "mystery" that the Christmas liturgy makes that great salvific event present to us, making available the saving power of the Lord's birth "for us and for our salvation." In Christ, God has fully entered into human history, has fully taken on our weak human nature, has become like us in everything, sin alone excepted. "The Word became flesh" and the human condition received for all time a new definition, renewed from within by the heartbeat of God. The claim is so daring that it seemed to many of those who first heard it a scandal, a blasphemy even.

From earliest times Christian teachers have struggled to express, however imperfectly, this saving action of God that is inexpressible in its awesomeness. Consider, for example, the teaching of St. Gregory Nazianzen, Bishop of Constantinople in the 4th century, and known in the East as "the Theologian":

This is why God became human: to raise up our flesh, to re-create humankind, so that all of us might become one in Christ who perfectly became in us everything that He is in Himself. The very Son of God, the perfect likeness, the definition and word of the Father: He it is who comes to His own image and takes our nature for the good of our nature to purify like by like. He takes on the poverty of my flesh, that I may gain the riches of His divinity. He who is full is made empty that I may share in His fullness.

In a similar vein St. Augustine says:

Men and women, awake! For your sake God has become human. You would have suffered eternal death had He not been born in time. Never would you have been freed from sinful flesh, had He not taken on Himself the likeness of sinful flesh. You would have suffered everlasting unhappiness, had it not been for this mercy. You would have been lost if He had not hastened to your aid. You would have perished had He not come.

Of his own will He was born for us today, in time, so that He could lead us to his Father's eternity. God became human, so humans might become God. The Lord of angels became human today so humans could eat the bread of angels. The Lord who had created all things is Himself now created, so that he who was lost would be found. Humans sinned and became guilty; God is born a human to free them from their guilt. Humans fell but God descended; humans fell miserably, but God descended mercifully; humans fell through pride but God descended with his grace. Brothers and sisters, what prodigies! What miracles! Ask if this were merited; ask for its reason, and see whether you will find any other answer but sheer grace.

Texts like these help us understand something of the awesome mystery we celebrate at Christmas. The Liturgy calls this mystery a "marvelous exchange." We give the Son of God a share in our human nature, and in exchange He gives us a share in His divine nature. He becomes what we are to make us what He is.

The Incarnation reveals both the human face of God and the divine face of being human. We become "sons and daughters in the Son" (*filii in Filio*) to use St. Augustine's perceptive phrase. The Lord of the whole universe "empties Himself" and takes the form of a slave, to enrich us by His poverty. Jesus takes on our humanity so He can die for us, and in exchange He gives us a share in His divinity so we can live forever. A "marvelous exchange" it is indeed!

All this is, of course, sheer grace, free gift—undeserved and undeservable—from God Who is Love.

## The Example of St. Francis

St. Francis's love of the Christmas mystery is among the most obvious of his traits. He called Christmas "the feast of feasts" (2Cel 199). His first biographer tells us that "the humility of the Incarnation and the charity of the Passion occupied his memory to such an extent that he hardly wanted to think of anything else" (1Cel 84). On Christmas day he suggested that the rich "invite all the poor to a lavish meal," and he wanted people to throw wheat on the roads "every year on the day of the Nativity of the Lord, so that on this great solemnity the birds would have food" (AC 14). Christmas was to be a day of great rejoicing for all creation.

Chapter XXIII of the Rule of 1221 is sometimes called "the Franciscan Preface." In this beautiful "Prayer and Thanksgiving" Francis recalls the mysteries of our redemption, and pours out his soul in praise for the gift of the Incarnation:

All-powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God . . . We thank you for as through Your Son You created us, so also, through Your holy love, with which You loved us You brought about His birth as true God and true man by the glorious, ever-virgin, most blessed, holy Mary.

If, as is well known, Francis was a lover of "Lady Poverty," one of the main reasons for this choice can be found in his contemplation of the mystery of Bethlehem:

Through his angel, St. Gabriel, the most high Father in heaven announced this Word of the Father—so worthy, so holy and glorious—in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from which He received the flesh of humanity and our frailty. Though He was rich beyond all things (2 Cor 8:9), in this world He, together with the most blessed Virgin, His mother, willed to choose poverty" (2LtF 4f).

It was the Christmas mystery that confirmed St. Clare too in her unconquerable commitment to "most holy poverty." She wanted her sisters to use poor clothing "for love of the most holy Baby, laid in a manger and dressed in swaddling clothes, and of his most holy Mother" (Rule of St. Clare II, 25). Awestruck as she contemplates the Christmas mystery, Clare writes: "O marvelous humility, O astonishing poverty! The King of the angels, the Lord of heaven and earth, is laid in a manger!" (4 LAg 20f)

## The Absolute and Unconditional Primacy of Christ

In the Mystery of Christ the whole of creation takes on new meaning: "All things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being" (Jn 1:3). All creation is centered on Christ and oriented to Christ. In the momentous teaching of Colossians:

"Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creatures. In Him everything in heaven and on earth was created, things visible and invisible; all were created through Him and for Him. He is before all else that is. In Him everything continues in being." (1:15ff)

Based on this Pauline teaching, the Franciscan School of Theology, under the leadership of Blessed John Duns Scotus (1266-1308), proclaims the absolute and unconditional Primacy of Christ, the Incarnate Word. In God's eternal plan for creation Christ came first: everything exists "through Him and for Him." Everything holds together in Him; without Him everything falls apart. Christ did not come because of Adam; Adam came because of Christ! Christ, not Adam, is "the first-born of all creatures." Adam, like everything else in heaven and on earth, exists "through Christ and for Christ. Christ is before all else that is." In the gospel of John (8:57), Jesus declares: "Before Abraham came to be, I am." He could just as well have said: "Before Adam came to be, I am," not only because He is the Eternal Word, but also because as the Incarnate Word He comes first in God's plan. Very perceptively Thomas Merton wrote: "without Christ Adam has no function or meaning in Scripture. Without Jesus, Adam is merely the beginning of a story that wanders off inconclusively into nothing" (*The New Man*, p. 32).

As Vatican II taught: Christ is the "goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the center of mankind, the joy of all hearts and the fulfillment of all aspirations" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 45). He is "the key, the center and the purpose of the whole of human history" (GS,10). THE WORD INCARNATE IS GOD'S ABSOLUTE MASTERPIECE!

## Greccio, the "Franciscan Bethlehem"

The friary at Greccio, a town about 45 miles south of Assisi, was one of St. Francis's preferred places. He considered that town to be "rich by reason of its poverty" (2Cel 35). Three years before his death Francis decided to celebrate Christmas there in a new and dramatic way. So new was it that he obtained special permission from the Pope so as not to be considered an innovator. (LMj X:7). It grieved Francis that people had lost their sense of wonder at the

awesomeness of the Christmas mystery. Fifteen days before the great Feast, Francis asked a close friend, a converted Knight called John of Greccio, to prepare a setting that would "recall to memory the little Child who was born in Bethlehem and set before our bodily eyes in some way the inconveniences of His infant needs, how He lay in a manger, how, with an ox and an ass standing by, He lay upon the hay where He had been placed" (ICel 84).

When the holy night of Christmas arrived, John carried out Francis's wishes to the letter. As the time for Mass approached, Francis with his brothers, together with the townsfolk, made their way to the site. A manger had been prepared, hay brought in, an ox and ass led in. People were "filled with new joy over the new mystery" (ICel 85). Candles and torches lit up that holy night. The simple country folk joined Francis and his brothers in singing God's praises. The manger served as the altar for the Mass, and Francis, as Deacon, sang the Gospel and preached. St. Bonaventure describes the scene: "The saint stood before the crib and his heart overflowed with tender compassion; bathed in tears, Francis was overcome with joy" (LMj X:7).

"The woods rang with the voices of the crowd. The brothers sang, paying their debt of praise to the Lord and the whole night resounded with their rejoicing." Francis had turned Greccio into a "new Bethlehem"! (ICel 85)

### The "Novelty" of Greccio

St. Francis is often credited with giving us "the first Christmas Crib." While his devotion to the Christmas mystery no doubt influenced our modern custom of arranging Nativity scenes in our churches and homes at Christmas, what Francis did at Greccio was different. Early Franciscan sources make no mention of statues or images there, not even of Mary, Joseph or the Babe. Only the manger, hay, the ox and ass are mentioned.

The originality introduced by Francis at Greccio was the close bond between manger and altar. In the perceptive phrase of the Dizionario Francese (n.1072) what Francis "invented" at Greccio was the "Eucharistic manger." At Greccio, not the image of the Infant but the Eucharistic species themselves were placed over the manger—the manger was the altar. The two great mysteries, the Incarnation and Eucharist, were shown visibly to be intimately connected. Francis notes the close association of the two mysteries in his writings also:

"See, daily He humbles Himself as when He came from the royal throne into the womb of the Virgin; daily He comes to us in humble form; daily He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of the priest." (1st Adm.)

We may continue this comparison. Just as shepherds brought gifts to the manger, so the faithful bring their gifts to the altar, the most important being the gift of themselves: "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, so that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally" (LtOrd 29). Just as "by the Incarnation Christ has in a certain way joined Himself to every human being" (GS 22), in the Eucharist He comes to His faithful so that they might "remain in Him and He in them" (Jn 6:56).

The English word Christmas comes from two Anglo-Saxon words "Cristes maesse" meaning "Christ's Mass," that is, the Mass celebrating Christ's birth. The very word "Christmas" reminds us that the great Christmas celebration is the Eucharistic liturgy that celebrates the Lord's birth, makes that event present to us in mystery, filling those who celebrate it in faith with "saving and amazing grace." Celebrating "Christ's Mass" in "Spirit and in truth" as the heart of the whole Christmas season is the best defense against the trivialization and commercialization of Christmas.

The word "Bethlehem" means "House of Bread" and for Francis Christmas is above all else the coming of Him Who is the "Bread of Life" and "the living bread come down from heaven." Francis marveled at the poverty of the Babe, and he never ceased to be amazed at the "humility of God" in the Eucharist:

Let the whole of mankind tremble, the whole world shake when Christ the Son of the living God is present on the altar. O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! That the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under the little form of bread! Look, Brothers, at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before Him. Humble yourselves as well that you may be exalted by Him. (LtOrd 26 ff)

Being a "little one" himself, Francis knew well that Christmas is for children. At Greccio Francis "became a child with the Child" (2Cel 35). To the greedy, to the arrogant and haughty, Christmas must seem the ultimate absurdity. Only the little ones can come before the Crib, full of reverent awe and simple joy, "lost, all lost in wonder" at the marvel of it all. Only the little ones can celebrate with purity of heart the Feast of the littleness of God. Only the humble can recognize the awesome power of this littleness: "By His birth, we are reborn" (Sunday Preface IV). This conviction was beautifully expressed by El Salvador's martyred Archbishop, Oscar Romero, in his 1978 Christmas homily:

No one can celebrate a genuine Christmas without being truly poor. The self-sufficient, the proud, those who, because they have everything, look down on others, those who have no need even of

God—for them there will be no Christmas. Only the poor, the hungry, those who need someone to come on their behalf, will have that someone. That someone is God, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God.

The Lord's first coming in poverty and littleness is the promise of His second coming in glory, a glory He wants to share with us. While we wait "in joyful hope" for that time of perfect fulfillment we do well to follow St. Augustine's advice: "We are not yet ready for the banquet of our Father, so let us contemplate the manger of our Lord Jesus Christ." The "Good News" of Christmas, which we need to hear and proclaim over and over, is unchanging: "a Savior has been born to you" (Lk 2:11). "To all who receive Him he gives power to become children of God" (Jn 1:12). To all who receive Him! Or, as St. Francis succinctly put it: "Since our Lord has been born for us, it is for us to accept salvation" (2MP 114). A marvelous exchange indeed!

May your Christmas be filled with peace, as you experience at the core of your being the grace of His coming.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>This article is the first publication of a reflection given during Advent, 2002. The citation for the quotes from the Church Fathers are not included.



Parrendo

*The Cord*, 53.6 (2003)

## The Life of St. Francis in St. Bonaventure's *Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*

Kathleen Teresa Eickwort, S.B.C.

*"In God's church there are holy men and women who have been enlightened more profoundly than others by the divine radiance and inflamed more ardently by inspiration from on high . . ."*

—St Bonaventure, Prologue to *The Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*.

*"I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours to do . . ."*

—St Francis of Assisi, on his deathbed (2C214)

## Introduction

*The Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*<sup>2</sup> is a short series of meditations written by Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, who at that time was Minister General of the Franciscan Order. It is a profoundly inspiring reflection on the theme of "spiritual motherhood," of Christ's conception and birth within the soul of the believer, and the bringing forth of Christ into the world. Bonaventure traces this theme by comparison with the Blessed Virgin's conception, giving birth, and naming of the Divine Child, the Adoration of the Magi, and the Presentation in the Temple.

