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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.  
Titles of books should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be footnoted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:  
(1Cor. 13:6). (2Cel 5:8).  
(RegNB 23:2). (4LAg 2:13).

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

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## Editorial

The cycle of time has once again taken us past the feast of Christ's birth and into the longer days of winter. In the publishing cycle of this journal, January is a kind of in-between time because Lent will so soon be upon us, and resolutions of holy change (conversion) will once again enter into our daily consciousness. The current issue of *The Cord* also belongs in the in-between category (at least for the first month of its life), since there is no fixed theme assigned to it. Nor is there a targeted audience within the Franciscan family to whom it is addressed.

To some, that may be not so good, but to the editor it is a gift. Why? Because I am then free to place before our readers a *smorgasbord* of articles and authors submitted here at times when the targeted topics and issues—May/June through November/December—prevented immediate publication and caused them to be delayed until their inclusion at a “time to be determined.” Consequently, this issue presents the opportunity to publish an interesting variety of subjects. We offer a brief biography of Mother Mary of the Passion written by a recent graduate of the Franciscan Institute; an article that brings the spiritual insights of Francis and Bonaventure into conversation with the challenges of modern science and environmental decay in an article written by a professor here at St. Bonaventure University; a poetic reflection on the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, and a poem on an often-overlooked figure in the life of Francis. Really, a *smorgasbord*.

And, since January is the month when ordinary people begin to assess what their taxes will amount to (and perhaps begin a period of discontent about having to pay them), we thought that an article by David Flood might be quite challenging: how many of us have ever considered what Francis might have thought about paying taxes? Lastly, we offer a piece by Thadée Matura which invites us once again, at the start of a new year, to reflect on Francis “as a man and a Christian believer . . . totally taken up by the desire for God.”

As a result, we have some history, some science, some poetry, some economics, and some spiritual direction, so to speak. The editorial staff has truly enjoyed putting this issue together and we hope that it will be as enriching for you to read as it has been for us to present it to you.

May the days of winter be good to all, revealing the beauty of the One who has created all things and called them good!

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*

**“Make my heart . . . a living flame . . .”**

**A Brief Biography of  
Mother Mary of the Passion**

Daria Mitchell, O.S.F.

Introduction

Pope John Paul II beatified the Venerable Mother Mary of the Passion on Sunday, October 20, 2002. Thousands of Franciscan Missionaries of Mary joined the universal Church to celebrate their foundress, Mary of the Passion, nee Hélène de Chappotin de Neuville. Largely unknown to American Catholics, Mother Mary of the Passion's elevation to the ranks of the Beatified represents decades of prayer and work on the part of her spiritual daughters, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. Begun in February 1918, the process leading to her recognition by the Church includes investigations into the events of her life, examinations of her writings, and evaluations of evidence of miraculous interventions attributed to her intercession. Beatification is the second step of the process leading to canonization, the official recognition by the Church of the heroic nature of an individual's response to the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit. The first step, the solemn promulgation of the Decree on the Heroicity of the Virtues of Hélène de Chappotin, took place on June 28, 1999, while the Decree for the Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God was published on April 23, 2002.

For the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, this event was an external validation of what they have long known, that their foundress was a faithful instrument of God in her life of ministry to the missions and in her patient suffering offered to make Jesus known to the world. Mary of the Passion's fervent desire—that she and her Institute embody the evangelical spirit of Francis of Assisi—found support and aggregation when, with the blessing of the then-Minister General of the First Order of St. Francis, Father Bernardine de Portogruaro, they were accepted into the Third Order Regular in 1882.

The mission and ministries of the spiritual daughters of Mary of the Passion continue to enrich the universal Church. This international congregation encompasses more than 9,181 Sisters representing 73 nationalities carrying out the missionary work of the Church in 73 countries on five continents.<sup>1</sup>

Helene's Early Journey

Why did this woman's sanctity receive Rome's official recognition? What can we learn from her about our call to “go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations” (Mt 28:19)? What does her life tell us about following in the footprints of Jesus in the spirit of Francis of Assisi? Let's first look at the early stages of her life to identify the gifts of nature and grace that enabled her response to her call.

Born the fifth and youngest child of Charles de Chappotin and Sophie Galbaud du Fort, on May 21, 1839, Hélène Marie Philippine de Chappotin de Neuville grew up in an extended family setting on a country estate called Le Fort a few miles outside the town of Nantes, France. Reared with her two sisters and two brothers alongside the six children of Sophie's brother, Alphonse, Hélène enjoyed a happy and predictably boisterous early childhood. Various descriptions of her as “spirited”<sup>2</sup> and in need of skillful discipline, Hélène displayed the gifts of a leader at an early age. Others report her as being a “gifted, vivacious and self-willed child.”<sup>3</sup> The responsibility for guiding the development of such a child may have challenged her parents' wisdom and ingenuity.

Hélène's family background enjoyed a diversity not typical of her time. At the outset of the French Revolution her father's family had fled France for Cuba, where they had expansive economic interests. It was there that Charles was born. He was educated at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland, and returned to France in 1817 to pursue engineering studies in Paris. Helene's mother's family also had diverse financial interests in the Antilles. It is interesting to note that Sophie's family claimed among their forebears a descendant of St. Dominic, as well as intermarriage with Spanish Basques; these influences were visible in Helene's dark hair and lively eyes.

Hélène's childhood idyll was interrupted when she was eight years old. Her father's promotion to chief engineer required the family's relocation to Vannes. Hélène missed her playmates and sought refuge in the companionship of books. Vannes, however, had a more cosmopolitan population than Le Fort and it was there that two encounters occurred which, in hindsight, can be seen to have played a significant role in engaging Hélène's interest in and compassion for others.

Always a generous child, Hélène tells of childhood games that involved begging food and clothing which were then distributed among the poor of the neighborhood.<sup>4</sup> So it is no surprise to learn that she had to be restrained from emptying her entire small savings into the basket of Jeanne Jugan, foundress of the Little Sisters of the Poor, as she solicited aid for the poor. When asked, however, which of the three Chappotin daughters would be a nun, Helene responded: “Not I. I'm not going to leave my mother.”<sup>5</sup> Unpublished sources, including correspondence and spiritual notes of Mary of the Passion, relate

Jeanne Jugan's response: "The one who says: 'I don't want to!' is already feeling the touch of grace."<sup>6</sup>

The second intervention occurred when Bishop John Mary Chanche, a former schoolmate of Charles who was on a fund-raising trip through England and France, stopped to visit his old friend. Bishop Chanche shared stories about many of his experiences among the Indians of North America. These tales fired Hélène's interest and compassion for those who "know neither Jesus nor Mary."<sup>7</sup>

The family relocated to Nantes in 1849, but Hélène's joy soon turned to sorrow with the first of three deaths within the close-knit circle of Le Fort. The death of her cousin Aurelia was followed in rapid succession by the deaths of her oldest sister Martine and her sister Louise. The tenor of her childhood was irrevocably changed as the pain of bereavement settled upon the household. The adolescent Helene sought to redeem her grief by focusing attention on Louise's now motherless daughters.

## The Path to Conversion

In 1856, during a retreat sponsored for the Children of Mary, while enjoying the companionship of her friends, Helene spent the days of the retreat in relative contentment until the last evening, when she suddenly realized the very great love God had for her and became aware of her call to respond. She continued to confront the issue of how to respond to the gift of divine love upon her return home. Finally came the recognition that "Only if I give myself, entirely, do I repay him who gives himself wholly to me."<sup>8</sup>

An initial attraction to a contemplative lifestyle led to plans to make a retreat in Paris in preparation for entering a Carmelite community. Her mother's death interrupted her plans: how could she leave her father in his grief? She resolved, however, to make her life a "rehearsal" for the day when she could realize her dream. Even while managing the affairs of the household, she found time for two hours of daily prayer and frequent acts of mortification. Following the example of the saints, whose lives she read, Helene added daily fasting and nights of prayerful vigil to her already rigorous asceticism.

Shortly after the death of her mother the Poor Clares established a house in Nantes. Hélène admired the conditions of poverty in which they joyfully lived and she gradually overcame family opposition to her making a retreat with them. Her intent, if not communicated fully to her brothers and father, was to experience the poverty and simplicity of the Franciscan Order by becoming a postulant, which she did in December of 1860. Although her Poor Clare experience was of short duration due to illness, it was there that she

experienced another remarkable call. Seeking a book on obedience for spiritual reading and reflection, she went to the chapel where she "heard this word clear and distinct, 'Are you willing to be crucified instead of the Holy Father?'"<sup>9</sup> In fear and trepidation, she wordlessly responded and received the name "Mary Victim of Jesus and of Jesus Crucified"<sup>10</sup> and thus accepted her call to sacrificial self-giving.

Hélène's pursuit of religious life brought her to the Congregation of Marie-Reparatrice. She was received by the foundress, made her novitiate at Toulouse, and even before pronouncing vows was sent to the missions of India. On the Feast of St. Joseph, at the age of 26, she made private vows at the Church of Notre Dame de la Garde in Marseilles on the evening before her ship sailed for India.

## Missionary Experience

Mary of the Passion, although still a novice, brought devotion, tact, order and observance of the rule to the houses where she resided. She professed vows on May 3, 1866, and within four months was entrusted with the spiritual and missionary well-being of the Sisters, first as superior of the house, and soon after as Provincial of the three houses of Marie-Reparatrice in the Apostolic Vicariate of Madura.

An account dating from her missionary time in India presents Mary of the Passion as first in observance of the rule and constitutions of the Congregation. As a daughter of Francis, even if only in spirit, she led by example, as well as by her words:

... accepting assistance from one of us as she came down, worn by fatigue after a sleepless night, her features pale and drawn. But returning from the Communion rail, she seemed completely transformed; her expression was radiant and calm. [ . . . ] Our Mother prayed continuously and helped us to pray. In the evening we would see her prolong her visit to the Blessed Sacrament . . . But at recreation she was the most entertaining person imaginable. She could relate anecdote after anecdote, for she had an endless supply. When we sang, she was the leader, and her songs were the most cheerful, amusing ones. [ . . . ] We realized that she was trying to make us forget the things that worried us.<sup>11</sup>

Her responsibilities as provincial required that she travel among the three missions and this equipped her with invaluable insight into the spirit, abilities, needs and challenges of the sisters in her charge. The Indian climate exacerbated the stresses inherent in mission life. After due consultation, Mary of the

Passion delegated the task of locating a suitable mountain location in which to establish a convent which would serve as a place to "come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little" (Mark 6:31).

Although each mission had its own capable superior, Mary of the Passion's mediating presence was a recognized gift in the entire mission community. She was always ready with a listening ear and loving attention, and her willingness to collaborate in seeking equitable solutions to problems fostered peace and order among the mission personnel. As one of the Indian Sisters<sup>12</sup> bade Mary of the Passion farewell in preparation for one of her journeys she cautioned: "Don't forget to come back soon, Mother. You know things get pretty mixed up when you are not here."<sup>13</sup>

Correspondence from Father Andrea Bruni, the Jesuit superior of the missions in Madura, testifies to the respect that the spirit and charism of the Sisters from France engendered. At the same time he clearly indicates that life in the missions could not be a mirror image of life at the motherhouse. "Instead of making reparation before the Blessed Sacrament and in the shadow of the cloister, here they will be Sisters of Charity in our hospitals, teachers in our schools."<sup>14</sup> Anyone familiar with the internal workings of communities of women (men's communities, too, one suspects) will recognize this as an area of potential conflict. When the need to interpret rules and constitutions according to conditions different from those to which one originally committed oneself arises, sincere and prayerful discernment is the only path to true obedience. Whatever the cause, Mary of the Passion and her companions in India were eventually presented with an ultimatum from their congregational headquarters in France: "Accept certain conditions which they considered against their consciences or leave the Congregation of Mary Reparatrix."<sup>15</sup> As Bishop (later Cardinal) Charles Salotti wrote:

It is sad that sometimes even excellent persons anxious to do good may through no fault of their own be involved in wrongdoing. From my knowledge of unpublished documents in my possession, I have reason to believe that the Church and history, both impartial judges, will fully vindicate this heroic woman. She suffered the humiliation of being deposed from her office as Provincial. (The letter of deposition reached India February 16, 1876.)<sup>16</sup>

A storm of protest, calumny and contradictions threatened the Sisters. Mary of the Passion and nineteen of her fellow Sisters of Mary Reparatrix accepted the decision and made arrangements to form a new community dedicated to missionary activity in the spirit of Mary.

Wisdom dictated that a delegation, including Passion Tayar (her name in Tamil), should travel to Rome to gain authorization to continue as a religious

institute. The sisters who remained in India would continue their work under the protection and support of the Bishop of Coimbatore. The mountain mission of Ootacamund became their sanctuary while they waited for news. Mary of the Passion's request, when leaving, was that the Sisters "keep silent during the critical period through which they were passing. Never must they retaliate when attacked."<sup>17</sup>

## A New Missionary Institute

Pius IX granted permission to organize an Institute of Missionaries of Mary whose work would be missionary. The further suggestion, conveyed by Cardinal Franchi, Prefect of the Office of Propaganda, that they open a novitiate in France sent them off immediately to plant the seeds for future growth of their new congregation. With this news, rejoicing took place on two continents.

During the next few years, Mary of the Passion shuttled between France and Rome in her efforts to secure a firm foundation for the new Institute. Quickly outgrowing the first novitiate, they received a gift of The Chatelets, the former residence of the Bishops of St. Brieuc, and happily settled into the work of developing the property into a suitable place for forming the missionary spirit.

In 1880 Mother Mary of the Passion was again on the road to Rome, this time in the company of Bishop David of St. Brieuc who was making his *ad limina* visit. Much had changed in Rome. On the death of Pius IX, Leo XIII had assumed the throne of Peter. There were additional changes in curial offices. Presenting the report of the Institute to Cardinal Simeoni she gained his approval: "The relations between your Sisters in Coimbatore diocese and in that of St. Brieuc are perfectly in order. The matter is settled."<sup>18</sup>

Mary of the Passion was back in Rome in 1882. This time she made the acquaintance of the Minister General of the Franciscan Order, Father Bernardine de Portogruaro and Father Raphael d'Aurillac, Definitor General. On their advice the sisters established a house in Rome. Their support encouraged her to formalize a relationship between the Missionaries of Mary and the Franciscan Order, long the desire of her heart. She petitioned for entrance into the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, for the favor of Franciscan spiritual direction, and for papal permission to enroll all the members of the Institute as Franciscans "in order to preserve it from worldliness and to see it imbued with the spirit of charity, poverty, and of Gospel simplicity."<sup>19</sup> Mary of the Passion and her companion Mary of St. Veronica attended Mass at the Ara Coeli on October 4, 1882, and afterwards made their profession in the Third Order. On December 8, 1882, Father Raphael received the entire community into the Third Order Regular.

All was not smooth sailing for the new Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. In late winter 1883, whispers and some enigmatic restrictions placed on ordinary requests by the sisters as they organized their Roman convent were the prelude to a more organized campaign in opposition to the new institute. Mary of the Passion was urged to resign quietly but responded:

When our Lord was on the cross they urged him to come down, He did not, but waited until he was taken down. [ . . . ] I cannot in conscience relinquish my heavy responsibility now; I shall wait until it is taken from me.<sup>20</sup>

She did not have long to wait. This time her deposition included an interdiction prohibiting communication with the sisters in India, as well as those in the novitiate in France. For almost two years, the Institute of Missionaries of Mary was without its founding leader. Her ring, symbol of her office of superior, was laid at the feet of our Lady in the little chapel of the convent in Rome as she waited the result of the investigation. The congregation kept complete records. Father Bernardino had urged them: "In your own interests and those of the Institute it would be prudent if you kept in your archives a complete record of what you have done. You already have all the documents and one day they will secure your complete rehabilitation."<sup>21</sup>

The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda assigned the examination to Father Alphonse Eschbach, of the Holy Ghost Fathers. The issues investigated included the dowries that the sisters, now Missionaries of Mary, had brought to the Congregation of Marie Reparatrice. They rejoiced in the decision that no restitution of the dowries would be obliged and finally on March 23, 1884, a decree was issued recognizing her as foundress of a congregation and its superior general. Years later the Minister General explained one of the reasons for his high regard for Mary of the Passion and her institute: "They uttered no word of complaint against those who were the cause of their difficulties."<sup>22</sup> And Mary of the Passion herself gives this testimony, "I have prayed for the Congregation of Marie Reparatrice that our success may not hurt them and that our Lord will let them share it."<sup>23</sup>

### The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary

Mary of the Passion's personality and spiritual aspirations played a significant role in setting the tone and customs of the new Institute. She wrote the Sisters in December 8, 1884:

Listen, Sisters! I have a message from Francis of Assisi . . . and with it I am sending to you your Constitutions. . . . You keep the Command-

ments in your hearts; you follow the Gospel counsels with love. But think! Christ's gift in the Sacrifice and Sacrament of Love demands a response ever more and more total. . . . What should our response be? First, love of the Eucharistic Presence of Jesus Christ. Second, veneration for priests, all priests, always and everywhere. Then strive for holiness in our lives, because our beloved Jesus is holy. This is our vocation. Let charity be our rule of life. Love Mary. We are her missionaries, her Franciscan Missionaries. Observe our Constitutions to the letter—but even more, in the spirit. Sing the praises of God, but consider harmony of souls more important than beautiful music. Grow . . . in faith and love . . . love of the Word of God in Holy Scripture and in the Blessed Sacrament. Say to the Holy Child Jesus on Christmas Day (and every day is Christmas!): "Thy kingdom come!"<sup>24</sup>

An energetic person, Mary of the Passion avoided idleness of any kind. She believed in the dignity of work and the daily schedule of the Institute's



MARIE DE LA PASSION,  
HÉLÈNE CHAPPOTIN DE NEUVILLE  
(1839-1904)

houses give testimony to this. She believed that work conferred economic advantages for the order as well as empowerment for all those to whom the sisters ministered. Hers was not a compulsive need for activity, however, because "the people with whom Mary of the Passion worked were her first concern; the work itself was secondary."<sup>25</sup>

Her habit of reflection and contemplative prayer gave her insight into the ordinary daily happenings and trained her to recognize the positive nature of any unexpected development. Even

time traveling from place to place yielded profit for the missions. On the voyage to India she occupied her time at sea with primary lessons in the Tamil language and introductory material concerning Indian ways in order to develop a true respect for their customs. Once at her destination, Mary of the Passion plunged into the new environment, making friends and colleagues of those with whom she was to live and minister. The prayer-life of the sisters took priority but their days were balanced with study and community life.

One aspect of Mary of the Passion's genius must be acknowledged as stemming from both nature and grace. She was blessed with the ability to recognize the essential elements of her religious commitment and to accommodate the local conditions in such a way as to lose none of the spiritual foundation which promoted true evangelization without being a slave to European conventual practices. One can see the precursor of this wisdom in an event that took place on her return home from the Poor Clare monastery in 1861. During her recuperation she chose to restrict her mode of dress to black. Her brother Charles, anticipating his marriage and wishing to ensure that his beloved H  l  ne would participate appropriately in the festivities, questioned her choice of black, knowing from their early years as children that she preferred green. The day of the wedding dawned and H  l  ne delighted Charles by donning an outfit of green, "gown, hat, gloves, and all"<sup>26</sup> but the next day she quietly resumed wearing black.

Mary of the Passion was a prodigious writer. She has left complete and detailed records of the foundational events of the Institute, formation strategies which cover the most minute issues of religious development, letters to family, friends, and sisters, and retreat notes—both of retreats which she made and retreats which she prepared and gave to the sisters. An example of her abilities in this arena will suffice. On their second meeting, Father Raphael asked about the state of the new Institute's constitutions. When told they were not written but existed only in her mind and heart, he instructed her to begin immediately and to bring him the text in three days. She tackled the task after prayer and enlisted the help of Mary of the Holy Spirit in preparing copies to be submitted to Father Raphael. After he had seen the work he suggested that a copy be prepared for the Holy Father. Afraid she was taxing the skills of her copyist, Mary of the Passion expressed concern, only to be told:

It is no trouble at all Mother. It is a joy. For five years we have seen you living these constitutions and have tried to live them with you. This is a happy day for us all!"<sup>27</sup>

Formal preparation for missionary work is lengthy for the young Franciscan Missionary of Mary. Theological foundation and cultural preparation take their

places alongside language training, and learning trades and crafts which will provide economic support for the mission and act as a stimulus for local economies. Spiritual formation is designed to prepare hearts able to say, in Mary of the Passion's own reply to Mother Mary of Jesus, Superior of the Congregation of Marie Reparatrice: "I shall go wherever you send me."<sup>28</sup> From that seed the various missionary activities of the sisters develop to meet the needs of the people they serve. No two missions are identical; that is why the variety of works in which they engage is so vast. There are kindergartens, orphanages, schools, workrooms, hostels, clubs, catechism classes, welfare centers, hospitals, leper asylums, isolation hospitals, and dispensaries, as well as care of sodalities and catechumenates, churches and sacristies, visiting the sick, the poor and prisoners, refuges for outcasts and care of the dying.

## Conclusion

When Mary of the Passion would finally be united with the God Who had loved her and invited her complete self-giving love in return, she took her place at the banquet table with many of her fellow Franciscan Missionaries of Mary who had preceded her in death. July 9, 1900, saw the martyrdom of seven sisters at Tai-Yuan-Foo, China: Marie Hermine, Mary of Peace, Maria Chiara, Mary Nathalie, Mary of St. Just, Maria Adolphine, and Marie Amandine.

In her New Year's wishes to the sisters on December 31, 1900, Mary of the Passion closed her letter with these words:

When a congregation grows as ours has grown, it is because it responds to an actuality in the vital needs of our day. . . . Victims were needed. To fill the chalice of mercy, our seven victims of Tai-Yuan-Foo offered themselves generously. In this we see fulfillment. . . . We understand just a little what God's plan has been in giving life to our community. Our role now is to be generous so as to hasten the blessed hour of a new era of the Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>29</sup>

By 1901, two new groups of sisters were en route to West China.

On November 15, 1904, Mary of the Passion entered eternity. One memorial tribute published in the community Annals summarized her spirit thus:

... one of zeal for the spread of the Gospel, boundless charity, and the spirit of sacrifice for the Church and souls; a spirit of love of Jesus in the Eucharist and of Mary; and enthusiasm for all that is true, just and beautiful."<sup>30</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Raffaele Pazzelli, *The Franciscan Sisters: Outlines of History and Spirituality* (Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University Press, 1993), 166.

<sup>2</sup>Marie-Therese de Maleissye, *A Short Life of Mary of the Passion: Helene de Chappotin Foundress of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary* (Bandra, Mumbai: St. Paul Press Training School, 1997), 12.

<sup>3</sup>De Maleissye, 12.

<sup>4</sup>Georges Goyau, *Valiant Women Mother Mary of the Passion and the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary*, trans. George Telford (London: Sheed & Ward, 1947), 6.

<sup>5</sup>Goyau, 7.

<sup>6</sup>DeMaleissye, 16.

<sup>7</sup>Thomas F. Cullen, *The Very Reverend Mother Mary of the Passion and Her Institute* (Providence: Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, 1929), 6.

<sup>8</sup>Goyau, 11.

<sup>9</sup>Cullen, 23.

<sup>10</sup>Cullen, 23.

<sup>11</sup>Sister Agnes Willmann, *Everywhere People Waiting: The Life of Helen De Chappotin de Neuville (Mother Mary of the Passion) Foundress of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary* (North Quincy, MA: The Christopher Publishing House, 1973), 103.

<sup>12</sup>The original missionary activity of the Society of Marie Reparatrice was to give support to the work of the Jesuits and to exercise supervision over a convent of native sisters already in existence.

<sup>13</sup>Willmann, 105.

<sup>14</sup>Goyau, 20.

<sup>15</sup>Willmann, 111.

<sup>16</sup>Willmann, 111.

<sup>17</sup>Goyau, 28.

<sup>18</sup>Willmann, 137.

<sup>19</sup>Willmann, 159.

<sup>20</sup>Goyau, 55.

<sup>21</sup>Goyau, 64.

<sup>22</sup>Goyau, 65.

<sup>23</sup>Goyau, 67.

<sup>24</sup>Willmann, 190.

<sup>25</sup>Willmann, 74.

<sup>26</sup>Willmann, 63.

<sup>27</sup>Willmann, 148.

<sup>28</sup>Goyau, 17.

<sup>29</sup>Willmann, 317.

<sup>30</sup>Willmann, 371.

## Francis, Bonaventure, and the Environmental Crisis

Anthony Murphy

In flat country I watch every sunset in hopes of seeing the green ray. The green ray is a seldom-seen streak of light that rises from the sun like a spurting fountain at the moment of sunset; it throbs into the sky for two seconds and disappears. One more reason to keep my eyes open. (Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*)<sup>1</sup>

This year marks the thirty-fifth year since Professor Lynn White proposed St. Francis as the patron saint of the environmental movement. His classic lecture "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" was published in March 1967 in *Science*.<sup>2</sup> Since that time there has been a steady hail of ecological crises: global warming, population growth, species extinction, threats to Alaskan wildlife preserves, and so forth. Environmental concerns are such today that some, I think of the Cambridge physicist Stephen Hawking, have opined that if the human species is to survive in the long run, given the damage being inflicted on the planet; it will have to colonize other worlds. Quite a prospect indeed!

White's insight into the ecological problems of our day was prescient. His analysis of the cause and solution is ground breaking. Not only does he argue that the current ecological crisis is not merely a technological problem, requiring a "technical fix," but that the dilemma of our age is at its root theological or philosophical. According to White's analysis, our future depends less on engineering and scientific innovation, and more on rethinking theological and philosophical axioms. Indeed it may be the case that it is these very technological marvels that have brought us to the current historical threshold; I am reminded of Brecht's second version of *Galileo* in which the physicist is recast as the villain of the modern age. Perhaps, though, we can take solace in the fact that White's article, an historical and philosophical essay, was published in *Science*.



Specifically White argues a thesis that he shared with the late Arnold Toynbee, the great historian of culture, that the roots of the current ecological crisis are traceable to Christianity, or perhaps to spread the blame around, to Judeo-Christianity. Inherent in the world view of Christianity, it is claimed, is a thrust to domination rooted in a perceived gap between spirit and nature, what Marx refers to as alienation. Fortunately for Christianity, according to White, there exists an alternative stream of thought, a subterranean river that runs through the Christian tradition. This tradition White sees as a radical counter culture opposing the dominant Christian ethos. With the ring of a piece written in 1967, White remarks "The prime miracle of Saint Francis is the fact that he did not end at the stake, as many of his left-wing followers did."<sup>3</sup> Based in part on St. Francis's radical credentials, White goes on to nominate him as the exemplar of this Christian counter-culture and as the patron saint of ecologists, a proposal that has since been realized. In light of White's remarks I wish to explore whether or not a retrieval of parts of the Franciscan philosophical tradition is warranted in the present historical circumstances.

In an often unnoticed part of his article White refers to the life and work of St. Bonaventure, a person often referred to as the "second founder" of the Franciscan order. White tells us that he deems Bonaventure to be a "great and perceptive Christian" but nonetheless he charges him at least implicitly with being a reactionary. It was Bonaventure who, after all, "tried to suppress the early accounts of Franciscanism."<sup>4</sup> It is true that Bonaventure did order the destruction of earlier accounts of Francis's life after the writing of his *Major Life of Francis*. I wish to argue that White's ambivalence toward Bonaventure has led him to miss the full significance of St. Bonaventure for the current ecological debate.

Let me highlight some of the central claims of White's seminal article especially as regards his notion of an alternative Christian ethos:

1. The ecology crisis is rooted in certain metaphysical/theological axioms or presuppositions that are endemic to Western Society. The book of *Genesis* is singled out particularly as suspect. Since the crisis has a religious root, only a change in religious presuppositions or axioms can affect it; no technical fix will do.
2. The solution was presented by the great Christian counter-cultural figure, St. Francis, the proposed patron of ecology. Francis overturned both Christian axioms: 1) That there is a gap between human persons and nature and 2) that nature was given to humanity for the purposes of dominance and exploitation. In place of alienation, Francis imbues nature with spirit; White cites in this regard Brother Fire, Brother Ant, preaching to the birds, and the Wolf of Gubbio, *etc.* Instead of

arrogance Francis preaches the virtues of humility and species equality.

3. Finally, White touches on the issue of Augustinian/Bonaventurean symbolism but fails to appreciate its full significance. He hints that there are two ways to look at the world of nature: 1) nature as object and 2) nature as a "symbolic system through which God speaks to man." This second view of nature, Bonaventure's view, White rejects as "essentially artistic rather than scientific." Indeed he holds that a symbolic mode of appropriating nature is anti-scientific: "science, as we know it, White claims, could scarcely flourish in such an ambience."<sup>5</sup>

Allow me to engage in a few preliminary thoughts before I come to the main issue. Ought we to accept the claim that *Genesis* is the culprit? White apparently has no understanding, as we might expect, of contemporary biblical scholarship. Today it is a commonplace among biblical scholars that the *Book of Genesis* contains at least two story narratives, an early "J" account and a later "P" account. Moreover theologians have debated at length issues regarding the concepts of "dominance" and "stewardship" in this text. Based on current Biblical scholarship, it would be naïve to suggest that there was only one meaning implicit in this foundational religious text. Nonetheless I think it would be fair to say that White has put his finger on how western culture has appropriated this text.

Beyond the issue of *Genesis*, the ecological consequences of the Christian scriptures would appear even more dire. Nowhere, as far as I see, are the authors of the Gospels concerned with the natural world. Whatever concern there is, is limited primarily to the world's passing away. The entire story of the incarnation, at least for the authors of the Gospels, and I mean to include Paul, is devoid of any concern for nature. It would be nearly impossible to imagine St. Paul preaching to the birds of Corinth. Yes, there are parables with agrarian themes: the sowing of seed, the mustard seed, *etc.*, but the story of the soil is only incidental. If I am not mistaken, the only encounter that Jesus has with the non-human world is with the fig tree he smites for its failure to bear fruit. For all intents and purposes, the natural world does not exist in the Christian scriptures; the sole interest is God's relation to human beings. This is in great contrast to the Hindu scriptures, wherein Krishna appears in animal form as well as human.

I now turn to the Augustinian/Bonaventurean metaphysical theme that White introduces but fails to develop, i.e., the notion that nature might have symbolic significance. At one point in his article White speaks of the differences between Western and Eastern Christianity. Articulating what he takes

to be an earlier but rejected form of Christian theology in the West, White remarks: "in the early Church, and always in the Greek East, nature was conceived primarily as a symbolic system through which God speaks to men."<sup>6</sup> Associated with the Eastern Church, White concludes that such a symbolic view of nature is essentially anti-scientific, being more akin to romanticism. In White's view, the Greek East "seems to have produced no marked technological innovation after the late seventh century."<sup>7</sup>

Such a symbolic view of nature was given its classical expression by Bonaventure, a student of the Greek East, and articulated in his *Itinerarium*. Now to White's mind such a symbolically charged universe is not only romantic but it is doubly suspect given Bonaventure's credentials as a reactionary. I intend to argue that White's dismissal of a decidedly Franciscan "symbolic universe" is unfortunate and that Bonaventure's attempt to interpret the experience of Francis in terms of the earlier symbolic theology of Augustine might be fruitful for the contemporary environmental debate. For an account of Bonaventure's metaphysics I shall turn to the *Itinerarium*. Trying to discern White's motives for rejecting a metaphysics of symbols, I have concluded that he believes that the specifically metaphysical aspects of Bonaventure's thought are incompatible with contemporary science. I shall address his objection in due course.

The best place to come to an understanding of Bonaventure's symbolic metaphysics is to turn to the first two chapters of his *Itinerarium*. It is in his metaphysics, I believe, that we will find the ground or foundation for a Franciscan environmental ethics. Allow me to cite a few passages (below and later):

By praying in this way, we receive light to discern the steps of the ascent into God. In relation to our position in creation, the universe itself is a ladder by which we can ascend into God. Some created things are *vestiges*, others *images*; some are material, others spiritual; some are temporal, others everlasting; some are outside us, others within us. In order to contemplate the First Principle, who is most spiritual, eternal and above us, we must pass through his vestiges, which are material, temporal, and outside us.<sup>8</sup>

The first thing to be noticed about this passage is that for Bonaventure the material universe is a ladder by which we can ascend to the contemplative knowledge of God. The starting point must be from the vantage of faith; Bonaventure believes that one receives the light to discern the presence of God in the world as a result of prayer. The underlying assumption is that if God created the world from nothing, then it would be reasonable to assume

that there would be evidence of His existence in the creation. In this sense the material world acts as a pointer.

This passage is anchored in the Platonic tradition—all the elements of the physical world are images of eternal archetypes or ideas. The notion of image is, of course, the root metaphor in Platonism. Think of an architectural design or blueprint which acts as the model for an actual building. For the Platonist, of which Bonaventure is one, the whole physical world is an embodiment of idea. Based on the language of images we might conclude that we are dealing with a theory of analogy in which things are seen as having various degrees of similarity to their Creator.

An analogy is a comparison between two unlike things; I might compare, as Bohr did, the nucleus of the atom to the solar system. Both have a central mass with other masses revolving around it; both obey the inverse square law. Yet obviously an atom and a solar system are quite different: size, electrical rather than gravitational forces, etc. A vestige, on the other hand is quite different. The term is rooted in the Latin "vestigii" which means "footprint." We are familiar with the cognates "investigate" or "investigator." A hunter during winter will follow the footprints of a deer across the Allegheny countryside. Now in the tradition of Francis, the following of footprints has a rich and variegated meaning. Often one will hear the expression "following in the footprints of Jesus" as kind of moral axiom. Ewert Cousins often quotes the following passage from the *Life of Francis*:

"In beautiful things he saw Beauty itself and through his vestiges imprinted on creation he followed his Beloved everywhere, making from all things a ladder by which he could climb up and embrace him who is utterly desirable."<sup>9</sup>

Now it is clear that footprints are quite different from comparisons or analogies. No one would say that the footprints of a deer are like a deer in the way that an atom is like a solar system. Moreover, if we have a true footprint, that of which it is a print must have existed at some time. A footprint is not an analogy; it is a sign or pointer. Signs along with symbols have something in common: they both point to something beyond themselves. In this sense a footprint of a deer points to the proximity of a deer. Now this whole mode of talking is subject to a serious difficulty. How do I know that something is actually a footprint? What appears as a footprint to one may appear to another as just a random marking in the snow, perhaps produced by wind or rain. This difficulty is often called the problem of signs. How do I know when something truly is a sign? Would I for example, interpret a large foot print as a sign of "Big Foot?"