It is notable, indeed striking under the circumstances, that St. Francis of Assisi is never mentioned in this text. All the focus is on the Incarnate Word, Jesus. In the Prologue, the author points to meditation on Jesus as the privileged path to mystical consolations:

*. . . through meditation upon Jesus and reverent contemplation of the Incarnate Word, a faithful soul can experience a delight far sweeter, a pleasure more thrilling and a consolation more perfect than from honey and fragrant perfumes.*<sup>3</sup>

However, Francis's life could not have been far from the consciousness and memory of this man who was the head of the Franciscan Order, and who

later became his biographer. The thesis of this article is that the life of St. Francis and the birth of the Franciscan Order is intentionally implicit, although not explicit, in Bonaventure's exposition of these "*Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*."

### Parallels in the *Five Feasts* with the Life of St. Francis

In "The First Feast: How Christ Jesus, the Son of God, may be Conceived Spiritually by a Devout Soul," the comparison is made between the experience of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the conversion of a "devout soul" to God. Although the "First Feast" should be the Annunciation, the account of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth is also included in this Feast.

The principal object of this Feast is clearly to encourage the reader to be open to, and to recognize and cooperate with, the action of God in the soul, by the reception of God's mercy and grace. This disposes the soul for the "spiritual conception." But someone who is familiar with the story of the early conversion of St. Francis must be struck by the parallels with his experience; how in his illness after the war with Perugia, he was touched with weariness and distaste for the worldly life he had previously led; and how he "rejected and despised previous imperfections and former desires for worldly things"<sup>4</sup> (cf. 1CII). Just as medical scientists speculate that a woman within the first trimester of pregnancy has changes in her appetite to protect the delicate embryo from toxic substances, and provide it with essential nutrients, the soul newly pregnant with grace requires some protection from the world, and is inspired to withdraw from its former ways and companions.

This would also explain the emphasis in this Feast on Mary's haste to go up to the hill country. Francis, in drawing aside to pray in the cave with his companion to guard the entrance, probably, like Mary, "begins to climb the hill country."<sup>5</sup> The most likely place for his "treasure hunting" in the cave is some unknown location on Mt. Subasio (1CIII), or even to the area of the Carceri, where later tradition says he prayed with his earliest brothers.

Bonaventure's focus on withdrawing from the company of worldly people and on one's friendship with the good, although it applies to Mary's visit to Elizabeth, surely also alludes to St. Francis's withdrawal from his previous party-going companions, and his seeking of the company of the priest of San Damiano (1C9, LC3:16-17).

Although we know that Mary, after her virginal conception, was in danger from the law of her people, we do not know very much about what she actually had to suffer after Joseph was inspired to protect her and her reputation. The description by Bonaventure of the assaults of the wicked and their insidious, toxic counsel, the discouragement offered by the seemingly good, and the culture of spiritual abortion that would "seek to kill the Son of God conceived in them by the Holy Spirit,"<sup>6</sup> more clearly fits Francis's experience and that of

the earliest brothers. Pietro de Bernadone's attacks on his son, and the misunderstanding, ridicule and abuse showered on St. Francis and his companions by the people of Assisi, were very close to the pattern described by Bonaventure (1C V, VI, VII; AP19-20 and other accounts).

In "The Second Feast: How the Son of God is Born Spiritually in a Devout Soul," Bonaventure describes how, after "good advice, due thought, and prayer for God's protection . . . the soul begins to do that which it long had in mind."<sup>7</sup> Here again one may see allusions to events in St. Francis's life after he began to live as God had inspired him. In peace of conscience, because he is now living a radical life of grace, he still weeps for "time lost," and is constantly edifying



others by his words and actions and exhorting them to a life of penance (1C103). There may also be an allusion to the struggle and discernment whether he was called to prayer only or to an active contemplative life, preaching as well as spending time in solitude (LM 12:1-2). And surely no Franciscan can hear Bonaventure exhorting us to:

nourish [the newborn Child] 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 longings and cherish him in the bosom of our inmost heart,<sup>8</sup>

without remembering the accounts of Francis at Christmas in Greccio (1C 85-86).

"The Third Feast: How the Infant Jesus is Named Spiritually by a Devout Soul," is a song of praise to the power of the Name of Jesus. But Bonaventure also says, "To the little Infant begotten in you spiritually, give the name Jesus which means: Saviour, amidst the miseries of this life."<sup>9</sup> St. Francis's "spiritual child" was the Order of Friars Minor, and the name of this Order was very important in protecting its members from the temptations to wealth, prestige, and power, as well as from individualism which would destroy fraternity. The Founder was very conscious of this, which is the reason he changed the name from the original appellation "Poor Men of Assisi."<sup>10</sup> It is also important, Bonaventure implies, that each soul touched by grace name those graces so that it can receive them with a proper gratitude, awareness of the gift, and devotion.<sup>11</sup>



"The Fourth Feast: How the Son of God is Sought and Adored Spiritually with the Magi, by the Devout Soul," describes how the three kings, "resolve to go in search of the Child, already revealed to them in the royal city, that is, in the structure of the created universe."<sup>12</sup> For the Magi of St. Matthew, the "royal city" in this first paragraph would presumably have been Babylon (cf. Dan. 2:45b-48).<sup>13</sup> But for Bonaventure it was the structure of the created universe, as well as prophetic revelation, which had revealed to Francis and his brothers the providence of God in their poverty, and the radical gospel life to which they were called. Yet just as the Magi were drawn by the star to Jerusalem, and following proper royal protocol, they consult with King Herod, even so Francis goes—to Rome.

The new Order must be submitted to the proper Church authorities, because knowing the providence of God, Francis knows also that no authority exists that is not of God (Romans 13:1). But Herod in the Bible (possibly along with the Pharisees) exemplifies the culture of spiritual abortion that is warned against in the *First Feast*. This is very jarring after the devotional sweetness expressed by Bonaventure in adoration of the Child being sought:

We have heard His voice and it is soft and tender; we have tasted His sweetness and it is delightful; we have caught His fragrance and it is alluring; we have felt His embrace and it is irresistible. . . . Now Herod [!], give us the answer, tell us where the Beloved is to be found, show us the little Child we are yearning to see. He is the one we seek and long for.<sup>14</sup>

In the biblical account, Herod, at least through his chief priests and scholars, *does* have accurate information about where the Child is, because he has access to the tradition and the scriptures (Mt 2:3-6): "in Bethlehem of Judea." But Herod's spirit and his will is not turned toward devotion and worship, despite his words to the Magi (Mt 2:8). If we consider here a rather daring parallel between the institution of the Church and King Herod, we see the point: this is a time of crisis and danger for the newly born Order. The danger is not only of rejection by the Church authorities but also of compromise. The spiritual identity of the Order may be lost in the writing, and re-writing, and acceptance of the Rule. If this happens, even if the Order should continue, the Infant, the spiritual Child that was conceived and named and brought forth, whose name is Jesus, is lost. The founder, Francis, must use all three powers of the soul (the "Magi," or kings, as Bonaventure calls them), will, memory and intellect to write a Rule, not once, but several times; to submit it to God and to the Church, and to continually pray for guidance and inspiration in all of this.<sup>15</sup> Clare also seeks to protect the inspiration of the Order and its charism of holy poverty, all the way to the day of her death.<sup>16</sup>

"The Fifth Feast: How the Son of God is Spiritually Presented in the Temple by a Devout Soul" is an exhortation to present back to God the Father, from whom comes every good and perfect gift, the Child that has now been conceived, delivered, named, and adored by the Magi. The worship of God in thanksgiving and adoration for the fruitfulness that the divine inspiration has brought forth, and entrusting that Child back to the Father in prayer, is a fit culmination to the meditations on the Feast. Both Francis and Bonaventure, as the current head of the Order, would have known their utter dependence on God to carry out their vocations. St. Francis was certainly aware of his inadequacies to the point of resigning his position as head of the Order (2C143; see also his dream of the hen and chicks in 2C23-24). So this Fifth Feast acknowledges powerlessness without the continual grace of God, and focuses on gratitude and the praise, worship and adoration of God.

Conclusion: Why would St. Bonaventure Leave This Theme Implicit?

*"Look at the Good Shepherd, my brothers. To save his sheep He endured the agony of the cross. They followed Him in trials and persecutions, in ignominy, hunger and thirst, in humiliations and temptations, and so on. And for this God rewarded them with eternal life. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves; the saints endured all that, but we who are servants of God try to win glory and honor by recounting and making known what they have done."* (Adm VI)

If we accept the possibility that Bonaventure indeed had in mind the life of St. Francis and the founding of the Order in writing about these *Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*, why didn't he say so? I believe there may be several reasons. The first is mentioned in the Prologue, "Because I thought out this little work with humility. . . ." Any comparison between the Blessed Virgin and St. Francis, coming from the Order's Minister General, might have been seen as prideful, and, moreover, of a kind of vicarious pride that was explicitly forbidden by the founder himself (Adm VI).

The second might be that the allusions in the Fourth Feast, in particular, would be politically dangerous and seem subversive to Church authority. Since he was himself a leader, as General Minister of the Franciscan Order, Bonaventure would have had no desire to foment or legitimize rebellion. However, he must have been constantly aware of the creative tension between the powerful, fresh dynamism and gospel charism of the Order, and the needs and condition of the institutional Church of his time. For Francis's calling to "rebuild My Church" to be accomplished, that dynamism had to remain in relationship and dialogue with Church authority, so that the Rule of the Order

would be accepted and the ministry of Franciscans within the Church validated.

But primarily, I believe that Bonaventure did not want to encourage religion as a "spectator sport."<sup>17</sup> The purpose of this work was to encourage the friars, and all his readers, to conceive and bring forth Christ in their own world and their own time, as God inspired them. Too much focus on Francis might hinder that purpose; but the implicit parallels rather serve to validate the readers' experience as being like that both of St. Francis and of the Blessed Virgin Mary. May Christ teach us what is ours to do, as St. Francis prayed, and give us the grace to do it. Amen.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Bonaventure, *Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*, from the English translation by Eric Doyle, "Bringing Forth Christ: Five Feasts of the Child Jesus," 1984, SLG Press, Convent of the Incarnation, Fairacres, Oxford OX4 1TB England, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Doyle, tr., *op.cit.*, p. iv, says that the original Latin text of this work is found in Tome VIII of St Bonaventure's *Opera Omnia*, which was published at Quaracchi near Florence in 1891. I have been unable to obtain this work, entitled *De quinque festivitibus Pueri Jesu*, and so my comments are based solely on the English translation.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup>See the discussion of the naming of the Order in Leonard Lehmann, O.F.M. Cap, 2002, "Minority: The Core of Poverty," *The Cord*, 52.5, pp. 207-208.

<sup>11</sup>I am indebted to Fr André Cirino, O.F.M., for the interpretation of the "Naming of the Child" in this Feast as the naming of the graces, gifts and ministries that are brought to birth in us, all of which are aspects of the Divine Child. Fr. Cirino led a six-day retreat on the *Five Feasts* of St Bonaventure which I attended in December, 2002, and he also encouraged me to write this article.

<sup>12</sup>Doyle, tr., *op.cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup>This records the Hebrew prophet Daniel being put in charge of the wise men of Nebuchadnezzar's court, after the king falls down and worships him, and orders sacrifice and incense to be offered to Daniel, who has survived his night in the lion's den.

<sup>14</sup>Doyle, tr., *op.cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Bonaventure's description of Francis's use of the powers of his soul to write the Rule in "The Morning Sermon on St Francis, Preached at Parish, October 4, 1255," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Vol. II: The Founder*, Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv., and William J. Short, O.F.M., 2000, pp. 508-516. Bonaventure in this sermon states that the stigmata were God's seal and stamp of approval on the revelation to Francis, and hence also God's seal on the Franciscan Rule.

<sup>16</sup>Edith A. Van den Goorbergh, O.S.C., and Theodore H. Zweerman, O.F.M., 2000, *Light Shining through a Veil: On Saint Clare's Letters to Saint Agnes of Prague*, Peeters,

Leuven, Netherlands, pp. 19-20. Clare was the first woman in history to compose a rule that was confirmed by papal authority.