We wouldn't recognize footprints as those of a deer unless we had prior experience of deer. Likewise it would seem to follow that we could not recognize material things as vestiges of God unless we had prior knowledge of God before our experience of the footprint. To my lights, seeing the footsteps of God in the world is only possible from the perspective of faith. In that sense, one's faith stance is the solution to the problem of signs. From this it might follow that some people experience vestiges of God in the world whereas others don't, in much the same way as when one person experiences a duck when looking at the classic *gestalten* when another sees only a rabbit. A beautiful literary illustration of this uniquely Bonaventuran mode of seeing is given in Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, chapter two.

Allow me to leave this discussion at this point and highlight the key element in Bonaventure's thought that might have implications for an environmental perspective, at least for a theist. In fine, for Bonaventure the *things in this world are not merely things, they are also signs and symbols that point to the presence of God, to the transcendent. In that sense, things are also sacraments.*

Let us return for a moment to the text of the *Itinerarium*. In chapter II, Bonaventure remarks:

From these first two steps by which we are led to behold God's vestiges, . . . we can gather that all creatures in this visible world lead the spirit of the contemplative and wise person to the eternal God. For creatures are shadows, echoes, and pictures of that first, most powerful, most wise. And most perfect Principle of that eternal Source, Light, Fullness, of that efficient, exemplary and ordering Art. They are the vestiges, images, and displays presented to us for the *contuitio* of God, and the divinely given signs wherein we can see God. These creatures are exemplars, or rather illustrations offered to souls as yet untrained and immersed in the senses, so that through these sensible things that they see they may be transported to the intelligible which they do not see, as through signs to that which is signified.<sup>10</sup>

In the next paragraph he makes the environmental consequences of his symbolic metaphysics even more explicit: "(The world) not only has the character of sign in the ordinary sense of the term, but also has the character of sacrament as well" (*Itinerarium* II: 12).

We are given a whole array of terms meant to capture the relation the natural world has to God. Nature is vestige, image, shadow, echo, picture, display, sign, and finally sacrament. Philotheus Boehner, the founder of the Franciscan Institute, argues that there are various levels of representation found in nature ranging from the lowest to the highest: shadow, vestige or trace, image, and finally similitude. Essentially every creature is capable of repre-

senting God as a vestige insofar as it expresses in a remote but distinct manner God's power, wisdom, and goodness.<sup>11</sup> To call the world a sacrament highlights the sacredness of such signs. If nature is a sacrament in the sense that the Eucharist is a sacrament, to defile or despoil the natural world is akin to sacrilege.

This passage introduces a uniquely Bonaventuran term, namely "contuitio." The Latin expression "*contuendum Deum*" is probably best translated as seeing God obliquely or at a glance. It carries with it the Pauline connotation of seeing God "through a glass darkly." When I drive, for example, my eyes are focused on the road ahead of me but at the same time I may be obliquely aware of activity out of the corner of my eye. Perhaps we can translate "*contuendum Deum*" as seeing God out of the corner of my eye. The point is that God's presence is not something we see directly but that it is mediated by the natural world. An immediate implication of this line of thought is that the existence of God needs no proof, his existence is given, albeit indirectly, in the experience of nature.

The *Itinerarium* is replete with examples of how the presence of God may be contuited in nature. He cites in particular the "origin, greatness, multitude, beauty, plenitude, activity, and order of all things (I, 14)." The notion of plenitude is significant. Why is the world so filled with diversity? Have you ever wondered why, for example, there are so many species of fish or insects? The philosopher Louis Mackey once asked a related question, "Why are there so many squirrels?" There is a fascinating passage in Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, in which Darwin talks about going into his garden and removing a few square inches of grass with a pocket knife. To his wonder he discovered over a hundred species of grass within this small sample, not from a tropical rain forest, mind you, but in England. He concluded that nature must have a tendency to proliferate, to fill as many ecological niches as possible.

Bonaventure was certainly aware of this tendency. But unlike Darwin who could only view such a tendency as a brute fact without any underlying metaphysical explanation, Bonaventure was able to postulate a metaphysical cause. Simply, if God is infinite and the world of nature is attempting to mirror that infinity, the only way a finite universe could mirror the infinite is by utilizing some principle of plenitude. Plenitude should be expected! Based on this principle we might expect, at least potentially, the existence of a near-infinite number of universes.

At this point we might ask what for Bonaventure is the exact relation between God and Nature? The connection is so close that one might be tempted to say that Bonaventure is approximating pantheism or the view that God and nature are the same. The classic pantheist Spinoza went so far to use the expression "*Deus sive Natura*" or "God or Nature" to indicate that both notions were logically equivalent; God and nature are the same thing.

Bonaventure makes his position on the relation between God and Nature clear in chapter VI of the *Itinerarium* where he speaks of the procession of the Trinity. Nature, as it turns out, is nothing but the overflow from the process of divine self-expression. Bonaventure writes this highly suggestive line: "For the diffusion that occurred in time in the creation of the world is no more than a pivot or point in comparison with the immense sweep of the eternal goodness" (VI: 2). As I understand, Bonaventure holds that the life of the Trinity is a dynamic process of self-expression that goes on for all eternity, infinite in its sweep. The metaphor we are given is that of diffusion, as in the diffusion of light.

The Trinitarian life for Bonaventure is as self-diffusive as the sun; just as it is the nature of the sun to radiate light so it is the nature of the divine nature to express itself and by so doing, radiate being. Nature is nothing other than the divine self-expression in time and space. In fact there are two diffusions or self-expressions of the divine, one from all eternity, this is the Trinity itself, and the expression in time and space or Nature. The first expression is necessary; the second is based on the Divine will. This distinction is needed to guarantee the contingency of the creation. This passage indicates that Bonaventure is no pantheist, God and nature are not the same. There are two separate diffusions, one eternal and necessary, the Trinity, and the other, nature, temporal and contingent. Such a view is often called panentheism, or the view that all that exists is God or the Divine Trinitarian life but that the universe is only a minuscule and finite subset of that life. Bonaventure calls the world a mere "pivot or point" in comparison to the immensity of the infinite sweep of Divine goodness. That said, it is still true for Bonaventure that Nature is in some sense a manifestation or self-expression of the Blessed Trinity. For that reason Nature has the status of sacrament and as such is sacred. The implications for an environmental ethics are again, I believe, apparent.

The ecological problem is essentially one of respect or lack thereof. White is correct in seeing that lack of respect for the environment is at root a theological issue, an issue of faith, and not a technological one. He is also correct to draw attention to the Franciscan virtues of humility and equality. Nonetheless White fails to see how an ethics of virtue can be greatly enriched by a Bonaventurian symbolic metaphysics. St. Bonaventure has developed a uniquely Franciscan metaphysics rooted in the experience of Francis. To ignore it would be to weaken any efforts to construct a robust environmental ethics.

At this point I would like to address Professor White's concerns that Bonaventure's symbolic mode of appropriating nature is anti-scientific, that "science, as we know it, could scarcely flourish in such an ambience." Clearly White is correct in seeing that such a view of nature is more theological, or perhaps even romantic, than scientific. That in itself should pose no problem.

Does not White himself argue that the solution to the current ecological crisis is to be found in the realm of theology rather than in that of science or technology?

The more telling concern is whether science itself could possibly flourish in a symbolic universe. Science as we know, at least of late, has flourished in an environment of naturalism, materialism, and mechanism. Some of these assumptions have recently come under increasing attack not only from quantum theory but also from recent advances in the philosophy of mind, especially those dealing with questions of consciousness. That said, I see no reason why there could not be two images of the world, one scientific and one theological.

There is no necessity for reductionism. Modern scientific studies in consciousness,<sup>12</sup> for example, employ both causal and phenomenological models without reducing one to the other. In speaking of the uniquely qualitative aspects of human consciousness, questions of how things feel or taste, we are using an explanatory mode quite different from the causal and mechanistic mode employed by neuroscience. The two modes of explanation, phenomenological and causal, may never be reconciled. In fine, first and third person accounts of consciousness are clearly at odds. Why expect theological and scientific modes of explanation to be reducible one to the other?

A metaphor might be in order. The human voice is capable of expressing a great variety of meanings some of which are expressed in song. No one would claim that music is reducible to the physics of sound. Likewise the appreciation of music doesn't interfere with advances in the science of sound. A brain surgeon is not hampered in treating the body of a patient, a purely mechanical task, if he happens to believe that his patient is a person. We operate quite easily with two separate and perhaps irreducible ontologies: an ontology populated by persons, reasons, and values as well as an ontology made up exclusively of mass points, forces, and causes. Why should it be especially problematic to hold both that the natural world is an image of God and at the same time composed of natures and structures open to scientific scrutiny? I see no reason to believe that science is necessarily incompatible with Bonaventurian theology.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that Professor White's seminal article is every bit as current today as it was almost four decades ago. He is quite correct to hold that the core of the contemporary ecological crisis is not so much a scientific problem but a theological one. He is also correct in holding that the adoption of certain Franciscan virtues like species humility is crucial. That said I believe his account of the Franciscan theological tradition fails to see the full potential of a rich symbolic metaphysics. The root of the ecological problem can be traced to the assumption that nature is primarily a collection of things rather than the symbolic self-expression of the dynamic Trinitarian

life, an expression of the sacred, a sacrament to be precise. For this reason I propose St. Bonaventure as the metaphysician of the environmental movement.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (NY: Harper and Row, 1988), 17.

<sup>2</sup>Lynn Townsend White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* (May, 1967). Reprinted in *Machina Ex Deo: Essays in the Dynamism of Western Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968). All page numbers cited below are taken from this volume.

<sup>3</sup>White, 91.

<sup>4</sup>White, 91.

<sup>5</sup>White, 88.

<sup>6</sup>White, 88.

<sup>7</sup>White, 87.

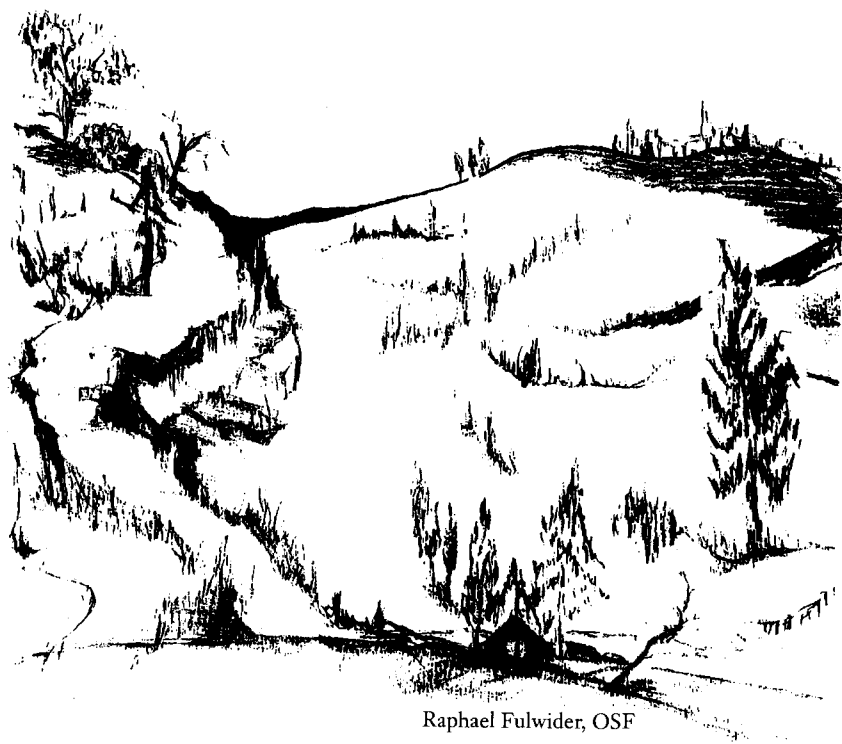
<sup>8</sup>*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, in *Bonaventure*, Ewert Cousins, trans. Classics of Western Spirituality Series (NY: Paulist Press, 1978). I: 2.

<sup>9</sup>The Life of St. Francis, IX: 1, in *Bonaventure*, op. cit., 75-76.

<sup>10</sup>*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, II: 11, in *Bonaventure*, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>Philotheus Boehner, OFM, *St. Bonaventure's Itinerarium Mentis In Deum* (NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1956), 110.

<sup>12</sup>See Ned Block, Owen Flanagan, and Güven Güzeldere, eds., *The Nature of Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).



Raphael Fulwider, OSF

## *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* A Reflection on St. Bonaventure's Masterpiece

Roberta Cusack, OSF

"You must always approach it contemplatively." So directed my professors: Eric, Juvenal, and Zachary. It truly is his masterpiece! But how to purify my curious senses and discipline my wild mind that I too might see God in all creation, in myself, and in God's transcendence . . .

Francis preached peace and forever longed for peace.

Curiosity and this same desire  
took Bonaventure to northern Tuscany's Mount La Verna  
to search out his roots at a most difficult point in his life.  
There, the Seraphic Doctor realized a profound insight  
from the depths of his own spirit  
regarding St. Francis's mountain-top experience.

I, too, seek this true and lasting peace and justice  
which only God can give  
and which we humans yearn for more intensely at times of crisis.

I, too, desire to take this experience to heart—  
to truly be God's delight.  
The Poverello's deep love for Christ so captivated his Italian heart  
that the "groans of prayer" brought him  
to the necessary disposition to grasp all as grafted in God.

Bonaventure called me to respond to each chapter.

*1. As I observe the footprints of God  
in my limited vision of the universe  
I, too, am moved to consider  
the power, the wisdom, and the peaceful goodness of my God.*

*I'm awakened and enlightened to praise and discover much more  
about the journey of our cosmos  
of which I am but a tiny yet significant member.*

*I so welcome the fulfilled promises of God  
as I follow my star leading me to the Great Star.  
How tremendous are your wonders, O God!*

*2. In all of creation, I'm invited to perceive, enjoy and judge  
all material, temporal and sensible things as bearing God's touch.  
These are beyond my comprehension.*

*Yet I'm disposed to take them in  
and enable these divine realities to shine forth  
as from the mirror of my own heart.*

*And in the darkness of the night  
I bring our weary, waiting world in prayer.  
All creation marvels at You, O God!*

*3. Ah! God's Image is imprinted upon my own natural powers,  
possessing awesome spiritual faculties  
to know, to love and to remember,  
forever leading me to eternity,  
to truth, union, beauty and the highest good!  
Yes, You greatly expand my heart from your Eternal Hills!*

*4. Oh Great Wonder by which I'm led to divine things,  
As God's Image I'm transformed with infused virtues,  
a grand variety of spiritual senses and, dare I say,  
the possibility of mystical ecstasies  
all at God's initiation and invitation.  
Who might comprehend these wonders!*

*5. Enter God's essential attributes!  
What's this I hear—"I Am Who Am" "He Who Is"  
as I approach "the Great Mercy Seat," Jesus,  
bathed in the brilliance and wonder of it all.  
God truly is! Oh, the indescribable Being of God!  
In this experience I sense  
"The All Good! The Only Good, the Highest Good!"*

*6. Oh, Most Holy Trinity!  
Dwelling in relationships  
of towardness and supreme communicability—  
while I'm invited to contemplate the grand multitude  
of Your diffusing emanations!  
What a performance—my Star!  
Rest my soul, and simply take it all in!  
My God and My Everything!*

*7. Be still and listen, my overactive mind and heart,  
as I channel my bounding energies  
toward "Ecstatic unctions and burning affections"  
rushing to "the Mercy Seat," Jesus, into the Heart of my God.  
It is enough! Herein is true Peace  
with "the highest Good, Lord God, living and true!"  
in absolute mystery.*

*"Now let human nature rejoice! Christ has flowered in our flesh!"  
(Jacopone da Todi)*



## Francis on Taxes

David Flood, OFM

"The gravest questions of fiscal responsibility for the nation are being ignored in the freakish sideshow now under way in Congress over yet another tax cut in these fiscally difficult times." *The NY Times*, June 15, 2003.

**Francis and his brothers** foreswore the use of money. Given their suspicion of the unspoken agreements sustaining a currency, they kept money at a distance. Still, in central Italy, they breathed the common air of social life. They both worked at the service level and they went about wishing people peace. (They learned enough thereby as to specify, soon, "true peace," for they had their difficulties with what was passing as peace.) Inevitably, then, in all of these comings and goings, they saw the way money circulated. And where there was money, there were taxes.

The commune of Assisi taxed its population. It also collected various duties. Towards the end of the charter of 1210, the authors levied a tax of two solidi a year on every household of the city and its contado. The money was to pay back those who had fought for Assisi in the recent battles with Perugia. It was to indemnify as well those citizens who had suffered losses during the wars. The commune collected a road tax. The charter stipulates that, for the next three years, these monies as well would go to the same knights and citizens. There was more taxing going on in and around Assisi, for the communes developed a series of indirect taxes on all sorts of things: on wine, on cloth, and so on. The Latin word *gabellae* covered these various duties.

In the passage from feudal rule to communal institutions, a passage taking place in Assisi as the Franciscan movement got on its feet, the nature of taxation changed. Feudal lords had taken in monies and goods in a variety of ways. They took a portion of the natural wealth because they had the power to do so. Those who paid had no claim to anything specific in return. Feudal lords also demanded that the men under their rule do military service. Out of the customs of military service the cities of central and northern Italy developed their taxation and its justification. The cities had to see to the defense of their com-

munal interests. Of course everyone was expected to help. With time, however, instead of everyone taking up arms, the commune taxed the population to pay those who fought for the commune. It also indemnified the citizens who suffered losses in times of war. The charter of 1210, mentioned above, exemplifies this development in communal organization. In Assisi, taxation played a role in the city's pursuit of wealth and glory.

Although, as laborers, Francis and his brothers tied into Assisi's system of indirect taxes, they paid no household tax. Not only did they not accept and handle the wherewithal of paying taxes, they were recognized as a religious organization, a social identity confirmed by no one less than Pope Innocent III. As religious they were exempt from taxes, an exemption that slipped by unnoticed, for at work and in service, they paid as much back into the lives of people as they had, after taking care of their minimal needs.

The brothers did not respond to the enthusiastic summons of the 1210 charter to contribute to Assisi's growth and glory. They definitely did not have the glory and wealth of Assisi at heart: they had left Assisi. They spelled that out in Chapter One of the Early Rule. By spelling it out with passages from the gospels, they made clear on what authority and to what purpose they left Assisi.

Though insensitive to Assisi's ambitions, the brothers stayed close to Assisi's people. In fact, their principled insensitivity to Assisi's ambitions brought them closer to people. First of all, they worked at the common jobs available in and around Assisi. Seeing as Assisi's economy was developing, they could find work. (Beyond the commune's economic need, good workers found work. In the twelfth century, the Cistercians settled where there was just land, and often swampland, and soon there was a flourishing economy.) The brothers also helped out in leper colonies and almshouses. More importantly, the brothers took the time to think about labor and elaborate their own definition of work. They came up with a notion that defined their daily labor as service to everyone. And, seeing as things social hang together, their reflection on work led them to a theoretical synthesis in which labor had a central place. With their work in almshouses and leprosia, they reorganized and redefined these institutions. They made them work in the interest of the people sheltered there. Their social reflection, with service central to it, involved them in others' lives. Out of their proximity to the working population of Assisi there arose a piece of writing in which Francis shared with others what he and his brothers, as laborers, had learned about the dynamics of the Spirit of the Lord. Basically, the text was the theory of the good words they said to others when they met them in daily life.

It is not easy to write about the text in which Francis shared with people the lessons learned by him and his brothers. It is not easy in part because much has been written about it already. It even has a title that prejudices its interpre-



tation. Earlier, perhaps originally, it had another designation, one that corresponded to its contents and purpose. Customarily it is called and read as Francis's "Letter to the Faithful," a title that cannot be documented before the fourteenth century. With a general title like that, the text speaks to people from a distance, it indicates a spiritual message, and it comes from Francis and no other. Francis does speak the text, but as the voice of the Franciscan movement. It has a profoundly spiritual message, but it draws on the experience of the brotherhood. Consequently it comprises a social dimension, including the economic and political implications of a social message. And it arises out of a common journey; it arises out of the context which speaker and addressee share. It is, as it was called in the late 1240s, a *commonitorium*, "a message of recall and encouragement." It recalls the words of the Lord and it encourages a whole-hearted response to his summons: a response in the style of Francis and his brothers and their action for a just and human world. So I call it the Message. It is what the Franciscans have to say to others: it is THE MESSAGE.

We can follow the origins and development of the Franciscan movement in the Early Rule. I have tried to lay that out with sufficient detail in *Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Movement* (Manila, 1989). The result of such a reading of the Early Rule gives us the context for reading other "early Franciscan writings." Through the experiences and reflection evidenced in the Early Rule, the brothers succeeded in elaborating a perspective on their common goal and the way to get there. Their ideas and commitments deserved to be summed up for a wider audience, and that is what happened in the Message. In the text Francis lays out what he and his brothers had learned. Whereas he and his brothers develop their understandings in the early Rule, step by step under the instruction of the Spirit of the Lord, in the Message they lay it all out for others. In the text, for a general audience and first of all for the audience of their daily labors, Francis sums up the Franciscan way.

Francis spoke the words of the Message in the context that resulted from their daily labor. In other words, he spoke in particular to a working population organized in guilds. The expression *iugum servitutis* (verse 40 of the Message), the burden of service, plays a central role in the whole text. Francis brought the reflection down to the work one shoulders each day. By such service, each brother and each sister contribute to the movement's purpose. They are "giving all good things back to God" (Early Rule XVII). That is, they are sharing the good things God gives us with everyone. This is not pious sentiment (or not only piety and feeling); it is the age's unchallenged theory of social justice. Seeing as Francis was summing up for his public what he and his brothers had learned, he ended up with a political theology. In a Christian context, as J.-B. Metz has explained so well, a political theology derives its proposals from the gospels and has social transformation in mind.

Early in the Message, at verses 28-31, Francis passed through two components of worker solidarity particular to the guilds. In the guilds some had the authority to rule on questions and cases brought before them. Francis told them to use that authority with God's mercy in mind (verses 28-29). The guilds were also known for the charity they practiced, both towards guild members who came on hard times and through the establishment of almshouses. They also engaged in public service. Some made it a point, for example, to see to public works: bridge repair, city walls, harbor moles. Francis encouraged them to see to the common good in the second part of this passage (verses 30-31). (This paragraph occurs at this point in the Message, given the overall progression of the text. It would take too much space to spell all that out in detail.)

*Those who have been given the power to judge others are to show mercy in their judgments, as they wish mercy from God. Judgment without mercy, as James says (2: 13), will fall on those who have shown no mercy. As a practice of charity and serviceability, let us give alms. Alms cleanse souls from the dirt and foulness of sin. People lose everything that they leave behind in time. But they take along with them the gains of charity and the alms done here below. For such transactions God will pay them back worthily.*

Francis is not formulating any new teaching in verses 30-31. What he says draws on the Christian culture of his age. People regularly heard that charity here below assures rewards in heaven above. In his *Verbum abbreviatum*, written in Paris towards 1200, the influential pastoral theologian Peter the Chanter taught and urged such investment in heaven. The great difference between the customary teaching and Francis's proposals lies not in formulation but in actualization. Francis and his friends took this teaching into their action. The teaching mutated from moral principle into a social force. They turned acknowledged teaching into a dialectical challenge to the social order of the day. Distributive justice was their goal: they had committed themselves to the return of all good things to God.

With this passage (verses 30-31) Francis and his brothers propose that guild members, as well as whomever their words reach, understand their practice of alms in the Franciscan perspective. They invite these good people to swell the social force of the movement. The goods they bring in will sustain them; the goods will also enable them to take part in making the world work for everyone: "giving God back all good things." They will bring their skills as well as their means to serve the common interest. What they do, Francis tells them, will encourage others to follow suit (verse 53). A movement good and true rallies good people to the cause.

The logic of the paragraph, as well as the logic of the whole Message, is the logic that looks on taxes as the means to construct a functional and just



society. Taxes are the public buying public goods. We want good roads? We buy them. We want good schools? We buy them. We want research on heart disease? We pay for it. And how do we invest in this way? We pay taxes and make sure that those whom we elect use public funds to buy these goods. The purchase of such goods has the desirable effect of stimulating the economy. We want defense, as the Assisians did? We buy it, as they did. We want a good budget for the public goods we need? We plug the loopholes that allow big businesses off-shore tax dodges. We want to eradicate poverty? We pay the price for doing so. We buy these goods with tax money.

When the people do as Francis proposes and begin organizing their action, they soon arrive at a system of taxation. That happens when organizational reason kicks in and a society puts order into the collection and disbursement of public monies. Today taxes make it easy for people to carry out what Francis proposed.

Taxes are not a necessary evil. Taxes do not relieve people of what they have earned to use it for some purpose foreign to their need. We pay for the country we live in. If we choose to live in a country, we pay for its construction and maintenance. We pay for the social house we inhabit. Whereas the king took taxes by force and the ruling classes managed the state in their interests, as in Assisi, we empower people to act in our common interest and pay them wages. We elect them. We have to watch out for the public goods we are sold, of course, and we are doing a very poor job of it. As middlemen, our elected officials too easily slip into collusion with shady dealers.

Many in the United States argue that public spending is a "rip off" (Heilbroner-Thurrow, *The Economic Problem*, 1984, page 570). They want to keep the money they have earned, not give it to the government. I must demur: it really is not their money; the money certifies them to draw from the available goods, while they contribute their share to the upkeep of the system on which they draw. If the socioeconomic system does not prosper, neither does a considerable majority of the population. The fact that people do not see and understand and accept that results from a failure in civic education. To their mind, our economy, which makes them rich, is supposed to function in their interest, while they ignore the social house they inhabit, including the economy that makes them rich.

Francis and his brothers ran up against similar sentiment in their contemporaries. The people and families of wealth in Assisi told one another explicitly that they had to make Assisi function in their interest. In the charter of 1203, they told one another, in sum: Let's be clear about it, we're making the commune function in the interests and for the increase of our properties.

The brothers did not have much difficulty refuting their pretensions. In one section of the Message (verses 63ff.) Francis excoriates the ambitious bankers and the monied merchants of Assisi, and of central Italy as well. He blisters

them for not living up to their promises (verse 64). After all, such bankers and merchants lived in a Christian world and professed a Christian faith. If they demurred, they were dependent for their justification on the culture that supplied the brothers their arguments.

Theologians and canonists supported the brothers in their contention that the good things of life belonged to everyone. Catholic theologians continue to speak that way today. The Catholic tradition stresses that private property is limited, grounded in the destiny of goods to serve the needs of all. As now, so in Francis's day: Christians had the obligation to succor their needy brothers and sisters. There was no novelty to the brothers' propositions. Once more, the novelty lay in giving social reality and social influence to all these good Christian ideas. That was new. The brothers turned Christian truth into a social force. Previously good charitable Christians had acted alone, on the basis of individual virtue. Even the guilds understood their work on roads and bridges as virtue. That had the untoward effect of making the world an easier place for the greedy to enjoy their wealth. The Franciscans bound these good people into the movement. In sum, they criticized Assisi's wealthy for **not** getting into the action that soon would lead to a just, and if Franciscan certainly generous, system of taxation.

About taxes there are two questions and one problem. The two questions are why have taxes and who pays them. The problem stems from the incompatibility between rationality and appropriation. When we invite sweet reason to determine who pays how much in taxes the passion to appropriate insists on mixing in and troubles the calculation.

I have already answered the two questions, but it will not hurt to repeat. As for the first question, we need taxes because we have common needs. We need the services of officials who will adjudicate differences between people. We need a government that will see to social order. We need the substructure of an economy that will feed and house us all. Generally if not universally, we want to enjoy the various elements of a good society. As for the second question, the people who benefit from living in the society pay them. Who else, God's angels? Of course not, although if a government found a way to tax angels, it would not hesitate, and perhaps everybody would be happy. Even the angels would be happy because they are not hung up on possessions the way people are. We leave angels aside. Everyone knows we pay the taxes that pay for our common needs as a society. If people dine together, at a restaurant, and the waiter brings the check, someone will pick it up (the angel); or, if the occasion is not congenial, and that is the case with a social system, each will pay for her plate. That is but fair. So what is fair with taxes?

We decide what is fair by rational discourse. We decide how much we want to buy (in the way of public services) by rational discourse. The problem with taxes arises because the passion for acquisition and accumulation obfus-

cates rational discourse. As a class, and here I generalize in the interest of a useful discussion on taxation, rich people seem incapable of rational thought about taxes, both theory and practice. People with wealth in society have a loud and influential voice and they do not want to pay taxes. Democracy lives by rational discourse, and rich people do not like democracy. They prefer the power of wealth. They are plutocrats and not democrats. They expect and frequently buy consideration as wealthy people. That is why, with their wealth, they have subverted democracy in the United States. In the Message, Francis branded such people as blind (verse 66).

However simple and clear the rationale of taxation, the system of taxation for such a vast and rich society as we have in the United States is excessively complicated. Many people use the complexity of the system to favor their interests. A flat tax (say nineteen percent on all income) is not fair; nor does it do away with complication, for there still remains the task of determining how flat it will be. It is a cherished idea of some who would benefit considerably from a flat tax and not a reasonable, fair idea. And tax reform, regularly in the news, is not about reform guided by the basic rationality of taxation. It's about the effort to open or to block loopholes. Given the complications both of financial transactions and of tax law, tax accountants and tax lawyers can find ways to reduce the amount paid, for those who can afford their services. We cannot even determine incidence on income: that would suppose we know the exact flow of demand and supply in businesses. Let us conclude this point by observing that only the president's men and university professors pretend they understand the economy, and the latter know they're bluffing.

So what does a Franciscan do? Francis and his brothers addressed the basic question of paying for public services and for social needs by preaching. The brothers spoke up when the chance arose. Preaching in their day covered all areas of human behavior, social as well as private. Brothers did not hesitate, as Francis did not hesitate in the Message, to urge a just and generous distribution of God's good gifts to us all. "Share your wealth," the brothers told others, "you'll see that it pays off" (Early Rule, Chapter XXI, verse 4). They were drawing on their experience.

Whereas the early Franciscans preached justice, we pursue justice by democratic process. We are surrounded in the United States by great abundance. Seeing as it came out of our socioeconomic system, in justice it has to sustain all within society, while repairing society's weaknesses and banishing society's evils. When a few of us lift a heavy object, the stronger ones supplement the weaker ones. So with taxes: we depend on one's capacity to contribute. We have a lot to pay for and we get the funds through taxation. In the interests of the smaller people and for the sake of those in need, of good housing as well as of good education, a true sister and a true brother readily engage in the demo-

cratic process by speaking up about reasonable and just taxation. If they do not know how to do so, they do not know how to represent their cause. They have to learn. They have to speak up. We are, after all, Franciscans. The early Franciscans were savvy about economic realities. They were also relentless in their pursuit of economic justice.

In public intercessory prayer, we often mention the poor, the sick, the needy. Perhaps we need a more realistic intention at such prayer: "For a clear and vocal commitment of Franciscans to just taxation, let us pray to the Lord."

(Michael Blastic and Stephen Horan contributed critical feedback on an early draft of this essay. My thanks to them both.)

## Guido

Do we Franciscans ever pray for Guido  
And thank God for that bishop  
Known to be worldly and intemperate  
Pushy and proud?

Do we thank God for that episcopal embrace  
Which as easily could have been a shove  
Driving Francis away?

It was from venal Guido  
Before Innocent, before Hugolino  
That Francis first felt the embrace  
Of holy Mother Church  
And learned that God's promises  
Are not annulled  
By human weakness.

Robert Barbato, OFM, CAP.

## Francis of Assisi: A Saint for Our Times

Thaddée Matura, OFM

*To be sure, the saint who preached to the birds, the pacifier of the bad wolf, the author (apocryphal) of the prayer, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace" (which, it seems, was distributed to the signers of the charter of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1947) is well known and enjoys wide appeal.*

But perhaps one must first of all "break the statue," demythologize the poetic image, too beautiful to be true. Perhaps one needs to challenge certain historical clichés, still in circulation, on the spiritual and cultural turning point in history which Francis represented *id. est.*, a victim of the institution which he and his achievement had become in the hands of the Church. The truth is less dramatic and more complex; it emerges more clearly in our days thanks to the patient examination of the social, cultural, and religious context of the era in which he lived, but above all thanks to Francis's own writings, whose importance can surprise us given that he was a man who hardly knew how to read or to write.

What emerges is an image with many more nuances and sharper contrasts, but no doubt closer to us and more meaningful for the men and women of today, believers or unbelievers.

Rather than providing chronological reference points for Francis's life, I felt it would be more interesting to sketch, in broad strokes, some aspects of his personality as a man and as a Christian believer, aspects which are especially meaningful for us today.

A certain understanding of holiness (which is not only a medieval one) has made of Francis (and of all saints) an unreal figure, one too supernaturalized to be real. For Francis's personality is one of sharp contrasts, richly endowed, always in search of balance, and in which dark and light sides coexist.

Gifted with great finesse and charm, sensitive to beauty, he lived in a state of impoverishment and sometimes wretchedness that is not always attractive. If he manifested deep tenderness towards men and women, even the entire creation, he knew, on occasion, how to be merciless and even inquisitorial. He was devoured all his life by ambition. He wanted to be someone, to be number

one, at the same time that he sought to lower and abase himself. His gaze on created reality was that of a child or a poet and yet his vision of the human condition, as it appears in his writings, was without illusion, even pessimistic. A merciless ascetic towards himself, he nonetheless asked for his favorite sweets on his deathbed. Joys and tears came easily for him; like everyone else he was vulnerable. Very aware of his mission and of its present and future importance, he knew above all else that he was a poor man and a sinner, that, no matter what, he had not yet done anything.

Much is said of Francis's evangelical spirit, its literal application, and his "mimetic" relationship with Jesus and the Gospels. But one has not understood anything about his adventure as long as one has not grasped how he was a man totally taken up by the desire for God. He lived in a radical way the faith experience, the discovery of God, the mystery of his darkness and light. The cultural and spiritual context of his search was, to be sure, different from ours, but he intuitively understood its primacy, its urgency and its difficulty. The lines in which he speaks of his experience and emphasizes its central place in the Christian life are among the strongest in the spiritual tradition. It is because he was so taken up by his desire for God, even as if drunk with it, that his fidelity to the gospel consisted of an encounter with Jesus, his spirit, more than a rigid and sterile literalism. Outside of this mooring in the reality of God, which is faith, Francis is unexplainable.

Much more than the post-conciliar church of the twentieth century, the Church that Francis knew was traversed by a protest current in the name of the gospel. Faced with the Church's power, wealth, enmeshment in temporal affairs and spiritual lukewarmness, groups of men and women rose up who not only reproached it for its compromises, but went so far as denying, because of its betrayals, its pretense of being the church of Jesus and his disciples. In any case, everyone soundly criticized the clergy deemed as holding the most responsibility for this situation.

No doubt, because of his deep experience of God and his knowledge of Jesus, and notwithstanding his ability to be very lucid on the weaknesses and the faults of the church as institution, Francis did not want to separate himself from it, nor even raise a critical voice. On several occasions, he reaffirmed his faith and his submission to the Church and the clergy, not for opportunistic reasons, but because he believed that this is the only institution in which space is given for the gospel to be lived. His protest consisted in the radical gospel project which he and his first brothers lived within the institution, but not against it.

Francis suffered to see his ideal dilute itself and lose its original cutting-edge because it was necessary to be adapted to a more and more numerous and mediocre group. The Church, with its moderating and disillusioning influ-

ence, certainly pushed for these adaptations and this was for him a source of suffering. And yet Francis never rejected the movement which was born of him nor the institutional church as heavy as it was at times.

Rooted in the experience of God, attached with every fiber of his being to Jesus' gospel, Francis created a freedom zone for himself. He moved with ease in the midst of men and women and all of created reality. He went where the wind of the Spirit moved him. With his initial community, he succeeded in creating and being involved in a rare adventure; one without insertion in any social class, without a permanent dwelling place, living day by day, poor, mobile. He realized what so many men and women dream of: harmonious relationships in the world and living a life stripped of all attachments, content with only what is necessary. He was, before it was described as such, the one who says no to the consumer society and the alienations that spring from it.

This freedom from socio-economic conditionings had nothing romantic about it; many times he had to stretch beyond himself to remain faithful to it. Above all he knew how to avoid rigidity and ideological stubbornness. He was free enough to refuse or to receive, to have nothing as well as to rejoice over what he had.

In a century of political (papacy and empire) and social (feudal lords-rising bourgeoisie) struggles, of internecine divisions, Francis appeared as a man of peace. He and his brothers situated themselves at the margins of the society of his time and from that situation managed to reconcile antagonistic classes. He was a poor man who does not curse the rich, who did not try to occupy their place. Without making any demands for himself, he could address to the poor as well as the rich a word that is free, costly perhaps, but arising out of a deep love for everyone.

As a man of his time, Francis was no doubt aware of the heaviness of structures and the necessity of transforming them. What he aimed for, nonetheless, remains essential and valid for all times: a change of heart. For it is from the heart that structures of oppression or liberation spring and are created. This was an approach which seems, especially today, disincarnated and inefficient, but could it not be the key that opens the future? Could it not be that one must change the hearts of men and women to change society? To change men and women means to unblock their hearts, closed by egotism, so they can listen attentively and be receptive to others. The peacemaker is the one who strives to realize this and sometimes succeeds in doing so.

The evolution of the first Franciscan community while Francis was still alive (between 1210 and 1226) is a concrete illustration of the painful tensions between the pure ideal and its insertion in human reality. Francis was a man of absolutes who did not hedge on his essential choices. Between the first draft of his rule (1220) and his testament (1226), his plan hardly varied. Rather it even affirmed itself more forcefully.

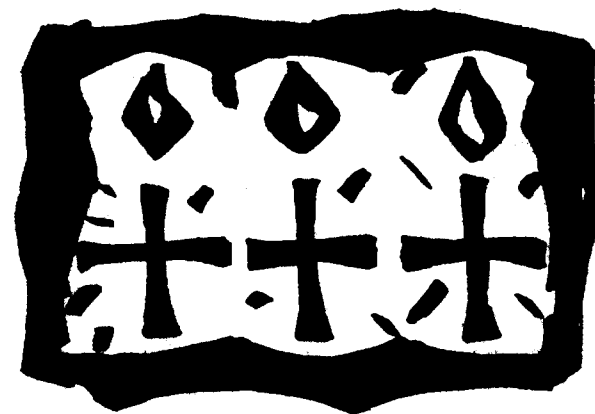
And yet the thousands of men who came to join him in the space of fifteen years (between three and five thousand) could not lead the same life as Francis had when there were only twelve of them. Francis saw with his own eyes what his intuition, the original charism, could become when it extends itself in wider and wider zones. He suffered from it beyond what one can say about it. The early biographies, moreover, echo these sufferings. But in spite of this degradation, in spite of the temptation to give up, the founder continued to take responsibility for the child born from him, even if the latter began to have a life of its own.

Between ideological purity, withdrawal and easy compromise, Francis chose, and above all, lived, the middle way. He accepted the inevitable tension between the ideal charism and the concrete institution, between dream and reality without denying one or losing himself in the other.

The community, which succeeded him—if one could really be called a successor to Francis—down through the centuries, has always lived this permanent drama: the persistent call for freedom and gospel purity and the heaviness of men and women and institutions.

And if the memory of Francis remains alive in men and women of today it is because, in spite of everything, and in the midst of generalized mediocrity, there are always men and women who have been awakened by the voice which arises from this man of the thirteenth century and they attempt to relive his gospel adventure.

Translated by Paul Lachance, OFM  
with the help of Diana Faust, SFO



## BOOK REVIEWS

***Crescentia Hoess: A Saint for Our Time.*** Karl Poernbacher. Trans. Clara Brill and Ursula-Blank Chiu. Ed. Alice Kaiser and Grace McDonald. La Crosse, WI: Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, 2003. 41 pp.

Maria Angelorum chapel built in LaCrosse, Wisconsin in 1902 has, among several windows depicting Franciscan women, a stained glass image of Crescentia Hoess. Fifteen years ago, when I became inquisitive about our Franciscan foremothers, this window intrigued me. Who was Crescentia, and what virtues were Third Order women to emulate from her shining example? On November 25, 2001, she was included among the 475 saints canonized by Pope John Paul II. The author of *Crescentia Hoess: A Saint for Our Time*, Dr. Karl Poernbacher, served as vice-postulator for the canonical process and provides information for why Crescentia is the "most revered and most approachable saint of the Diocese of Augsburg."

Crescentia Hoess (1682-1744) was born, lived and died at Kaufburen in the Augsburg Diocese of Germany. Her parents were unable to offer a dowry so she could enter the convent but the Protestant mayor of the village, that was two-thirds Protestant, arranged with the Sisters to receive her. Why? Her father was a trustworthy and respected weaver in Kaufburen, but more likely it was because Crescentia had a beautiful voice and the mayor and his wife had seats in the oratory to listen to concerts in which she sang. Her first years in the convent were difficult because she was treated as a Cinderella, entering without a dowry. She concealed her pain and was joyful, and within seven years was assigned to be the convent portress and nurse. She had learned healing skills from her mother, and she dispensed words of spiritual advice along with the salves and different kinds of teas as physical remedies. She treated all visitors to the convent with "endearing friendliness, hospitality and kindness." Over the years she received hundreds of letters from men and women of every level of society seeking advice for their spiritual, physical and material concerns. After seven years as portress she became the Director of Novices, a position she held for twenty-five years, before serving as Superior of the convent during the last three years of her life.

At her canonization Crescentia was praised as an ecumenist and an exemplary adorer of the Holy Spirit. She was known for her strong devotion to the Holy Spirit and in visions encountered the Spirit as a person "in the form of an extremely beautiful youth dressed in a snow-white robe and gown, bare-headed, with curly hair, and seven fiery tongues encircling the head." Her

superior had an artist create a painting according to Crescentia's description. Copper etchings of this painting were made and distributed in the hope "that the human form would help people find an easier approach to the Holy Spirit." A papal ban against depicting the Holy Spirit in human form led to the burning of the original 1728 painting.

Poernbacher says that Crescentia is a "saint for our time" but leaves it to the reader to make the association of Crescentia's life with ours. Was it her devotion to the Holy Spirit that enabled her to offer advice to Protestants, Church and civic leaders? Was it her prayer life or the dispensed homeopathic remedies that brought about healings? Poernbacher concludes this synopsis of Crescentia's life by stating that she is "a great intercessor" and a "convincing model for our time." A more complete biographical study is needed to expand our understanding of Crescentia's hallowed place among the line-up of great Franciscan women.

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***Journey and Place: An Atlas of St. Francis.*** Keith Douglass Warner and John E. Isom. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 2003. 58 pp.

If the affordable (\$14.95) price tag is not enough to tempt you to take a closer look at this unique offering from Franciscan Press, surely the maps and classic photos will hook even the most casual glance. For anyone traveling to Europe in pilgrimage to the Franciscan holy places, or for those who yearn to go but find travel out of their reach at this time, this little book can make Francis's world accessible to the 21<sup>st</sup> century gaze as few others can.

Selection and careful cropping of photographs from the 1956 book *Saint Francis of Assisi: A Pictorial Biography* by Leonard von Matt and Walter Hauser make it possible for an armchair pilgrim to view Assisi's walled streets and surrounding countryside much as first generation Franciscans did. The careful research of geographer John Isom results in incredible detail on the eleven full color maps of thirteenth-century Europe and the black and white maps which trace the routes Francis and his followers traveled lead one to a better understanding of the early fraternity's world view.

The foreword by William J. Short, O.F.M. sets out the purpose of this book "which maps the early Franciscan experience, helps to celebrate the importance of place among these itinerant preachers, hermits and missionaries." R. Vidal describes the impact of the photo essay chosen to enhance the reader's appreciation of Francis's environment, thus allowing "us to 'know' the places that we love; to 'visit' them in our imagination, and even to 'recognize' them if our hopes of visiting the places in the flesh are ever real."

For the serious student of the early movement, the gazetter at the back of the book is invaluable. All the places mentioned in the original sources about St. Francis are listed with convenient references to the maps for easy location and study. The footnoted essay provides guidance to the resources used by Warner and Isom in preparing this brief, yet incredibly rich, glimpse into the world in which Francis moved.

For formators, for librarians, for anyone anticipating a trip to the Franciscan holy places, or for anyone who has experienced the Italian birthplace of the Franciscan movement, this book will be treasured and savored again and again.

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**David Flood, OFM**, is a member of the research faculty of The Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University. He is internationally known for his scholarly work on the early *fraternitas* and the economics of Assisi at the time of Francis.

**Thadée Matura, OFM**, is an internationally-respected Franciscan scholar and author. He has published frequently about Franciscan life and spirituality, including *The Message in His Writings* and *A Dwelling Place for the Most High*.

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**Anthony Murphy** is currently a professor of philosophy at St. Bonaventure University specializing in medieval philosophy. Dr. Murphy has taught courses in Franciscan thought and is presently collaborating with Fr. Michael Blastic on an edition of the history of Franciscan philosophy.

## The Sixth National Franciscan Forum of the Franciscan Institute

Denver, Colorado, at the Adam's Mark Hotel  
February 26-29, 2004

**TOPIC: THE PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE  
FRANCISCAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION**

*How can one move the beautiful word of the tradition from the heart[s] of the specialists through the pastoral textbooks to the people in the pews?*

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AND TOM BOURQUE, TOR  
AS FACILITATOR**

### CONSIDERATIONS:

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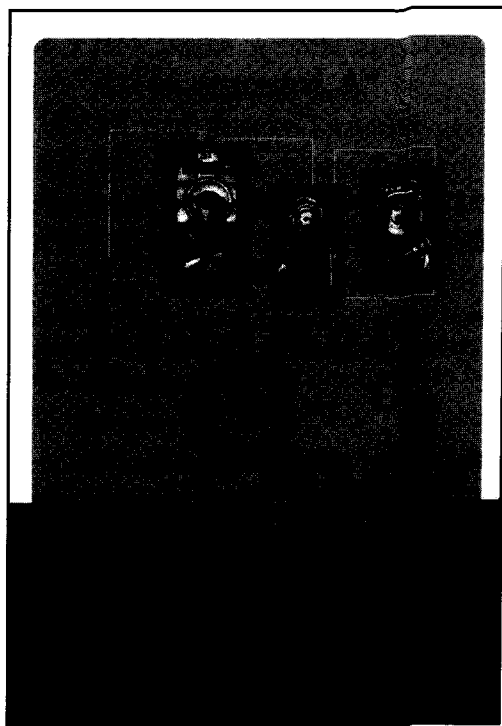
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Sincerely,

(Most Rev.) John A. Boissonneau, Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto

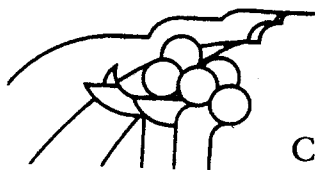
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*The Cord*, 54.1 (2004)

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**The Sixth National Franciscan Forum.** Adam's Mark Hotel, Denver, Colorado. "The Pastoral Implications of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition." Contact: Kathleen Moffatt, OSF. (See ad, p. 41).

**Saturday, February 28-Thursday, April 8, 2004**

**The 40 Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat.** At the Portiuncula Center for Prayer, in collaboration with Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF. (See ad, p. 52.)

**Sunday, April 4-Sunday, April 11, 2004**

**Holy Week Preached Retreat.** At the Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. With Samuel Vaccarella, TOR. Contact: fsc@osfphila.org. (See ad, p. 47.)

**Tuesday, April 13-Wednesday, April 21, 2004**

**The Journey Into God-A Retreat Experience with Bonaventure, Francis and Clare.** At Casa Paz e Bien, Scottsdale, AZ. Josef Raischl, SFO and André Cirino, OFM. (See ad, p. 51.)

**Monday, May 24-Monday, May 31, 2004.**

**Preached Retreat at the Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA.** Peter Chépaits, OFM. \$300.00 Contact: fsc@osfphila.org. (See ad, p. 47.)

**Friday, May 28, 2004-Sunday May 30, 2004**

**The Seventh Annual Franciscan Symposium** at Washington Theological Union. "Go Rebuild My House: Franciscans and the Church Today." Contact: Alyce Korba. (See ad, p. 43).

**Saturday, June 26-Friday, July 2, 2004**

**"A Journey With" retreat** at the Portiuncula Center for Prayer. Josef Raischl, SFO and André Cirino, OFM. (See ad, p. 49.)

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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 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 (*Regula non bullata*)  
LR The Later Rule (*Regula bullata*)  
RH A Rule for Hermitages  
SalBVM A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
SalV A Salutation of Virtues  
Test The Testament  
TPJ True and Perfect Joy

## Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg First Letter to Agnes of Prague  
2LAg Second Letter to Agnes of Prague  
3LAg Third Letter to Agnes of Prague  
4LAg Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague  
LEr Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges  
RCl Rule of Clare  
TestCl Testament of Clare  
BCl Blessing of Clare

## Franciscan Sources

1C The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano  
2C The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul  
3C The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano  
LCh The Legend for Use in the Choir  
Off The Divine Office of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer  
LJS The Life of St. Francis by Julian of Speyer  
VL The Versified Life of St. Francis by Henri d'Avranches  
1-3JT The Praises by 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

## A WORD FROM BONAVENTURE

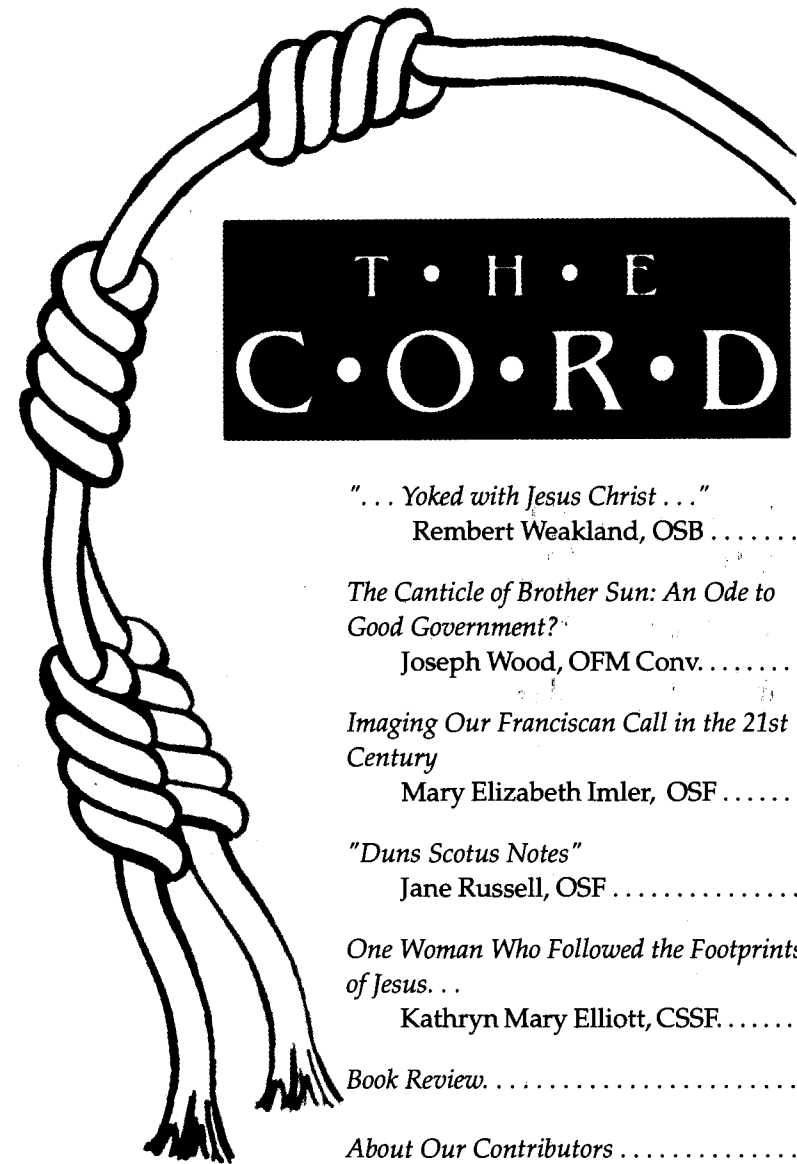
PICTURE IN YOUR MIND A TREE WHOSE ROOTS ARE WATERED BY AN EVER-FLOWING FOUNTAIN THAT BECOMES A GREAT AND LIVING RIVER....FROM THE TRUNK OF THIS TREE, IMAGINE . . . TWELVE BRANCHES THAT ARE ADORNED WITH LEAVES, FLOWERS AND FRUIT. . . .

IN THE GARDEN OF THE HEAVENLY PARADISE—GOD'S TABLE—THIS FRUIT IS SERVED TO THOSE WHO DESIRE IT. THIS IS SUGGESTED BY THE FIRST STANZA, WHICH SAYS: O CROSS, SALVATION-BEARING TREE, WATERED BY A LIVING FOUNTAIN, YOUR FLOWER IS SPICE-SCENTED, YOUR FRUIT AN OBJECT OF DESIRE.

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3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.  
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(1Cor. 13:6).      (2Cel 5:8).  
(RegNB 23:2).      (4LAg 2:13).

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

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**Editorial**

Is it really time for us to be immersed in the seasons of Lent and Easter? Can it be that the winter chill and mountains of snow here in western New York will be coming to an end when this issue is received by its readers? How does the cycle of life move so quickly? This time last year our country was on the verge of war and now we must admit, if we are honest, that we have seen more suffering connected to that war than some probably anticipated. In fact, we buried the first casualty from the town of Allegany just this week. It matters not (at least to me) that he died in Afghanistan instead of Iraq; he is still a war casualty. His death diminishes all of us, if John Donne's words are true.

Awareness of suffering is one thing, holy acceptance of it is another. Part of our focus for this issue has been to provide material that will lead us into deeper reflection upon the suffering that has shaped our Church—and consequently our place in that Church. Our lead article has a ring of authenticity to it, we think, precisely because its author has known what it means to be “yoked with Jesus Christ.” We also offer a piece on a woman whose spirituality of reparation may seem far removed from our own views of penitence, but which offers the opportunity to consider our own levels of service, prayer, and suffering.

We also present in this issue the Presidential Address given last August by Mary Elizabeth Immler at the annual Franciscan Federation conference. A commentary on Franciscan symbols and the harmony of goodness certainly encourages us to embrace the cross more fully as 21st century Franciscans! Jane Russell's poem about the Subtle Doctor allows us to continue our promotion of John Duns Scotus as an accessible figure in Franciscan life. And Joseph Wood once again takes us into the mind and heart of Francis, this time in a way that allows us to see Francis as a man willing to “intervene in political and religious matters”—something many of our brothers and sisters do today, at the cost of great personal suffering.

We know and believe that, for all of us, any suffering in this life pales beyond all telling in the light shed on us by the glory of the Risen Lord. May we accept our sufferings faithfully, relying always on our God to supply the grace we need to come into our own heavenly inheritance.

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*



## “... Yoked with Jesus Christ ...”

Rembert G. Weakland, OSB

This is the slightly edited text of the homily given by the Very Reverend Archbishop Weakland on October 5, 2003, at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis in Milwaukee, as part of the community's celebration of the feast of St. Francis. Parts of the text are addressed directly to the Sisters, and we have chosen not to edit the second person pronouns.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (11:25-30)

*On one occasion Jesus spoke thus: “Father, Lord of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children. Father, it is true. You have graciously willed it so. Everything has been given over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son – and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.*

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light.”*

Dear Friends, all of us Franciscans, and all the rest of you,

There is a popular image of St. Francis out there. I am sure you have seen it and heard it often. St. Francis is depicted as carefree, not excited much about anything, just living life nonchalantly, and, in addition, someone who loved to talk to birds and creation . . . this kind of sweet image of St. Francis. Yet, more recently, at least in some of the biographical writings of Francis, that image is being challenged a bit more, and we find that Francis was a person who sought to incorporate the whole of Christ's life into his own. It is important for us to develop this view of Francis if we want to have the same kind of childlike simplicity that characterized Francis. It doesn't mean avoiding the cross, it means accepting the whole of life and being able to see Christ in it; and, in that way, we obtain a broader vision. It is in that vision that we gain the freedom

that Francis had and are able then somehow to appreciate better all of creation. We don't want to miss that thread that runs through Francis's life, which is really putting on Christ, how we put on Christ day in, day out, and always ask ourselves who is the Christ that we put on.

*The Gospel today is well chosen, because it means that if we are docile, childlike to that presence of Christ within us, then we can become more and more like Francis, and more and more, as it were, come to know the Father. That's the first image today: we all have to become childlike. I am challenging you to do that, but to do it in a way that is much more profound than that popular image.*

The second point today is, that to become childlike, we have to become more like Jesus Christ; and if this seems daunting to us, then we have to remember that we are yoked with Christ through life and that that yoke is not burdensome. We are yoked to Jesus Christ, and this is the image that you should have. You have probably seen pictures of oxen with the yoke over their heads doing the plowing. Well, sometimes there are two oxen, side by side, under the same yoke. Think of that image of being yoked with Jesus Christ through life, so that in carrying the burdens of life, in doing what you should be doing, you are with Christ pulling; you are not alone; you are never alone. In that way the yoke is not burdensome to us, because it is Christ who carries it with us, and sometimes, I must say, for us.

We get through life because we are yoked to Jesus Christ, and that makes our life meaningful. We are a part of Christ's mission. That's the way in which Francis took up his cross. He carried that cross with the marks on his body; he was always aware of Christ crucified and his being one with Christ crucified. It is so easy for us to want to be one with Christ when he is getting the best of the pharisees; we like that. Or we like being one with Christ when he performs wonderful miracles, when he feeds the thousands. That's nice to be one with Christ at those moments. But then when Christ begins to anger others because he challenges them, we want to slip away, like so many of the disciples did. When Christ has to face death, an ignominious death with lots of suffering, it is so easy for us, then, not to be among those disciples.

We heard today from Galatians about St. Paul saying that he carried the wounds of Christ in his body. You probably thought, well, that means he had the stigmata like St. Francis and that's all there was to it. I don't think St. Paul had the stigmata, by the way; I think Francis did, but not Paul. Paul, when he talks about the wounds of Christ that he carries in his body, refers to the times when he was beaten. He refers to the times when he was stoned, and when he was shipwrecked. I bet he had all kinds of wounds, and he wouldn't say they were football wounds from his youth. These were wounds that he carried in his body because he preached the mission of Jesus Christ and was willing to make all the sacrifices that were necessary to follow Christ.

All of us have been branded by the wounds of Jesus Christ. You might not carry them visibly on your body, but there might be many there that you do carry from the years that you have served the Lord. Oh, you might not have all the rheumatism you have if you hadn't taught in that awful, cold school in that small rural town; or you might not have all the wounds you have if you hadn't worn all those older dresses that maybe didn't do your health any good when you cooked at the stove. I'm not saying what the wounds are. You all carry your own wounds, don't complain about them, but they're there. We all carry the wounds of Christ in our bodies if we have truly been imitators and put on Jesus Christ. And that tells us to whom we belong. So we are not only yoked with Jesus Christ, but I like to think that we are branded then with the image of Jesus Christ on us, not necessarily the stigmata, but the branding that took place at Baptism and was reinforced at Confirmation, just as slaves were branded and you knew who owned them, or just as in the holocaust when people were branded so you knew what their race was, to whom they belonged. All of this means that we are branded with Jesus Christ and we carry that stigmata, if you will, as a wonderful sign of belonging to Christ.

So, we are yoked with Christ and we belong to Christ. If Francis were here, he would say that that is the basis of what it means to be a Franciscan, to be aware of that presence of Jesus Christ, and never, never to curtail it, to cut it, to make it easy.

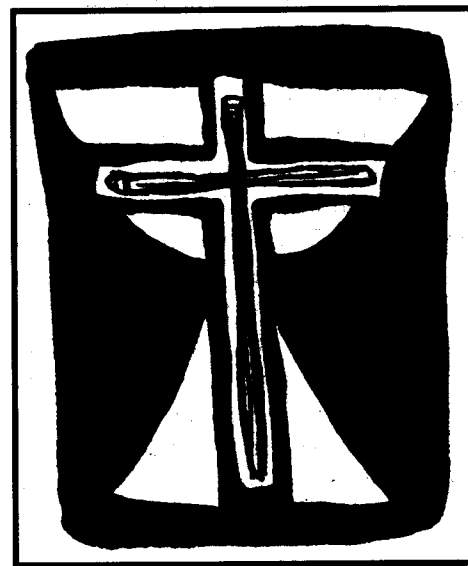
But I want to go on to another point. Francis never saw himself really as just a Franciscan. He saw himself as somebody who was called by God to bring a renewal to the Church. That's important. I get nervous about so many groups today in the Church who are inward-looking, who don't see that their mission is to a larger Church and then through that Church to the world. The other day I wrote this in fact to a certain Cardinal in Rome who had made some public remarks. I wrote, no, don't talk that way, because the religious are always for the Church, and the spirituality that the religious have, that spirituality is for all of us so we become aware of who Jesus Christ is. If you don't find that in some of the modern religious movements, that's their fault, that's their weakness; but all the great, great saints were aware that what they were doing and the image of sanctity they were striving for, that this is necessary for all of us.

So it is with Francis. Francis is somebody who was worried about, concerned about the renewal of the Church. Oh, my, how we need Francis today! How we need the Franciscan spirit today! How we need to get back to the essence of what it is to be a Christian, which is to put on Jesus Christ; that's what it is all about. Instead, we fight over who is going to pour the wine and who is going to do this and who is going to do that; we fight over such insignificant things and miss what is essential: to be a Christian, which is a follower,

and more than that, somebody yoked with Jesus Christ. That's what it is all about. That's why Francis is so important for us today.

But I am going to challenge you at this point. It's so easy for us to take some aspect of Jesus Christ and put it aside; but we have to be people who are yoked with the totality of who Jesus Christ is, not pick and choose. Jesus came teaching, and we have to be teachers. If you were to ask me the greatest struggle I had as a bishop [I am writing my memoirs now], the greatest frustration, it was ignorance. You can deal with anything else, but you can't deal with ignorance. So we need so much now to be teaching Christ, that's important. That only comes by reading Scripture, because only Christ can reveal the Father to us; so this means that we have got to live in the Scriptures and in the Sacraments. Then we have to be also healing Christs. Oh, that healing aspect is so needed in our world today. There is so much division in that world. There are so many people saying nasty things about each other. We need a healing Jesus Christ, and that's where Francis is important to us today. It is so needed that we have a healing person.

The prophetic Jesus . . . oh, religious talk a lot about being prophetic, but when it comes to putting our heads on the block, that's another story. Can I



just give you my view [don't quote me on this one]? To me the whole point of celibacy is an imitation of Jesus Christ as prophet, not as priest (if you get what I am talking about), but as prophet. That's why Jeremiah was celibate, that's why John the Baptist was celibate, because they told truth to power and they didn't care, they could do that because they didn't have to worry about other responsibilities. I don't know how often when I went down to El Salvador the Lutheran bishop down there—a wonderful, holy, saintly, great human being—would say, Rembert, oh, the Catholic archbishop has

it so easy, because he can get up there and denounce the government and take those death threats and never have to worry about his family, his wife and kids, and I sit here every day being protective because I never know when being prophetic and challenging others will hit those closest to me and those for whom I am responsible. So we do need more prophetic witnesses in our world—and that is what Jesus did—and we have to accept the consequences.

The sacrificing Jesus, the suffering Jesus, the one who is willing to give up his life for others, that's something we also have to imitate. Religious life should not be an easy way out, it should not be just a protection; it's a way of suffering also and suffering for others, so that others will have more.

Then the dying Christ—we all have to be a part of that dying Christ—not only physical dying as we get older (oh, that's happening to all of us, we know it), but also dying to so many things we were attached to, dying to change. I find right now that I am dying in a way that I never expected to die before; I'm grieving, I'm grieving over Vatican II. I'm grieving over all the energy I spent trying to bring that through and about and implemented and find that today it doesn't seem to matter much to many people; they want to go backwards. We all have to grieve over things in the past that didn't work out the way we thought they would. We have to grieve about the dreams we had that were never fulfilled. We have to get used to the dying that is necessary to be Christlike.

Finally, in that whole area, we also have to imitate the resurrected Christ. The resurrected Christ is the sign of hope. [Imitating the resurrected Christ] is the way in which we say that all of this is worthwhile, because Jesus rises and takes [unto himself] that human condition (as horrible as it might seem) that he died for. All of that [suffering] has now a greater end, a greater destiny, and that's what resurrection is all about: hope.

I have given you the easy ones. There are two more that are very hard in the totality of who and what is Jesus Christ. The next one is that we must always see ourselves as yoked to Jesus Christ but as a part of the Body of Christ. You see, it is so easy in our day and age to take that image and personalize it, privatize it, and make it me and Jesus Christ and we're going to get through. But what about the rest? If there is anything about Francis that is important, it is his concern for the poor, those who were marginalized, those who weren't making it. That should be the Church, that's you and me. So we must be constantly putting on not just an abstract Jesus Christ, but the Jesus Christ of here and now in this world, the Body of Christ, everybody, and that's the Church. We put that on, and you don't pick your neighbors, you don't even pick your leaders; that's where you are. Oh, you can pick Sister Marcia and those leaders, but not *the* leaders; you are helpless, we all are in a way. But we are a part of that Church: all of those in that Church who are joyful and all of those who are suffering, all the poor and all the wealthy.

And, when you put on Jesus Christ, you also put on and are yoked to the Cosmic Christ; that's the word that St. Paul uses. To be a part of the Cosmic Christ means that you see what Jesus' death, resurrection, and salvation means not just to all the people that I mentioned, but to every aspect of creation. Every aspect of creation is dear to the Father, and every aspect of creation finds its ultimate fulfillment in the end of time when Jesus Christ presents that

world to his Father. So Francis's care and concern about ecology in the world is rooted deeply in that Scripture vision of the Cosmic Christ. When you put on that Cosmic Christ, you become one with that care and concern for this world, because it is in this world where we work out our salvation, where Christ has to become visible, where we put on Christ and transfer and transmit that to the next generations. That's why this world is important to us, not just that we will have more gas to run our cars. It's an idea, a way of looking at the whole world in terms of who is Jesus Christ.

Wow! I think today that's what is needed. Our Christianity has become too narrowly focused. Our saints try to pull us forward, but they don't always do it. So now, on this feast of St. Francis, when we have looked at that wholeness of the Jesus Christ that he put on, I want to remind you of the end of today's Gospel. Because the end of the Gospel, in Jesus' words, is an invitation. Jesus is inviting us all to come and to be a part of the Kingdom and to be yoked with him. "Come to me all you who labor and are burdened." That's all of us, that's all of us. "Take my yoke upon you." Jesus is calling you today to put that yoke on you, to be yoked with him now through life. Go through life pulling half the load, not complaining about it, and knowing most of the time you're hardly pulling any—but it is the Lord who is working in and through you. And then you can hear the words very deeply, "For my yoke is easy, my burden light."



## **The Canticle of Brother Sun** *An Ode to Good Government?*

Joseph Wood, OFM Conv.