<sup>17</sup>Richard Rohr, in *Hope Against Darkness: The Transforming Vision of St. Francis in an Age of Anxiety*, 2001, St. Anthony Messenger Press, p. 12 writes: "The Bible seems to always be saying that this journey is indeed a journey, a journey always initiated and concluded by God, and a journey of transformation much more than mere education about anything. We would sooner have textbooks, I think. Then the journey would remain a *spectator sport* [emphasis mine], as much religion often seems to be. The education model elicits a low level of commitment and investment, even if it keeps people obedient and orthodox. The transformation model risks people knowing and sharing "the One Spirit that was given us all to drink" (1 Corinthians 12:13). So sad that we have preferred conformity and group loyalty over real change!" Bonaventure, in leaving the life of Francis implicit, opts for the model of transformation, where we all may receive and be made fruitful by the Spirit of God.

## A WORD FROM BONAVENTURE

**. . . the Archangel Gabriel was sent to the Virgin. When she gave her consent to him, the Holy Spirit came upon her like a divine fire inflaming her soul and sanctifying her flesh in perfect purity. . . Oh, if you could feel in some way the quality and intensity of that fire sent from heaven, the refreshing coolness that accompanied it, the consolation it imparted; if you could realize the great exaltation of the Virgin Mother, the ennobling of the human race, the condescension of the divine majesty; . . . then I am sure you would sing in sweet tones with the Blessed Virgin that sacred hymn: My soul magnifies the Lord**



Lynne Anne, O.S.F.

. . . .

(Tree of Life, First Fruit: 3)

## River's Franciscan First Holy Communion

André Cirino, O.F.M.

*On Christmas Eve morning, I was peeling shrimp in preparation for our festive Italian supper. My grandnephew River, who was to make his First Holy Communion at home during our Christmas Eve Eucharist, sat down at the table and asked:*

*River:* Uncle, tell me something about tonight when I receive Jesus.

*André:* River, who is Jesus to you?

*River:* Jesus is our Savior.

*André:* Do you know what that means?

*River:* Yes, he saved us from our sins, but I'm not into this sin stuff!

*André stops peeling shrimp, seizing the chance to expound to this eight-year-old some Bonaventurian/Scotistic theology.*

*André:* River, one of my favorite names for God is Good. And God-Father shares this Good with God-Son who both share this Good with God-Spirit. Does that make sense to you?

*River:* Yes!

*André:* *Amazed, continues:* The Bible says this Good God created the universe, stars, moon, sun, planets, plants and animals calling all of them good. Then God made the first human beings and called them very good.

*River:* Uh huh!

*André:* So just as God-Father shares all good with God-Son and both share all good with God-Spirit, it just overflows from one to the other.

*River:* I see, they keep sharing it, receiving and returning it to each other.

*André:* Correct, and this sharing is always going on. And when they shared all goodness with creation, they wanted creation to share it back with them just as they share with each other, fully completely perfectly.

*River:* So we give all our good back to God?

*André:* We do, but can we humans give good back to God fully completely perfectly?

*River:* Not perfectly . . .

*André:* Right! So they knew that someone like themselves would have to be come human in order to give it back fully completely perfectly. And they decided that one of them would become one of us to make this return of all good to the Good God fully completely perfectly.

*River:* And that's Jesus, right?

*André:* Yes! Now let me ask you this, are the stuffed Christmas stockings our complete celebration of Christmas?

*River:* No! We have a Christmas tree with gifts, a Christmas supper, a Christmas mass, visits from our family and more.

*André:* So the Christmas celebration is greater than just opening the Christmas stockings?

*River:* Uh huh!

*André:* So saying that Jesus came to save us from our sins is like saying that a stuffed Christmas stocking is our celebration of Christmas. Just like the celebration of Christmas is greater than just Christmas stockings, so too, Jesus came for a greater reason. Jesus came so that all good can be given back to God fully completely perfectly. So this is the Jesus you will receive tonight when you make your First Holy Communion. You will touch Jesus tonight when you eat the bread and drink the wine. Does this make sense to you?

*River:* Yes, but . . . *pausing to think* . . . where is Jesus after mass, when I go home, when I'm in school or on the playground or with my friends?

*André:* An excellent question! Is Jesus Good?

*River:* Yes!

*André:* Is God Good?

*River:* Yes!

*André:* So every time you meet good, you meet Jesus, you meet God!

*River:* Uh huh!

*André:* When you were playing checkers with Uncle Ralph before, how did you feel?

*River:* Good!

*André:* That good was Jesus, that good was God!

*River: – astonished. – I got it!*

*André: And when you shared your toys with your little twin cousins, how did you feel about doing that?*

*River: Good! And that was Jesus and God too! Wow!*

*The conversation concluded at this point. During the Christmas Eve Eucharist, River helped give the homily by repeating some of the above conversation. I know Bonaventure and Scotus smiled as they eavesdropped on this eight-year-old child experiencing their theology.*

### *Advent Wine*

*Advent wine held high  
crystal-clad sparkling beverage  
light lines the vessel  
liquid Light, potable, inside*

*More than wassail or cup of cheer  
more than Jack or Comfort's mead  
more than every human pleasure  
meeting every human need*

*Come weal, come woe, come empty measure  
drink, quaff the cup, the Vine's dear treasure.  
Come woe, come weal, come here to heal  
drink from the chalice abolishing malice.*

Felicity Dorsett, O.S.F.

*The Cord*, 53.6 (2003)

## **Presence, Poise and Praxis: The Three-fold Challenge for Reconcilers Today**

Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J.

As followers of Jesus, we stand at the dawn of this third millennium with great hope and not a little trepidation. Our hope of course lies in the power of Jesus, living and active in our world. Our trepidation comes from our own sense of our limitations, our vulnerabilities. We long to be peacemakers in a world torn by violence and war; yet in our own lives we are conscious of those moments where we have been fragmented and not at peace. We long to promote health and life; yet in our own lives we are painfully aware of all that is not healthy or life-giving. We long to build bridges, to promote justice and right relationships, to take risks for reconciliation; yet we are often frightened and threatened by what such risks would require of us.

"My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection." (2 Cor. 12:9) As we each in our own spiritual journey seek to turn our gaze from ourselves to Jesus, as we work to see ourselves in the divine loving regard, the spiritual traditions of our religious families offer us insights and support. For Franciscans, support can sometimes come from where it is least expected: from the complex and intricate thought of one of your greatest medieval metaphysicians: John Duns Scotus. As I hope to show in what follows, Scotus's manner of re-framing the vision of the human person and the created order in the light of divine love and generosity offers a rich source for all who live and work in the spiritual tradition of the Poverello. I am confident that in his discussion of the constitution of the human heart and its deep desire to love God above all things, to honor the self and to promote justice, Scotus offers a fruitful approach for anyone who seeks to promote right relationships with God, self, others and creation. I draw out the elements of his vision according to three themes: presence, poise and praxis.

### **I. Presence**

At the time of this writing, we are entering the second full week of war in Iraq. Because of the trauma that this conflict has brought to our nation and

our world, it is difficult to concentrate on the day to day activities or on such things as writing a paper that require focus and sustained effort. My mind seems to me to be everywhere and nowhere. I am exhausted in the evening, yet with no great sense that I have done that much more than I normally do. My imagination and my emotions are drawn to the other side of the world, to people I do not know, to children and to the other innocent victims of the violence around them.

This experience of inner fragmentation and distraction calls my attention to the way in which my life might have other, less significant fragmentations and how these affect me and those around me. We all know what it feels like to be with someone who is distracted, who is cold or distant. They appear absent from what is going on around them. In their presence we feel unimportant and, perhaps, even bothersome. This type of encounter brings out and confirms our deepest fears: that we really are not that important or that our problems are not as important as those of others. We can all remember at least one time in our lives where we were not completely present to what was going on around us. We can also bring to mind either people or occasions where our behavior was evasive. Often, when we are unreconciled our behavior reveals our discomfort with a past situation or person.

Times when we must force ourselves to pay attention to what is going on around us strip our energy and leave us exhausted. The psychic effort required to unify what can be so fragmented within us is really enormous. These times of distraction or inattention are often those where our own internal world, our preoccupations, needs, concerns are disunified and out of sync with what is going on around us. We use the term "disconnected" for we feel unconnected with what surrounds us. We are "somewhere else" entirely.

Conversely, we all know how empowering it is to be in the presence of someone who is fully engaged with us and with whatever may be happening in our lives. We can all remember at least one moment in our lives where we were engaged with what was going on around us. These moments are energizing, they are dynamic experiences where life seems to be happening around us and within us. No effort is required. Indeed, things happen around us and we are carried along by a strength much greater than our own.

Considering these two contrasting human experiences points to the difficulty and the exhilaration of the activity of full presence. What is really going on in the case of the fully present individual? What has come together for her/him at a particular instant? Conversely, what has not happened, not come together in the case of the distracted individual? What is preventing him/her from allowing the energy to flow through the individual to those around her/him?

If we consider anyone who is formed in his or her craft or field—the professional athlete, the gifted artist or dancer, the master educator, spiritual di-

rector or health care professional—we are aware of the enormous act of presence that is required of this person. The act of presence I refer to is not simply presence to what he or she is doing (running a race, throwing a pot, teaching a class) and to others who are present, but also an internal self-presence that is a dynamic act of self-awareness, rather than a self-consciousness that can distract. This dynamic act of self-awareness and presence to the other is a single, simultaneous act. Such an act can only be performed by a rational being. This act, as we know, is difficult to achieve and almost impossible to maintain over prolonged periods of time. It is, however, a transformative act: both self-transforming and transforming of others. When we achieve it, we sense a harmony and peace that gives life to us and to those around us.

How is such an act possible? Ancient Stoic thinkers used an organic metaphor to point to such an act. It was the metaphor of the living organism in which two natural dynamic dispositions were operative: the first, that of self-conservation or preservation protected the organism at the level of identity and being; the second, that of growth and development directed the organism's energies beyond itself: toward reproduction. Both tendencies function naturally and their point of contact was itself the life energy of the organism. In other words, it was not in protection of the self as opposed to movement outward that was the life force of the organism. Nor was it only in the movement beyond the self that the organism experienced its fullest life. Rather, it was in the simultaneous and dynamic tension of the two that the organism grew and developed, both in complexity and in perfection.

Like many thinkers in the thirteenth century, John Duns Scotus was influenced by such Stoic models, especially as they were transmitted through the early Patristic writers to the monastic tradition of the 12th century. Indeed, Scotus borrows from the Benedictine Anselm a way to understand these two tendencies as they manifest themselves in a rational being. Like his predecessor, Scotus refers to them as *affectio*, or affections, but both meant by this term not an emotion or felt affection, but rather a metaphysical disposition or desire, a rational thrust that belonged to the constitution of the being. These affections are first, the affection for happiness (or possession) and the affection for justice (or loving the good for itself alone). If we see these two affections as directed toward the good, we understand that in the affection for happiness, the good is loved for the self and for whatever it might bring to the self. In the affection for justice, the good is loved independently of what it might bring to the self, that is, it is loved for itself alone and on the basis of its intrinsic value. It is loved simply because it deserves to be loved.

Both affections belong to our rational nature, both are good and required for our fullest perfection. The affection for happiness is a self-directed affection. This affection has as its goal the protection of the individual. As a rational affection, we might call this the integrity of character. When my integrity

is protected, then I am spiritually protected. The affection for justice is a value-directed affection. This affection has as its goal the recognition and acknowledgement of value, independently of individual concerns. As a rational affection, Scotus calls this the moral constitution within the will. This is the affection that makes us free, because this is the affection that is both naturally disposed to love what is good and rationally equipped to control the affection for happiness. The affection for justice asks the question: "is this good really a good?" "is this action really what I should do at this time?"

While Scotus followed Anselm in his use of these two affections and how they constitute the natural and rational freedom of the human will, he did not follow Anselm's more negative anthropology in their regard. In his *De Casu Diaboli*, Anselm had argued that the affection for justice was that rectitude of the will that was lost as a result of original sin. Since the original departure from Paradise, human willing is predominately the affection for happiness as a natural tendency to seek our own good. Scotus responds that, if this were true, then there is no such thing as moral freedom. If the human will does not still retain this important moral affection, then we do not have genuine control over our own actions. We should not be blamed for seeking our own good at the expense of another, because that is what our nature demands. Unlike Anselm, Scotus argues<sup>1</sup> from a more positive anthropology when he claims that the human will is fully natural, fully rational and completely free. The affection for justice, the will's natural disposition toward intrinsic good and natural ability to restrain itself, remains even after the fall. It has not been lost; nevertheless, its natural harmony with the affection for happiness has been affected. This harmony is now more difficult to attain. It requires more work on our part; it is not impossible.

For Scotus (and Anselm), when these two affections work together and are in harmony, when what should be loved as a possession is loved in that way and when what should be loved for itself is loved in that way, then the rational being is both perfected and fulfilled. Indeed, both thinkers agree that herein lies the perfection of rational freedom: it is right and ordered loving; it creates right and ordered relationships.