### **The Canticle of Brother Sun**

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,  
Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor, and all blessing,  
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,  
and no human is worthy to mention Your name.  
Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,  
especially Sir Brother Sun,  
Who is the day and through whom You give us light.  
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;  
and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,  
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,  
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather,  
through whom You give sustenance to Your creatures.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,  
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
through whom You light the night,  
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,  
who sustains and governs us,  
and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.  
Praised 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.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,  
from whom no one living can escape.  
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.  
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,  
for the second death shall do them no harm.  
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks  
and serve Him with great humility.

As with any work of literature, especially the dictated work of a very conscientious dying man, we may appreciate the Canticle of Brother Sun as containing more than one reality: one reality that would appear obvious to anyone—a swan song of gratitude to a merciful Creator—and another reality which would not appear obvious to a later generation. Those of us who are old enough can remember the immediate social messages innate in almost every rock song from the late 1960s, whereas today's younger generation, while still appreciating the same piece of music as a "classic" (merely because of the melody and rhythm), will remain completely oblivious to the original message because of a lack of awareness regarding the social climate of the times.

With an historical lens may we speculate that the Canticle could be both a praising of the Creator as the "Most High, all-powerful, and good Lord," and at the same time be an ambassadorial letter that praises (and admonishes) an earthly lord, the "most high, all-powerful, and good lord" *pope* or *emperor*?

Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., comments that immediately after his conversion "Francis was emerging as a peace-maker rather than as an underminer of the social and religious worlds, even though his vision . . . did, in fact, weaken the feudal and monastic social structures . . . of inequalities and hierarchies."<sup>1</sup> Yet Francis could only "weaken" a feudal structure or break down "inequalities and hierarchies" if the very leadership of such structures (clergy and nobility) did, in fact, take seriously his writings and warnings.

Francis saw himself, as did later biographers, as somehow having an important role to play on the world stage. After he presented himself to Pope Innocent and received oral approval of the Rule, Francis dreamt of his importance through the symbolism of seeing a tree of great height bowing down before him. When he awoke he told his companions that he believed the tree was the pope (1C XIII). Francis saw himself important enough to chastise his friars, to exhort diocesan clergy, to preach to Muslims, to send letters to rulers, to befriend nobles, to rewrite the psalms, and to talk to animals—all the while calling himself a "worthless," "weak," "humble" and "illiterate" man. But Francis unhesitatingly "commanded," "decreed," "forbade," and wished the "anger of the Almighty" on anyone who would tamper with his words (cf. Admonitions,

Early Rule, etc.). He was a humble man who felt competent and important enough to intervene in religious and political matters.

The Assisi Compilation (84), among other sources (2MP 101, etc.), speaks of Francis's concerns while he lay dying, especially noting the great rift between the bishop and the mayor of Assisi. Francis tells two friars to approach the mayor, "on his behalf," asking him to gather with as many magistrates as possible, at the bishop's residence. He then tells two other friars to go there, to sing the Cantic to the whole assembly, and to be sure to sing his newest verse speaking of pardon and endurance in suffering. The Assisi Compilation tells us that Francis felt compelled to send this ambassadorial party "[because] there was no one [else] who was intervening" (AC 84). Francis was confident "that [the Lord] would humble their hearts and the [mayor and bishop] would make peace." Indeed, after hearing the hymn, both men admitted their faults, asked forgiveness, and "with great kindness and love they embraced and kissed each other" (AC 84).

Thomas of Celano confirms that Francis's Cantic is a rewriting of the premier scriptural cantic of Daniel 3:17 ff. (a position favored by some contemporary authors.<sup>2</sup>) In Daniel, three young Jewish men, raised and promoted in a foreign court for their bureaucratic skills, are condemned to a fiery furnace for not worshipping a king who claimed he was a god. Once in the furnace, they are miraculously protected from the flames and begin to rejoice and invite all of the natural elements to praise and glorify the Creator. Could Francis have seen a lesson in the Book of Daniel that applied to his own generation? Were there Christian leaders (bishops, abbots, barons, dukes, counts, magistrates—even popes and emperors) who also saw themselves as "gods"? Was Francis's Cantic the last effort of a man who had recently been assured of his own salvation, (AC 83) to set things right for those he was leaving behind "as orphans" (LtE)?

For centuries, two great monarchs, the pope and the emperor, believed they ruled by divine right, and were often in conflict with one another. They caused factions and defections, one side playing off the weaknesses and alliances of the other.

Long before the Cantic and Francis's praising of "Brother Sun," Pope Innocent III metaphorically used the same elements to remind the kings of the earth that "just as the moon derives its light from the sun . . . so, too, the royal power derives the splendor of its dignity from pontifical authority."<sup>3</sup> As generous and as trusting as Pope Innocent had been with Francis, history records that this pontiff had another agenda for the rulers of the world. As "Vicar of Christ" (a term he up-graded from "Vicar of Peter"), Innocent considered himself the supreme judge who could summon to his forum any litigant in any quarrel in the Christian world. As "vice regent of God" he would "judge all

men, but be judged by none." He would see the kings of Europe kneel at his feet to receive their countries from him as fiefs. Innocent thought of himself as "greater than men, and little less than God." In his day, and later in legend, he was, without question, the "master of the world." In a short amount of time he had transformed himself and the medieval papacy into an imperial priesthood.<sup>4</sup>

The pope's adversary, the emperor (in this case, Frederick II), chose to spite his overlord and incorporated the sun and moon (symbols of world sovereignty) into his own royal seal. When Frederick received his first crown (of Sicily) he was hailed as the new Apollo, the sun-god.<sup>5</sup> When he received his second crown (of Germany), he was hailed as "the anointed of the Lord," "a heaven-sent messenger."<sup>6</sup> When he received his third crown (the Roman Empire), poets gathered and sang "that a new sun had risen on the horizon."<sup>7</sup> When Frederick received his fourth crown (Jerusalem), he reminded those in attendance that he was born within a day of Christ (December 26) and that he had been born in the humble town of Jesi (named for "Jesus"), and therefore, it was fitting that he should also reign in Christ's place as King of the Holy Land.

At the end of his life, when Francis could perhaps see the future so clearly, did he feel compelled to write a letter to these rulers because during his own lifetime he had been regarded as a mirror image of the emperor, a man who was somehow both the favorite son and the bane of the papacy?

People in the Middle Ages were always desperate for entertainment, especially for exaggerated tales of heroic or disreputable deeds. For many years the best news on the medieval networks was a toss-up between the on-going feuds between papacy and empire, and the comparisons and contrasts between the erudite emperor and his ascetic counterpart.<sup>8</sup> Stories of the lives and deeds of Francis and the Emperor Frederick were not only recounted after their deaths, but even while they were both still alive.

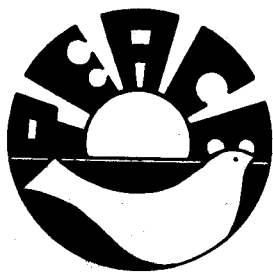
While Frederick and Francis were both young, it may have been hard to distinguish one from the other because of their graciousness. As they matured they were both patient and impatient with their subordinates. Both held a great admiration for the Cistercians as a practical reforming Order that promoted the humanity of Christ. Both Frederick and Francis believed in peace without the sword. Both were welcomed into the court of the Sultan Melek-al Kamil. Both won the heart of that noble Muslim and contracted bloodless treaties. Stories abound of both men speaking to animals. Frederick loved nature and had a menagerie of animals that traveled with him. He even allowed children to visit and view the animals wherever his court settled. Both loved music. Francis would sing in French and pretend to play the violin while rubbing two sticks together. Frederick wrote music and taught the monks at Padua new hymns while he was there on retreat. Even the cynical chronicler, Friar

Salimbene, said of the emperor that despite himself, he could not help but "love him." Frederick's green eyes and calm bearing unsettled people; Francis's humility and fiery sermons equally unsettled the crowds.

But as the warm relationship between the empire and the papacy cooled, affirmative comparisons between the two men chilled into denunciations. Should it be surprising then, that a man like Francis, who foretold that his own body would be venerated after his death (2MP 109) and who predicted that his good friend, Cardinal Hugolino, would one day be pope, should not also be able to intuit the conflicts looming on the horizon between the papacy and the empire?

Within five months of Francis's death, Hugolino, as the new Pope Gregory IX, launched the first of several excommunications against the Emperor Frederick because of his refusal to go on crusade. Gregory did not hesitate to exhume the heretical prophecies of the Abbot Joachim of Fiore when condemning Frederick as the apocalyptic beast from the abyss, and the anti-Christ!<sup>9</sup> Six months later, during Francis's canonization, Gregory applied images to the *Poverello* that also served as a final stab at the disobedient emperor. Gregory proclaimed Francis as the new "David," "Jacob," and "Samson," "faithful warriors at the eleventh hour." Francis was being heralded as the "obedient knight" (in opposition to the "disobedient knight," Frederick). Francis had been "raised up to put the Philistines to flight [i.e. Frederick and his allies] (*Mira circa nos*)."

Did the endless strife between Church and State, that had violent ramifications on every level of society, finally compel Francis to stir up a little crusade of his own?



Francis's own life had been wounded by conflicts and war. When he was sixteen he participated in a bloody civil war that chased out an unjust duke, razed his castle, and braved a papal excommunication. At age twenty, Francis fought in the battle of Collestrada where he was taken prisoner and languished with a long illness. At age twenty-two, he enlisted in a crusade with Walter of Brienne. At age thirty-seven he witnessed what history records as one of the worst blood

baths of all time at Damietta, Egypt. Throughout his life Francis proved that he was not oblivious to worldly affairs. And after his conversion, he never shied away from peacemaking. He interceded on behalf of Christian interests with the Sultan, he interceded on behalf of the poor in Arezzo, and he interceded on behalf of all who asked for his prayers because of temptation or illness.

How then can we say that the *Canticle* was not composed as a "charter of peace"<sup>10</sup> by a true crusader of God?<sup>11</sup> The *Canticle*, after all, was a song writ-

ten in the troubadour fashion,<sup>12</sup> which meant that it was the hymn of a knight singing of brave deeds. Francis, the courtly lover, speaking a courtly language, is actually binding all the elements of nature together in a harmonious and originally-intended relationship. The adjective-virtues that Francis praises: gentleness, serenity, humility, strength, robustness, and even radiance, are all virtues of the perfect knight.<sup>13</sup>

Francis's Admonitions are constant in their message of returning a right order to creation: through disobedience we broke our relationship with God; through obedience harmony will be restored. In the Middle Ages, every scientist, musician, architect and theologian studied mathematics and the stars. It was the goal of every fashioner of substance and intellect to transform an earthly discord into a mirror image of heavenly concord. Thus, in the *Canticle*, Francis is doing his part to remind his audience about the balance and obligation of power. Francis "becomes the new Adam . . . who restores Eden."<sup>14</sup>

Thus, as a restorer of the Original Plan of God, is Francis writing the *Canticle* as a means of speaking to a powerful ruler? Is he trying to make him aware of a situation that he can correct and thereby be appreciated in an even greater light by his subjects, if he heeds the warning? The *Canticle* can easily be understood as a device that tickles the ear of an overlord. It is the refined language of a courtier that delicately broaches an uncomfortable subject—a subject of imbalance, of injustice. The leaders of the Middle Ages desperately needed such a message. They spent their lives fighting over ownership of land and its resources. Is Francis telling rulers that "Our Sister Mother Earth," upon whom all people depend for daily sustenance, must no longer be manipulated as a weapon of oppression and inequality? Is Francis stating that land needed to be shared, not hoarded, highly taxed, and warred over? In a time when brother fought brother for property and inheritance privileges, causing cities and countries to be torn apart, does Francis call the elements "brothers" and "sisters" because he was somehow innately aware of humanity's primal need for a non-jealous mutuality and interdependence?

Francis teaches his followers that to be effective troubadours of God—servants and minstrels (AC 83)—they too had to rhyme power with responsibility and balance ambition with reconciliation. As the premiere friar minor ambassador, Francis masterfully rearranged the levels of true authority by hailing "Brother Sun," a symbol of the Lord of Light, as the King of heaven and earth. In the *Canticle*, the pope is no longer the sun, Christ is the sun. The emperor is no longer the moon, we are the moon. Humanity reflects the light of Christ, the true Sun King.

In the final analysis, the *Canticle* is not only a hymn praising God for the power, beauty and wonder of the created elements, but rather, a statement that the Creator is best praised when human beings offer pardon and are even

willing to suffer for the love of God in a spirit of patience.<sup>15</sup>

The Middle Ages, like most other centuries and cultures, revered numerology as sacred. Could it be a coincidence then that a few years after Francis's death, in 1296, the friars commissioned Giotto to interpret Francis's life on the walls of his tomb church in exactly twenty-eight episodes (of Bonaventure's *Legenda*)? An agrarian society would have never missed the obvious reference of the number twenty-eight as being the natural pattern for the monthly lunar cycle. Is Francis being portrayed as a bigger than life "Everyman" in the Giotto fresco cycle of Assisi? Is the rose window of the basilica (which in unusual fashion faces East, toward the rising sun) strategically set in the very middle of Francis's life cycle because he is and we are the "*alter Christus*," the moon, called forever and contentedly to bathe in the light of God the Father?

Only in the end, as he lay on the bare ground "naked before a naked God" (a God of self-emptying) as St. Jerome often said, could Francis rest in peace, knowing that he had accomplished all that he could do to "rebuild God's house."

During his whole life Francis had crept softly into the dens of power and deftly wielded a mighty weapon of influence. It is a fitting curtain call for the "king of song" to have culminated his life's goal for peace by raising his invincible voice and ultimately to have conquered with a song.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Regis Armstrong, *Clare of Assisi, Early Documents* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993), 10.

<sup>2</sup>Octavian Schmucki, "The Mysticism of St. Francis in his Writings," *Greyfriars Review* 3.3 (1989): 261.

<sup>3</sup>Jane Sayers, *Innocent III: Leader of Europe 1198-1216* (New York: Longman, 1994), 197.

<sup>4</sup>Ernst Kantorowicz, *Frederick the Second* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1957), 44-45.

<sup>5</sup>Kantorowicz, 202.

<sup>6</sup>Kantorowicz, 55.

<sup>7</sup>Gertrude Slaughter, *The Amazing Frederic* (New York: McMillan Co., 1937), 68.

<sup>8</sup>David Einstein, *Emperor Frederick II* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 175.

<sup>9</sup>Kantorowicz, 162.

<sup>10</sup>Sylvia Marie Gamberoni "The Canticle of Brother Sun, A Theology of Creation," *The Cord* 48.6 (1998): 289.

<sup>11</sup>Seamus Mulholland "The Canticle of Creatures: A Reflection on the Creative and Artistic Influences," *The Cord* 51.5 (2001): 233.

<sup>12</sup>Mulholland, 232.

<sup>13</sup>Mulholland, 233.

<sup>14</sup>Francesco Cardini "Francesco d'Assisi e gli Animali," *Studi Francescani* 78.1-2 (1981): 10.

<sup>15</sup>Cardini, 18.

## Imaging Our Franciscan Call in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF

Editor's Note: This text was the Presidential Address given at the 38th Annual Conference of the Franciscan Federation of the Third Order Regular last August. It has been slightly edited in two ways: for conversion to a better reading style (rather than a spoken address), and for room to add two logos and an image of "the blue crucifix" referred to in the text. Unfortunately, we could not put graphics for every section.

As we embark on the journey of these next few days I invite you to begin by getting in touch with this sacred space in the length, depth and height of it, the temperature, colors and feel of it all. But also, as Physics would have you consider, [in touch with] that fourth dimension of time. . . . I invite you to reach out in this wrinkle of time, to be alert as Franciscans to this sacred encounter with the Leo's and Clare's, the lepers and wolves, all sisters and brothers. Become conscious why you are here, now at this gathering just as I tried consciously to do over the course of these three years of my Federation service, not to miss some incredible opportunities, to be in on conversations that really matter, making connections that will last long into my lifetime, and now peaking in this 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Federation Conference. Open your minds, hearts and hands to hold all that is good. Open yourself to gaze, consider, contemplate and feel the power of desire within you to imitate through a few of the icons that speak of our deep story.

## Our Conference Logo

Like contemporary sociologists, I am conscious of this "open space" as we gather tonight in a bit of Franciscan chaos, tomorrow in regions and then together with our congregations. I recall the grace of Genesis as the Spirit promises to hover over the abyss (Gen 1:31). . . . All that God needs to create





fire again, so to speak, is within this space and time. In humility, all we need to do is believe our littleness is enough, believing God can do more than we can imagine. Let our desires for this gathering be holy. Let our longing for the good and gracious God of this gathering open our ears to hear, our eyes to see, our hearts to feel, our minds to know God in this here and now. As president of a federation of over eighty Franciscan congregations, let me welcome each and every one of you to this intersection of the sacred in time and space. Be welcoming to this “Harmony of Goodness.”

### Conference 2003 Title: The Harmony Of Goodness

Goodness is at the heart of our Franciscan theology. Recall that Genesis moment that connected the entire cosmos into oneness, into communion, for it was there and then that our God declared everything God made as GOOD! God saw all God had made and indeed in that fullness it was very good (Gen 1:31). I can only imagine the wonderful harmony God experienced in that first Sabbath, a harmony from the abundance and variety of all things to which our brother Francis later declared, “My God and All!” The goodness of harmony we discover in music occurs when two or more very different tones are played together. In art, harmony is seen in the contrast of light and darkness of hues,

and, as we might say of relationships, there is harmony when opposites attract. In the particularity of one’s “thisness” blending with another’s unique “thisness,” harmony is so much richer than a monotone chant or a monochromatic world—as wonderful as that oneness might be. Even at the very essence of the “thisness” of our God is the harmony in the Trinitarian communion unlike any other gods.

This year’s theme, “Harmony of Goodness” grew out of the transformational experiences of our past few conferences. In 1999, in Columbus, we explored the vastness of the cosmos. At the threshold of the new millennium we dared to delve into the mystery of the Trinity. Then in 2001, we listened to the newness of vowed life; and last year we were pushed to address the challenges of peacemaking. Many of us can still hear Sr. Ellen’s remark that we are not to throw stones but be instruments that recognize the goodness and contribution of each stone and try to find the right relationship in which they build one upon another. As the Board further reflected, we each came to know that if we truly become peacemakers it will take us, like our brother Jesus, to the cross. As this penetrated our hearts, we were impelled to address the call to be reconcilers who see differences not as *them* vs. *us* but as peacemakers who acknowledge the need . . . the beauty . . . the richness of differences when blended into a harmony. I believe that we in this 21<sup>st</sup> century are being called to be converted from simply tolerating differences to truly celebrating diversity, reconciling what seems to be divergent. In this, we participate with Jesus in the redemption of the world.

### Reconciling As Franciscan Peacemakers

The theology of our Franciscan brother, John Duns Scotus will guide us through “reconciling as Franciscan peacemakers.” Let us be truly present, poised for praxis as our Rule and Life beckons us to “our God who has brought peace and reconciliation to all things in heaven and on earth.” (TOR Rule, #12)

Do you ever wonder before a greatness such as that of Duns Scotus how he came to know a new truth? According to his name, Brother John was born in the country of Scotland in the town of Duns, most likely in 1265. In 1293 Scotus studied under the Franciscan scholars in Paris. There his table reading would have been from Bonaventure’s Major Legend, [a “life” of St. Francis]. This text, like the gospel of John, had time to simmer, and distance [from which] to gain a deeper perspective on the who and why of Francis, a man “totally aflame with a seraphic fire” (LMj Prologue I:19).

It strikes me that Brother John would have been familiar not only with this perspective of Francis but also with a Franciscan worldview. Scotus would have heard, “From the moment when Francis first began his active service in



the army of the crucified, a number of the mysteries of the cross were seen in his life, as must be clear to anyone who studies his biography." One theme of Bonaventure's storytelling was laid out "in the seven visions which he had of our Lord's cross, [Francis] was transformed into the likeness of the crucified in thought and desire and deed and by ecstatic love of him" (LMj Part II, I:1).

Bonaventure goes on to describe Francis as one "bearing the seal of the living God . . . held up as an example for those who would be the perfect followers of Christ." The Legend continues, "but even more is this confirmed with the irrefutable testimony of truth by the seal of the likeness of the living God, namely of Christ crucified, which was imprinted on his body not by natural forces or human skill but by the wondrous power of the Spirit of the living God" (LMj I, 22-30). Brother John Duns Scotus would have come to know through the hearing of the visions of the crosses in the Legenda, about Francis, about himself, about the world and God.

Scotus, I believe, had to have been deeply moved by Bonaventure's theology of the cross so gloriously summarizing all seven visions in Chapter XIII:10. Let us see in these the symbols for this conference the recalling of the truth of these visions: Jesus bore our humanity, the cross of Christ is manifested in the incarnation as complete acceptance of our human condition in a particular intersection of space and time, of the human and divine. See the crossbeams not at odds or enemies of each other in an either/or perspective but rather as salvific because of how they reconcile, as the harmony of goodness in a both/and perspective. Can we not see in the cross arms held in dynamic tension, a kind of leverage to lift us into the very reign of God? Have we the courage to celebrate them, naming them as the wisdom of our TOR Rule and Life would, "sister and brother" in *fraternitas* through our brother, Jesus "who reconciled all things in himself" (2Cor 5:19)? Similarly Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ, offers the image of the cross beams as blessing holding a wind chime in a holy and delicate balance.

### Naked Cross on LaVerna

Francis graced his sacred places—the likes of Fonte Columbo, Poggio Bustone and LaVerna—with the image of the cross. Clare must have noticed, in her pondering, Christ held at these cross beams. Love is poised for the graced possibility at the intersection. As a poet once put it, "we are put on this earth for a bit of a while to bear the beams of love."

### The San Damiano Cross

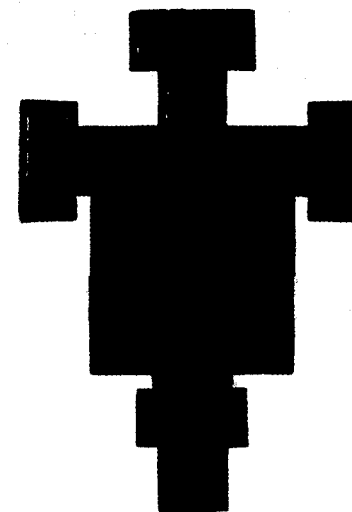
Gaze on our all-too-familiar San Damiano Cross, whose timeless voice beckons us to repair the house of God, the church, each human earthen vessel of our time. Consider how its crossbeams hold at the intersection, the heart of

Christ. Contemplate a heart that reveals both life and death. Let us imitate this heart grappling with the tensions of the poor, chaste and obedient life, sustaining community and mission in a sacred balance. See the heart of celibates who "profess chastity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (TOR Rule, #15) while at the same time risking affectionate relationships. Let us dare to live a life guided by valuing our poverty not merely as not appropriating things but in measuring all the needs for our service as instruments of God's peace. Let us live the vow that binds and the value that sets us free. Let us be faithful Franciscans "promising obedience and reverence" (TOR Rule, #3), trusting the experience of those in authority and the authority of our own experience. Let that contemplative Heart whom we desire to imitate teach us to hold in balance listening and speaking, hearing and heeding, poise and praxis. Can we, too, stand firm in the shadow of these cross beams with Francis to "repair [God's] church"?

### The Blue Cross

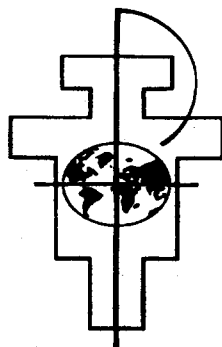
But Francis didn't so much pray before this crucifix as eventually "become [that] prayer" (1C95), a living sign of reconciling harmony. This icon, perhaps, was too real and a bit new, one that a sacristan of the Basilica of San Francesco found too much and tucked away and hence became less familiar for Franciscans. The Blue Cross painted to hang above the tomb of Francis presents an image whose meek and humble heart has dropped below the intersection weighed down by the brokenness and unloving choices of this world, our world. We gaze at a cross which Joseph Wood, OFM Conv., calls the "cross of Francis's response" in which the face of Christ incarnate lies at the

intersection. A face that longs to see the "pilgrims and strangers" (TOR Rule, #22) of his world give their all "to preserve the unity of mutual love and peace." (RCl 4:23) We consider this face that desires to see us live his poverty and humility. (TOR Rule, #21) We contemplate a face that speaks words that are Spirit and Life (TOR Rule, #11), a face the depth of which reveals a life giving its all trying to hold that delicate balance of Scotus: the "affection for self" and the "affection for justice." Can we, too, hold these desires within our hearts in balance as Christ calls us to imitate Him?



## Logo of the Franciscan Federation

In the here and now we come to our common cross. We hold this cross of our vision, the cross of the Franciscan Federation. This symbol, in its simplicity, says much as our gaze is drawn to the world at the intersection of the cross' beams. Our world at a time of fragile peace and broken promises is so in need of witnesses to gospel reconciliation. As we in the here and now image anew our TOR way of life, may we discover in the autonomy of our particular charisms how we can at the same time be federated around the mission of Jesus and contemplate the possibility of regional collaboration and the unity of federation in a holy newness. Let us hear the call through our common prayer as Franciscans to learn what is ours to do. Together as sisters and brothers we can proclaim, adore, bless, serve and praise our God for the goodness of this world. We can imitate Jesus by bearing the cross, redeemed ourselves and participating in its universal redemption. We are called to proclaim (as St. Paul tells us):



Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and a folly to the Gentiles, yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks alike, Christ is the power and the wisdom of God. (1Cor 1:23-4)

Can we hold our world gently enough so as to see God's original vision of a harmony of goodness?

Brother Ed Coughlin, OFM, pointed out to us that Francis, in the Fifth Admonition, invites everyone in their particularity 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."

Francis concluded this admonition by challenging all women and men to "glory in your infirmities and [bear] daily the holy cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us be open to learn how we are to bear daily this holy cross of ours. Our infirmities, weaknesses bring us together as the Franciscan Federation, into congregations, regions, as sisters and brothers of a particular time and place. Let us be poised, ready to be converted when we may find ourselves at the intersection of the cross. Let us be true to our incarnational spirituality, for Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow me" not "worship me." Let us not forget the last phrase of Clare's invitation to prayer, "to gaze . . . consider . . . contemplate . . . as you desire to imitate" (2LAg 19).

Francis calls each of us in imitation of Christ to "take up our bodies and carry his holy cross." (OP Ps VII). Let us hold up all that is unresolved in our

world so that the Spirit of God shall hover and breathe a gentle breeze to nudge our wind chimes to sound the harmony of goodness. Let us show on our faces the trust in reconciling what is yet irreconcilable in our world. Let us hold true to both the affection for self and the affection for justice struggling for that inner harmony. May we be encouraged in this gathering. May we be open to the grace that does not desire to snuff out either side but hold both in the intersection of the cross beams of love, as witnessed by our Sr. Mary Motte and the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary trying to reconcile Adrian Robinson and their murdered Sister Philomena. May we not want to maintain a lifeless static equilibrium as Sean O'Malley invites his new archdiocese, indeed the entire church to join him in repairing the broken parts from the Boston scandal? Let us, like Francis, like Jesus, live so as to bear the tensions in the poverty of ordinary times.

My wild hope is that the holiness of Francis, the goodness of Jesus comes alive again in our time through us, now and here in this sacred space. May we hear of such wonders as we honor our reconcilers who haven't wasted time dividing the world into the good guys and the bad guys. They have held them both together in their hearts, where we are all in communion in the Heart of God, crossing dividers in a reconciling embrace. Listen to their stories of redemption overcoming those old Newtonian dualities of old/young, male/female, conservative/progressive, homosexual/straight, extrovert/introvert, faithful/unfaithful by bearing their holy cross. Let us follow Francis as when once he lay in the cross beams between life and death listening to the harmony of the Canticle of Brother Sun. Others turned to him to reconcile differences and to trust in the reconciling power of harmony sung by the brothers and sisters to resolve conflict. There within the city of the servant of God, was a need to reestablish peace and concord between the religious and secular worlds. On this occasion, Francis composed the following strophe and added it to his Canticle:

*All praise be yours, 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, they shall be crowned.*

Francis then called two of his companions and asked them to go and find the leaders to meet and bless them for him with the singing of the Canticle of Brother Sun. Francis said, "I have confidence that the Lord will put humility and peace in their hearts and that they will return to their former friendship and affection" (Adaptation of the LP 44, 100). Do we not have such confidence in reconciling as Franciscan peacemakers? Let us ring out our wind chimes, a symbol for this conference, and listen to the Harmony of Goodness we make. And as church we say, "AMEN! ALLELUIA!"

## DUNS SCOTUS NOTES

To Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ

### I

I hoped to get to know  
the Subtle Doctor  
in three weeks—impossible,  
I knew, but hope  
still springs eternal . . .

I had tested,  
tasted  
once before,  
and found him  
far too dry,  
too complicated  
(what's your point?)  
to persevere,  
returned him to the shelf,  
gone on to juicier pursuits.

This time investing cash  
and precious weeks,  
I was committed,  
would not leave  
without some nectar  
from that thistle bloom.  
The teacher spread a canvas,  
splashed some big ideas  
and danced across the room  
ecstatic. "Here's a key:  
the whole Rube Goldberg scheme  
is an AESTHETIC!  
It's all about appreciating  
*beauty* and divine delight,

which naturally ties in  
to *love*, connects  
with all of our  
*contingency*  
(might not have been,  
you know.)  
So why did Love create?  
It comes of *freedom*,  
which, in God,  
spills over  
*generosity*."

The overview exuded scent  
of hope, but time will tell  
if teacher's insights  
really point a path  
through Latin brambles,  
yield a honeycomb.

" . . . nature is prior naturally  
to 'this nature,'  
and the unity proper—  
which follows on nature qua nature  
is prior naturally  
to its unity qua this nature."?!'

We hold our breath  
and trust these thorns  
do hoard a honey  
waiting to be born.

### II

Swift weeks of study bring the thought  
that thistle blooms are lovely  
even though the leaves do prick  
annoyingly. No guided tour  
can clear the bristling issues  
we don't care about;  
it does direct attention  
to surprising blossoms lurking there.

Duns Scotus sings to God, Creator,  
 “You are happy–happiness itself,  
 because you are in possession of yourself.  
 You are the clear vision of yourself  
 & the most joyful love.  
 Though self-sufficient, happy in yourself alone,  
 you still understand in a single act  
 everything that can be known.  
 You hold the power to freely will  
 each thing that can be caused,  
 and through your willing make it be. . . .”<sup>2</sup>

He ponders what constitutes  
 “God’s freedom in loving himself,”  
 concludes “it consists in the fact  
 that he elicits this act and perseveres in it  
 as something delightful  
 which he has elected to do.”<sup>3</sup>

Why did the Son of God become incarnate?  
 Not just to redeem the human race!  
 “The glory of the souls to be redeemed  
 is not comparable to the glory  
 of the soul of Christ. Neither is it likely  
 that the highest good of all creation  
 merely chanced to come to pass.  
 No one is predestined because God foresaw  
 another would fall,  
 lest anyone have occasion to rejoice  
 at another’s misfortune.”<sup>4</sup>

The Scot embraces all with dignity–  
 each “this” unique,  
 no human ruined by ancient sin  
 but only somewhat weakened.  
 “The affection for justice  
 can rein in our affection for the beneficial  
 so we do not *have* to seek our comfort.  
 This affection for what is just, I say,  
 is the liberty innate to the will.”<sup>5</sup>

All our acts can bear a charm or grace.  
 “Just as beauty is not some absolute quality  
 in a beautiful body,  
 but a combination of all that is in harmony,  
 so the moral goodness of an act  
 is a kind of décor it has,  
 a combination of due proportion  
 to all it should be proportioned to.”<sup>6</sup>

Better yet, God chooses to reward our deeds  
 “beyond our worth  
 This merit is beyond nature  
 and its intrinsic goodness;  
 it comes from a gratuitous acceptance,  
 beyond that justice which would commonly  
 reward an act. God rewards  
 by means of pure liberality.”<sup>7</sup>

Joyful love, delight, the highest good,  
 affection for justice, beauty, liberality:  
 bramble blooms to stock, ferment,  
 in time distill exhilarating wine.

Jane Russell, OSF

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>*Ordinatio* II, d. 3, no. 172. In *Duns Scotus Metaphysician*, 185.

<sup>2</sup>*De Primo Principio*, quoted in *Will & Morality*, 8.

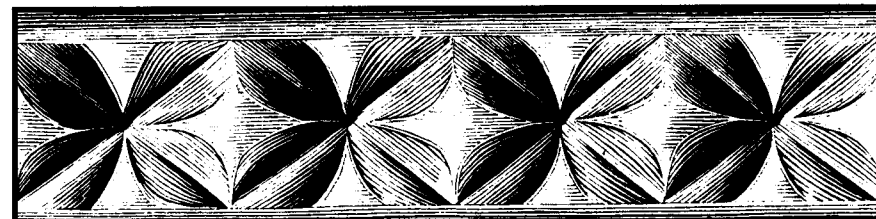
<sup>3</sup>Quodlibetal Question 16.34, in *God & Creatures*, 379-380.

<sup>4</sup>*Ordinatio* III, d. 7, q. 3. In *John Duns Scotus – Four Questions on Mary*, 25.

<sup>5</sup>*Ordinatio* II, d. 6. In *Will & Morality* 468; alt.

<sup>6</sup>*Ordinatio* I, d. 17, n. 62. In *Will & Morality* 207f.

<sup>7</sup>*Ordinatio* I, d. 17, n. 149. In *The Harmony of Goodness*, 134.



## One Woman Who Followed the Footprints of Jesus: Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska and the Spirit of Reparation

Kathryn Mary Elliott, CSSF

Francis of Assisi, in writing his way of life for the brothers in 1221, stated simply, "The rule and life of these brothers is this: to live in obedience, in chastity, and without anything of their own, and to follow the teaching and the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ." (ER I:1) Francis recognized the uniqueness of each of his followers, and in giving this Rule to them (and to those brothers and sisters who would come after) let them know that each was to follow these footprints of Jesus in his or her own way, each adding a special dimension to the family called Franciscan.