But such harmony is difficult to attain. Too often the affections are not in an appropriate relationship. Sometimes, the affection for possession takes over and invades the life of rational choices. Everything that is loved or done is inspired by preoccupation with the self and the individual's needs. Nothing is understood to lie outside my personal interests or the interests of those I care for. Everything is seen to be in reference to me. Other times, the affection for justice can become an affection for perfectionism, or for inappropriate other-centered choices. An overweening sense of duty or obligation can mask an affection for justice that is operating alone, as it were. In either extreme case, that of extreme self-centered or other-centered behavior, the perfective bal-

ance of the two affections is lost. When the balance is lost, then freedom is hindered and rationality is diminished. Such loss of balance can reveal itself in destructive personal behaviors: addictions to substance, to relationships, to work or achievement. The affection for possession can disguise itself as the affection for justice, using duty and generosity as reasons for actions or choices.

But like any spiritual discernment, the false harmony eventually reveals itself as false. Sooner or later, the behavior's destructive nature is unmasked. The true harmony of right ordering of these two affections requires the presence of both at all times and in every choice. This means that a total disregard for the self is not productive of freedom or of rationality, let alone a healthy life. The affection for possession loves the self, to be sure, but the self is a creature of inestimable worth, loved by God and deserving of love. I owe it to myself to consider my own good in the choices I make. Indeed, the affection for justice (that desire to love what is good as it deserves) cannot disregard love for the self and still remain faithful to its deepest desire. It is not the case that the two affections operate independently of one another. On the contrary, when I desire to be a good person and to love rightly, I am uniting the two affections into one. The desire to love rightly is a desire that fulfills both affections. It fulfills the affection for justice because loving rightly is what that affection desires. It fulfills the affection for possession because if loving rightly is characteristic of a good person, then the desire to be a good person is the most personal and rational desire we can have. In addition, Scotus would argue that this sort of desire is most personal, most rational, most free and finally, most satisfying.

Because of his more optimistic anthropology, for Scotus, personal happiness and perfection are not at odds with good behavior. We can be attentive and aware of our self and our own needs and aware of the needs of others without tearing ourselves in two. There is no antagonism within the human heart: there is only an intricate balance to be achieved. We achieve this balance by working at the two-fold act of presence to self and to other. This balance is what is required for inner harmony and peace. It is only when we have achieved this harmony that our very presence, like that of Jesus, will bring peace to conflict.

In a beautiful argument in IV, 46, Scotus offers an example of divine behavior that might help us see more clearly what this sort of balanced attitude might look like. In answer to the question of the coincidence of justice and mercy, especially in God's forgiveness of sinners, Scotus begins with a presentation of two notions of justice.<sup>2</sup>

The first is from Anselm, the second from Aristotle. The first (Anselmian) understanding of justice involves rectitude of the will served for its own sake. This would be justice to myself, or what we might identify with the affection for possession. The second (Aristotelian) understanding of the term deals with

this rectitude in relationship to another. This justice would look to the value of the act, in order to see what it might deserve. Here, of course, we recognize the affection for justice. Indeed, there is a sense of justice that refers to the self, to what character and integrity require. Additionally, there is a sense of justice that involves due proportion to something or someone other than oneself, giving someone what he deserves. An act may be just in either or both senses. I can act justly toward myself as well as toward another. This illustrates what we said earlier in terms of the *affectio iustitiae* and how it can unite with the *affectio commodi* in the case of personal dignity and integrity.

In the case of divine justice, we can consider the following situation: God could act by virtue of either perspective. God can either respond according to the object (what it is owed) or according to the divine nature (what God owes Himself, so to speak). When God acts generously, this is better understood as a function of divine integrity rather than a function of our deserving reward. Such an act reveals the coincidence of the two affections, with the primacy of the affection for possession over justice, strictly observed. Indeed, the two affections are perfectly fulfilled in divine generosity, where God loves as God is, freely and generously. Such generous freedom takes nothing from God's delight; rather it adds to it. Healthy generosity reveals that the most noble action is self-fulfilling and life giving.

## II. Poise

When, for my part, I work to attain this inner harmony that involves both presence within and presence to others, I am like the dancer or the athlete. I am poised, ready to act, to execute the move or the play. The poise I refer to here is not the social grace of poise, that is, the ability to "keep one's cool" in social settings, although this might be a consequence of the attitude. I refer rather to an internal point, sometimes called the still point, or "the zone" as athletes say.

At this moment of poise, I am listening and attentive to everything around me. Sometimes it is all a matter of timing: I await my cue. I cannot know when the cue will come, and sometimes the wait seems interminable. In some cases, the cue does not come at all for me. I am not needed in every scenario. But the readiness of the poised moment requires everything I have.

In my opinion, the asceticism of today requires this type of attitude of us: readiness and poise. Ours may not be the era where ascetical practices can be reduced to physical discomfort, such as lack of sleep or long hours in prayer. Rather, the asceticism required of us may be a radical readiness for whatever moment God may present to us. Our readiness must be humble and simple, with no grumbling that a moment did not come for us in a given situation. This sort of readiness takes long preparation in attentiveness, listening for the

Spirit, conviction that we do not have the answers but that, when the moment comes, we will receive what we need. It requires a collaborative and mutual spirit of generosity, where we are happy to assist another in completing the work of peacemaking, where we do not see ourselves as the only person who can reconcile, where we strive to remain open to notice what Jesus is doing in the situation, and not what we think we should be doing.

This type of ascetical attitude takes everything we have. Most importantly, it may require of us that we turn over a project or an effort that has meant everything to us. We may be asked to turn something precious over just when we see ourselves critical or essential to the project. This handing over is a grace: for it is the very outpouring of divine life, the very act of divine kenosis (Phil. 2). Indeed, the ultimate peace and reconciliation we long for may only be reached at the price of this act of generosity.

Our ability to respond to the important moments such as these depends both on the developed sense of presence that is simultaneously internal and external, and upon the readiness to act in response to the requirement of the situation. When Scotus deals with this moment of choice, he states that the morally mature person knows immediately what to do and does it, just as a musician knows what notes to play at the right time and plays them. This poise is not simply a mental attitude or intention, it is like the runner at the starting line, waiting for the "go" of the referee. The inner readiness of the two affections in harmony now gives way to the energy to act, to move outward toward a situation in which we see what should happen and, most importantly, what we need to do. Yet this energy must be controlled energy, informed by patience and attentiveness to the moment when we must act.

It is in the act of poise that Scotus resolves the creative tension, always operative between the two affections within us. For him, it is not the case that one day, all will be in harmony, a type of stasis where we can relax and enjoy things. On the contrary, the poised moment is a type of transcendent, trans-temporal rational experience, where we stand at the boundary of life: of self and other. At this critical edge, we know the energy of life that lies within all and sustains all. Time seems suspended and we have the impression of entering a higher dimension.

## III. Praxis

This experience is the moment of praxis, of action, for which our internal presence and poise have prepared us. This is the here and now of justice. If we have not done our homework, as it were, we will pass this moment by and hardly recognize it. We will be so attentive to our plans, our projects, our good actions that we will not be able to allow the Spirit to get in our way.



This moment of praxis depends in a critical way upon the inner relationship of the two affections. On them and on their harmonic relationship depends free choice and, ultimately, freedom. Because we have these two dynamic affections, we have control over our own actions and can await the timing required. At this instant of choice, the rational person stands, as it were, between a double choice: first, to act or not (this is the timing question) and second, to do this or that (this is the substantive question). For example, I may know very well what I should do in a situation, but not yet have the sense that this is the right time. So, I wait, ready to act but also ready to revise my action in light of what may change in the situation.

Artists and athletes offer us the best example of this. For an athlete, everything depends upon the hours of training, upon attention to the game at hand and to the moment when his move is the essential move. The goal is the excellent move, the play, the shot. Likewise, the harmonic relationship between the two affections is the dynamic source for the poised person. The moment of poise finds its fulfillment in the act of praxis. Scotus's vision of the rational human person is a vision that is founded upon the dynamic interaction between the affection for self and the affection for another. This dynamic interaction is a creative tension whose resolution is not found in one affection or the other, but in the poised focus toward action. It is action, it is praxis that fulfills the deepest desires within us: both the desire for our own protection and the desire for the good.

Praxis is the fulfillment of rational desire. It is the completion of what lies within us reaching out toward God. Praxis is the manifestation of the human person as *capax Dei*, as a being open to the divine. Here we find the Incarnational motif of Scotist thought reversed, as the human reaches out toward and enters into union with God. This union foreshadows the beatific embrace, for we are not yet into the complete presence of the creativity that imitates divine creativity. We extend the incarnational and sacramental presence into the world with our acts of love, acts that are both selfless and self-fulfilling.

As our acts contribute to divine action in the world, we enter another dynamic that is both natural and free. This is the divine dynamic of *firmitas*, the commitment present in God's own love. Within the Trinitarian communion, according to Scotus, divine love operates according to both a necessary and a free perspective. God's self-relationship is necessary, quite simply, because of divine simplicity and the integrity of divine self-relationship. Just as organic beings are held together by the dynamic affection for possession (a natural impulse for self-preservation), so too the divine being is sustained by divine identity. In addition, divine love is directed to God's own being because God is the highest good and good cannot not be loved.

God's love within the Trinitarian communion is also free because it is an act of the will and the will is the free potency. In God, freedom and necessity

do not contradict one another, because God's nature is what it is and because God freely chooses and rejoices in love. Scotus affirms simply that, in God, freedom and necessity are both operative, because of the nature of God and the nature of love.

Since freedom is, for Scotus, understood to be independent from any external constraint, one is free to act when one is not constrained or forced by anyone or anything external to oneself. Clearly, the inner life of the trinity is free in precisely this sense. God's inner life of love is defined on the basis of the autonomous divine nature: completely self-contained in its intentional objects. But divine activity exhibits just this sort of intentional independence when acting *ad extra*, or external to God, in creation. No created object possesses the good belonging to the divine nature. External to the divine essence there is no natural reason belonging to any course of action that would constrain or necessitate divine choice. Any actions God takes outside the divine essence are not completely explainable in terms of conditions, objects or situations that exist independently of God.

However, just because there is no external way to justify or explain divine action, this does not mean that God's actions cannot be explained. These actions can be explained, however, precisely in terms of divine identity, divine integrity and divine intentionality, all best understood in terms of how scripture describes God: Love. Concretely, this means that, in any situation involving divine action, one cannot completely explain the situation solely in terms of the conditions within which God has acted. We must allow for a partial explanation coming from the nature of God. Why God chose Abram, for example, cannot be completely explained in terms of Abram's character or natural traits. Why God remained faithful to the Hebrews and Israelites despite their infidelity is a question that can only be completely answered by an appeal to the divine nature and to the requirements of gracious love that flows from God's self-identity and integrity.

All this points to a central dimension that belongs to divine love and freedom: *firmitas* or divine steadfastness. God's choice to act within a certain established order is itself an affirmation of the divine commitment to an earlier choice to establish that order. Divine fidelity expresses God's "ability to adhere to its object in a self-actualizing action, the love-product of which is in no way pre-figured in the will nor coerced by the object."<sup>3</sup>

This sort of fidelity is both the deepest expression of divine nature and the fullest manifestation of the exercise of freedom.

This explains why Scripture is so important as a backdrop for Scotist thought and why, despite his importance for the history of philosophy, he is bringing together theology and philosophy. As divine self-revelation, the sacred texts give critical information about the nature of God that lies behind and helps explain divine action in human history. Salvation history recounts in



a marvelous manner the details of divine activity *ad extra*: the call of Abram, the Exodus, the Incarnation. These actions both recount and predict divine response. What God has revealed in the past can be used as a basis for the human expectation for the future. For Scotus, it is not the fact of divine graciousness and fidelity that is at issue; it is the extent of divine graciousness and fidelity that cannot be assigned ahead of time. This movement of divine graciousness of which the Incarnation is the fullest manifestation culminates in the divine response of acceptance in the order of merit. This is the act of love by which God accepts any human action as worthy of reward and orders it toward whatever manner of fulfillment that is deemed suitable according to divine generosity.