Among the many Franciscans in succeeding centuries was Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, foundress of the Felician Sisters. The Jesus she followed was the Suffering Christ, so her footsteps were those of reparation. By her life and example, Blessed Mary Angela showed what it meant to take up one's cross. Her entire life was lived as an act of reparation.

Reparation, as explained in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, "is a theological concept closely connected with those of atonement and satisfaction and thus belonging to some of the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith."<sup>1</sup> It can also be viewed as "the action of repairing or keeping in repair" and when used in this context it "designates the whole work of restoring all to the friendship of God."<sup>2</sup> In this way the word reparation is close to its root, the Latin *reparare*, which means to prepare anew or restore.<sup>3</sup>

Reparation is not accomplished by multiplying sufferings but by the humility, love and obedience with which sufferings are endured.<sup>4</sup> The duty of reparation, then, has to be seen in a much wider scope than only that of expiation. It needs to be seen in the reestablishment of all things in Christ. This duty is the obligation "to share in the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ, who by obedience to the will of his Father in heaven, especially by the offering of his life on the cross, merited eternal salvation for all. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

## Historical Context

In order to understand the character, and consequently the significance of reparation in the life of Blessed Mary Angela, it is necessary to understand her place in history and in the society in which she lived. We will look at its impact, not only on her early family life, but also as it formed the impetus which led to the founding of the Felician Sisters.

In his book, *The Mind of John Paul II*, George Williams summarizes the Poland during the lifetime of Blessed Mary Angela:

The history of Polonia in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is one of successive uprisings and defeats, harshest for the largely Catholic Poles and Orthodox Russians. After a brief episode (1807-15) of the Duchy of Warsaw, created by Napoleon Bonaparte under pressure from General John Henryk Dabrowski, the Duchy was reduced in size to the advantage of Lutheran Prussia by the Treaty of Vienna but elevated in rank as the kingdom of Poland. The Tsar was its king. By the end of the century, after three revolutions, the Tsar imposed the Russian language in schools. Polonia survived under three states from 1815 to 1918. This was the period during which, because of the spiritual tie with revolutionary France, the prophetic poets, the shapers of modern Polish literature, much of it deeply patriotic, created Polish Messianism, the interpretation of the sufferings of the nation in terms of Christ's passion and resurrection.<sup>6</sup>

Poland has been metaphorically called the Christ among the nations, redeeming, through suffering, not only the Polish nation, but mankind as well.<sup>7</sup>

Adam Michiewicz (1798-1855) is considered to be the poet who best articulated the idea and ideals of Polish Messianism. In his writing he expressed the belief that, "Like Christ, Poland suffers for the salvation of the world, to redeem the sins of all nations so that they may become worthy of freedom."<sup>8</sup> Zygmunt Krasinski also pictured his martyred country as the messiah of the nations. It was his belief that the plight of Poland signified the coming of the Kingdom of God upon the earth that would triumph with the resurrection of Poland.<sup>9</sup>

The Church, for her part, also suffered particularly in the area of Poland subject to Russian domination. After the Insurrection of 1830-1831, harsh measures were taken against the Catholic Church. The government would not give official approval to episcopal candidates and, as a result, the See of Warsaw was vacant from 1829 to 1836, and again from 1838 to 1856. Two hundred monasteries were suppressed in 1832, and by 1834 the freedom of movement of the clergy was restricted. By 1841 a major portion of Church property had been confiscated. During the reign of Alexander III (1855-1881),

at the time of the Second Insurrection of 1863-1864, the Archbishop of Warsaw, along with four hundred clerics, was banished to Siberia. Almost all monasteries and Catholic societies were abolished. The Felician Sisters, founded in 1855, were ordered to disband. Public processions and May devotions were forbidden. No permission was given for bishops to travel to attend Vatican Council I.<sup>10</sup>

## Biographical Background

This was the Poland into which Joseph Truskowski, the father of Blessed Mary Angela, was born. He is described as "the only son of a citizen and landowner."<sup>8</sup> After finishing his course of studies at the University of Warsaw in 1822, he pursued a career as a jurist. Joseph did not care to work with his father, and accepted the position as a judge in the Juvenile Court in Kalisz. As a result he was in constant contact with juvenile delinquents. Shortly after he began his work in the courts, he married Josephine Rudzinska. Joseph was twenty-two, his wife sixteen. Three years later, on May 16, 1825, their first child, Sophia Camille, was born.

Born prematurely and later described as a frail and delicate child, Sophia was lively, perceptive and overly serious for her young age. She was also unusually sensitive to human misery. Sophia was brought up, with her brothers and sisters, in a God-fearing atmosphere. She was submissive to her parents, gentle with her peers, and captivated the hearts of all. Profound piety was part of her life from early childhood; later she would devote long periods of time to prayer. Because of her poor health, Sophia received most of her education at home. She read avidly, was fluent in French, and was learning Italian and Latin. As the oldest of five children, she helped the younger children with their studies. She was generous with the poor and, through her modestly concealed virtues, she exerted a wholesome influence upon her environment.<sup>11</sup>

As a young woman the primary influence in her life was her father. Encouraged by Sophia's desire to learn Mr. Truskowski gave his daughter the key to his library. "Sophia's quick mind thrilled him and her spiritual hunger delighted him . . . for her knowledge led to analysis and organization. She carefully balanced theory with practical application and this habit stood her in good stead for the rest of her life."<sup>12</sup>

Also awakening at this time in her life, and causing some discomfort, was an intuitive gift of prayer, and a hunger for God.

This tension reflected the spirit of the times. . . . In Poland, the attempt at reconciliation brought a certain spiritual realism, a return to real life in order to spiritualize it. As a result, the love of Christ began to permeate even Polish philosophy and the correlative love of neigh-

bor produced a healthy reawakening of humanism, but now a Christian humanism."<sup>13</sup>

Sophia exemplified this in her response to human suffering. She suffered deeply at the sight of physical misery, but the spiritual poverty that was around her was even more agonizing. Sophia reacted to the misery around her, not only on a human level, but also by taking these sufferings to prayer. "If moral evil set itself between her God and His cause, she would battle with that evil and strive to eradicate all misery from the world about her, restoring all things in Christ."<sup>14</sup>

She joined the St. Vincent DePaul Society in 1854 and visited garrets and basements where she encountered the throw-offs of society: orphans and abandoned children, and the infirm aged. The immensity of human misery in the city of Warsaw did not give her peace of mind. With the help of her father and the St. Vincent DePaul Society, she rented two rooms in the attic of a home located next to the church of the Blessed Virgin in Warsaw. From this small start, Sophia, together with her cousin Clotilde Ciechanowski, began to educate the children and minister to the elderly.

At this time of her life, it is said, Sophia closely resembled the life of Francis. After being told by the Crucified at San Damiano "Go rebuild my house; as you see, it is all being destroyed" (2 Cel VI: 10) Francis began his life's work. Sophia went about the process of restoration by searching out the homeless, the elderly, and the delinquent, to rebuild with living stones, a trait that would remain throughout her life and which she would instill in the hearts and lives of her spiritual daughters.<sup>15</sup>

## Spiritual Development

This was also the time in her life that she made the acquaintance of Father Honorat Kozminski, OFM Cap. After hearing him preach, Sophia took Father Honorat as her confessor, and through his encouragement became a Franciscan Tertiary. Her investiture took place on May 27, 1855; she received the name Angela, taking Blessed Angela of Foligno as her patroness. It was Father Honorat, as her spiritual director, who would influence Sophia the most in her spiritual development, as well as in the development of the congregation she would be credited with founding.

It became necessary for Sophia to rent larger quarters, as the number of children and aged had increased. Moving to Mostowa Street, Sophia and her cousin Clothilde made their permanent residence there. On "November 21, 1855, the feast of the Presentation of Mary, kneeling before the image of Our Lady of Czestochowa, whom they regarded as the Foundress of their work, they solemnly promised to dedicate their lives to her service in accordance

with her Divine Son, Jesus Christ."<sup>16</sup> This day is regarded as the day of foundation for the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix.

Sophia had no intention of founding a religious community, but she did in fact found a community which would break from the traditions of European women religious. She and her sisters became one of the first communities of women that would combine the active and contemplative ways of life. Mother Mary Angela, as she was now known, did this by instilling into her daughters the ideals of which she was the incarnation: charity, benignity and reparation.<sup>17</sup> For Mother Angela the ideal of reparation would be lived out in her life by restoring the church, both in her active ministry and in her hidden life, by taking the words of St. Paul to heart and making them her own: "It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church." (Col 1:24) It is fitting, then, that Blessed Mary Angela, and her nine companions at this time, should be invested with the Franciscan habit on Good Friday, April 19, 1857.

As the Congregation continued to grow it was evident that Father Honorat thought the life of the sisters should be primarily contemplative, and with this in mind, saw to it that the Sisters were divided into two choirs on October 4, 1860. The first, the "Marys," were strictly cloistered; their prayers would support the works of the second choir, the "Marthas," who were considered active-contemplative and were involved in apostolic works. Mother Angela, who had been elected Superior General in the Spring of 1859, was assigned to reside with the Cloistered Sisters, and served as Superior General of both choirs.

During this time, which could be described as Mother Angela's "Dark Night," she was able to develop a deep prayer life and to function as the spiritual Mother for the community in spite of her poor physical health, her concerns for the Community, and her dealing with Father Honorat, all of which contributed to the suffering that would last, in varying degrees, for the rest of her life. The words of Bonaventure, taken from his *Itinerarium*, describe her life's direction: "There is not another path but a burning love for the Crucified." In Meditation IX she writes, "Oh, what I would not do, with what eagerness I would get rid of those books (spiritual) if I could only learn like our Holy Father, St. Francis, to read one book—Christ Crucified."<sup>18</sup>

During this time of interior identification with the Crucified Christ, Mother Angela saw the expansion of the work of the sisters into the rural areas of Poland. The Agricultural Society was asking religious to undertake establishment and supervision of social centers for peasant families in the vicinities of Lublin and Podlasie in the Russian Sector.<sup>19</sup> It was to one of the sisters stationed at one of these social centers (or "ochrony"), Sister Mary Bogdana, that Mother Angela imparted her thoughts on the love of the Crucified Christ:

Let us then love our Lord Jesus Christ, but let us love him on the cross. This will not only ease our pain, but will be a sweet consolation to Him . . . why should it matter to us from what kind of wood our cross is hewn. The important thing is that it comes from Love itself. Christ himself fastens us to the cross beam, so He also can give us the courage to bear it. . . . We must not look for any other consolation except the comfort which comes from suffering with God. . . . Can you say with Paul, "May I glory in anything else only in the cross of Jesus crucified?"<sup>20</sup>

Mother Angela would apply this to her own life. She adhered to penitential practices and even stated that she wore "a hair shirt and iron chains constantly,"<sup>21</sup> yet she never imposed any penitential practices on the sisters without consulting them for their opinions. Then these practices usually took the form of additional prayers. If a sister should want to do something over and beyond what was called for, Mother Angela would caution the sister to be prudent in the use of these penitential devices.

### Embracing the Cross

Political unrest was rising to the surface in the early 1860s, and being a product of the Poland suffering oppression, and ingrained with the philosophy of messianism, she felt that her prayers and the prayers of her sisters could help make satisfaction for the sins of the nation. In November of 1861, she wrote, "This devotion (the recitation of the Office of the Immaculate Conception) will be offered for the intentions of our country. We are being told in the cloister that God wants this from us, that He will hear us and it appears that He Himself is compelling us to do it."<sup>22</sup>

In this period of history, however, the prayers and practices of reparation would not alter the course of things to come. Regardless of the political tensions the Sisters continued their work in the villages and Mother Angela continued to write to encourage her daughters, and in those writings, her spirit of restoring all to the friendship of God is made evident. In a letter dated March, 1862, to Sister Hedwig, the superior of the social center in Chroberz, and her sisters she writes,

Dear Sisters, do you know how you may best grow in the love of God? It is by forgetting yourselves, actually doing for him whatever we do for the least of his brethren. . . . Our Holy Father St. Francis might not have merited the stigmata if he had not surrendered wholly and completely to the will of God by devoting himself to his neighbor's salvation. . . . Our Lord Himself gave us His encouraging example so



that we would not lose heart over our reluctance to suffer. Though He was all-powerful, He offered Himself as a sacrifice of Love.<sup>23</sup>

By 1863 an insurrection against Russian control had begun, and the sisters working in the villages were operating field hospitals for both Polish partisans and Russian soldiers. Again, Mother Angela counsels Sister Hedwig:

Actually putting up with ourselves and our shortcomings is cross enough for us, a truly heavy one from which we will never be delivered. . . . Try to intensify your spiritual life. Very few people realize that it does not depend on extraordinary states of prayer, ecstatic experiences, or special revelations. It consists in being identified with the mind and spirit of Christ so that we can say with Paul, "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me."<sup>24</sup>

The uprising was unsuccessful and, as a result, the Russian government began reprisals against the Polish people. On March 2, 1864, Tsar Alexander II granted property rights to the peasants. As a result, landowners could no longer support the social centers staffed by the Sisters, and many of the centers were forced to close. The Sisters returned to Warsaw. Threats of suppression had started and a government committee was collecting information on religious orders, their houses, possessions, and membership. Mother Angela, living with the fear that her life's work was facing extinction, was re-elected Superior General on July 27, 1864. Having spent three years in the cloister, Mother Angela was needed back among the active branch of the Congregation.

On December 18, 1864, soldiers arrived at the Motherhouse in Warsaw. Four officers and two civilians assembled the community and read the decree of suppression. It required that the sisters discard their religious dress and disperse within three days. The cloistered branch was to relocate with the Bernardine Sisters in Lowicz. Mother Angela was to go with the cloistered sisters. One of her last acts before the sisters disbanded was to write a circular to the sisters concerning the suppression:

My beloved, what can I share with you this year since my heart is filled with sadness? The Infant Jesus brings us all the very heavy cross of suffering and tears, exile and destruction. . . . Although I am now burdened with such a heavy cross, and can say with the mother of the Maccabees, that I am a crucified exile some two hundred times, however, beyond comparison I would be more tormented and grieved were I to learn that you are unfaithful to God and that you accept the cross from his hand unwillingly and ungratefully.<sup>25</sup>

Mother Angela remained in the cloister, but while there maintained communication with her exiled daughters, and "as a result of the sisters residing in Krakow and the intervention of Bishop Galecki, Ordinary of the Diocese of Krakow, the Austrian Government admitted the Community of the Felician Sisters into Galicia in August, 1865. Upon receiving this information the Servant of God commissioned the sisters to reorganize a new common religious life, to open a novitiate in Krakow, and to build a new convent."<sup>26</sup> Mother Angela was reunited with the sisters and helped revitalize and expand the Congregation's activities. (The cloistered branch of the congregation became the Order of Capuchin Sisters, living the Rule of St. Clare and claiming Mother Angela as their foundress.)

The congregation grew rapidly and, by 1874, five Felician Sisters were sent to the United States to work among Polish immigrants. Mother Angela was elected Superior General for three consecutive terms. In 1869, she resigned her office due to health reasons and began to live what she referred to as "the hidden life," tending flowers, decorating the altars in the Motherhouse Chapel, and sewing vestments and altar linens for the poorer parishes where the sisters served. Although deaf, she still maintained an interest in the congregation she founded. The bulk of her correspondence to Father Honorat now dealt with the Constitutions being drafted for the Community.

## Conclusion

Till the end of her life Mother Angela served her Congregation with her example of virtue, prayer, and suffering. This remarkable woman is brought to life in her writings, especially in her letters to the sisters. "The letters are written in a simple style because they were dictated by the current circumstances of life and not by literary presumption. One reads them for enlightenment and encouragement because they radiate the authenticity of mature faith," stated Pope John Paul II, then Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, in reference to the writings of Mother Angela in the preface to *Selected Writings*, Volume I.

Her writings reveal a spirit of reparation which is developed over her lifetime and is two-fold. First, there is the deep belief of living out the Corporal Works of Mercy, because in her life, and as an example to her sisters, Mother Angela was a living example of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked and visiting the sick and imprisoned. It was in this way that she helped restore the Church.

Secondly, Mother Angela became one with the Crucified when she took to heart the words of Jesus, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt. 15:24). Her whole life became connected with the cross; it was her focus and her love. She tells us, "Oh, how good it is to live and to die on the cross! Oh, how good and

helpful is the cross at all times and in all places . . . we should not look for any other consolation but this, to suffer with the Crucified Christ."

Her words, as well as her life, have meaning for Franciscans today. Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska is an example of what it means to live a life of reparation. It is not the externals, the doing extra, but a reparation that consists of an act of renewal on a day to day basis, and the words written by her over one hundred years ago still serve as an example to those who come after her, "Their perfection should not consist in doing unusual things, but in leading ordinary lives in an extraordinary way . . . so it could be said of them, as it was said of Christ, that he did all things well . . ." <sup>27</sup>

It has been written that "Sophia Truszkowska was a woman whose great faith and uncommon piety were exceeded only by her intelligence and wisdom. She was one of those extraordinary and generous women, who in a word, is born to rule kingdoms."<sup>28</sup> On April 18, 2003, both the Felician sisters and the Order of Capuchin Sisters celebrated the tenth anniversary of the beatification of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska. The cause of her canonization is in process.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>"Reparation," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911, 775.

<sup>2</sup>"Theology of Reparation," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, 380.

<sup>3</sup>"Reparation," *Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1980, 463.

<sup>4</sup>"Theology of Reparation," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, 380.

<sup>5</sup>"Theology of Reparation," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, 380.

<sup>6</sup>George H. Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action* (New York: Seabury, 1981), 22-23.

<sup>7</sup>Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland 1795-1918* (Seattle: U of Washington Press, 1974), 117-118.

<sup>8</sup>W. F. Reddaway, *The Cambridge History of Poland* (Cambridge: UP, 1941), 320-321, 324.

<sup>9</sup>Oscar Halecki, *A History of Poland*, trans. Monica Gardner (New York: Roy, 1943), 246.

<sup>10</sup>"Poland," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 479-480.

<sup>11</sup>Father Bernardine of Siena, *The Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God Mary Angela Truszkowska* (Roma: Universita Gregoriana, 1967), 1-2.

<sup>12</sup>Artur Gorski, *The Heart of Mother Angela*, trans. Sister Mary Fidelia Chmiel (Pittsburg: Shemco, 1986), 8.

<sup>13</sup>Gorski, 10.

<sup>14</sup>Gorski, 17.

<sup>15</sup>In 1861, while reflecting on those early times in her life, Blessed Mary Angela wrote: "Nothing was too difficult if it was for God. . . . Once I began to serve God in the world, I felt a deep inner happiness and natural tendency to do good. Working for others and practicing active charity seemed almost instinctive. Even as a child I was

inclined that way. As the years went by, doing good to others drew me even more strongly toward God. Nothing could stand between me and the fulfillment of my purposes. I was equal to the greatest sacrifices as long as I could serve others and alleviate their miseries. . . ."

<sup>16</sup>Bernardine of Siena, 3.

<sup>17</sup>Sister Mary Ellen Ryba, *Response*, (np, 1974) 16.

<sup>18</sup>*Selected Writings*, vol. IV, 66.

<sup>19</sup>Bernardine of Siena, 5.

<sup>20</sup>*Selected Writings*, vol. XIV, 14-15.

<sup>21</sup>*Selected Writings*, vol. IV, 85.

<sup>22</sup>*Selected Writings*, vol. II, 114.

<sup>23</sup>Gorski, 150-151.

<sup>24</sup>Gorski, 155-156.

<sup>25</sup>*Selected Writings*, vol. I, 216-217.

<sup>26</sup>Ryba, 16.

<sup>27</sup>Bernardine of Siena, 6.

<sup>28</sup>Gorski, 68, 69.

## BOOK REVIEW

*Landscape of Prayer*. Murray Bodo, OFM. St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2003. 240 pp.

Drawing heavily on his personal experiences in prayer, Murray Bodo involves the reader in his own understanding of the ways and means of talking with God. His *Landscape of Prayer* is an intimate glimpse of his childhood, his parents, and the milestones of his life enlightened by the wisdom gleaned through meditating on how God is always present in day-to-day minutiae. The ticking of a clock, a rushing stream, the symbolism of a nearby railroad line—life's commonplace settings are seen as sacred places of contact with the all-good God.

Place, in Murray's economy of prayer, is shared in a particularly vivid manner. The reader can almost bask in the anemic sunshine of a southwestern winter afternoon and settle into his mother's cozy armchair wrapped in a Navajo rug with a cup of comforting brew for a reflection on life's mysteries. Nostalgia is often present but never overbearing, leading the reader to his/her own ancestral settings for owning and healing the past.

Especially meaningful for the Franciscan reader are Bodo's reflections on Assisi, made even more telling by his extraordinary familiarity with the medieval setting of the birth of the movement. In that small city where the stone streets witnessed Francis first carousing with his friends and then preaching penance to her citizens, Bodo leads readers and pilgrims to greater insight into authentic Franciscan experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This collection of more than fifty meditative essays allows the reader great latitude in sampling the results of six years of Bodo's prayer experiences. Whether one approaches the work by theme, by liturgical year, by season or any other personal selection process, Bodo's readers will be charmed, challenged, and led to a place of peaceful centering where their own spirits can find God.

Bodo's gift with the word, his humble sharing of his own life's mysteries, and his transparent commitment to following the footprints of Jesus with his brother Francis can be savored over and over. New insights will continue to leap from the pages of this journal for those who want the spirit of prayer to pervade the commonplace moments of their daily lives. This book can serve both beginner and experienced practitioner in "opening the door every morning and every evening. . . ."

Daria Mitchell, OSF  
St. Bonaventure, NY14778



## About Our Contributors

**Kathryn Mary Elliott, CSSE**, is a member of the Chicago Province of the Felician Sisters. A graduate of the Franciscan Institute, Kathryn now serves as her province archivist and teaches in the Felician formation programs.

**Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF**, General Superior of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Frankfort, Illinois, is a co-founder of the Portiuncula Center for Prayer in the Joliet Diocese and a past president of the Board of Retreats International. She has recently completed her term as President of the Franciscan Federation of the Third Order Regular. A graduate of The Franciscan Institute, she also holds a Masters in Physics and Chemistry and has done advanced studies at the Guelph Center for Spirituality.

**Jane E. Russell, OSF**, is a member of the School Sisters of St. Francis, Milwaukee. Currently, Jane teaches at Belmont Abbey College in North Carolina. In the past she has served on her congregational leadership team. In the summer of 2002 Jane participated in a class on Soctus at the Franciscan Institute, and her poem is rooted in that experience.

**Rembert Weakland, OSB**, is the retired archbishop of Milwaukee. He was active in the liturgical renewal movement following the Second Vatican Council and is a well-known public speaker.

**Joseph Wood, OFM, Conv.**, is a friar of the St. Bonaventure 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 co-founder of "Yes Pictures," a new film company.

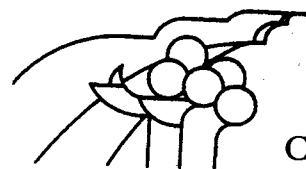
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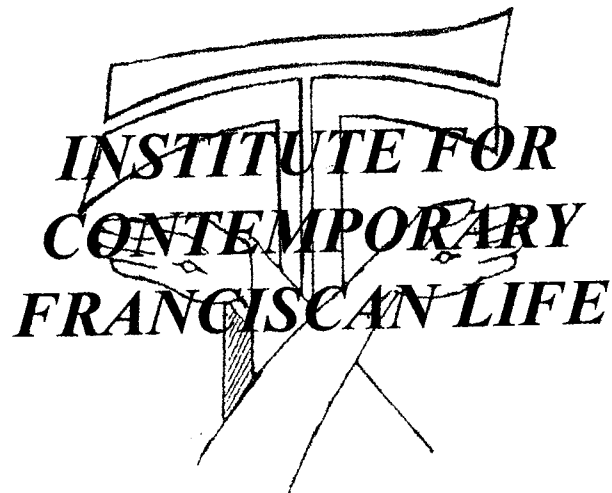
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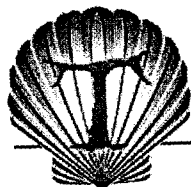
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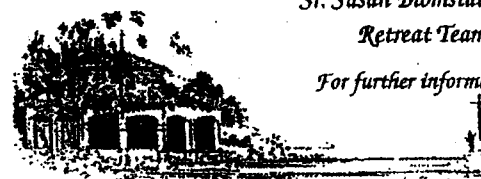
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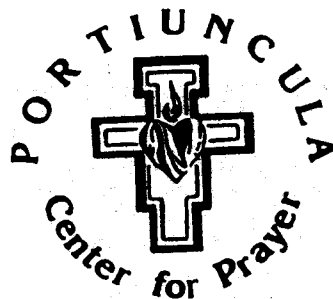
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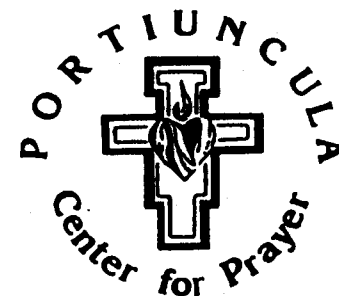
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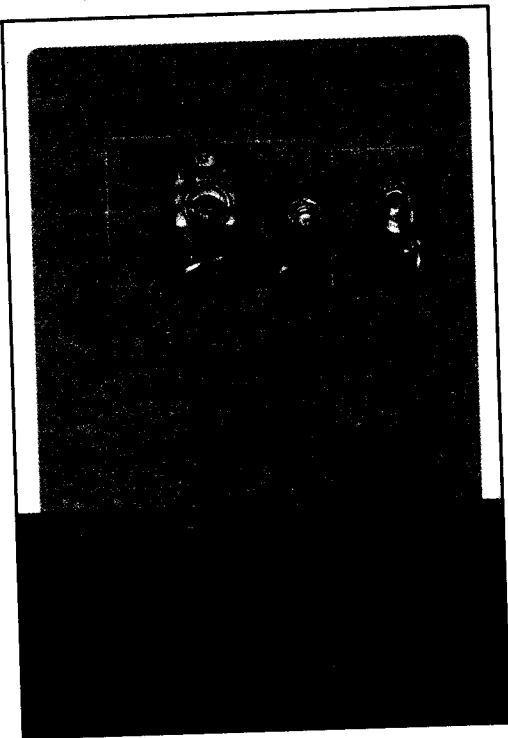
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### Journeying Program: Forgiveness: A Gift to Give Yourself. April 2-4, 2004. Friday, 7:30 p.m.-Sunday, noon.

Vince Hyatt. This retreat will assist participants with learning and practicing the steps in the forgiveness process, as well as discovering how to maintain a spirit of forgiveness in one's life. Franciscan Spirituality Center. 920 Market Street, LaCrosse, WI 54601. 608-791-5295. Email: FSCenter@fspa.org.

### Keeping the Earth. April 13, 2004. Tuesday, 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Sr. Anne Dougherty, OSF. A celebration of Earth Day with video, discussion and prayer. The Franciscan Center, 3010 N. Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603-5345.

### Stumbling Blocks and Stepping Stones. April 16-18, 2004. Friday, 7:00 p.m.-Sunday, 1:00 p.m.

Fr. Gavin Griffith, OFM. Weekend retreat for individuals active in any 12-Step program. The Franciscan Center, 3010 N. Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603-5345.

### Spirit Woven: Life Connected. April 23-25, 2004. Friday, 7:00 p.m.-Sunday, noon.

Fr. Bernie Tickerhoof, TOR. This retreat seeks to build our awareness of the ties that bond us with God, with creation and with one another. Franciscan Spirit and Life Center. 3605 McRoberts Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340. 412-881-9207.

### Reconciliation. May 28-29, 2004. Friday, 7:00 p.m.-Sunday, 2:00 p.m.

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton and Sr. Anne Dougherty, OSF. This second annual "peace retreat" will be a time to reflect on how God creates relationships, heals and restores them when they have been broken. The Franciscan Center, 3010 N. Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603-5345.

## 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
OfP	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
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

## A WORD FROM BONAVENTURE

... LOOK TOWARD THE **MERCY SEAT** AND BE **ASTONISHED** THAT THERE THE **FIRST PRINCIPLE** IS **JOINED TO THE LAST, GOD WITH HUMANITY** ... THE **ETERNAL** IS **JOINED WITH TEMPORAL HUMANITY**, **BORN OF THE VIRGIN IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME**; THE **MOST SIMPLE WITH THE MOST COMPLEX**, THE **MOST ACTUAL WITH THAT WHICH SUFFERED SUPREME**LY AND **DIED**; THE **MOST PERFECT AND IMMENSE WITH THE MOST MODEST**, THE **SUPREME**LY ONE AND **ALL-INCLUSIVE WITH AN INDIVIDUAL COMPOSITE DISTINCT FROM OTHERS**, THAT **IS, THE HUMAN BEING, JESUS CHRIST**.

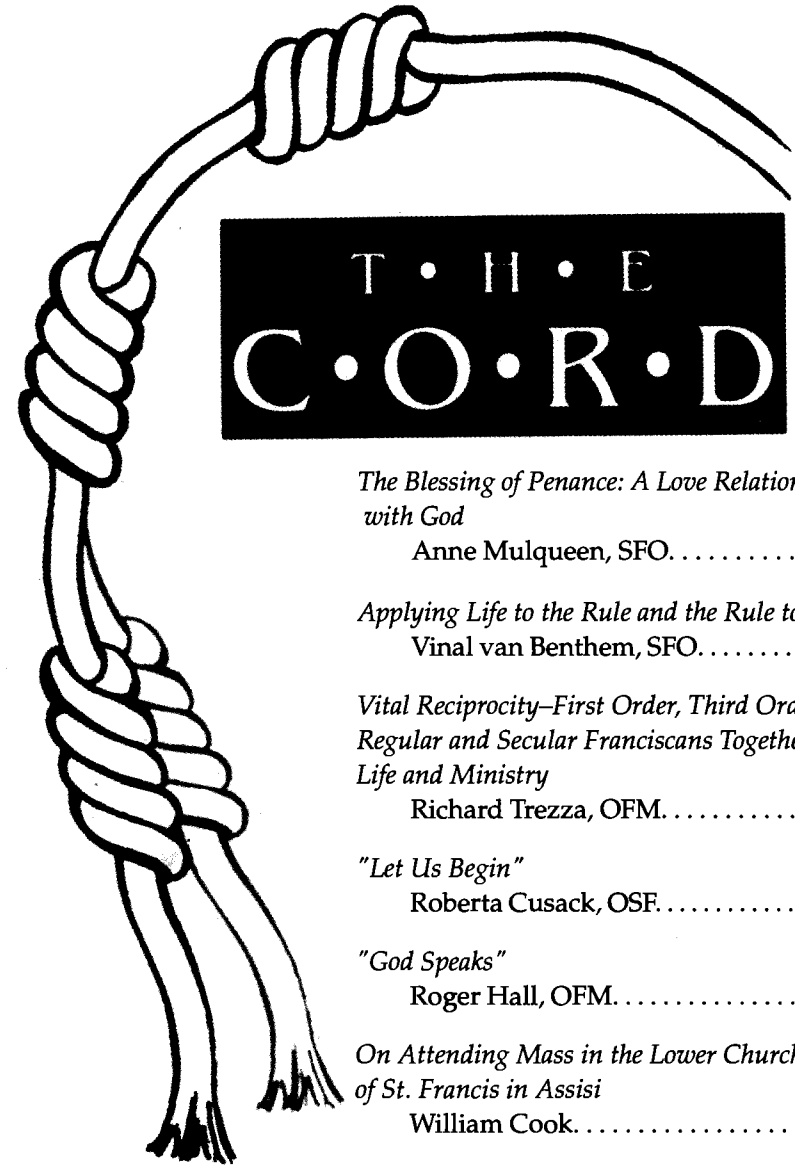
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**THE CORD**  
**A Franciscan Spiritual Review**

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

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3. Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined. Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
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(1Cor. 13:6). (2Cel 5:8).  
(RegNB 23:2). (4LAg 2:13).

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*, 54.3 (2004)

**Editorial**

Once again we happily offer an issue dedicated to our brothers and sisters in the Secular Franciscan Order. The 2003 issue commemorating the 25th anniversary of the approval of the Secular Rule is sold out—so if you have a copy, hold on to it. One day it will be a valuable antique! It is really gratifying that there is such high interest in the concept of an issue dedicated to SFO life.

Last June, after the publication deadline for the 2003 SFO issue, more than 200 Secular Franciscans attended a symposium here at St. Bonaventure University, bringing their enthusiasm and energy to a campus that really needed a boost. One of the questions at the time was how to get the symposium materials into the hands of so many who would have liked to attend the sessions, but could not. This current issue provides a partial solution. The first three articles are texts of some of the presentations made then. They cover areas of formation, applications of the Rule, and the role of the spiritual assistant in SFO life. Each author gave solid input, asked challenging questions, and proposed re-dedication to the Secular Franciscan vocation. We are pleased to be able to share these texts with all our readers.

In addition, this issue presents material which we believe will serve well the purpose of this issue: to foster the call to continual conversion, to sound the challenge we all face to be ever more faithful to the call to build the Kingdom of God in concrete ways, and to embrace the historical heritage of Franciscan life. The authors are not Secular Franciscans, but write of themes and values that blur the boundaries of "Order" and widen the circle of "family." Their contributions are greatly appreciated.

Speaking of appreciation, as editor I wish to express heartfelt congratulations and thanks to Sr. Margaret Carney, OSF, who on June 1st will move into the presidency of the University. Her leadership, stamina, and energetic zeal have served this journal and all aspects of the Franciscan Institute extraordinarily well. It has been a privilege and a grace to work with her these last two years. May her gifts continue to enrich all who minister here, and may the generous Spirit of our God hover above her in all her undertakings!