When Scotus discusses the order of merit, he situates it clearly in the theological domain, because it depends upon the nature of God, precisely as revealed in Scripture. When he speaks of divine acceptance, Scotus assumes that the God referred to is one that we know well both from our reflection upon scripture and upon our own personal experiences. This is a God who can be trusted. Acceptance appears as the culmination of divine intentionality from the first moment. There is no distinction between the graciousness of the creator, the redeemer and sanctifier. Nothing, not even human weakness, has interfered with the realization of divine desire. Indeed, history unfolds as a single movement of love that informs human experience. Acceptance is nothing less than the bringing to completion of the good work begun by God at the moment when order came forth out of chaos. As ordered and ordering love, it is part of the overall divine intention to reveal and share graciousness and mercy. Like divine action recorded in Scripture, the act of acceptance expresses the divine joy and, in particular, the delight with which God responds to every human action. Acceptance is the divine applause for human efforts at loving; the divine joy at the sight of human generosity. Here God's freedom meets human freedom; God's love encounters human love. Here God freely and lovingly embraces a human action performed out of love. This action, however great or small, is accepted and rewarded. Indeed, where the order of merit is concerned, Scotus affirms only one certainty: God's freedom and love are so immense, that we can count on a reward far beyond anything our actions deserve. Divine goodness does not stop there, for our sins will be punished far less than they deserve:

And so, it is well said that God always rewards beyond our worth, and universally beyond any particular value which an act might merit. This merit is beyond nature and its intrinsic goodness; it is from a gratuitous divine acceptance. What's more, even beyond that justice which would commonly reward an act, for God rewards by means of pure liberality.<sup>4</sup>

If all this is true, then the highest human perfection is not justice (or even acting out of the affection for justice). This represents the fulfillment of moral perfection, but not yet a perfection that shares in divine life. Rather, the highest perfection is love, and generous love in imitation of God's outpouring in creation, redemption and salvation. The two intentions (justice and charity) do in fact make the actions different. An act performed out of love is superior to one performed out of justice because it imitates the divine action and is never limited by the constraints of what is required. Indeed, divine action goes beyond justice to us because generosity is never limited to what we deserve.

Divine acceptance is the manifestation of generous freedom according to a Franciscan perspective. Just as Francis was free to throw all his possessions away and rely completely on the love of God, so God is free to throw caution to the wind, as it were, and toss out rewards, not so much to the completely undeserving (since God can never reward the sinner for sin, nor punish the good person for being good)—Scotus states this clearly in *Ordinatio* IV, d. 46<sup>5</sup>—but far beyond the actual amount that might be determined in a calculation of strict justice. This sort of God is depicted in the parable told by Jesus in Matthew 20: the generous master who pays everyone the same, and wonders why some complain because he is generous.

When, therefore, Scotus exalts the action of the divine will in his texts, it is the affirmation of the divinity of generosity, a defense of the Franciscan penchant to throw caution to the wind. This is what it means to rely "*mere ex voluntate Dei*"—solely on the divine will—which really means solely on divine love and generosity.

Generosity is thus rendered rational; indeed, it is rationality itself. In the generous act, the person pours forth, not unreflectively nor because of any external constraint or condition that requires action of a particular sort, but because this is what it means to be that sort of person. Here generosity meets integrity, as the deepest reality of the divinity is generous and intentional love, mercy and forgiveness. The reason God acts in this way, Scotus would argue, is because this is the sort of person (or Triune communion) that God is. This God is clearly not the God of the Philosophers, or the intellectuals of his time. It is not the God of Aristotle or Plato: a God understood to be Ground of Being, Unmoved Mover, Necessary Principle or Form of the Good. These gods are fine for others, but they do not hold a candle to the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ. And here, Scotus argues, Christianity has something that really is Good News.

Indeed, this God is not best encountered by thinking or speculating about the divine nature: not a God of theory at all. Scotus defines theology as praxis, not a speculative or contemplative science.<sup>6</sup>

This is a personal God encountered by and in the activity of loving and selfless generosity: a God of praxis, a dynamic God to be encountered not

possessed; a God into whose inner life we are invited and whose sole desire is to transform us into our true selves, as genuine and vibrant *imago Dei*. This God is frightening. Here is not someone to carry around in a purse or wallet. This is a demanding, irritating, relentless “Hound of Heaven” sort of God, who never leaves us where we’d rather stay and always calls us further and deeper into the reality of love, generosity and mercy.

In these moments, we do not act as individual agents. Indeed, here is where the divine presence is fully operative with us and fully generous toward us. God cooperates so intimately with human choice and freedom, affirms Scotus, that divine love is present to each of our choices and desires only that we choose rightly. God longs for our best choice and gives us all the help that we need, but never makes us choose rightly. We must do that for ourselves. When we do choose both freely and as God would have us, we join our energies with the divine outpouring of gracious goodness into the world. Every act of praxis is a moment that has been prepared “from the foundation of the world.” Every moment that has gone before has been leading up to this moment. At this moment, we are fully free, fully rational and fully human. All reality awaits our choice.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>*Ordinatio* II, 6.

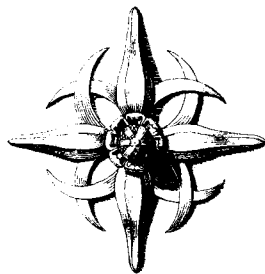
<sup>2</sup>An English version of this text can be found in Allan B. Wolter, *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality* (Washington: CUA Press 1986), pp. 238-255.

<sup>3</sup>William A. Frank, “Duns Scotus’s Concept of Willing Freely: What Divine Freedom Beyond Choice Teaches Us,” *Franciscan Studies* 42 (1982): 86.

<sup>4</sup>*Ordinatio* I, d. 17, n. 149 (Ed. Vat. 5:210). Translation mine.

<sup>5</sup>*Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, p. 245.

<sup>6</sup>See *Ordinatio* Prologue, Pars V, (1).



## On the Significance of Being “You” Exploring Scotistic Insights for Franciscan Life and Ministry in a Post-Modern Context

F. Edward Coughlin, O.F.M.

The most popular movie in 1971 was *Love Story*; other favorites that year included the *Summer of '42*, *The Owl and the Pussycat*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and the Oscar went to the *French Connection*. The movie *Harold and Maude* premiered that same year and was a box office flop.<sup>1</sup> The story of the relationship between the twenty-year-old Harold and septuagenarian Maude did not capture the imagination of moviegoers. Ironically, the movie quickly became something of a cult favorite among the coming of age baby boomer generation—a generation characterized by its preoccupation with self, eagerness to explore new experiences, readiness to experiment with a wide variety of illegal drugs, and an inclination to challenge the traditional values and assumptions of every institution.

Harold Chasen is a bored and emotionally dulled young man. He dresses formally and lives in a beautiful but sterile mansion. He is a loner who frequently stages elaborate suicide attempts to get attention, particularly that of his distant and self-preoccupied mother. When Harold’s analyst presses him to say what he does for fun, “what gives him that special satisfaction?” Harold replies: “I go to funerals.” In a later scene we also learn that he enjoys watching demolitions. A powerful counter-point commentary is provided by the Cat Stevens lyrics: “. . . lift your head, and let your feelings out instead. And don’t be shy, just let your feelings roll on by, on by.”<sup>2</sup>

Dame Marjorie Chardham, Maude, is an unconventional free spirit who is full of life and enthusiasm. She lives in a railroad car that sits across the highway from the Pacific Ocean. Her home is warm and looks very lived-in. It is crammed full of treasured memorabilia that she describes as “incidental, not integral.” Maude is turning eighty on Saturday—an age that she believes is “long enough.” She has decided that her life will “all be over on Saturday.”

In one scene, Maude describes herself to Harold as someone who is “always looking for the new experience.” Harold replies: “Maybe; nevertheless I

think you are upsetting people. I don't think that's right." Maude explains, "Some people get upset because they think they have a hold on things. I am merely acting as a gentle reminder to people: here today, gone tomorrow; so don't get too attached to things now." Maude's free spirited philosophy is conveyed in the Cat Stevens lyrics: "if you want to sing out, sing out. And if you want to be free, be free. . . . If you want to be me, be me, if you want to be you, be you. 'Cause there are a million things to be, you know that there are. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

In this article, I would like to use the characters and experiences of Harold and Maude to draw out some of the practical implications of two Scotistic doctrines, namely, (1) the principle of individuality, "thisness" and (2) the human heart's affection for justice and affection for self. Both of these doctrines hold the potential to offer some useful and practical guidance to contemporary men and women who desire to experience a greater measure of peace in a fragmented and disordered world. They also offer a creative and helpful way to envision a way of living in "right relationship" characterized by mutuality and harmony in a world torn apart by division and discord.

The challenge of peace as well as the longing for right and reconciling relationships are among the most pressing needs in these complex and conflicted times. Paradoxically but not surprisingly, the proclamation of peace and an emphasis on right relationship are two of the outstanding characteristics that distinguished the life and ministry of the early followers of St. Francis. The enduring wisdom and insightful perspective of Scotus, an important theologian-philosopher within that early tradition, offers contemporary Franciscans an invitation to rediscover some of the essential characteristics of the Franciscan charism within the Church and world. These Scotistic doctrines also offer contemporary Franciscans a better way to understand core challenges at the heart of the life and ministry of Franciscans who are making a significant difference in our contemporary Church and in our post-modern world.

## The Principle of Individuation – "Thisness"

*Haecceitas*, "thisness," is the principle of individuality. It has a twofold function in Scotus's work in that (1) "it makes an individual unique and incapable of duplication, even by an omnipotent God; and (2) it differentiates [each individual] radically and ultimately from each and every other individual. . . ."<sup>4</sup> According to Scotus, it is "the individual that is primarily intended by God."<sup>5</sup> We should understand, therefore, that in the words of Mary Beth Ingham, "[e]very being within the created order possesses an immanent dignity; it is already gifted by the loving Creator with a sanctity beyond our ability to understand."<sup>6</sup> Each person's "thisness" is, in fact, "a sacred mystery that is known fully to God alone."<sup>7</sup> Allan B. Wolter can argue, therefore, that this Scotistic doctrine:

would seem to invest each [human person] with a unique value as one *singularly* wanted and loved by God, quite apart from any trait that person shares with others or any contribution he or she might make to society. One can even say, *haecceity* is our personal gift from God.<sup>8</sup>

Scotus's principle of individuality reflects a high point in the early Franciscan theological tradition's reflection on the noble dignity of the human person. In his fifth admonition, Francis invited everyone to "Consider . . . in what excellence the Lord God has placed you for [God] created you and formed you *to the image* of [God's] beloved Son according to the body, and *to His likeness* according to the Spirit." He concluded this admonition by challenging all women and men to "glory in your infirmities (2 Cor 12:5) and [bear] daily the holy cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Lk 14:27)."<sup>9</sup>

The ancient wisdom at the heart of this admonition emerged as a central theme in the Franciscan theological tradition. In the theology of Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and others, it played a prominent role and acquired some distinctively Franciscan characteristics.

The "excellence" of our having been made human and "in the image of God" also plays an important role in Scotus's theology and philosophy of love. One of his most distinctive contributions to the Franciscan tradition in this area is his principle of individuality. This principle demands that "you" consider honestly how "you" have "received" the gift of "your" being—"thisness"—and then consider how "you" are living and loving in the light of that gift. It is a challenge to hear the "you" in Francis's admonition in a *singular* kind of way.

The challenge of "receiving" the gift of your unique being invites each of you to struggle to comprehend some measure of the mystery of your "thisness," the fact that "you" are "singularly wanted and loved by God." It involves an honest attempt to open your heart to the reality of love itself, a love that enables "you" to be loving and empowers "you" to become more loving. Ideally, a sense of your excellence and "thisness" becomes the firm foundation upon which "you" struggle to enfold love in the ordinary, sometimes extraordinary moments of "your" life.

Francis heard the humble and crucified Christ's call to love. He understood this call to love as a call to "live according to the form of the Holy Gospel"<sup>10</sup> in the range of relationships that defined his life—a range that included being present to the Lord in prayer, to the poor and suffering in their need, to the brothers in the witness of their life together, and to a Church in ruins. He responded generously to this call and encouraged others to strive to "follow the teaching and the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ" as "best" they could.<sup>11</sup> By continuing to embrace daily the demands of the call to love and be loving, successive generations of Francis's followers have struggled to

discover how each one of them can make a *singular* difference on the margins of the Church, within the local communities, and in the middle of the marketplace.

In the movie, Maude senses intuitively that Harold does not grasp the singular significance of his life, the fact that he—"Harold"—might be wanted and loved by anyone, much less by a God who freely and deliberately called him into being. Maude's intuition leads her to render herself present to him, to engage him in conversation, and to invite him into experiences that will challenge him to understand his life and the world in a whole new way.

In one scene, Maude recruits Harold to help her rescue a dying tree from the suffocating smog and unhealthy environment of downtown Redwood City, California. She assures Harold that "we have got to do something about this life." Having clarified the urgency of the task, this unlikely pair steals a shovel, loads the tree onto a "borrowed truck," and races down the Pacific Coast Highway. Unaware of the importance of their mission, a California highway patrolman manages to pull them over. Maude refuses, however, to enter into his understanding of how things ought to be. She boldly informs him that she does "not believe in having a driver's license" even though she acknowledges that she has been driving for 45 years. When he asks if the truck is hers, she informs him that she "just took it." Sensing the problems that are about to entrap her, she speeds away. When the patrolman pursues her, she draws him into a tight series of circles across the width of the highway. His motorcycle stalls and he falls. Freed from his attempts to control and limit her, Maude continues joyfully and confidently on her way. Before the sun sets, the tree is transplanted in a forest and Maude assures Harold that it will be just fine. "It is where it needs to be, where it can grow."

In another scene, Maude tells Harold that if she could be a flower she would want to be sunflower: "They are tall and simple." She then asks Harold: "What flower would you like to be?" Somewhat hesitantly he says: "Oh, I don't know. One of these, maybe" as he points to a single daisy in a huge patch of wild daisies.

"Oh, but they're NOT all alike," Maude informs him. "Look. See, some are smaller; some are fatter; . . . some have lost petals. All kinds of observable differences! You see, Harold, I feel that much of the world's sorrow comes from the fact that people are 'this', yet allow themselves to be treated as if they were 'that.'"

As the camera pulls back we discover that the daisy patch is in a cemetery with uniform rows of white headstones suggesting that any measure of the individuality of those who have died has been eliminated.

Without in any way suggesting that Maude is an astute Scotistic philosopher, I do think her dialogue with Harold reflects an appreciation of the essence of Scotus's principle of individuation, "thisness." She notices things and delights in the value and mystery of even the smallest of things, the most ordinary kinds of experience. She has seen a lot of life and exudes a sense of inner peace and happiness. She seems to truly enjoy the simplicity of her life on the edges of the world in which she lives.

Maude's sense of herself as an individual enables her to be present to Harold, to respect his individuality, and to offer him the possibility of coming to know through experience his goodness and discover his capacity for love.

Maude becomes a mirror, a model, and a mentor in Harold's life.<sup>12</sup> By choosing to be present to him, to accept him as he is, and to walk with him, Maude is able to establish a relationship. It is a personal relationship through which she is able to invite Harold to look at things in different ways, to think differently, and to respect the desires of his heart. By encouraging him to do different things—"make some kind of music," "stroke, palm, caress, explore" the smooth contours of a sculpture in her living room, have fun at a carnival, for example—she invites Harold to discover new dimensions of his life. Maude is even able to provide an environment safe for Harold to begin to acknowledge and feel the inner pain that he had learned to avoid and deny.

Let's not presume that all the experiences Harold and Maude shared were praiseworthy, appropriate, or necessary—they smoked a bong and shared sex, for example! What was critical for Harold, as for ourselves, was his experience of Maude's respect and love for him as a unique individual. This caring relationship became an encounter with the power of love (grace). It forced him to struggle with its implications and to search for a more adequate understanding of both himself and his relationship with the world.<sup>13</sup> As the Cat Stevens lyrics suggest, Maude led him "on the road to find out" the deeper meaning of his life and enabled him to discover that some of the answers "lie within, so why not take a look now?"<sup>14</sup>

Harold's response to Maude's loving presence in his life is captured in the song *I Think I See The Light* when Cat Stevens sings:

I used to walk alone, every step seemed the same.  
This world was not my home, so there was nothing much to gain.  
Look up and see the clouds, look down and see the cold floor.  
Until you came into my life, girl, I saw nothing, nothing more.  
Until I found the one I needed at my side,  
I think I would have been a sad man all my life.  
I think I see the light coming to me,  
Coming through me giving me a second chance.

Because Maude chose to be a loving presence in Harold's life, he "found the one [he] needed at [his] side." The "light" she brought into his life gave him "a second chance." She treated him like a "this," not a "that." In the company of Maude, Harold began to feel loved and wanted by a woman who had a sense of her own self, who chose to turn her attention to him, and who concerned herself with what might be good for Harold rather than for her self. Maude's desire to establish a mutual and harmonious relationship with Harold went a long way toward establishing the conditions wherein Harold could consider new choices and explore new relationship possibilities.

Maude serves "as a gentle reminder" to the followers of Francis that each of us must, in the first place, struggle to grasp something of the mystery of our "thisness," the fact that each of us is "singularly wanted and loved by God." This is not an argument to support the cultivation of eccentricity. It is not a call to radical individuality. It is not a clarion call to an "anything goes" mentality. Rather, it is a call to be rooted and grounded in the mystery of God's singular love for each of us—a way of being in the presence of love itself that makes "me" more capable of loving others, the world, and myself in a *singular* way.

Maude also serves as "a gentle reminder" to the followers of Francis that our Gospel way of life and ministry is essentially a challenge to be in relationship—to cultivate loving-relationships that mirror and model, even if dimly and in an obscure way, the mystery of God's singular love for each person and all creation. Rooted in the "sanctity that is beyond our ability to understand," at least in theory, we are inclined and empowered to turn our attention to living the implications of God's loving desire for each of us to be a unique individual.

## The Heart's Two Affections

The human person's capacity for action is rooted in the fact that all rational creatures have been made in "the image of God," that is, gifted with the powers of knowing and loving, as well as free with respect to choice. One of the most distinctive features of Scotus's understanding of the nature of the "rational creature" is his focus on the human will, the principle for all action, that is, right-willing, ordered-loving, justice. This is essentially "a focus on the power of love, the perfection of which reveals the fullest understanding of the human person as rational and as created in the image of God."<sup>15</sup>

As conceived by Scotus, the will is the power of loving desire passing into action. It is "the dimension of the self that is constituted to respond rationally to the command of Jesus: love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>16</sup> The intellect, the power to know and understand, is the faculty that informs, works with, and serves the activity of ordered loving, justice, right-willing.<sup>17</sup>

Scotus's understanding of the will is best grasped in terms of the will's two affections and its freedom. Following Anselm, he identifies the will's "two affections" as the affection for justice (*affectio iustitiae*) and the affection for the self (*affectio commodi*). The two affections are "really dispositions for loving. They are metaphysical desires. They are not 'felt' affections, nor are they emotional responses to reality."<sup>18</sup> They do reveal, however, the genuine "desires within the human heart."<sup>19</sup> A working knowledge of these affections will, therefore, help us to understand better, and in a very personal way, how one might strive for a greater measure of personal integrity, how one might struggle for a greater measure of inner peace and harmony, and how one disposes the self in cooperation with grace to enter into relationships that value individuality, mutuality, and the good in itself.

## The Affection for Self

The affection for what is advantageous to the self (*affectio commodi*) reveals a basic instinct within the human heart for one's own perfection "which consists above all in happiness (*beatitudo*)."<sup>20</sup> It demands that we pay attention to our intentions and desires—our inner life and our legitimate human needs. It also confronts us with the necessity of prudently and freely choosing to love ourselves as individuals while avoiding the temptations of either "excessive" self-indulgence or "irresponsible" self-denial. However, this is not to suggest that the concern for self is necessarily "selfish."<sup>21</sup>

The affection for one's own advantage reveals a natural and fundamentally "healthy concern for self."<sup>22</sup> It is "radically self-centered" at least in the sense that "nature seeks primarily and above all else its own welfare"—happiness (*beatitudo*).<sup>23</sup> This affection manifests itself in a variety of emotional responses, both positive and negative, as they incline a person to either desire to take possession of a good and/or to protect one's own self.

The presence of strong emotions—anger, jealousy, envy, for example—reveals natural desires within a human heart in a particularly important way. They alert "me" to inner truths about: (1) what truly matters to "me," (2) the good for which "I" long, even if only privately or somewhat unconsciously, and/or (3) the fears and anxieties that arise because of "my" expectations of what is due "me" or how "I" might preserve the good "I" have taken hold of, even if in a very tenuous way.

More often than not, strong negative emotions reveal dimensions of the self that an individual might be reluctant to acknowledge. Frequently, emotions like these reveal truths for which "I" might not yet be ready to assume responsibility. For this reason, it takes skill and discipline to confront the subtle ways "I" might be reluctant to consider reality objectively or allow demanding truth to come into "my" conscious awareness (e.g., defense mechanisms: de-

nial, avoidance, projection, splitting, and the like). It takes inner faith and courage to acknowledge, at least to myself, my anger when I am trying to appear happy, my negative feelings when I am expected to be nice. There are numerous ways in which the affection for what is advantageous to the self must be acknowledged, learned from, and worked through if my capacity to love freely and justly is going to mature and develop as fully as it might. As Wolter notes, "the inclination for the advantageous does not need to be eradicated as something bad, but rather, controlled or moderated lest it lead to excess."<sup>24</sup>

In the movie, the prim, proper, and always composed Mrs. Chasen is self-centered, that is, focused totally on herself and her preferences in an extreme way. She knows what she likes, wants, and needs to be doing at every moment in her day. She does not hesitate to impose her preferences and judgments on Harold in ways that demonstrate a complete lack of respect for the desires of his heart. In one scene, for example, she informs Harold that his car, a black Cadillac hearse, is a "monstrosity . . . an ugly black horror . . . an embarrassment!" In a later scene, with the tune from *If You Want To Sing Out, Sing Out* playing in the background, she presents him with a silver gray jaguar coup convertible—a car she describes as "more appropriate for you. I like it very much." As she walks away quite satisfied with herself, we see Harold holding a flaming welding torch in his right hand next to the car with its huge red bow. After glaring angrily at the place where she stood, he lowers the welder's shield over his face and turns his attention to transforming the jaguar into a sporty black jaguar hearse.

In another sequence, Harold's mother informs him that she has decided that it is time for him "to take on adult responsibilities . . . to get married." She also decides that the best way to find him a suitable wife is to seek the assistance of a dating service. When the application arrives, she informs Harold that he must complete the "Personality Inventory." She then proceeds to read the questions to him but quickly becomes absorbed in answering them as she thinks best. In the meantime, Harold takes a gun out of his briefcase. He points it at her and glares darkly at her. Suddenly, he shoots himself—another fake suicide attempt that annoys her but does not distract her from answering the remaining questions.

Regrettably, Harold is shy in a very self-conscious kind of way. He rarely lifts up his head and never lets his feelings out.<sup>25</sup> He is only able to express the desires of his heart in indirect or passive aggressive ways. He does not seem to have discovered the inner strength to pursue his legitimate needs, those things that might be good for him as an individual. His dark moods and downcast eyes suggest that he experiences little peace within himself. While he seems reluctant to pursue any kind of relationships, his chance and graced encounter with Maude becomes a critical turning point in his life.

## The Affection for Justice

The affection for justice (*affectio iustitiae*) is the "nobler" and metaphysically higher affection.<sup>26</sup> It inclines the human person to will a good that is "not oriented to the self,"<sup>27</sup> that is, the honest good or the good in itself (*bonum honestum*). The affection for justice may be understood, therefore, as "a positive bias or inclination to love things objectively or as right reason dictates."<sup>28</sup> Thus, Scotus argues that God is to be loved for God's own sake "insofar as [God] is good and is the first good."<sup>29</sup> Lesser goods are to be loved secondarily and honestly, namely, in terms of their intrinsic worth "rather than in terms of how the lesser good might perfect one's individual person or nature."<sup>30</sup>

Scotus's understanding of this affection is based on two assumptions. First, he argues that "[t]o love something in itself (or for its own sake) is more an act of giving or sharing than is desiring that object [good] for oneself."<sup>31</sup> Second, he also argues that in justice, there is "but one goodness toward which charity is directed, and that is God in [God's self] and [one's] neighbor as turned towards God in love."<sup>32</sup> Therefore, God is to be loved in the first place, other goods are to be loved secondarily in and through the love that is God—*caritas*.

As Ingham notes, the affection for justice is operative when honest choices cost "me" something.<sup>33</sup> It expresses the rational desire to love others "as they deserve" and to the extent that they deserve, not from any profitability to be gained" for one's own self.<sup>34</sup> The inner movements associated with this affection provide important clues, therefore, that reveal a person's character and what motivates an individual.<sup>35</sup>

While the affection for justice looks beyond the self, it is not necessarily a "self-less" affection. Rather, it reveals the human capacity to look beyond the self without denying the value of the self. It demonstrates the human capacity to sacrifice what may be advantageous to the self for the sake of a higher good. In its purest, highest, and most radical form, the affection for justice imitates the charity of Christ in his willingness to be crucified because of the "excess of his love."<sup>36</sup>

## The Heart's Two Affections and the Struggle for Inner Harmony

The affection for justice and the affection for what is advantageous to the self are both "God given and lead to [God] in different ways."<sup>37</sup> We need to be alert, therefore, to the fact that "in every rational choice both affections are present and at work. The key to right loving lies in the appropriate relationship between them."<sup>38</sup> A conceptual understanding of these affections provides a practical and helpful framework for reflection and discernment in sorting through the heart's strong, sometimes confused, often conflicted desires

"on the road to find out" the meaning, purpose, and goal of "my" life. This is a task that is critically important in moral decision making, in the struggle to build mutual relationships, and in fulfilling the command that "I" should strive daily to love God above all things and "my" neighbor as "my" self.