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*

## The Blessing of Penance: A Love Relationship with God

Anne H. Mulqueen, SFO

*[The present article reprises the thoughts expressed in an address given at the Fr. Robert M. Stewart, OFM, Memorial Seminar, held at Saint Bonaventure University in June 2003.]*

Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things [penance] and persevere in doing them, because "the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Saint Francis of Assisi

### Francis, Penance, and Penitents

To understand the significance of Saint Francis's words in the Prologue to The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, we need to understand Francis's perception of a life of penance. Francis regarded sin as that which separates humanity from God. If sin separates one from God, then it follows that repentance can restore that union.

As Francis looked back on his life, as he neared the end of his days, he could distinguish in it two periods. One he described plainly and concisely as "when I was in sin" and the other as "doing penance."<sup>2</sup>

Francis came to understand sin as gratifying the ego and exercising self will. Penance was a means of dying to self and obeying God's will. Penance transformed Francis into a man of deep reverence for God and all God's creation. He changed from a self-centered young man to a selfless saint. Francis perceived penance as pure grace and gift from God. Of his own conversion experience he wrote, "that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

"Penance as Blessing"—how odd that sounds. I don't think it will become a popular motto for most twenty-first century Americans. The notion that it is better to practice self-denial rather than self-indulgence is neither popular nor often practiced. But penance or transcendence of ego is a life-giving position, and it does bring a blessing upon those who live it. It becomes a path to union with God.

Francis was born into a time of spiritual awakening and, as a young man, joined a penitential movement. The penitents chose a life of public repentance both for their personal sins and the sins of others. Obviously, Saint Francis was not the first to see penance as salvific, nor was he the first to adopt penance as a way of life. From the fall of Adam and Eve, God has repeatedly called his people to conversion.

### Biblical Roots of Penance

The Bible is filled with instances of God's call to repentance. The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Zechariah and the most fearless of them all, John the Baptist, continually called God's people to conversion. The prophet's role is to remind the people to seek the Lord while He may be found (Isaiah); to rend their hearts and not their garments (Joel); to hate evil and love good (Amos); to act upon the message of the one in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord (Luke 3:17). And when the Messiah appeared, his prophetic message was, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32).

How do we obey the Lord Jesus Christ and the message of the prophets? How do we begin to do penance? Secular Franciscans begin by reading, internalizing, and living the Rule, going from prayerful gospel reflection to living its message in their secular lives. The model is Saint Francis of Assisi, ". . . who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people" (Article 4, SFO Rule). Francis was a man who had the Spirit of God at work in him; a man responding in love to God who first loved him; a man willing to turn away from his sinful life, seek purification, change his behavior and resolve to do good. Francis of Assisi is our human illustration of a life of penance. What he did in his time in history, we are called to do now.

### Exhortation of Saint Francis to the Brothers and Sisters in Penance

Did Saint Francis leave us instructions on how to live a life of penance? I believe he did. Francis left a "letter" which, at times, is referred to as the Earlier Exhortation. It is inserted at the beginning of the Rule of 1978 as the Prologue. It is an exhortation that describes those who do penance as blessed and those who do not do penance as lost. Basically, the first part of the Prologue describes a covenant relationship between God and the penitent. The penitent promises to love God totally—heart, soul, mind and body—and to love his neighbor as himself. The penitent promises to turn away from sinful inclinations and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the penitent does these things and perseveres in doing them, the result will be worthy



fruits of penance. God, in turn, promises to send the Spirit of the Lord upon the penitents and transform them into "spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup>

Robert M. Stewart, OFM, in his book *De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam: The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order*, summarizes the exhortations in these words: "Thus, briefly put, the text says that doing penance brings a person to salvation and not doing penance leads a person to damnation."<sup>5</sup>

## Dynamics of Conversion

Leaving the thirteenth century and rejoining the twenty-first century, we ask the question, "How do we appropriate the words of Saint Francis into our lives and our time in history?" Recognizing my dependence on Fr. Bob Stewart's research, and aware of the potential for "stealing fruit," I acknowledge that the essence of the information I use on the dynamics of conversion belongs to Fr. Stewart and the theologians upon whom he relied for substantiation. Below is a brief explanation of the contributions of these theologians.

- Bernard Lonergan: "Lonergan describes conversion as a vertical exercise of freedom, a movement to a new horizon, which involves an 'about-face,' that is, a repudiation of the past and a choice of something new."<sup>6</sup> Lonergan's theory is that conversion occurs on four levels of experience: affective, intellectual, moral, and religious. Lonergan believed conversion radically transformed a person, not simply "changed" a person.
- Donald Gelpi: Gelpi's view of conversion is "the decision to pass from irresponsible to responsible behavior in some distinguishable realm of human experience."<sup>7</sup> Gelpi's premise regarding the dynamics of conversion anticipates occasions of "ongoing conversion" after the initial conversion experience. Gelpi enlarges Lonergan's aspects of conversion and adds a fifth area, socio-political conversion.
- Walter Conn: Conn wrote an analysis of conversion based on the work of Bernard Lonergan. Conn offers a fuller description and treatment of affective, intellectual, moral and religious conversion than did Lonergan.

— When considering the conversion of the total person, it is important to remember that a person can be converted in one or more areas of her life without being converted in all five. Although all components of conversion are related to one another, all five are distinct. Yet, each aspect of conversion has an effect on the others. As an example, I might be converted affectively,

intellectually, morally and religiously and not be converted in the socio-political dimension.

## Conversion Through the Lens of the SFO Rule

These examples of living conversion through the lens of the SFO Rule are mine. These are not the only way the texts can be compared and interpreted. I invite you to open your hearts to the words of Saint Francis in the Prologue and the words contained in the Articles of the Rule. Then you might critically evaluate the concepts, judge them according to your informed conscience, and listen to the Spirit of God speaking to you. If you feel the stirring of the Spirit, act on what the Lord has revealed.

### • Conversion of Affect (Emotions)

Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things [love and 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. . ." (Prologue).

Mindful that they are bearers of peace . . . [and] trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and the transforming power of love and pardon, [they are to be] . . . [m]essengers of perfect joy in every circumstance . . . bring[ing] joy and hope to others (Article 19).

Penitents, on the path to emotional or affective conversion, acknowledge unhealthy or disordered elements of their emotions. They strive to cultivate healthy emotions. When stability and order are brought to a disordered emotional life, the penitent is free to love God and all that God has created. The person experiencing affective conversion is freed from guilt, fear, anger and other destructive emotions. Those whose hearts are converted will desire nothing more than to have the Spirit of God at work in them.

### • Conversion of Intellect (Mind)

I entrusted to them the message you entrusted to me and they received it. They have known that in truth I came from you, they have believed that it was you who sent me (Prologue).

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. . . (Article 19).

Fundamental characteristics of a converted intellect are critical theological reflection, a desire to know the truth, and a passion for understanding. Penitents seeking intellectual conversion want to know the truth. Their love for the truth and passion for understanding allow them to face their own disordered thinking processes and change. These penitents commit themselves to critically examining their values and beliefs in dialogue with others.

- Moral Conversion (Values)

We are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to him through a holy life which must give light to others by example (Prologue).

Thus, in the spirit of "the Beatitudes," and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power (Article 11).

The penitent experiencing moral conversion is willing to confront his or her disordered moral values and change them. These fortunate people are aware that they must live the values and ideal they profess. A shift in making decisions based on satisfaction to making decisions based on what is morally and ethically correct occurs. When moral conversion is present, penitents "... conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls 'conversion'" (Article 7).

- Religious Conversion (Faith)

Bless and consecrate them, and I consecrate myself for their sakes. I do not pray for them alone; I pray also for those who will believe in me through their word that they may be holy by being one as we are (Prologue).

They have been made living members of the Church by being 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 (Article 6).

Christians blessed with religious or faith conversion accept God's love revealed in Jesus the Christ. They commit themselves to following the teaching of Jesus as contained in the Gospels without reservation. Their center of the reality

shifts from temporal concerns to transcendent realities. They understand they did nothing to "earn" or "achieve" this gift. It is pure grace of God. To those who accept the gift of faith, Saint Francis adds this blessing from his Testament:

May whoever observes all this be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father, and on earth with that of his beloved Son, together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

- Conversion of Purpose (Socio-Political)

All who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with all their strength, and love their neighbors as themselves ... (Prologue);

... [are] individually and collectively in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives (Article 15);

... esteem work both as a gift and a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community (Article 16);

... cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life (Article 17);

... respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which bear the imprint of the Most High (Article 18);

... [foster communion by] meeting with other Franciscan groups, especially with youth groups" (Article 24).

Saint Francis experiences conversion in all five aspects of his being. In his Testament he says:

The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and afterward I lingered a little and left the world.<sup>8</sup>

## Scriptural Model of the Conversion of Saint Peter

In addition to the models/levels of conversion identified above, we can learn from the life of Saint Peter how to enter into all aspects of conversion.

Saint Peter is an exceptional model of conversion because during his lifetime, he recovered the likeness of God through dying to sin and self-centeredness.

### Peter's Denial of Christ and Affective Conversion

This gospel scene opens with Jesus being led away and Peter following at a distance. A fire burns in the courtyard. Peter is sitting among the people when a servant girl sees him and says:

"This man was with him too." But he denied it. "Woman, I do not know him," he said. Shortly afterwards someone else saw him and said, "You are one of them too." But Peter replied, "I am not, my friend." About an hour later another man insisted, saying, "This fellow was certainly with him. Why, he is a Galilean." Peter said, "My friend, I do not know what you are talking about." At that instance while he was still speaking, the cock crowed, and the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, and Peter remembered the Lord's words when he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will have disowned me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly (Luke 22:55-62).

Peter enters the courtyard afraid. His fear causes him to deny Jesus. When Peter faces his fear, he repents in tears and anguish. Peter experiences affective conversion.

### Peter's Address at Pentecost and Intellectual Conversion

The season is Pentecost. The apostles are assembled in one place. There is the sound of fierce winds. Tongues of fire come to rest on each head. All are filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in foreign languages as led by the Spirit. Also in Jerusalem are devout men from various nations. They are amazed to hear these men speaking their languages. They laugh and assume the spirit-filled men have had too much to drink. Peter stands and says:

Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, make no mistake about this, but listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you imagine; why, it is only the third hour of the day. On the contrary, this is what the prophet was saying (Acts 2:14-16).

Peter explains this phenomenon to the crowd. He tells them that the Lord is pouring out his Spirit on all humanity. He tells them that their sons and daughters will prophesy, that their young people will see visions, and their old people will dream dreams. Peter himself experienced intellectual conversion.

### Peter's Counsel During Persecution and Moral Conversion

In his letter to the Jewish Christians, Peter expresses concern about their tendency to complain about being persecuted. Peter reminds them that they are responsible for their moral decisions and actions, even in the midst of persecution. He says to them:

Your minds, then, must be sober and ready for action; put all your hope in the grace brought to you by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Do not allow yourselves to be shaped by the passions of your old ignorance, but be obedient children, be yourselves holy in all your activity, after the model of the Holy One who calls us, since scripture says, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1Peter 1:13-16).

Peter is not only morally converted, but shares the fruit his moral conversion with them.

### Peter's Profession of Faith and Religious Conversion

The gospel scene is the region of Caesarea Phillippi and Jesus is with his disciples. He asks them the question:

"Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked, "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:13-16).

Peter makes an astounding profession of faith in Jesus. Jesus then explains to Peter that it was not humanly possible for him to come to this understanding on his own. It was the pure gift of his heavenly Father. Peter has received the gift of religious conversion.

### Peter's Concern for the Outcasts

In this particular gospel scene, Peter and John are on their way to the Temple to pray. A man, crippled from birth, is being carried to the gate of the temple to beg from the people going inside.

When this man saw Peter and John on their way into the Temple he begged from them. Peter, and John too, looked straight at him and said, "Look at us." He turned to them expectantly, hoping to get something from them, but Peter said, "I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!" Then they took him by the right hand and helped him to stand up (Acts 3:1-7).

Peter empathizes with this man who has to live on the fringe of Jewish society. Peter chooses to give to him freely what Peter has been freely given.

### Peter Transformed into the Image and Likeness of Christ

At the end of his life, it would seem that Saint Peter's conversion was complete. He accepted all that committed discipleship entails and his life ends in exile and imprisonment. Again and again he said "yes" to Christ. The cost of discipleship for Peter was his life.

Tradition tells us Peter died on a cross upside down. He didn't consider himself worthy to be crucified as Christ had been. The Peter who joins Christ at the end of his life is not the same fisherman who left all to follow Jesus. Peter dies as Jesus did, a man for others. Through his living and in his dying, Peter is changed into the image and likeness of his beloved.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to quote the late Father Bob Stewart's challenge to the Secular Franciscan Order:

Where the members of Secular Franciscan Fraternities fully commit themselves individually and collectively to ongoing conversion in all areas of their lives, a blessing will be given to the Church. . . . The palpable holiness of authentically lived conversion cannot but be a grace in the Church. . . . The Secular Franciscan Order will gain a "new impetus" when the challenge of the primitive Rule becomes evident again, when the radical conversion envisioned is lived individually and communally by the members such that the fraternities themselves become living sacraments, become palpable expressions of God's love and presence in our world.<sup>9</sup>

The good news is we don't have to wait for heaven to enjoy the rewards of a life of penance. If we live our charism to the fullest in our ordinary secular lives, God promises us:

- A love relationship with the Almighty as the pursuer;
- Access to the Spirit of God working in us in our ministries and apostolates;
- Freedom from guilt, fear, anger and other destructive emotions;
- An appreciation for truth and a passion for understanding;
- A shift in decision making from self-satisfaction to principled action;
- A shift in focus from the finite pleasures to transcendent realities;
- A deepening awareness that we are called to leave our comfort zone and minister to those less fortunate.

May the entire Franciscan family appropriate the words of Saint Francis set forth in the Prologue to the SFO Rule, and produce worthy fruits of penance through enfleshing these words which are spirit and life.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Earlier Exhortation, *Exhortation of Saint Francis to the Brothers and Sisters in Penance* in Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, William J., Short, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, Volume 1, *The Saint* (New York: New City Press, 1999), 41-44.

<sup>2</sup>Raoul Manselli, *St. Francis of Assisi*, translated by P. Duggan (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1988), 41.

<sup>3</sup>Testament 1-3. Cf. Armstrong, *Francis and Clare* (NY: Paulist Press, 1982), 154.

<sup>4</sup>Earlier Exhortation.

<sup>5</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), 335.

<sup>6</sup>Stewart, 343.

<sup>7</sup>Stewart, 343.

<sup>8</sup>Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, William J., Short, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, Volume 1, *The Saint* (New York: New City Press, 1999), 124.

<sup>9</sup>Stewart, 364.



## Applying the Rule to Life and Life to the Rule

Vinal van Benthem, SFO

Our “New” Rule was written so that the form of life preached by Francis of Assisi might gain new impetus—and flourish—vigorously! It presents the thirteenth-century Rule in the language and theology of the 2nd Vatican Council! By what grace did we come to profess this Rule? Did something significant happen? Was there some ‘defining moment’? What did it mean? What is the story? How was Francis introduced to you? With hospitality? With love? With joy? Was there some kind of internal dialogue going on? Were there issues you spent time wrestling with? Did you pray about it? How did you finally decide to follow Francis?

However you answered these questions—however it came to be—the fact is that now you’re professed. . . .*So what?? Now what???* Where are you now on your Franciscan journey? How did you get here? Imagine two moments in the future: Tuesday at 10:00 A.M. and Saturday at 2:00 P.M. What will you be doing—and how will it be different because you’re a professed Secular Franciscan?

How have the Scriptures affected your life? Is there anything that you are struggling with? How is your prayer life? What is prayer for you? How do you incorporate prayer into your life?

Who invited you into the Secular Franciscan way of life? The primary Minister of Invitation into the SFO is the community—but there has to be a community—and that means we might actually have to talk to one another!!!

### Formation

Profession is the “kiss”—but there’s a whole lot that goes on before that. It’s kind of like a “courtship.” What do people see when they see us? Are we community? Do we gather in real community? Are we hospitable with one another? Do we pray together? Most of us would probably answer “yes,” but are we really a people of the Eucharist? What does that mean? My fraternity celebrates Eucharist only on very special occasions. For example, at Profes-

sion (in church—followed by a potluck supper); Christmas (home of one of the members, with families—followed by a potluck supper); completion of the Candidacy Retreat (on the Formation Minister’s deck—outside—followed by a potluck supper). (We do like our potluck suppers!)

Do we share a common belief? Again, most of us can probably answer “yes.” Then the question is—what do we believe? Do we engage in ongoing formation? Do we live what we believe? H-m-m-m. . . .

Profession can’t be about “knowledge” or “facts”—or how many books we’ve read. (Or even what formation materials we use.)

First—Information;

Second—Formation;

Third—and most importantly—*transformation!*

Profession isn’t about “what” we know—but “Who” we know. Profession isn’t about “who” we are—but “Whose”! Francis never claimed followers for himself. He belonged only to Jesus. We say that, but do we believe it? At the heart of effective formation is not the skill or knowledge of the Formation Minister—it’s the heart of the Formation Minister! It’s the heart of the community!

How do we treat the people who are recently professed?

For that matter—how do we treat the people who are not so recently professed? Take it one step further—how do we treat the people who are not professed? People in our families, our parishes? Our neighborhoods and communities? Who are the lepers in our world? The marginalized? The hungry rich and the hungry poor? The lonely old and the lonely young? How would Francis treat them? How would Jesus treat them?

“Love the Lord with your whole heart—strength—soul—mind—(most of us try hard to do this part, but then it gets harder) . . . and your neighbor (who is my neighbor? the Samaritan? the Muslim? the woman next door with the noisy kids and the loud TV?) . . . as yourself.” (Do you love yourself? Did you ever think about the fact that you are commanded to love yourself? Do you eat regularly and healthily? Do you get enough exercise and rest?)

“Receive the Eucharist” (most of us are really good at this one). “Produce worthy fruits of penance” (perhaps not quite as good at this one, however). Give light to others by example (in Church—right? That’s where Francis spent most of his time—right? And Jesus?) in various ways and forms but in life-giving union. (This comes up over and over again—it’s that “COMMUNITY” thing again.)

### Living the Gospel

Are we an apostolic community? Are you engaged in any apostolic service? When I was professed we had to have an “apostolate”—but that was easy

for me. I was involved in youth ministry. Later, the emphasis was on the spirituality of work. The truth is that if we aren't on mission we aren't doing what we professed to do! The way we carry out our apostolate is how we make present the charism of our Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the church. Francis made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and with people.

"... strive for perfect charity in their own secular state. . . ." (Are we nice to the people we live and work with—even when they aren't around?)

"Live the Gospel by means of this rule." This present Rule adapts the SFO to the needs and expectations of the Holy Church in the conditions of changing times. Why is it that people who may have "Franciscan hearts" are so hesitant about becoming Secular Franciscans? Could it be because they need us to be flexible! They need us to use our imaginations? Life is messy. We keep trying to make it neat by institutionalizing it and, in the process, we drain it of its humanity.

Secular Franciscans should "devote themselves to careful reading of the Gospel . . ." (so far so good—we do Bible Study) and go from Gospel to Life and from Life to the Gospel. But are we truly a Gospel people? We may read the story of the woman caught in adultery at lunchtime but it won't mean a thing if we continue to throw stones when we get back to work!

SFO members "Seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in our brothers and sisters . . ." (that community part again . . .), in Sacred Scripture, in the Church (Big "C" and little "c") "and in liturgical activity." (Eucharistic life—note, this is mentioned last, which usually means something when you find it in church documents.)

## Mission to Witness

What is the simplest way to understand the concept of mission? We must be witnesses and instruments of (the Church's) Mission among all people—proclaiming Christ by our life (mentioned first) and by our words. "Let us want to live in full Communion with the Pope, Bishops and Priests, fostering open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and creativity." (The only real "crisis" is a "crisis of imagination.")

Secular Franciscans are called to "conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change" which the Gospel calls "conversion"—a lifelong process carried out daily; not something we do "for show," like wearing Franciscan jewelry!

"Let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they do." SFOs are to participate in the sacramental life of the Church—above all, Eucharist. They are to "join in liturgical prayer," in one of the forms proposed by the Church. (Note the words "join in"—that doesn't mean we have to do these things at our

meetings! We are to *join in* liturgical prayer—which doesn't necessarily mean doing it ourselves.

Part of the mission is the way we express ardent love for Mary by imitating her complete self-giving. The Rule also exhorts us: "Let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances in life." This is what puts the SECULAR in Secular Franciscan! As laity we "witness to the poor and crucified Christ—even in difficulties—in [our] various circumstances in life."

We "seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying [our] own material needs . . . in [our] various circumstances in life . . . being stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children." We "strive to purify [our] hearts from the tendency and yearning for possessions and power." (Workplace power struggles? Parish cliques?)

SFOs "set themselves free to love (a) God and (b) their brothers and sisters. . . ." (Community—there it is again.) They "accept all people . . . (even the next door neighbor whose dog drives me crazy?) as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ . . . [and] place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially the lowly." (Wouldn't it be easier just to write a check?)

The Rule tells us we are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world by witnessing the Christian spirit of service. This can be something as simple as picking up your neighbor's tray when you go out to lunch.

We are called individually and collectively to be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of our lives. "Do as I DO? Or Do as I SAY?"

## Work and Family

"Let them esteem work both as gift and as a sharing in the creation" (manufacturing, writing computer programs); "redemption" (healthcare, waste management, forestry); "and service" (sales; travel; human resources) of the human community. What we do from Monday through Saturday is what we bring to place on the altar on Sunday—the "*work* of human hands" . . .

What else does the Rule tell us about our everyday lives? "In their family [they] cultivate . . . a Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, respect for life." (How do we talk to our children? Our spouse? Do we build up? Or tear down?) "By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives . . . bear witness *in the world* to the love of Christ for His Church." Again, the Rule encourages us to "Joyfully accompany children on their human and spiritual journey." Do we participate in our children's Christian education? Perhaps volunteering as catechists? Or do we leave it up to the school? or Sister? Or Father? Do we *listen* to our children? Do we pay attention to what they are saying?

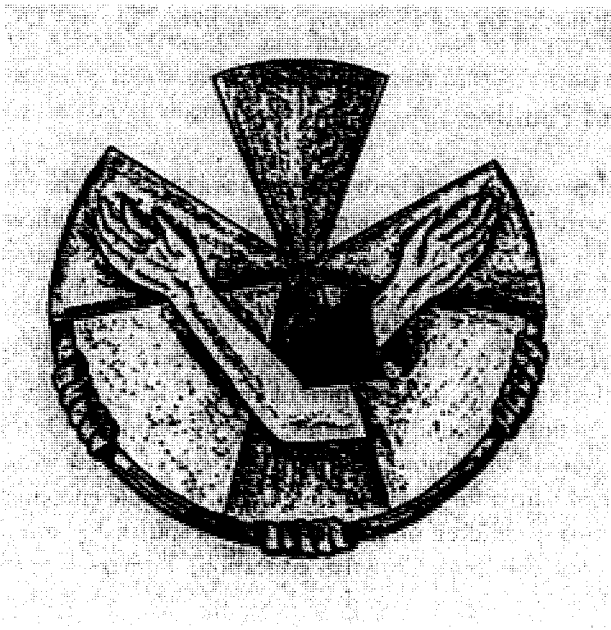
## Conclusion

We have so many areas in which our Franciscan formation teaches us how to walk the path of holiness today. We are challenged to respect all creatures and to move from exploiting creation (do we use paper or styrofoam cups at meetings?) to “universal kinship.” (“Brother Sun” and “Sister Moon” . . . how did Francis know?)

We are challenged to be “bearers of peace” (even with my neighbors? my family? even the people I don’t like?) and “messengers of perfect joy.” Where? In the world! How? In whatever ways are proper to our various circumstances in life!

Our Rule did not magically appear in Francis’s hands, it evolved, and it continues to evolve!!! This is the Rule that could change the world if we really understood and lived it. But we must commit ourselves to continuing the process.

What threshold is God inviting us to step over at this time? What risk is God inviting us to take? What is the “Next Step”—for your Region? For your community? For you?



## **Vital Reciprocity – First Order, Third Order Regular and Secular Franciscans Together in Life and Ministry**

Richard Trezza, OFM

The notion of “vital reciprocity” has to do with conviction. We must be convinced of the need for it or else the ink spilled in defense of it will have been spilled in vain. In preparation for this talk, I took the *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance* and actually read the gray, imposing tome. There, neatly laid out was all the documentation concerning Spiritual Assistance and the expected give and take between the friars and the Secular Franciscans—all equal members of the same Religious family. Each First Order obedience and that of the Third Order Regular included those passages of their respective Rules and Constitutions which had something to say about the relationship of all branches of the family to each other. Each of the Ministers General of the three First Order obediences and the Third Order Regular wrote eloquently about the subject at hand . . . “vital reciprocity.” The sentiments are anything but fluff and pie in the sky. “We either flourish together or we perish together” was one such observation.

Somehow those words, perhaps just like the words and sentiments which make up the documents of Vatican Council II remain just words. They have yet to find expression in the everyday praxis and in the minds and hearts of those for whom they were written. Those carefully chosen words have yet to effect that radical change of mind and heart . . . that “*conversio*,” if you will, which makes penitents of us all. That penance of doing the difficult thing which we know or should know to be the right thing—not only as individuals but also communally as a Church—as an Order—as a family with all its limitations.

Perhaps we are not yet convinced. Perhaps we see these statements as rebellious children who don’t want to do as we are told. As with most situations, we exist on the local level. We resonate with what we know—the familiar. We are comfortable with who and what we know . . . doing the things we do best. Unless we force ourselves to do so, we usually do not see the larger pic-



ture. We are too involved in our own small situations. But even non-ecclesiastical entities are speaking of a "new collaboration." Only a decade ago we were celebrating our diversity. Parents preferred to rear their children in places like Manhattan's Upper West Side where I currently minister. Why? Because it is a diverse community with many possibilities to be and work together for a better way of life. In this neighborhood, you can go out to eat every night for a month and eat a different country's cuisine within an eight-block radius! The best schools are those with diverse student populations. Grants of money are readily awarded to those programs which serve a wide diversity of peoples. It seems that we are able to accommodate the culturally diverse, the financially diverse, the sexually diverse, even be champions of that religious diversity called ecumenism, but for some reason not be able to garner the benefits of the diversity of charisms in our own Franciscan house. Those responsible for this gathering, the Franciscan Institute Center for Secular Franciscan Studies, have taken the bold initiative in reversing this sorry situation. *Deo gratias!*

Now that this societal diversity is a reality and applauded, we are being called upon to work together collaboratively in order to be a part of something new being born. It would be a shame not to recognize the same need in our Church and Order.

All that having been said, I think we need to promise a few things to one another.

**Internationally**, on the part of the friars who have the *altius moderamen*, there is a need to insure that at each and every General Chapter, that there be ample time on the Agenda for a discussion on how the *altius moderamen* is being exercised. I would imagine that the General Spiritual Assistants of all First Order obediences and the TOR are *ex-officio* members of their respective General Chapters and may even give a reckoning of their ministry and the state of Assistance in their Orders. But goals need to be made which will trickle down to the national levels of Assistance . . . something truly worthwhile which could undergo scrutiny or evaluation. Needless to say, the General Minister and Council of the International Fraternity (CIOFS) would be invited to join the discussion. CIOFS could collaborate in hammering out legislation concerning this much desired reciprocity with the members of the friar General councils. This may be difficult to carry out. Perhaps it is enough that the sentiments concerning vital reciprocity already expressed in the formal documents suffice for the General level and that most of the grunt work will have to happen nationally, regionally and locally. But, who knows?

Perhaps after all these years those sentiments could find themselves going on to the next step.

On the **National level**, the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) can have an on-going dialogue with the U.S. Provincials and Re-

gional SFO Ministers concerning collaboration in friar and SFO ministries. Perhaps the Apostolic Commissions already mirrored in friar apostolates may be a kicking-off point. The efforts of the CNSA in inviting friar provincials to the discussion table is to be commended. Could some of the members of the National Fraternity (NAFRA) be paired with friars on Provincial directorates who are interested in the same slice of Gospel life and who could collaborate to bring about a more effective living out of Franciscan life?

Friars who are **Regional Spiritual Assistants (RSA)** usually share that ministry with their other ministries in the provinces . . . teaching, parish work, etc. Would ministry to/with the SFO ever become so important that a friar would actually ask permission from his provincial to take a slice of time away from his "full-time" ministry in order to devote some quality time to his ministry to the SFO? Maybe a couple of weeks every 2 months for nothing but SFO related ministry. Time to catch up on visitations, talks, meetings with other Spiritual Assistants in the region, etc. This sort of arrangement would let the friar provincial know that this is important work, indeed, and would also say something to the Seculars about the RSA's commitment to them. Could the SFO on the Regional level organize in such a way that collaboration is possible with the friars in that region?

On the **Local level**, the friar and non-friar Spiritual Assistants should promise to be faithful to the job description as outlined in the Handbook—neither being directive or strong handed, but not retiring into oblivion either. Seculars, on their part, should strive to live by their Rule. The phrase "the New Rule" should be obsolete. They should do their very best to maintain good fraternities—the kind to which anyone would be happy to encourage inquirers to join. They should strive to make those fraternities truly the 'privileged places' spoken of by the SFO Rule.

Our world is calling out for collaboration. Could today's Franciscan movement do for today's world what it did for the Church and world of Francis and Clare of Assisi? I believe it could and it must. Let us work together, convinced of our common religious ancestry, to build up our Church and Order once again.

This article was taken from a talk given by Fr. Richard at the 2003 symposium celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SFO Rule at St. Bonaventure University.

## **“Let Us Begin”**

Roberta Cusack, OSF

When asked to contribute something to the “Clarion” I settled for a little sharing on the Volterra Letter, or the Recensor Prior, if you will. This is better known as Francis’s First Letter to the Faithful. Father Cajetan Esser, a German Franciscan scholar of blessed memory, dates this between 1213-1215 and gives it special importance among Francis’s writings. Since it does not follow the style of medieval letter form it seems to be more in keeping with his preaching. This piece was rediscovered by Paul Sabatier, a Protestant Franciscan scholar in 1902 in the Guarnacci Library at Volterra, Italy. Hence the title. At that time it was thought to be an earlier version of the 2LtF. Esser did extensive research on this letter in the 1970s attesting to its authenticity and alerting us to this great treasure.

I felt it good to make a statement about the Volterra letter as it is used as Prelude to the revised Rules of the SFO and the TOR Franciscan family, we modern day Penitents of Assisi. (Penance must always be understood in the Biblical context when referring to our charism.) The letter connects us with 800 years of Franciscan history, and bonds our two realities by their common birth. Francis addressed this letter to the Penitents in the Umbrian Valley, those members of the Church’s Order of Penitents to which he had briefly belonged before following his vision to be simple and subject to all. When the early Friars asked him how they should identify themselves when people asked, Francis responded “we are Penitents from Assisi.” Celano tells us “Francis acted boldly in all things . . . and that he attracted and formed many others” (1C 37).

It was quite natural, according to Esser, that Francis give some suggestions, instructions, and encouragement to the men and women who followed him in the penitential movement. There were many other groups people could have joined, but Francis must have sensed God’s plan when he provided a “form of life” for the penitents. This letter is the first indication we have of St. Francis giving such direction to penitents. It is, therefore, the most significant original text from the founder to people like ourselves. At that time all the

penitents were lay, and later, out of this movement, religious groups began to develop. But originally we all had the same first Rule: “Memoriale Propositi” of 1221. Developed, most likely, through the collaborative efforts of Cardinal Hugolino and Francis, this text formed the rule for Franciscan penitents until Pope Nicholas IV revised it in 1289. The Rule of 1289 served both secular Franciscan and little groups of religious penitents who wished to live communally. In 1521 Pope Leo X gave the religious groups a separate Rule. The Secular Franciscans used the 1289 Rule until 1883 when Leo XIII authorized a revision. After Vatican II, the SFO Rule (previously known as the TOS Rule) was revised and blessed by Pope Paul VI in 1978. The TOR Rule was revised and promulgated in 1982 by Pope John Paul II. However, all of our Franciscan Rules bear the same basic spiritual values and for those of us in the Third Order tradition, secular or religious, the emphasis is on conversion, a more positive and comprehensive term for penance.

In the first chapter of the first edition of the Letter to the Faithful, Francis speaks with authority and in a spirit of prophecy as he addresses us “in the Name of the Lord.” This phrase opened any official formation document at the time of Francis. In the opening phrase he alludes to the great Jewish prayer formula, the Shema of Dt. 6: 4-9, so central to Jewish prayer. Francis must have been moved by this holistic mandate as it is repeated in many of his writings.

In that same first paragraph I recall a great scripture scholar, Carroll Stuhlmueller, CP, emphasizing that “hating or despising our bodies” would be better translated “to love less or proportionately.” Francis details this for us in his 28 Admonitions, or words of exhortation and encouragement. These had to spring from Francis’s awareness of his own sinful humanness. They are very powerful statements demanding intense self-knowledge. Then when we are Spirit-filled, we can take action in what we have promised, thus “producing worthy fruits of penance.” Francis is not simply referring to external deeds but rather to our attitudinal stance before God whereby we invite our God to lead and direct our steps in this ongoing journey. He tells us we will then be happy in this emptying out, our personal imitation of the kenosis of Christ Jesus, (Phil. 2: 6-11).

Articles 7-10 deal with relationships as Francis breaks forth in his marvelously spellbinding and charismatic preaching. True freedom comes of the indwelling of Christ Jesus’ Spirit as we strive to live the Paschal Mystery with sincerity and truth. Ephesians 3:17 is fulfilled as we enter the great awesome relationship with God as children, spouses, mothers, sisters and brothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. This union then is evidenced in our desire to know, to do, and ever be in the will of our God, consciously, lovingly and sincerely bearing the Godself in our very fragile members. We thereby give birth to God through all that we are and do. We praise the Godself through our bod-

ies, minds, spirits and emotions. This incarnational living is a powerfully graced experience. And it is always counter-cultural in order to give birth to God in our age. Our challenge, like Paul's, is to be the holy exchange of the permanent presence of Christ among all people, through the power of the Holy Spirit. What a sacred trust we have been given as special agents of the Spirit! And in this we do shine before others as an example (Mt. 5:16).

Francis then continues to encourage us in his "al'italia" style of effective repetition and ecstatic manner and movement. As he gains momentum in the dance of expressing God's love and presence, our Saint simply cannot say enough in praise of our good God, and he does so from a Trinitarian focus. This Triune aspect is in everything Francis writes. In this spirit, he quite naturally quotes Jesus' High Priestly prayer (Jn 17) for us, his intimate ones, sister and brother penitents. Johannine texts are very special to Francis. Just as Jesus the Lord yearns for our love, presence and union forever, so does Francis yearn for us, his followers.

It's good to remember that the movement is still very young. Francis had just gone to Rome in 1209 and it is probably 1213-1215 and the followers are still all Italian when he dictates this letter. So we can taste the freshness and

enthusiasm of Francis toward these people who want to live the Gospel as Jesus spoke it to him.

We, too, want to live that same Gospel as Francis focuses it for us in this first Letter to the Faithful. So for now, we hear him encouraging us, "let us begin brothers and sisters, for up to now we haven't done much . . ." Penance in the biblical sense is ongoing. There is really never a state of completion . . . we are ever in need of reconciliation as we strive for this. Yes, let us begin!

"La Verna, Monte di Dio" by Marino B. Banfucci, taken from *Il Monte della Verna Sintesi di un Millennio di Vita* (Arezzo: Edizioni "LaVerna," 1982), p. 73.



## On Attending Mass in the Lower Church of St. Francis in Assisi

William Cook

While in Assisi recently, I attended a Sunday mass in the Lower Church of San Francesco, where the original altar is still in place directly above the tomb of St. Francis. I've been there many times for mass and like to sit in the left transept because I can gaze at the Pietro Lorenzetti frescoes of Christ's passion in case I can't follow the sermon or it is not particularly interesting or edifying. I find as I get older that either the sound system has degenerated or my hearing isn't quite as sharp as it was a few years earlier, so I usually do some looking at frescoes on Sunday mornings in Assisi.

One thing I have liked about Sunday's principal mass in the Lower Church of San Francesco is its welcoming quality and international character. After all, most of the people in attendance are tourists/pilgrims, and at least a large minority do not understand much Italian. Hence, the principal celebrant usually gives a welcome to visitors and briefly explains the sacredness of place. Often, the readings plus the psalm are in different languages (most often Italian, English, French or Spanish or German, and an Asian language) so that just about everyone can be an active participant in some portion of the mass.

Alas, neither of the elements I have just described was present at the 10:30 mass of August 3, 2003. After a rather elaborate procession with about a dozen priests and lots of incense, the presider simply began the first part of the liturgy rather than offering any special greeting. All of the readings were in Italian. Surely, especially in the tourist/pilgrimage season, the friars missed an opportunity to offer hospitality and to evangelize (remember that despite famous stories of Francis preaching to birds and the Sultan, most of his sermons were given to exclusively Catholic audiences). I saw an American friar at the mass, so certainly a greeting or a call to exchange the kiss of peace could have been offered in English.

As I realized that I was attending a mass similar to those I attend each week when I am in Italy, I began to think of the Lorenzetti frescoes above me.

However, as it turns out, I made a mistake by sitting in the front row of the left transept. Unless I looked straight up or twisted my body in an awkward way, I could not see them. Hence, as the mass proceeded, I began to do what I have learned that people were supposed to do with the frescoes. I focused on different ones as they provided background for the lectern, the place where the homily was given, and where the consecration took place. I also was drawn to different frescoes in the Basilica depending on whether I was standing or sitting. Hence, as I tried to understand the readings and give the proper responses and recite the Creed, my experience of God's presence and of Francis as God's gift to the Church was enhanced by the extraordinary frescoes that completely cover the walls of the Lower Church.

Let me pause for a minute to tell you why I was in Assisi. I have been doing research in the Basilica for 25 years and have written about quite a few of the paintings in it. I have been bringing students to the Basilica for almost 30 years. In 2003, I had the honor of directing a seminar for college and university teachers sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities entitled "St. Francis in the Thirteenth Century." This group of fifteen college professors, all of whom are conducting their own research on some aspect of Franciscanism, met twice a week to discuss both written and visual texts about Francis produced in the thirteenth century. We were trying to find out not only about the historical Francis but also about how he was understood and presented to others in the century in which he lived (d.1226). For two of the six weeks of the seminar, we were in Assisi; and in fact our meetings took place in the Chapterhouse of the Sacro Convento, not more than 20 meters from where I sat at mass.

When I take my group into the Basilica of San Francesco to examine the frescoes, I explain how we need to do more than follow one story, for example the life and posthumous miracles of St. Francis in 28 scenes that surround the lower part of the nave of the Upper Church. I point out that these stories depicted in the Basilica are not self enclosed but are related to two levels of frescoes above them as well as to the windows, the vaults, and other decorations visible from the nave. I emphasize how the physical presence of so many frescoes and the fact that we can move even a little and see them and their relationships to one another differently is something to be taken advantage of. We can creatively relate and arrange stories, even ones from different narrative cycles, much more easily than when reading a book. After all, we literally leave one story behind when we turn the page of a book; it is no longer physically present to us. And we normally do not have two books with two different sets of stories in front of us at the same time! In the Upper Church, we can cast our eyes to the frescoes above a story of Francis, look back at the previous story and forward to the next one, and turn around to the part of the narrative of his life depicted on the opposite wall.

In addition to directing the seminar while in Assisi, I was critiquing several articles that will be in a book I am editing which has as its general theme the art of the Franciscan Order in the later Middle Ages. One of the pieces in my collection is by a brilliant young British scholar named Janet Robson. In it, she proposes a likely scenario for how pilgrims visited the Lower Church after about 1300. Basically, she suggests that they entered through a passage connecting the Mary Magdalen Chapel in the right nave into the right transept, circled counter-clockwise behind the altar into the left transept, and finally stopped in front of the altar to venerate Francis (pilgrims could not come into contact with the tomb, unlike so many other saints' shrines). Dr. Robson has her readers stop from time to time as they follow the pilgrims and look around to see what is in front of them, behind them, to the right and left, and above them. She points out, for example, that from a particular place we can see two stories juxtaposed that we had only seen separately as we began our visit to the area of the tomb.

Well, here I was on August 3 just a few feet from the altar beneath which Francis is buried. I really couldn't see my personal favorites, the Lorenzetti frescoes, without appearing rude and disengaged. What I found myself being was a pilgrim stopped in a particular spot for about an hour. I wonder if pilgrims in the fourteenth-century found themselves where I was, pausing to pray and to take everything in. I could easily imagine a pilgrim standing where I was for a considerable amount of time waiting for his or her turn to pray near the tomb in thanksgiving and for help to St. Francis. After all, there must have been huge numbers of pilgrims waiting for their time to be in closest possible proximity to the body of the saint.

As the celebrant censed the altar before the beginning of the liturgy, I saw through the cloud a fresco in the Mary Magdalen Chapel, perhaps the work of Giotto himself. I was drawn to this image by the contrast between the deep red robe of the kneeling Mary Magdalen and the white robe of the resurrected Lord. The story is the "Noli me tangere," where the risen Christ tells Mary Magdalen not to touch him (John 20:17). In seeing this image from afar and hence without considering the details, I pondered the presence of Christ in the world both at the time of the Resurrection and now; and I also pondered our inability, like Mary Magdalen's, to grasp and experience and embrace him fully. After all, even the great mystics of the Church have only temporarily had their unitive experiences with Christ.

I noticed a few minutes later when I was sitting that I could also see the fresco above the Resurrection. Actually, I could only see part of it, a stark and empty cave where Mary Magdalen lived in her later years, according to a well known non-biblical "conclusion" to her story. The cave was roughly the same shape as the body of the Resurrected Christ below; in fact, for a few seconds

until I got my bearings, I wondered who the person was above the scene of Christ's Resurrection. When I turned to the left from my seat I saw a similar cave in the background to Pietro Lorenzetti's stigmatization of St. Francis, as he experienced the crucified Christ in the wilds of mount La Verna. I've been there, and it is indeed a mountain full of these caves. Theologically, the cave links Francis with Elijah, who experienced God outside a cave; this connection was already made in the Franciscan hymn *Sanctitatis nova signa*, written just a few years after Francis's death.<sup>1</sup> Hence, these two paintings with caves, one just above the resurrected Christ's, whose barren stone tomb stands to the left of Mary Magdalen, and one in the stigmatization link Hebrew prophecy with Christ's fulfillment and with Francis's prophetic life lived in imitation of Christ.

During the readings at mass, which culminated with a text from John 6 in which Jesus declares himself to be the bread of life, the fresco in the distance behind the priest was of a miracle of Francis, the raising of a boy who had been crushed in a collapsing building. While a bier has just arrived at the family's home to take the body for burial, in an upper room Francis literally descends from heaven and raises the boy from the dead. Christ is indeed the Bread of Life; Francis his servant and imitator, is doing Christ's work. In fact, I thought of the raising of Lazarus, a story which I knew was depicted in the Mary Magdalen Chapel, though out of my sight from my seat in the left transept. I remembered a homily during Easter season preached by Henry Nouwen at the Abbey of the Genesee, four miles from my home. He strode to the pulpit and loudly repeated over and over the word LIFE! If I had x-ray vision to see through the vault of the Lower Church into the Upper Church, I could have seen in the highest frescoes God's creation of the world and its living creatures.

Francis's raising of a dead boy led me quickly to a reflection on my vocation—raising boys who need a father or a second father who speaks English and is familiar with American culture. I have three adopted sons and eight other boys who lived with me for considerable periods of time. All that began with Francis in Assisi 25 years ago. It was February 14, 1979, and I was in Assisi during a sabbatical to do research on Francis and on the Basilica. A few months earlier, I had met a family in Siena that included a 13-year-old boy named Guido. Quickly I found myself invited into this family, and soon plans were afoot for the coming summer for Guido to come to the USA to enhance his ability to speak English. As an only child and an unmarried man and hence never having been in the constant presence of teenagers except when I was one, I didn't quite know what to make of these developments other than I was exuberantly happy. I was sitting on the lawn in front of the Basilica that winter's night, thinking of Francis and thinking of Guido. I found myself pondering words that I had already used to describe my relationship with Guido to others—he's like a son. Suddenly, that night I realized that such a label was much

too tame to describe what I was experiencing. Guido is not like a son to me; he is my son! It sounded absurd at first. After all, I'm not Guido's biological or legal father, and he had a very fine dad, Silvano. But I was enough absorbed in Francis to be able to get beyond biological and legal definitions. How else can we take seriously Francis's relationship with lepers, let alone with brother sun and sister moon!

A few months after my revelation in Assisi, Guido became my *figlioccio*, a word based on the root "*figlio*"—son. This translates into "confirmation sponsor" in English, but I have always used the Italian *figlioccio* to describe this aspect of my relationship with Guido.

After Guido came to the USA in the summer of 1979 and to France with me in 1980, I made a decision to pursue adoption as a means of creating a family for myself in America. I knew I would return to Italy regularly and develop my special relationship with Guido, and in fact this has happened. We remain extremely close. I was one of the legal witnesses at his wedding in 1990, and I rejoice in his love for his wife Letizia and for their two wonderful sons, Ludovico and Bernardo. However, for most of each year, especially before electronic communications, there was no day-to-day or even month-to-month correspondence with Guido. I wanted to build a family in Geneseo, NY and be part of a family every day. I was getting close to 40 and doubted that I would ever marry.

I went to parenting classes and by the end of 1981 was ready to create a family. At that time, finding a son meant starting with scrapbooks containing pictures of and paragraphs about eligible kids. After I had selected a couple who I thought would fit into my town, my house, and my life, I discovered that adopting as a single man without any parenting experience would not be easy. After all, good social workers may quite rightly be reticent to send a kid in their care to someone like me. Finally, I found a blond 16-year-old named Paul living in a group home in rural Indiana, my home state. We met on Easter weekend, and Paul came to be my son at the end of May. It's that quick once the wheels start turning. After adopting, it became relatively easy to adopt additional sons. And when the last of the three left home, other kids came to live with me for a variety of reasons.

Seeing the painting of Francis raising the dead child led me to reflect on how we misunderstand the concept of miracle, or at least limit it to certain "unnatural" phenomena. When modern people, even those of profound faith, read collections of miracles from medieval sources, they often doubt the narratives and rather easily dismiss them as examples of medieval credulity. Did eyeballs really pop back into eye sockets, and were animals cured of their illnesses when something that had touched Francis of Assisi then touched them? Such reading is too literal. I am reasonably sure that it was a miracle that Paul came to me, and it is likely that without God's intervention in his life he would

be dead right now. My third son Angel came to me unable to trust anyone. Now he and his wonderful wife have a strong marriage and two beautiful sons. The hand of God is present in their lives just as it was in the life of the boy whom Francis raised from the dead.

During the homily, which I did not follow very well and hence lost focus, I found myself looking at the 4-part vault above the altar. The one that was most clearly visible is a complicated allegory of the virtue of Chastity. I have studied this vault and will soon write something about these four paintings, but at mass I looked at the paintings not as a scholar but as a pilgrim. Since two of the other sections of the vault contain allegories of Poverty and Obedience, it is clear that they were originally painted principally for the reflection of the friars at the Sacro Convento, who sang their offices in the apse of the Lower Church, just a few feet from where I was sitting. Still, pondering carefully even these meant-for-the-friars frescoes brought me great spiritual profit.

Although the allegory of Chastity is complex, the dominant figure is of a woman locked in a tower. Chastity, by which I mean more than celibacy, is indeed a virtue that must be constantly guarded. In a larger sense than a formal vow of chastity, I reflected on the desire for purity of body and of mind and how difficult it is to obtain and retain such purity. The symbol of the tower reminds me of how one must constantly be on guard against those things that will take us away from our pursuit of God's agenda for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters and for our planet. A Christian life requires focus and the discipline not to turn constantly on to the side roads as we journey toward God. One Lent, Francis decided to make a little cup since, after all, one cannot engage in prayer all of the time. One day at prayer, he began to think about getting back to working on his cup. He then smashed it. There was nothing wrong with the cup, but when it became a distraction to prayer, Francis destroyed it. How much more is purity of life difficult to focus on today with the constant bombardment of words and images and information? Deciding what to let into our towers and what to keep out is difficult, and there is no formula. Vigilance is what is important. I must guard my tower!

In the Poverty section of the vault, I have usually focused on the main scene—Christ assisting at the wedding of Francis and Lady Poverty. However, from where I sat, the most clearly visible part of the fresco was the lower left corner in which people are offering gifts to God. One is handing a friar his cloak, for example. At the top of the fresco, an angel takes a cloak and even a house to heaven. Here is the exemplification of Jesus' statement of Matthew 25: "Insofar as you have done this for one of the least of my brothers, you have done it for me." In our day, charity often is seen as a tiresome obligation and/or a good tax write off. As I looked at a poor man in the painting receiving the donated cloak, I realized that I had never seen or even imagined someone wearing the clothes I have in the past contributed to the poor. The dual image

of a poor man wearing one of my coats and God receiving that same coat in heaven (once again, I am reminded that I must not stay bound by scientific theories about matter while meditating on things divine) is powerful.

When Francis was still a merchant, he chased a beggar away from his shop. Soon he realized that if this man had come in the name of a wealthy or powerful man, he would have received him. Yet this man invoked God, and Francis turned him away. The saint-to-be found the beggar, offered him alms, and pledged never to reject anyone asking him for something in the name of God. How I need to live Francis's commitment and generosity!

Although the vault just above my head was difficult to see and I was viewing it upside down, I could see Francis and a friar having yokes placed on their necks, exemplifying the virtue of Obedience. Again, this is a powerful image. As Benedict reminds us in his Rule, obedience is the first step of humility. Ultimately, obedience, whether to a Rule or a superior or directly to God, is the recognition that someone knows more about what is good for me than I do. As a strong-willed person who plans everything far in advance, I must constantly try to incorporate into my life this important lesson. In America, we so value our personal freedom that the image of someone voluntarily accepting a yoke of obedience is distasteful and even "unpatriotic." Yet to refuse to be yoked is an act of pride, the first sin in the Garden of Eden and in some ways the root of all other sins. In the Upper Church, there is a painting of a friar experiencing a vision of several empty thrones in heaven, one of which was fancier than the others. In the vision the friar was told that this throne had belonged to one of the rebel angels who turned against God out of pride and that it was reserved for the most humble Francis. I need the image of the yoke and I need to repeat often: obedience is the first step of humility.

The quadrant of the vault that I haven't described contains an image of Francis sitting on his heavenly throne dressed in gold and surrounded by angels. It is important not to isolate this image from the three virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience and from the now destroyed fresco adjacent to it in the apse of Francis receiving the stigmata from Christ. The focused life of chastity, poverty, and obedience plus entering into the mystery of the incarnation and crucifixion are what will bring us to our more modest thrones in heaven. Without discipline, we will lose our way, and there is no Easter without Good Friday.

When the priest consecrated the bread and wine, the visual backdrop was the angel of the Annunciation in the opposite transept. I am used to teaching about the way that church designers in the thirteenth century often mounted or hung a crucifix above the altar so that when the priest elevated the host and the chalice, those present could make the connection between the body of Christ and the Body of Christ. I had never thought of Gabriel as a meaningful backdrop for the consecration. However, to make the connection between

Gabriel's announcement of Emmanuel (God with us) and the body and blood of Christ was easy and meaningful, for Christ is constantly Emmanuel—God with us—in the form of bread and wine. Just as the Annunciation is to us as well as to Mary, so is Christ's coming in the Eucharist a means for us to experience God Incarnate and a foretaste (note last syllable) of heaven.

The focus on Gabriel also led to more personal reflections. My third son is named Angel, a common name in Puerto Rico; appropriately he named his first son Gabriel. Hence, my thoughts went from the universal to the particular and personal. My son Angel, in the way he lives his life, announces constantly God's presence in the world. When I adopted him at age fourteen—actually children his age must consent to their adoptions in New York, and thus I should probably say that we adopted each other—he had been in three different families in the past three years: a foster home in which there was violence, an adopted home that turned out to be temporary, and another foster home. Why should he trust anything I said? Why should he commit to me when earlier commitments ended in loss and pain? It took quite a while, but Angel did make a commitment and did dare to trust. Now he teaches child care workers for the State of New York, is happily married, and is the father of two much beloved sons. Each time I see Angel hold Gabriel and Aidan, I know that a miracle has occurred.

Gabriel is my first grandson, and I bonded with him immediately. When he was tiny, I would hold him, and it appeared that we communicated through touch and eye contact. When I recently had open heart surgery, I told countless visitors that I would be fine and that I would obey doctors' orders because I wanted to watch Gabriel and Aidan and others yet to come grow up.

When it was time to receive communion, the priest distributing nearest me stood directly under the far left corner of Pietro Lorenzetti's enormous Crucifixion, the largest painting in the Lower Church. The figure just above me as I received the host was a soldier with a halo. It is the centurion who, according to the gospels, proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God. There is a medieval legend that he became a Christian, but there is no historical evidence of his conversion. The gentile centurion leads me to reflect on my own path in life. I was raised an Episcopalian and was received into the Roman Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil in 1975 at age thirty-one. At the Abbey of the Genesee, I made my public profession of faith, but it took much less courage than the profession of that centurion.

My confirmation name, in case you haven't guessed, is Francis. I began to think seriously about becoming Catholic in 1973 but hesitated to act on what seemed right because I thought that my parents would vehemently object (and I was right). I made up my mind to seek full communion with Rome while in Assisi that summer. During the day, I would seek out the monuments, including numerous visits to the Basilica, and sit in front of the Basilica and read and

think and pray in the evenings. In fact, I always sat in the same place, my favorite spot; and five and a half years later I was sitting there when it was revealed to me that Guido was my son. In the summer of 1973, I read the story and saw the fresco of Francis renouncing his father's goods. One of the most disturbing parts of the Franciscan legend is that there is no story that they ever reconciled despite the deathbed reconciliation in the rather silly Mickey Rourke movie, *Francesco*. We like happy endings, and in this part of Francis's story, there just isn't one. I was reasonably sure that my dad was not going to be Pietro di Bernardone and read me out of the family, but I knew that becoming Catholic would put a barrier between me and my parents. Although at the time I thought I could at least for a while become Catholic without them knowing, I knew that I was risking family solidarity. The example of Francis and the example of the centurion are important to my life.

Since the centurion is portrayed as a saint in the Lorenzetti fresco, my thoughts turned to the last five of my boys, all members of the same Vietnamese family and all not Christians. These boys come from a Buddhist tradition although they know very little about it and only engage in rituals concerning anniversaries of the deaths of ancestors. They will probably never formally convert to any form of Christianity. Although I know that they, like all of us, are sinners in need of redemption and conversion, I also know their virtues; and I experience their love. Does the centurion need a formal conversion to get that halo in the Lorenzetti fresco? Does the Sultan to whom Francis preached need to be converted formally, as is told in the Little Flowers, in order to be saved? I think not. Are Hieu and Hanh and Hung and Cuong and Jimmy among those whose faith is known to God alone? I believe so.

A few years ago, Hieu, then 16, came with me to Assisi. I had asked all members of my seminar and members of their families to take one of the 28 frescoes of the life of Francis in the Upper Church and share their thoughts with the rest of the group; some were quite academic and others quite personal. By chance, Hieu got scene #26, a story often overlooked in the cycle and one that the guides usually skip. I feared that Hieu would have nothing to say. It is a posthumous miracle showing Francis, accompanied by two angels, healing a man in Spain who had been attacked. When it was Hieu's turn, he talked about a time in Vietnam when his younger brother Hung was ill. It was feared he would die, and doctors could do nothing to help him. His family sold whatever they could and sought out a traditional healer in the countryside. Hung survived and is a freshman in college as I write this. Hieu noticed in the painting that the doctor was leaving the injured man's house, telling the soon-to-be widow that there was nothing that he could do. Several people in my seminar were in tears as Hieu told the story, and it was wonderful to see this old Italian fresco about this long ago saint speak to Hieu and connect to his own experience in the Mekong Delta. If there is a universal saint, he is Francis; and the



paintings so well convey his and hence Christ's universal values and message of hope and life.

As I left my seat at the end of the mass, fortified with Christ in the Eucharist, with prayers shared with my brothers and sisters present, and with my meditations inspired by the Basilica's frescoes, I passed by the steps leading up to the altar, beneath which is buried beloved St. Francis. I cannot imagine how many faithful men and women have knelt on those steps since the altar was dedicated by Pope Innocent IV in 1253. I confess that I've never been much of an admirer of Innocent IV. I read some of his pronouncements and commentaries while I was in graduate school; and he struck me as a haughty, hard-nosed, no nonsense, canon lawyer who believed that he was the legitimate ruler of the world. But in Assisi I am reminded that he also loved Francis and believed in his sanctity and his Order. On the same visit to Assisi, he visited the dying Clare at San Damiano and gave her the gift she so fervently sought—the approval of her Form of Life. If Francis and Clare can melt the heart of Innocent, then why am I still surprised that Francis spoke with birds and moved all sorts and conditions of humans to hope and to love and to pray. I doubt if there is a type of sin that has been committed that has not melted away when the sinner knelt in humility and repentance where I was standing.

There is hope for us all. In a world that seems so complex and fragmented, I left the Basilica feeling connected to the largest of realities and infused with love and awe and wonder. I was ironically grateful for a mass that was routine enough that I could be transported into a realm of experience beyond the normal. I was also grateful for all those long hours of study I have done, all those not-too-interesting articles I have sat and read in non-air-conditioned libraries over these many years. They allowed me to begin to soar. How often have I tried to convince students that there is a relationship between learning and experience, that the former has the power to enhance but can never replace the latter. Now I know from an intense hour of experience at mass in the Lower Basilica that I have been teaching students properly.

My experience in the Basilica on that Sunday morning was liberating to me personally but also intellectually important. We historians often tend to want to dwell within the boundaries of authorial intent. That is, we tend to try to reconstruct what the artists/designers meant to convey to their audience and conclude that we have solved the puzzle of the frescoes. I've written many an article of that type.

My hour in the Basilica reinforced that such scholarship is an important starting place both for understanding the Middle Ages and for living in the present. Augustine urged original interpretations of scripture as long as they did not go outside certain orthodox boundaries. The art of the Basilica is also open ended, I believe. We aren't meant to solve a puzzle in the Basilica but to have an experience that incorporates our thoughts and experiences into the

larger patterns of meaning. Too often even scholars start comments on the frescoes with: "I don't know if I'm right, but. . . ." What they often mean is, "I don't know if what I am going to say was the conscious thought of the artist." I've known about the Assisi frescoes, but I'm still learning to experience them.

#### Endnote

<sup>1</sup>Attributed to Thomas of Celano. For an English translation, see *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 1: *The Saint*, ed. Regis Armstrong, et al. (New York: New City Press, 1999), 356-357.

## GOD SPEAKS

**God speaks  
gently  
in the silence  
All surround around  
is God  
We are suspended  
in God  
Whose fullness fills the universe  
Yet Light years' distance  
we are apart  
Not so God from us  
but we from God.  
As light travels so silently  
may we enter in  
Into the silence  
Where God so gently speaks  
God's invitation  
to God's Kingdom come  
to be still  
and know  
that  
I AM God.**

Roger Hall, OFM



**"The Most Holy Body and Blood of the Lord"**  
(1<sup>st</sup> *Admonition*, v. 9)

Charles Finnegan, OFM

Even admirers of St. Francis who do not share his Catholic faith, such as Paul Sabatier, recognize that the Eucharist was not merely one of many devotions in Francis's life, but was absolutely central in his venture of radical gospel living. In practically all his Letters Francis treats of the Eucharist, and one of these, the Letter to the Clergy, treats exclusively of it. As Francis's first biographer put it: "He burned with love in all the fibers of his being towards the Sacrament of the Body of the Lord, overcome with a sense of wonder beyond measure for such kind condescension and most generous love" (2 Cel 210). Francis had a special love for France, because of the devotion of people there for the Eucharist, and wanted to die there "because of his devotion to these sacred mysteries" (2 Cel 2:10). With the approach of Sister Death Francis wanted to express one last time his loving devotion for the Eucharist: "And these most holy mysteries I wish to have honored above all things and to be revered and to have them reserved in precious places" (Testament, 11).

Most inspiring of all are Francis's own words in his Letter To All Friars:

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

In those final lines Francis deals with the all-important question of *motivation*: why come to Eucharist? His proposal: not out of routine or dehumanizing habit, nor just to fulfill an obligation, but precisely to "hold back nothing" from God who gives Himself totally to us, especially in this "Sacrament of all the Sacraments."

## Lateran IV and Vatican II

Our time in history is like that of St. Francis in that he lived as we do in a post-conciliar period. Francis was present at Lateran Council IV in 1215, and among that council's pastoral concerns was promotion of devotion to the Eucharist. Francis concurred wholeheartedly in this and one can detect the influence of Lateran IV's teachings in his writings.

The great gift of God to the church in our times was surely Vatican II. One of the chief pastoral aims of this council was promoting the centrality of the Eucharist in Christian life. So central is the Eucharist says the council that "it contains the whole spiritual wealth of the church" (PO, 5). The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* summed up Vatican II's teaching: "The celebration of the Mass, as an action of Christ and the people of God hierarchically ordered, is the center of the whole Christian life for the universal church, the local church, and for each and every one of the faithful" (1,1). The "eucharistic sacrifice is the source and summit of the Christian life" (LG 11), therefore the Eucharist is "the source and summit of all evangelization" (PO 5). The Eucharist is the heartbeat of Christian life and community. (This teaching, so basic in the entire Catholic Tradition, creates serious challenges, still unmet, in many local churches where people are deprived of the Eucharist through no fault of their own. In an increasing number of parishes it is no longer unusual to have a Celebration of the Word with a Communion service, in place of a Eucharistic celebration, even on Sundays. This is a serious departure from the Catholic Tradition and it would be tragic if this aberration were to come to be considered normal.)

Why the centrality of the Eucharist? Vatican II answers that question especially in nn. 47 and 48 of the *Constitution on the Liturgy*. The following insights need to be noted:

- The Eucharist "perpetuates the sacrifice of the Cross." While Jesus' whole life was a loving "Yes" to His Father (cf. 2 Cor 1:19), His "Yes" on Calvary was the essence of His saving work—His special "hour." The infinite power of that "Yes" has the force to cancel out all the "No's" of human sin. "He took the document written against us—[the document of the law, accusing us of sin—there was no document written against Him], nailed it to the cross and wiped it out completely" (Col 2:14). Similarly, Christ "took our

sins with his own body to the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pt 2:24). The Eucharist brings us that healing just as it makes present the victory of the Cross so that as we celebrate it in faith we are drawn into it: Christ's triumph over the "reign of sin and death" (cf. Rom 5:21) becomes ours. Vatican II repeated the teaching of the Council of Trent: in the Eucharist "the victory and triumph of Christ's death are again made present" (Constitution on the Liturgy n. 6). The victory of the Cross, finished in Christ, is not finished in us. Complete in the Head, it is ongoing in the members of His body. The Cross was Jesus' "hour of glory" (Cf. Jn 12:23; 13:1; 17:1.) In the Eucharist His "hour of glory" becomes ours in a real, though still incomplete way.

- In the Eucharist Jesus "entrusts [His sacrifice] to His beloved spouse the church." The sacrifice of Calvary was that of Jesus alone. We had no share in that sacrifice. We had no part in that saving "Yes." Calvary was for us, but not with us; for our salvation, but without our participation. Calvary was not the sacrifice of what St. Augustine calls "the whole Christ"—Christ the Head together with the members of His body the church. In the Eucharist Christ entrusts His sacrifice, which is His and His alone by right, to His church, so that His sacrifice might become our sacrifice also. The Eucharist makes Calvary the sacrifice of "the whole Christ"—He the Head together with us the members of His body saying "Yes" to the Father. We join the little "Yes" of our lives to His great "Yes." As Augustine told his people: "You are in the bread. You are in the cup. It is the sacrifice of yourself that is placed on the altar." During the Middle Ages it was the Franciscan theologian Duns Scotus who most emphasized the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the *church*. This offering is the specific purpose of the Eucharistic Prayer and its liturgical expression by the assembly is the "Great Amen" at the close of that Prayer. As Augustine put it: "To say 'Amen' is to sign your name." We sign our name to Calvary. The intimate union between us and Christ is symbolized by mixing a little water in the chalice with the wine—the Missal calls this rite a "mystery," a sacred sign. Early Christian teachers, such as the third-century Bishop/Martyr St. Cyprian, explained that the wine symbolizes Christ; the water the baptized assembly. Just as the wine and water become inseparably joined, so does Christ unite us intimately and inseparably to Himself in offering Eucharist. He and we together are protagonists in the great Action called Eucharist.
- All the baptized, and not just the presider, *offer* the Eucharist. In virtue of the sacrament of Orders the presiding celebrant *confects* the Eucharist (LG

10), but of all the baptized it is said: "Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, they offer the divine victim to God and themselves along with it" (LG 11). Vatican II's Constitution on the Liturgy emphasizes this: "Offering the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also together with him, they should learn to offer themselves" (n. 48). Similarly, the council instructs priests to "teach the faithful to offer the divine victim to God the Father in the sacrifice of the Mass, and together with it to make an offering of their own lives" (PO 5). We then go out from Eucharist to live that offering! In his encyclical *Mysterium fidei* (n. 31) Paul VI asked preachers to explain this teaching to the faithful "over and over again" since it is the very heart of their participation in the Eucharist. The Eucharist consecrates every dimension of our Christian lives—it's all caught up in the great Paschal Mystery. Liturgy and life are intimately connected. We celebrate our "life in Christ Jesus" and then go out from Liturgy to live that life.

- The liturgical tradition has always seen the Eucharist as an ACTION. (*Infra actionem* said the Tridentine *Missale Romanum* at the beginning of the Canon.) The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (n. 1) says: The Mass is "the action of Christ and the people of God." Christ, our High Priest, and we the members of his priestly body together doing the action that is "the center of the whole Christian life both for the universal church, the local church and for each of the faithful. [The Eucharist] is the summit of the action by which God in Christ makes the world holy, and the summit of the worship" we offer to God. The Eucharist is thus the summit of God's saving action for the world and the summit of our life of worship of God.
- The Eucharist is "a memorial of Jesus' death and resurrection." *Memorial* (*zikaron* in Hebrew; *anamnesis* in Greek) in the biblical/liturgical sense does not mean simply recalling a past event, a memory exercise. It is rather bringing that saving event, really but "in mystery," into the present, so that celebrating it in faith we are drawn into the mystery and experience its saving power. The *anamnesis* makes the saving event present to us, and makes us present to it. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 1104) puts it: "Christian liturgy not only recalls the events that saved us but actualizes them, making them present. The Paschal Mystery of Christ is celebrated, not repeated, and in each celebration there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit who makes the unique mystery present." The Eucharist makes present God's absolute masterpiece: the Mystery of Christ, God's loving embrace of all of us and of the whole creation. We cannot grasp this Mystery; we can only allow ourselves to be grasped by it, transformed

by it, becoming “in Christ a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). [On the biblical meaning of *anamnesis* cf. Chenderlin in *Analecta Biblica*, 99. In his “Once and Coming Spirit at Pentecost” (p. 26) R. Brown succinctly describes *anamnesis* as “making present again the great salvific act.”]