As suggested above, it takes skill, strength, inner discipline, and courage to face these challenges honestly. Without question, it demands faith to believe that sometimes, in the most mysterious of ways, our God intends to lead us through these desires to a better sense of what is truly good, right, and just. Therefore, in approaching these challenges, we should not lose sight of three of Scotus's most fundamental assumptions, as seen below.

First, the assumption that justice is the free choice made by a maturing individual who is grounded in a sense of his or her being "singularly wanted and loved by God." Second, the assumption that the choice of the honest good, a good that may have no reference to the self, reaches beyond but does not preclude or deny in any way a genuine love for the self and its legitimate desires. Third, the assumption that the choice to love and be loving is learned in the crucible of experience as a person of faith strives to love rightly, justly, in an ever more Christ-like way. Thus, character is both formed, and continues to be formed, as a person of faith makes loving choices. Over time, one can expect better glimpses of God's love and come to appreciate, in ever-deeper ways, the fact that "I" am indeed "singularly wanted and loved by God."

Throughout the movie *Harold and Maude*, we get a sense of the life that Maude has lived. In one scene, for example, she tells Harold a few things about her life in Vienna before the war. Her face reveals how precious and delightful her memories are and yet, at the same time, we see some of the pain she carries within as she looks away and gathers herself before she begins to talk about other things.

When Harold asks her about an umbrella hanging like a picture on the wall she tells him that it is from the days when she demonstrated "for the big issues—liberty, rights, and justice." She claims she no longer needs the umbrella anymore to defend herself; now she "embraces" things and is "fighting" for the big issues in a small, individual way."

In another scene Harold takes Maude to a junkyard. As they are enjoying their picnic lunch, they watch the heavy machines grind, crunch, and chew on the scrap metal. After acknowledging that the junkyard might hold some measure of attraction for him, Maude turns to Harold and asks: "Is it enough?" She then explains that she is someone who "likes to watch things grow . . . fade . . . die . . . and change into something else. Ah life!"

Maude knows herself, she knows the stories that formed her character and the moments that wounded her heart. She evinces a sense of inner peace, poise, happiness, and joy. Harold describes himself, however, as someone who "has

not lived" but "has died a few times." In response, Maude advises him: "A lot of people enjoy being dead. But they're not dead, really. They're just . . . backing away from life. Reach out. Take a chance. Get hurt, even! Play as well as you can. Go team! Give me an . . . L - I - V - E ! . . . Otherwise you have nothing to talk about in the locker room."

Once again, I would like to suggest that Maude serves as "a gentle reminder" to the followers of Francis that we are called to lean into life, not to back away from life with its joys and sorrows, complications and promises. In facing this challenge, it will be helpful to keep in mind the many early Franciscan stories that demonstrate so effectively Francis's willingness to attend personally to the challenges of discerning continually the desires of his heart in the context of his Gospel commitment.

In his prayer Francis was always asking: "Who are You, my dearest God? And, what am I?"<sup>39</sup> It was the hard question through which he discovered God's love for him. Even as he struggled to understand the message of the crucified One, he felt empowered to begin repairing "a house in ruins" by *serving* among the lepers, *forming* brothers according to the wisdom of the cross, *giving* the Gospel as a form of life to all who asked, *working* for peace between a wolf and a city, a mayor and a bishop, and the like.<sup>40</sup> In other words, Francis lived Scotus's understanding of the affection for justice in a most singular way. For me, a character like Maude, someone less renowned for her holiness and more like myself, also serves as a helpful reminder that "I" must strive evermore consciously to live more justly "in a small, individual way" by making the small choices that daily invite me to be loving and act justly.

Maude also serves as "a gentle reminder" to the followers of Francis that all of us, "wherever we are, in every place, at every hour, at every time of day, everyday and continually"<sup>41</sup> must strive to be attentive to the demands of relationship and consider carefully what loving presence might require of each of us in terms of justice "in a small, individual way." In this way, a follower of Francis can stand receptive to the various ways grace and life seek to engage us and invite us to love, that is, to live rightly and justly by choosing goodness—God in all things and above all things.

## Conclusion

Harold takes great care in preparing for Maude's eightieth birthday. He decorates her home with huge and colorful paper daisies. On a small table he has a bottle of champagne chilling, a cake with white icing and yellow flowers, and a single daisy in a small vase. He shows her all these things as their evening together begins; he promises her that after dinner he has one more special surprise for her—a marriage proposal—which he hopes will "make her very happy." Maude replies: "Oh Harold, I am happy. I can't imagine a lovelier



farewell . . . my eightieth birthday . . . I took the tablets an hour ago. I'll be gone by midnight."

Harold panics when he realizes what she has done. As they speed toward the hospital in the back of an ambulance, Maude expresses her frustration at "all this noise, so unnecessary." On the way, Harold tells her how much he loves her. With a broad and peaceful smile, Maude replies: "Oh Harold, that is wonderful, go and love some more!"

The movie's ending is obviously bittersweet. After Maude dies, we see Harold's black jaguar-hearse careering off a cliff into the Pacific Ocean. Thankfully, Hollywood endings rarely disappoint. As the camera pulls back we see Harold strapping on the banjo Maude gave him as he begins to sing and dance across a field above the cliff. In the background we hear Cat Stevens singing: "If you want to sing out, sing out. And if you want to be free, be free . . . If you want to be me, be me, if you want to be you, be you. 'Cause there are a million things to be, you know that there are. . . ."

Hopefully, this attempt to bring the characters of Harold and Maude into something of a dialogue with two Scotistic doctrines sheds some light on how the contemporary followers of Francis might live in the light of the tradition's wisdom in their search for inner peace and right relationship in particular. It is a challenge to "you" and to "me" to hear, in a very personal and singular way, the call to live the Gospel in the relationships that seek to engage us at this moment in our lives. It is a call to face the big issues in a simpler, singular, but always more loving kind of way. So, let's "go, and love some more."

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Directed by Hales Ashby, based on Colin Higgins's 1970 book with the same title. The soundtrack is a compilation of songs written and sung by Cat Stevens; although the soundtrack for the movie is unavailable, most of the songs can be found on various Cat Stevens CDs.

<sup>2</sup>Cat Stevens, *Don't Be Shy*.

<sup>3</sup>Cat Stevens, *If You Want To Sing Out, Sing Out*.

<sup>4</sup>Allan B. Wolter, *Duns Scotus' Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, Latin text and English translation with introduction (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1992), xiii.

<sup>5</sup>Scotus, *Ordinatio* II, d. 3, n. 251 as quoted in Wolter, *Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, xxvii.

<sup>6</sup>Mary Beth Ingham, *Scotus for Dunces: A Simple Guide to the Subtle Doctor* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003), p. 55.

<sup>7</sup>Ingham, p. 53.

<sup>8</sup>Allan B. Wolter, *Duns Scotus's Early Oxford Lecture on Individuation*, xxvii, emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup>Francis of Assisi, The Fifth Admonition, *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap. (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982), p. 29. Paul's

letter to the Corinthians (2Cor 12:5) provides the context for interpreting Francis's understanding of human physical weakness or frailty (*infirmitas*)—littleness—as understood in light of 2Cor 12:9 where Paul writes: "My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection. And so I willingly boast of my weakness instead, that the power of Christ may rest in me." See also Philippians 4:13.

<sup>10</sup>Francis of Assisi, *Testament*, n. 14, in *Francis and Clare*, p. 155.

<sup>11</sup>Francis of Assisi, *The Earlier Rule* (1223), 1:1 and 22:26, in *Francis and Clare*, pp. 109 and 128; This basic plan for life is phrased in slightly different words in the rules of the Poor Sisters, Third Order Regular, and the Secular Franciscan Order. See also the formulation of a simple plan for living in the *Canticle of the Creatures*, 14, in *Francis and Clare*, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup>A wonderful collection of mentoring stories can be found in Mathilda R. Cuomo, *The Person Who Changed My Life: Prominent People Recall their Mentors* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2003). See also The Testament of St. Clare, 6, in *Francis and Clare*, p. 228.

<sup>13</sup>See Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (New York: W.W. Norton, Co., Inc., 1975), p. 93.

<sup>14</sup>Cat Stevens, *On the Road to Find Out*.

<sup>15</sup>Mary Beth Ingham, "John Duns Scotus: Retrieving a Medieval Thinker for Contemporary Theology," in *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition*, Vol. 1 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), p. 100.

<sup>16</sup>Mary Beth Ingham, "A Certain Affection for Justice," *The Cord* 45.3 (1995): p.16; *The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality and Moral Living According to John Duns Scotus* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996), p. 140.

<sup>17</sup>See Thomas Shannon, *The Ethical Theory of John Duns Scotus* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1995), p.31. See also Ingham, *Scotus for Dunces*, pp. 94-100.

<sup>18</sup>Ingham, *The Harmony of Goodness*, p. 34.

<sup>19</sup>Ingham, "A Certain Affection for Justice," p. 16.

<sup>20</sup>*Ordinatio* IV, suppl. dist. 49, qq. 9-10, in *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, selected and translated with an introduction by Allan B. Wolter, Part II: The Will and Its Inclinations (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986, 1997), p. 185.

<sup>21</sup>See Ingham, *Scotus for Dunces*, pp. 87-91. Of particular interest here would be an individual's response to the challenges of maturing adulthood as well as to the inevitable psycho-social crises named by Eric Erikson in *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, Co., Inc., 1968).

<sup>22</sup>Ingham, *The Harmony of Goodness*, p. 33.

<sup>23</sup>Wolter, "Native Liberty of the Will as a Key to the Ethics of John Duns Scotus," In *The Philosophical Theology of John Duns Scotus*, edited by Marilyn McCord Adams (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 150.

<sup>24</sup>Wolter, *Will and Morality*, p. 40.

<sup>25</sup>See the lyrics to Cat Stevens' *Don't be Shy*.

<sup>26</sup>John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, suppl., dist. 46, in *Will and Morality*, p.153; see also Ingham, *Scotus for Dunces*, p. 87.

<sup>27</sup>*Ordinatio* III, suppl. dist. 46, in *Will and Morality*, p.153. For more on this point see Wolter's discussion of the four characteristics of love in "Native Liberty of the Will as a Key to the Ethics of John Duns Scotus," p. 151.

<sup>28</sup>Wolter, "Native Liberty of the Will as a Key to the Ethics of John Duns Scotus," p. 152.



<sup>29</sup>John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* III, suppl., dist. 28, a.1 in *Will and Morality*, p. 289. Scotus also states in this discussion that charity “inclines to a perfect and orderly love of God. . . .” Secondly, charity “wills that God be loved by anyone whose love is perfect and directed to loving [God] as [God] is in [God’s self].”

<sup>30</sup>Wolter, *Will and Morality*, p. 40.

<sup>32</sup>*Ordinatio*, III suppl., dist. 28, in *Will and Morality*, p. 291. Scotus identifies charity with justice. Wolter explains this is an extension and amplification of St. Anselm’s understanding of justice. See the introduction, p. 90.

<sup>33</sup>Ingham, *Scotus for Dunces*, p. 89.

<sup>34</sup>Ingham, *The Harmony of Goodness*, p. 34.

<sup>35</sup>Ingham, *Scotus for Dunces*, p. 89.

<sup>36</sup>Eph. 2:4.

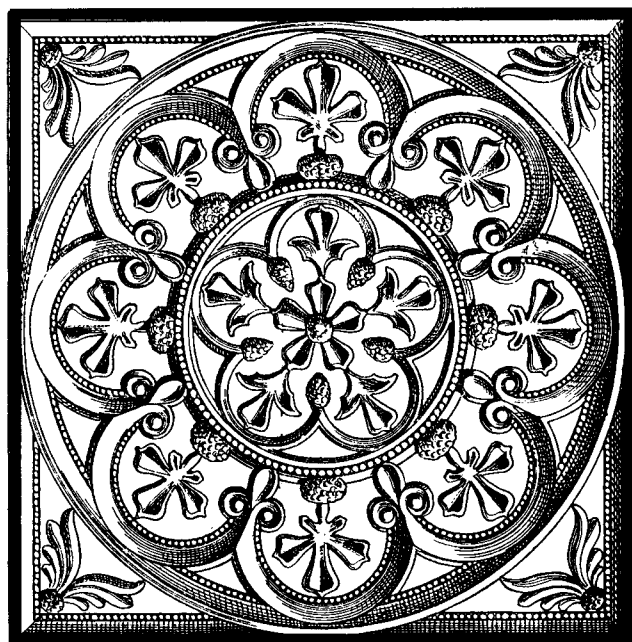
<sup>37</sup>See John Duns Scotus. *Ordinatio* III, suppl. dist. 26 in *Will and Morality*, 153. See also the introduction, p. 40.

<sup>38</sup>Ingham, *Scotus for Dunces*, p. 88.

<sup>39</sup>*Little Flowers of St. Francis*, The Third Consideration, in *Francis of Assisi: Omnibus of Sources*, ed. Marion Habig (Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972), p. 1444.

<sup>40</sup>*Major Life of St. Francis*, ch. 2, n. 1; ch.1, n.6; ch.4, n.3; 1 Celano, 37; *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, n.21; *Legenda of Perugia*, 44. All of these texts can be found in *Francis of Assisi: Omnibus of Sources*.

<sup>41</sup>Francis of Assisi, *The Earlier Rule*, 23:11, in *Francis and Clare*, p. 133.



*The Cord*, 53.6 (2003)

## BOOK REVIEWS

***Poetry As Prayer: Saint Francis of Assisi.*** Murray Bodo, O.F.M.  
Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2003. 152 pp.

The most recent entry in the Poetry As Prayer Series published by Pauline Books & Media comes from the pen of Murray Bodo, O.F.M., and provides a new view of the poor man from Assisi, Francis. Filled with insights into Francis as mystic, as poet, and as saint, Bodo encourages his readers to recognize the lessons we can learn about prayer through a careful and attentive re-reading of Francis’s life and his writings—particularly the *Canticle of the Creatures*—within the context of the medieval culture in which he was planted.

The opening chapter leads the reader through a brief discussion relevant to common qualities found in both good poetry and good prayer. Both are characterized by an economy of language which encourages honest expression. When they arise from the deep conflicts of the human heart, both poetry and prayer are personally authentic. Both enable the reader to see things anew, by requiring a second look and a passionate response. And both open the reader’s eyes and ears to the unseen and unheard world within.

In Chapter Two Bodo recounts the life of Francis, with special emphasis on the process of conversion that eventually resulted in personal sanctity. Chapter Three makes the connections between Francis’s cultural, spiritual, and mystical experiences and translates them for the modern reader. Here Bodo describes the medieval mindset: the ideals of chivalry, courtly love, and the language of allegory. In these chapters, the holiness of Francis becomes clearer and clearer; so do the reasons for which he has drawn admirers and followers through the centuries.

Chapter Four provides the reader with the historical context of *The Canticle of the Creatures*. Sometimes called *The Canticle of Brother Sun*, it is this text—of all of Francis’s writings, according to Bodo—that most clearly reveals Francis’s soul. Chapter Five takes the reader through a prayerful meditation on the *Canticle*, arriving at the conclusion that:

St. Francis’s *Canticle* is a concrete expression of the mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery of God’s entering the world in the person of Jesus Christ. In that Divine act, all of creation is touched by God. . . . Nothing is simply ordinary because of the extraordinary visitation of God.

For practitioners of poetry and prayer, Bodo includes the final chapter, "Ways to Read Poetry Prayerfully." Including several methods of involving oneself in praying the poetry internally, he also provides a list of additional poems which continue the process of integrating the poet and the pray-er in each of us. The selections offered represent poetry from a variety of authors—Brother Antoninus to Charles Wright—and are intended as a starting point, or as a handy list to take with you to the library.

This small, easily-packed book provides guidance, practice and inspiration for anyone seeking a new understanding of prayer, a new understanding of Francis, or both. It is a welcome addition to anyone's bookshelf and will find a comfortable niche with other inspirational or personal reflection books used as prayer-starters. Its pages are enlivened with images of the Giotto cycle of frescoes in the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, Italy. Reading Bodo's thoughts and savoring the classic Franciscan art underlines the quotation from Mark Van Doren with which he opened his text: "A good poem is the shortest distance between you and the subject."

Daria Mitchell, O.S.F.  
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778

***The Poverty of Riches: St. Francis of Assisi Reconsidered.*** Kenneth Baxter Wolf. Oxford Univeristy Press, 2003. 165 pp.

In the single blurb on the back cover of this work, historian Sharon Farmer informs the reader that the author has "written a fascinating and deeply disturbing meditation on the meaning of poverty in Western Medieval Christianity." After a careful reading of its short but impressively researched work (87 pages of text and 46 pages of endnotes), I agree with Professor Farmer, though I think not for the same reasons.

Wolf's book is fascinating in that the exemplary life of Francis makes for an odd target in a world replete with examples of avarice, sham humility, and self-promotion, all of which he charges to Francis. The level of sustained cynicism Wolf attaches to Francis and his motives is deeply disturbing. As I read the text, the author sees Francis as a supremely spiritually and socially self-elevated person, elevated at the expense of and in callous neglect of the genuinely needy.

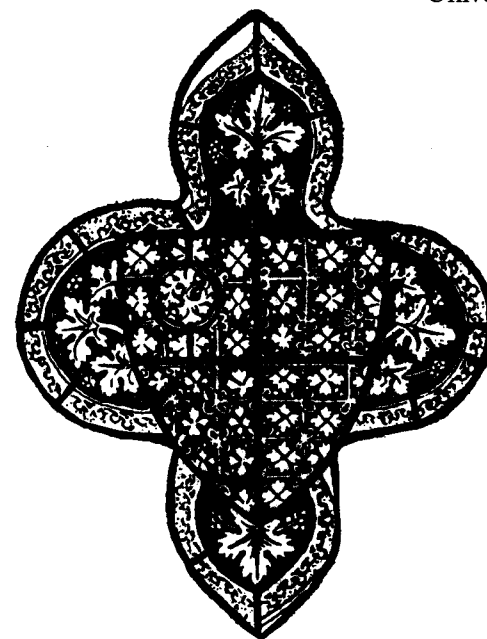
At the heart of Wolf's picture of Francis is a distinction between voluntary and involuntary poverty. Involuntary poverty, or "unholy poverty"—as Wolf sees Francis, and by extension, all mendicants—refers to those who are afflicted or poor "because of circumstances beyond their own control." Those who

choose voluntary poverty do so as a means to "spiritual regeneration" and "personal identification with Jesus." Wolf implies that Francis's poverty "really had little to do with the poor." He writes:

But when Francis finally settled on a particular way of life that made sense to him, it did not revolve around helping the poor, giving alms to lepers, or feeding the needy. Instead Francis opted for the "high road" in imitating the self-imposed poverty of Jesus by disposing of his own possessions and living, as he saw it, anyway, in complete and total dependence on God.

Further, in the author's view, the founding of an order was detrimental to society because "it compromised the goals" of service to the poor. There are other areas of misinterpretation throughout the book, too many to cite here. Missing from Wolf's reconsideration is Francis's experience of the theological virtues of love, faith, and hope that informed his worldview and sustained his actions. Missing is consideration of the vow of poverty in a vocational context. Missing, too, is a rigorous historical analysis of Francis's supposed ineffectiveness in helping the poor. Wolf presents no evidence of actual negative effects of voluntary poverty on the involuntary poor, either by episode or supported research.

Tim Weldon, Ph.D.  
University of St. Francis  
Joliet, Illinois



## About Our Contributors

**André Cirino, O.F.M.**, is a friar minor of the Immaculate Conception province. He has long served as a staff member of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs, and is the author of several books, the most recent of which is *The Journey Into God*, co-authored with Josef Raischl, published in 2002.

**F. Edward Coughlin, O.F.M.**, is a friar minor of the Holy Name province. He is a former Director of the Franciscan Institute and currently serves in his provincial offices. A well-known speaker, teacher, and consultant, Ed is working on a translation of the *Breviloquium* of St. Bonaventure.

**Felicity Dorsett, O.S.F.**, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration. She is finishing her thesis for a degree at the Franciscan Institute. She teaches at the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and works in campus ministry there.

**Kathleen Eickwort, S.B.C.**, an ordained Episcopal priest retired from parish ministry, resides in a new community: a mixed group of Gray Friars and Sisters of Brigit and Clare (hence, SBC). The Order has married and celibate members, lay and ordained, similar to the early Celtic communities. Sr. Kathleen has a PhD. from Cornell University, in the field of ecology. She currently serves as chaplain to the Celtic Franciscan Order of *Celi De*, part of the Anglican Communion.

**Charles Finnegan, O.F.M.**, is member of the Holy Name province. A well-known speaker and retreat director, he currently serves as the director of the San Damiano Spiritual Center, located in the inner city of Philadelphia. He has been a missionary and is on the Ministry of the Word team of his province.

**Mary Beth Ingham, C.S.J.**, is a well-known Scotus scholar and author, currently serving as Professor of Philosophy and Associate Academic Vice-President at Loyola-Marymount University. Her most recent publication is *Scotus for Dunces: An Introduction to the Subtle Doctor* published by Franciscan Institute Publications.

## About our Artists

**Nick Parrendo** is a life-long resident of Pittsburgh, PA and has been a stained glass artist for over fifty years. His most notable work—eight windows in Pittsburgh's Trinity Cathedral—has been hailed internationally as a modern masterpiece.

**Lynne Anne Schimminger, FSSJ**, is President of Immaculata Academy in Hamburg, New York. Her art appears in *The Cord* for the first time with this issue.

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*Francis's sacramental view of Church...*

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*The "dangerous memory" of the Crib, Cross and Eucharist...  
Investigation into the ethical and pastoral dimensions of the  
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*For information, contact*

*Kathleen Moffatt, OSF, Forum Coordinator*

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February 1 (7:00 p.m.) – February 6 (noon), 2004

### Retreat: "Peter, do you love me?"

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Saturday, March 13, 2004

### Spiritual Companionship Workshop

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July 12 (7:00 p.m.) – July 18 (noon), 2004

### Retreat: "The Admonitions of Francis"

This retreat is based on "The Admonitions of Francis" which give us an understanding of the Gospel passages which shaped Francis' spirit. The Admonitions also illustrate Francis' own understanding of human nature and the attitudes that can keep us from receiving and living the good news. Presented by Barbara Leonhard, OSF, an Oldenburg Franciscan who has extensive teaching and mission experience, a broad education and a Ph.D. in Christian Spirituality. Cost: \$325. Register by June 28 with \$50 non-refundable deposit.

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## Abbreviations

<i>Writings of Saint. Francis</i>		<i>Franciscan Sources</i>	
Adm	The Admonitions	1C	The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano
BIL	A Blessing for Brother Leo	2C	The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul
Ctc	The Canticle of the Creatures	3C	The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
CtExh	The Canticle of Exhortation	LCh	The Legend for Use in the Choir
1Frg	Fragments of Worchester Manuscript	Off	The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
2Frg	Fragments of Thomas of Celano	LJS	The Life of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer
3Frg	Fragments of Hugh of Digne	VL	The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches
LtAnt	A Letter to Br. Anthony of Padua	1-3JT	The Praises by Jacopone da Todi
1LtCl	First Letter to the Clergy (Earlier Edition)	DCom	The Divine Comedy by Dante Aliegheri
2LtCl	Second Letter to the Clergy (Later Edition)	TL	Tree of Life by Ubertino da Casale
1LtCus	The First Letter to the Custodians	1MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version
2LtCus	The Second Letter to the Custodians	2MP	The Mirror of Perfection, Larger Version
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful	HTrb	The History of the Seven Tribulations by Angelo of Clareno
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful	ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St. Francis and Lady Poverty
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo	AP	The Anonymous of Perugia
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister	L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
LtOrd	A Letter to the Entire Order	AC	The Assisi Compilation
LtR	A Letter to the Rulers of the People	1-4Srm	The Sermons of Bonaventure
ExhP	Exhortation o the Praise of God	LMj	The Major Legend by Bonaventure
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father	LMn	The Minor Legend by Bonaventure
PrsG	The Praises of God	BPr	The Book of Praises by Bernard of Besse
OF	The Office of the Passion	ABF	The Deeds of St. Francis and His Companions
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix	LFI	The Little Flowers of Saint Francis
ER	The Earlier Rule ( <i>Regula non bullata</i> )	KnSF	The Knowing of Saint Francis
LR	The Later Rule ( <i>Regula bullata</i> )	ChrTE	The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston
RH	A Rule for Hermitages	ChrJG	The Chronicle of Jordan of Giano
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary		
SalV	A Salutation of Virtues		
Test	The Testament		
TPJ	True and Perfect Joy		
<i>Writings of Saint Clare</i>			
1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague		
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague		
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague		
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague		
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges		
RCI	Rule of Clare		
TestCl	Testament of Clare		
BCL	Blessing of Clare		