- If Jesus’ death was His “Yes” to the Father, the Resurrection is the Father’s “Yes” to Jesus—and to us the members of His Body. Jesus’ death and resurrection comprise the one Paschal Mystery: “Dying he destroyed our death; rising he restored our life” said the sixth-century *Gelesian Sacramentary*. Jesus’ “Yes” to the Father wipes out the “No’s” of our sins; the Father’s “Yes” to Jesus raises us up to new life. The resurrection of Jesus is the Father’s loving embrace of “the whole Christ,” the whole Body—Head and members. Without Jesus’ death *and* resurrection nothing in the church has any meaning or importance: “If Christ has not been raised from the dead our preaching is worthless and your faith is. . . If Christ has not been raised from the dead, you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:14 ff). “The Spirit had not yet been given to anyone, because Jesus had not yet been glorified [in death and resurrection]” (Jn 7:39). Emphasizing the importance of the Paschal Mystery, the mightiest of all God’s mighty works, Vatican II teaches that all the sacraments draw all their power from this one source (cf. Constitution on the Liturgy 61). Since the Eucharist is the most privileged celebration of the Paschal Mystery, it is often called “the Sacrament of the Sacraments.”
- The Eucharist is a “sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity.” Every effort we make to build up loving communities flows from our being a Eucharistic people. Every effort to promote unity, social justice, peace and reconciliation is Eucharistic living: “We are all one because we share the one bread” (1 Cor 10:17). Conversely, vices opposed to unity, such as racism, indifference to the demands of justice for the poor, or refusing reconciliation, are opposed to Eucharistic living. The Eucharist says: “We are one.” Such vices say: “We are not one—and do not want to be one.” They are nothing less than a direct attack on the Eucharist.
- The Eucharist is “a sacred banquet in which Christ is consumed.” In the Eucharistic Prayer we offer ourselves with Jesus to the Father. In return the Father gives us His own Son in Holy Communion, so that He might live in us and we in Him (cf. Jn 6:56). In giving us His own Son, “the exact representation of the Father’s being” (Heb 1:3), God keeps nothing back from us. Similarly, when Jesus says: “This is my body. Take and eat. This is my blood. Take and drink,” He says in effect; “Everything I am and everything I have I am giving to you. I hold back nothing from you.” The

expression “body and blood” means “the whole person.” “The life of a living body is in the blood” says the Book of Leviticus (17:11). When Jesus says “This is my blood. Take and drink,” He is inviting us to drink His own life into the core of our soul. St. Francis understood this and drew the obvious conclusion: “Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, so that He who gives Himself to you totally may receive you totally.”

- Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist is a real presence, but it is not a biological presence. He is present at the level of Mystery, sacramentally present. Receiving Holy Communion is not cannibalism. (Stories of bleeding hosts and hosts that take on the form of human flesh when received do not illustrate the faith of the church because that is not the way the church believes Christ is present.) Thomas Aquinas, like other great theologians, emphasized the real but spiritual presence of our Lord’s body in the Eucharist. Writing about stories of “bleeding hosts” he commented: “What this miraculous blood might be I do not know; in any case it is not the real blood of Christ” (III, q. 76,a.8,c; ad 2).
- As early Christian teachers noted, the faith-filled reception of Holy Communion transforms us at the core and center of our being. Vatican II made its own the teaching of Pope St. Leo: “The sharing in the body and blood of Christ has no other effect than to accomplish our transformation into that which we receive [*ut in id quod sumimus transeamus*]” (LG 26). Similarly, St. Augustine: “[The Lord says:] I am the food of grown men and women. Eat me and you shall live. And you shall not turn me into yourself the way you do with bodily food. You will be turned into me.” In *Mediator Dei* Pius XII summed up the Catholic liturgical tradition in a simple but astonishing statement: “When you receive holy communion worthily, you become what you receive.” A truly amazing and stupendous truth: You eat the body of Christ—You become the body of Christ!—“body of Christ” being St. Paul’s favorite expression for church.

Contemplating as he loved to do the Eucharistic Mystery, St. Francis was filled with a sense of sheer wonder at this gift of infinite goodness. John Paul II expressed this same wonder in his homily on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi in 2001:

This gift “exceeds all praise, there is no hymn worthy of it” (*Lauda Sion*). It is a sublime and ineffable mystery, a mystery before which we remain astonished and silent, in a state of deep and ecstatic contemplation.

## Conclusion

The English word *Mass* comes from the Latin *Missa*, meaning "sent." Mass and mission go together. God invites us to the Eucharistic banquet to strengthen and nourish us, and then sends us out on mission to be God's own partners in building up God's kingdom on earth. The Eucharist pulls us into mission. The early church saw a special connection between Eucharist and care of the poor: "If we share the bread of heaven, we must also share the bread of earth."

Mass and Mission (*Missa/Missio*) are inseparably united.

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## About Our Contributors

**Roberta Cusack, OSE**, is a past contributor to *The Cord*. Presently a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Jesus, she has served the Franciscan Family in a variety of roles: teacher, nurse, formation minister, and director of the English-speaking Pilgrim Center in Assisi. She is currently devoted to "writing" commissions of sacred icons.

**William R. Cook** holds the rank of Distinguished Teaching Professor of History at the State University of New York, Geneseo. He has authored three books about Franciscan subjects, and is currently involved in projects that will preserve the art history of the Franciscan tradition.

**Charles Finnegan, OFM**, is member of the Holy Name Province. A well-known speaker and retreat director, he currently serves as director of the San Damiano Spiritual Center, located in inner-city Philadelphia. He is also a member of his provincial Minsitry of the Word team.

**Roger Hall, OFM**, is a friar of the Immaculate Conception province. After completing studies in Rome last year, he was ordained to the priesthood and now resides at St. Anthony Friary in Troy, New York. This is his second appearance in *The Cord*.

**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 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 reside in Kingsville, Maryland.

**Richard Trezza, OFM**, is the Spiritual Assistant to the National Apostolic Commission chairs, the Spiritual Assistant to the National Formation

Commission and the Provincial Spiritual Assistant of Holy Name Province. He is currently stationed at Holy Name Friary in New York City.

**Vinal van Benthem, SFO**, is a poet, spiritual director, workshop presenter, and retreat facilitator. She is currently a Patoral Associate in Wisconsin. She is married and the mother of two children.

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## BOOK REVIEW

*The Place We Call Home: Spiritual Pilgrimage as a Path to God.* Murray Bodo, O. F. M. Paraclete Press, 2004. 113 pp.

Readers need to beware of the reviewer: she or he examines a book through lenses both of bias and experience. Thus it was with some trepidation that I agreed to comment on Murray Bodo's latest work, *The Place We Call Home*, for I have never made a pilgrimage, neither solo nor with a group. Nor have I ever had the slightest inclination to do so, at least in the formal, traditionally practiced sense of the term.

But in this small (113 pages) book, Bodo wraps many meanings around that ancient and religious term, and so I found myself at ease in the text, following his reflections sometimes as onlooker, often as participant. Pilgrimage, in the words of his opening poem, is "story, ritual, Spirit. How we listen and do and pray...." There's place and meaning in Bodo's commentary on pilgrimage for all of us—whether social activist or scholar or contemplative or religious or one of the very ordinary most of us.

Early on Bodo sets the overarching context: "Life itself is a pilgrimage. The pilgrim way is communal, and in the shared journey, the I finds its true identity. That is the work of the pilgrimage, the transformation that is effected by and on the pilgrim way."

He talks about that shared journey, weaving in personal story and Franciscan history, anecdotes and reflections gleaned from years of being on pilgrimage and helping others on their way. He speaks eloquently of the pain as well as the joy of moving from an often confused individualism to a worldwide community, to home where God, the companion on the journey, is.

Murray Bodo's style of writing is relaxed, often poetic, the movement from memoir to history to instruction fluid. The author himself comes across as someone you'd really like to meet and enjoy a meal with and, perhaps, a glass of wine. I'm happy I've had that opportunity.

Athena Godet-Calogeras  
Allegany, NY



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The Commission was established by the English-Speaking Conference of the Order of Friars Minor in March 2001. The Commission was asked to develop, coordinate, and encourage a variety of initiatives that would promote the retrieval of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition as a vital resource for contemporary Franciscan life and pastoral ministry within the Church. Visit our Website and find out more about this exciting and rapidly expanding project at: [www.CFIT-ESC-OFM.org](http://www.CFIT-ESC-OFM.org).

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*Heritage Series* will provide a comprehensive introduction to a broad range of important topics in the areas of theology, history, economics, the arts, and other topics. Two volumes were published in 2003 and a number of other volumes are being prepared. Volume One, written by Kenan Osborne, OFM, is entitled: *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, Tracing Its Origins and Identifying Its Central Components*. Volume Two, written by Ilia Delio, OSF, is entitled: *A Franciscan View of Creation, Learning to Live in a Sacramental World*. Our goal is to publish two or three volumes in each of the coming years.

Would you be interested in helping us to develop additional teaching resources that might make this material more readily accessible to a variety of audiences—persons in various stages of formation for Franciscan life, college students, partners in ministry, adult education seminars? Are you a skilled developer of resource materials? Do you have the kind of creative imagination that finds practical ways to invite others into a deeper level of conversation with and reflection on the contents of a book? If so, we would like to hear from you. Our hope is to be able to make more broadly available resources, lesson plans, that others might be easily and effectively able to use to invite a wider circle of brothers and sisters into conversation with the richness and pastoral relevance of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. Would you like to become a partner in the ongoing development of this project? If so, please be in touch with Edward Coughlin, OFM, who is serving as the Commission's liaison for this part of our project, at: [fec@hnp.org](mailto:fec@hnp.org).

We hope to hear from you.

Commission on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition

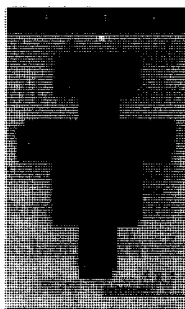
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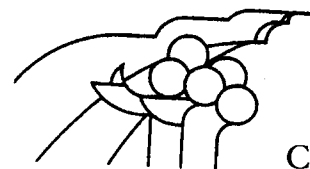
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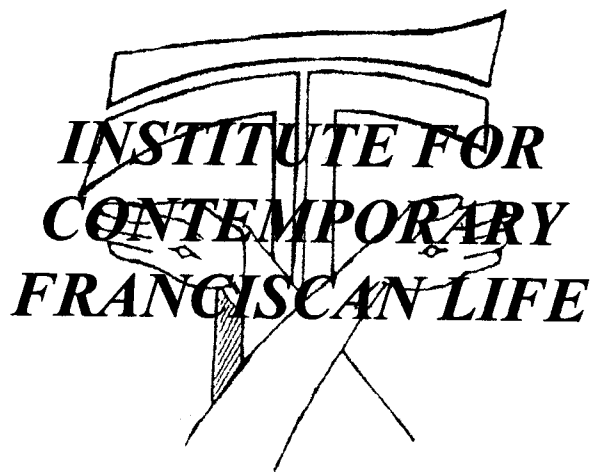
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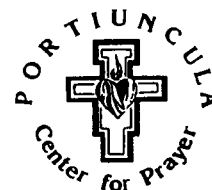
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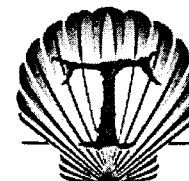
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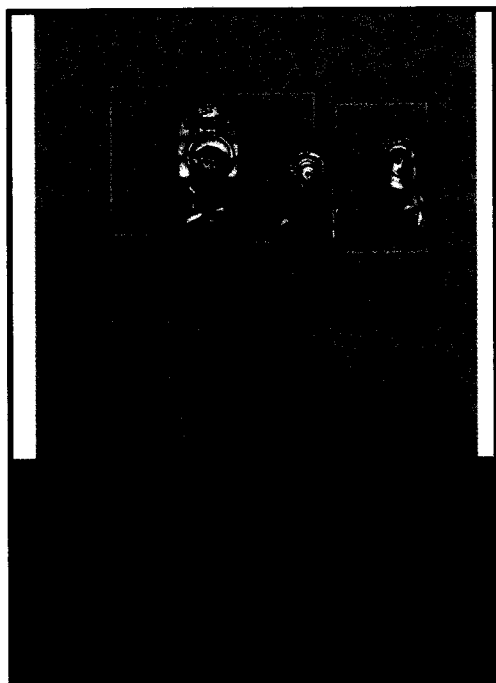
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### Sisters' Retreat: Free Yourself! A Deepening of the Religious Life.

June 4-June 10, 2004. Friday 4:00 p.m.-Thursday, 1:00 p.m.

Sr. Barbara Fiand, SNDdeN. Take time to touch the depth of your life as a religious. The retreat will explore holistic spirituality as the foundation for a renewed understanding of our life. Register with a \$50.00 non-refundable deposit. The Franciscan Center, 3010 N. Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603-5345.

### Our Journey in the Covenant. June 7-13, 2004. Monday, 7:00 p.m.-Sunday, noon.

Roland Faley, TOR. This retreat looks at our spiritual life as an ongoing journey of conversion into a people that has bonded with God. We will look at covenant in the Scriptures to see how it relates to ourselves and God, to our neighbor, and to the world at large. Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Rd. Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340. 412-881-9207.

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Fr. Bernie Tickerehoof, TOR. This guided retreat provides each participant with opportunity for reflection on the long tradition of contemplation in Franciscan spirituality, as well as ample silent time in which to pursue one's own contemplative call. Individual conferences with the director will also be available. Franciscan Spirit and Life Center, 3605 McRoberts Rd. Pittsburgh, PA 15234-2340. 412-881-9207.

## 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 Worcester 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 on the Praise of God
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrsG	The Praises of God
OfP	The Office of the Passion
PrCr	The Prayer before the Crucifix
ER	The Earlier Rule ( <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 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
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



# A WORD FROM BONAVENTURE

DEAR DAUGHTERS IN THE LORD, I HAVE RECENTLY LEARNED FROM OUR DEAR BROTHER LEO, ONCE A COMPANION OF OUR HOLY FATHER, HOW EAGER YOU ARE . . . TO SERVE THE POOR CRUCIFIED CHRIST IN TOTAL PURITY. I WAS FILLED WITH A VERY GREAT JOY AT THIS, SO THAT I NOW WISH, THROUGH THIS LETTER, TO ENCOURAGE YOUR DEVOTION AND YOUR GENEROUS FOLLOWING OF THE VIRTUOUS FOOTPRINTS OF YOUR HOLY MOTHER, WHO, BY MEANS OF THE LITTLE POOR MAN FRANCIS, WAS TAUGHT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"MAY YOU DESIRE TO HAVE NOTHING ELSE UNDER HEAVEN" EXCEPT WHAT [YOUR] MOTHER TAUGHT. . . .

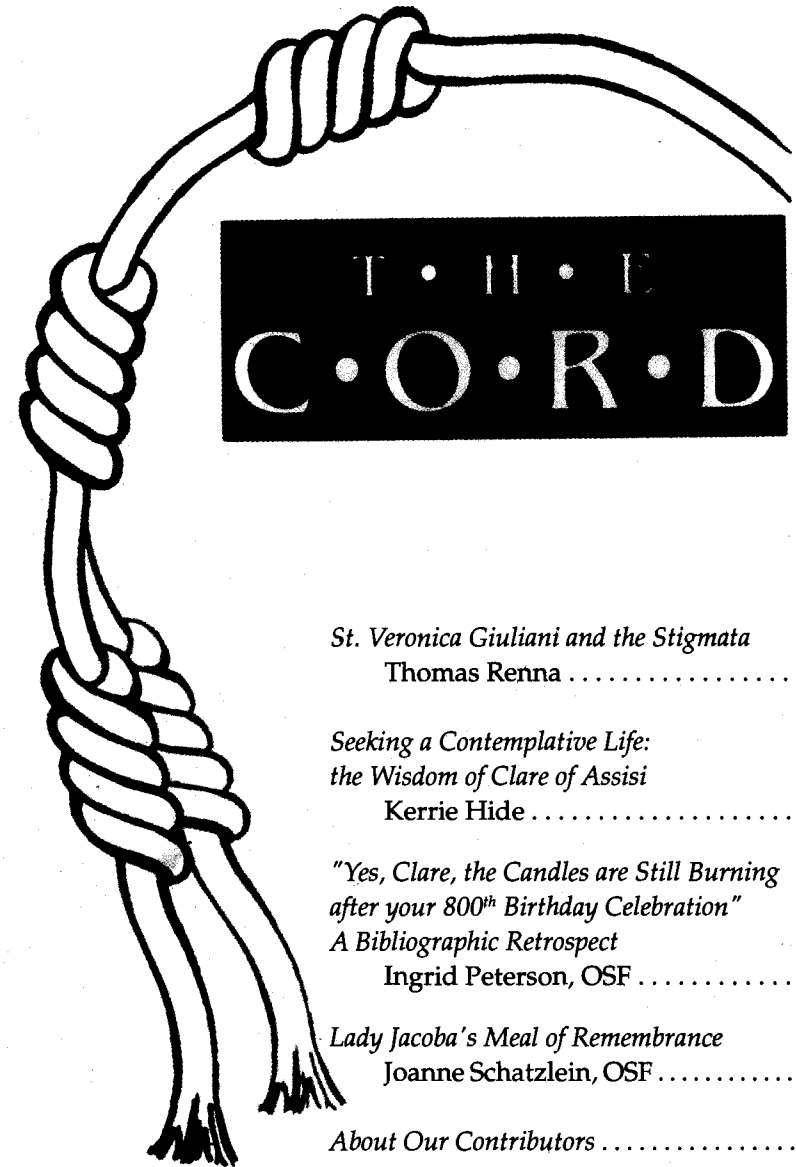
LETTER OF BROTHER BONAVENTURE, MINISTER GENERAL TO THE ABBESS  
AND SISTERS OF THE MONASTERY OF SAINT CLARE IN ASSISI (1259)

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**A Franciscan Spiritual Review**

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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*, 54.4 (2004)

**Editorial**

The July-August issue of this journal is generally dedicated to articles about the life, writing, and heritage of Clare of Assisi. To some extent that is true of this issue, but there is also a major historical piece about St. Veronica Giuliani, a Clarisse of the seventeenth century. One of the requests I have received from my Poor Clare sisters is to provide more material about the real women who have lived the life over the centuries so that they can learn more about the historical realities of a given era. Tom Renna offered his work for consideration last January, and I have been eager to publish it in this issue, as a partial response to the above-mentioned request.

The second article introduces a new name to Clarian writing, that of Kerrie Hide, of Australia. Kerrie is a laywoman much absorbed by mysticism and the possibility of contemplative living in her own life. It is a pleasure to offer her insights about and appreciation of Clare to our readers.

Back in 1993 one of the most important events celebrating the life of Clare was "Clarefest" at Viterbo College in LaCrosse. Attended by hundreds of Franciscan women, it was a momentous event for those of us who knew too little about Clare and Clare's history/spirituality. One of the major figures in pulling "Clarefest" together was Ingrid Peterson, OSF. Ingrid has continued to foster Clare studies over the last decade, and here presents us with a narrative bibliography of the major works (available in English) that have been published in the last ten years. It is a wonderful resource for all who want to keep up with Clare research.

Lastly, Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, shares with us a piece she has used in various places, a piece that we can adapt to the celebration of the feast of Clare, or of Francis, or of Holy Week. It is creative, practical for introducing people in formation to the person of Lady Jacoba, and certainly somewhat different from the other articles in this issue.

This is probably the most eclectic issue of *The Cord* that has emerged in my time as editor, and I must admit that there is a certain amount of uneasiness in me as I send it to press. *The Cord* is presented as "Franciscan Spiritual Review" but often has at least as many historically-oriented pieces as spirituality-focused ones. This issue includes both, and then an article that is just unique. I hope the mixture works for the readers, and is as sweet to the intellectual palate as the recipe for almond-cookies is to the physical palate.

May Clare, Veronica, Jacoba, and all our Franciscan women bless us!

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*



## St. Veronica Giuliani and the Stigmata

Thomas Renna

Veronica Giuliani's stigmata have rarely been examined apart from her mystical thought.<sup>1</sup> Scholars have generally assumed that the stigmata were simply an expression of her Passion spirituality, which was rooted in the Franciscan tradition. A breakthrough came with the work of Metodio da Nembro, which associated her love of the Crucified with her sense of social mission.<sup>2</sup> In recent decades some critics have noted the subtle changes which occur in Veronica's writings since she began to keep a diary in 1693. Some very fine studies have traced the development of her mystical insights in the period leading up to her stigmata and mystical marriage.<sup>3</sup> The appearance of new printed editions of her diary and letters<sup>4</sup> has stimulated interest in the process of her interior experience.

Yet historians have in general treated Veronica's stigmata as something static, which changed little in the course of her writing. Indeed, it is assumed that her sacred wounds differed little if at all from her prototype, St. Francis.<sup>5</sup> Her stigmata are taken to be a manifestation of the devotion to the Passion which was always a staple of the Franciscan legacy; Capuchin writings of the 16th and 17th centuries certainly reflect this heritage. Scholars treat her stigmata and her intercessory role as distinct. But these assumptions, it seems to me, have led to misunderstandings of how Veronica perceived her special grace, and how she mirrored something of the concerns of her time period.

I would argue that the stigmata in Veronica's works gradually changed after their initial appearance in 1697, and became integrated into her self-perception as a messenger for her own time. Her stigmata, I believe, passed through five stages: 1) Veronica as another Francis; 2) a sign which indicated her duty to help to release souls from purgatory; 3) proof that she was sent by God to strengthen the Church; 4) Veronica as the self-styled *mezzana* (intercessor) who holds an "office" in the Church; and 5) Veronica as a second Mary. In the final decade of her life (1618-27) these five stages intersect becoming blurred and indistinguishable.

First, in the years preceding the first appearance of the stigmata (1693-97) Veronica occasionally refers to the stigmata of Francis in the same context of her own intense desire to suffer with, and even be crucified with, Christ.<sup>6</sup> Her notion of the stigmatic Francis as a second Christ was probably influenced by her reading of Bonaventure's Legends of Francis, the monastery's liturgy, and the sermons on Francis and Franciscan saints preached on feast days.<sup>7</sup> Veronica's description of herself as a *mezzana*<sup>8</sup>—which began almost as soon as she took to writing about her experiences—simply means she saw her role as intercessor for sinners, a role traditionally attributed to saints and other pious Christians. In some vague way Veronica believed that her longing to participate in Christ's suffering resembled Francis's own response to his stigmata. Yet understandably she never explicitly compares herself to Francis.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps she felt that such an association would be presumptuous. Indeed she refers to the Poverello as her teacher and guide. She is clearly uneasy about any auto-suggestion that she is an *alter-Christus*. The point is that her self-description as a *mezzana* for sinners has some connection with her desire to follow in Christ's steps out of love for Him. The subsequent conceptual link between intercession and stigmata was, one might say, natural, even inevitable. Throughout the five years preceding the imprinting of the stigmata she frequently pleads with Jesus to grant her the crown of thorns;<sup>10</sup> she cried out to be crucified with Him.<sup>11</sup> Finally, while she seems to have had a premonition of her special vocation, she mentions that Capuchin nuns like herself should pray for the woes of those in the world.<sup>12</sup> Thus her vocation still retains at this stage some traditional concerns of a cloistered religious.

When in fact Veronica does record the first appearance of the stigmata the connection between her mission as *mezzana* and her physical torments (caused by the five wounds of the Passion) becomes explicit.<sup>13</sup> Indeed I would argue that the stigmata **confirm** her role to aid sinners (usually left as a general term, rarely specifying particular sins) by rousing them from their torpor and "blindness," and especially their ingratitude for their divine blessings. To a much lesser extent her mystical nuptials also confirm this purpose. It is not clear if she viewed herself at this phase (1697) as *the mezzana* on earth or simply as one among many (including all the saints and previous holy Christians). The latter seems more likely. Thus, the union of *mezzana* and stigmata is made at the very beginning of her life as a stigmatist. This union is a leitmotif in her writings for the rest of her life.

Second, Veronica sometime after the original stigmata—and with increasing frequency—extends her role as *mezzana* to the souls in purgatory.<sup>14</sup> God has granted her the awesome responsibility of easing the agonies of the good souls awaiting heaven. Her suffering, often self-inflicted, adds another dimension to her intercession, and weds her more firmly to the Mystical Body. She feels

more of a part of the larger community of the blessed. Her love for the souls in purgatory—who include blood relatives and sisters of her monastery<sup>15</sup>—intensifies her need to suffer now, physically and mentally. Her bond with purgatory widens her mental vista; she belongs to the “convent” of the community of purgatory.

Third, given her rapport with those in purgatory, it was perhaps inevitable that Veronica would lament the injuries to the terrestrial Church. Increasingly she reaches out to the organizational Church threatened by evil, particularly heretics<sup>16</sup> (certainly Jansenists, and probably Quietists), Turks<sup>17</sup> (who threatened Italy during the Wars of the Spanish Succession), and “bad princes,”<sup>18</sup> who fight each other instead of the infidel. The Christian rulers who break the peace give pain to Christ and His Church. Veronica’s Jesuit confessors may have been the most alarmist of her (39!) confessors; some of these confessors were true believers in her gifts of prophecy and intercessory power to strengthen mother Church in her time of peril.<sup>19</sup> Her diary suggests she was frightened by the turmoil in Europe and spread of heresy. (One wonders how much she knew of the state of central Italy and of the nature of the religious movements in the region, apart from the slanted reports of her confessors.) Any Capuchin sister would of course feel obligated to offer prayers and vigils on behalf of the misguided. But Veronica seems to have seen her vocation as something special, if not unique; only her suffering could assist the organizational Church in its tribulations. While she certainly knew of saints who suffered, voluntarily and otherwise, she describes her own distress in increasingly personal ways, rarely comparing herself to previous saintly Christians. She does not compare herself to other stigmatists and their vocation of suffering. In short, her stigmata attach her securely to the entire Church. The stigmata represent the stages in her mystical ascent to God, while retaining a pronounced ecclesial dimension,<sup>20</sup> as in Bonaventure’s account of Francis’s sacred wounds.

Veronica, then, views her stigmata not primarily as a phenomenon which occasionally descends to God’s elite as a sign of approval, but as a one-of-a-kind grace granted her in circumstances unique to her and her own historical era. Her sufferings are for the here and now, intended to mitigate the harm done to the Church by heretics, Turks, and warmongering princes. Veronica’s diary seems rife with an aura of impending doom, which gives her prayers a sense of urgency. Her writings do not, to be sure, reveal apocalyptic forecasts; yet the agitation in her pleas for divine intervention in the affairs of the world imply a state of crisis and imminent disaster. Veronica shares little of Bonaventure’s optimism about a world blessed with the advent of the second Christ, who has begun to rejuvenate the gospel life—verified by the unheard-of sight of the visible wounds of the Crucified.

Fourth, Veronica gradually came to view this divine summons to fend off evil as a special “office” in the Church.<sup>21</sup> She indirectly associates this office with the various duties assigned to the sisters in the monastery.<sup>22</sup> She relates this ecclesial office *a fortiori* to her position as mistress of novices and later as abbess.<sup>23</sup> In any case, it is extraordinary that this Capuchin nun would attribute to herself an office in the universal Church, as if she were a prelate or Church functionary. No human appointed her to this exalted position. It would seem that God created this post specifically for her; there is no suggestion of any precedent. The stigmata establish her authority to hold this office, which fixes her function as *mezzana* firmly within the Church militant. Veronica goes far beyond the Bonaventurian Francis whose stigmata offer visible evidence of his being an *alter-Christus*; by extension, Francis’s message of gospel poverty attains credibility.

Fifth, Veronica likens herself to the Virgin Mary. In what may be the most “mystical” sections of the diary, Veronica talks to Jesus’ mother as if she were her equal in suffering. Just as Mary endured the agony of the Passion, Veronica undergoes similar trials on behalf of sinners.<sup>24</sup> Incredibly Veronica in these dialogues with Mary often refers to herself in the second person (sic!)—which may be unique in an autobiography!<sup>25</sup> Both Mary and Veronica are *mezzane*,<sup>26</sup> whose torments expiate the sins of the world. In some of the most eloquent passages in the diary, Veronica describes at length how she receives her commission to participate in the Passion. These sections reveal a self-confidence and sense of purpose which suggest a further clarification of her vocation in the Church.<sup>27</sup> Without explicitly saying so, Veronica merges her mission with that of Mary. It is as if her previous attempts to define her prophetic calling had culminated with this intimate relationship with the Mother who stands between her Son and sinners. After 1710 her conversations with Mary become more frequent and more intense. As her devotion to the Virgin Mary deepened, she often recommends her sisters to pray to the Mother of God. Veronica says that Mary is her “teacher”<sup>28</sup> since the day she entered religion. Mary tells her daughter that their hearts are joined in their mutual suffering and love of the Savior. Mary directs Veronica’s soul by being a *mezzana* between her and God. It can almost be said that Veronica associates her stigmata with the “stigmata” (sufferings occasioned by the Passion of her Son) of Mary,<sup>29</sup> who is the advocate of sinners. Mary is a sort of co-*mezzana* before God for sinners. In her role as intercessor, Mary helps dispense divine grace to humans. But whereas Veronica is but one *mezzana*, Mary is the universal *mezzana* whom God has designated to bring his grace to the world.<sup>30</sup> Mary, like her daughter, is the mediator for the souls in purgatory. In her later writings Veronica mentions Mary, not Jesus, as the one who confirms her, Veronica, as the daughter of Mary’s sorrows. Just

as Christ had given Veronica the signs of His Passion, Mary gives her sorrows to her. Mary and Veronica stand at the foot of the cross.

Veronica has no doubt that Mary's grief is experienced in her own stigmata. Indeed Veronica participates in Mary's seven sorrows, which our Capuchin feels when her stigmata are occasionally renewed.<sup>31</sup> Just as Veronica's stigmata are offered to God, so she offers the sorrows and merits of Mary, who in effect approves of these offerings.<sup>32</sup> Amazingly Mary assures Veronica that she, Mary, is the mediator between her and God.<sup>33</sup> Mary "needs" Veronica, so to speak, to enable God to save souls and aid the needs of the Church. Mary is the mediator between God and Veronica in the conversion of sinners. How does Veronica perform this role as mediator? By suffering and prayer to be sure. But also through her writing. In some mysterious way Veronica's writing is an act of suffering, something like Michelangelo's artistic work or Thomas Merton's sense of vocation as a monastic writer. Perhaps Veronica expected others to read her diary after her death. Thus the merits of her suffering are brought to the world in a more mundane way. While it would be ridiculous to assume that Veronica imagined herself as an *altra-Maria*; Mary is after all her guide. Yet it seems that later in life Veronica came to view her own vocation as, at least in this narrow sense, a *mezzana* as was Mary. Somehow they both assisted in God's salvific work.

## Conclusion

At least a year before Veronica received the stigmata, she viewed herself as the mediator between God and sinners. But she was not a mediator in the way Francis the alter-Christus interceded before the throne of heaven for wayward souls. Veronica calls herself a "voice" *through which* Christ's merits are distributed to humans.<sup>34</sup> Her emphasis on this more humble role indicates that she clearly understands the difference between this relatively modest activity and Christ's supreme act of mediation between God the Father and humankind after the fall of Adam and Eve. The first appearance of the stigmata confirmed her mission to act as a channel through which the fruits of the Redemption come to us, who are then disposed to turn to Him. Her entire life is committed to this salvific task.

In the years after 1697 the meaning of the stigmata, which recur often, becomes at once both more social and more personal. More social in that her vocation as "voice" becomes more explicitly associated with the institutional Church; she is assigned a quasi-official "office" which obliges her to strengthen the Mystical Body as such, as well as strengthen individuals (and also heretics and infidels) who comprise this Body. More personal in that she gradually extends the meaning of *mezzana* beyond the intercessory function to

participation in Christ's suffering. But this co-suffering is ultimately far from the Bonaventuran use of the stigmata as a verification of Francis's function as the second Redeemer who restores apostolic poverty and evangelical virtue. For with Veronica the stigmata are God's way of merging her prophetic calling into the way of the Mother at the foot of the cross. Christ uses the stigmata, as it were, as a teaching device to bring Veronica closer to Himself and to His Mother. This Capuchin stigmatist "becomes" Mary; together they are the vehicle by which the Son takes his redemptive merits to a sinful world.

All this is not of course to deny the obvious association of Veronica's wounds with the stigmata of Francis. Both are in some sense intercessors on behalf of sinners. Both yearn to share in the Passion. Both were blessed with the stigmata as a visible way of God demonstrating His approval of His servants' behavior. Both are given these marks of sanctity as signs of their special missions. Yet Veronica's stigmata is—may one dare say it?—an advanced stage of a more "mature" interpretation of the wounds in the historical development of Franciscan stigmata. Although she is steadfastly within the Franciscan heritage, Veronica is just as much part of her own time and place. Her holy imprints embody the baroque tendencies of early eighteenth-century central Italy: heroic Tridentine spirituality; devotion to the sacred heart of Jesus; pronounced influence of the Spanish mystics (particularly John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila); highly emotional expressions of devotion to Christ's humanity and crucifixion (even to the point of extreme forms of self-inflicted pain); quasi-Jansenist emphasis on the elect who receive irresistible grace (Veronica's mission is, so to speak, assigned to her from above); total and uncompromising abandonment to the divine will; semi-Quietist tendency to downplay external practices and the sacraments (which are hardly ignored in Veronica's diary, but then such "externals" seem not to be in the forefront of her devotions; while evidence is lacking, it may be that the Inquisition accused her of Quietism);<sup>35</sup> the need for select holy women to repair a society rent by war, invasion, and heresy.

Veronica's delicate balance between the social and private dimensions of her stigmata would come apart in the 19th and 20th centuries, when many stigmatists are described in the most graphic, even bizarre, ways. By comparison with Veronica, modern stigmatists seem almost "private" in their comments about their signs. Most have been exceedingly reluctant to talk about the phenomenon, while their admirers largely praise their marks as evidence of sanctity. Even the Capuchin Padre Pio,<sup>36</sup> who rarely mentioned his stigmata, is lauded today mainly for his holiness and intercessory power on behalf of individual supplicants. Veronica Giuliani might best be thought of as the culmination of the stigmatic tradition of prophetic charisma and ecclesial sense of the entire Church, rather than as the first modern stigmatist.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>See, e.g., F. da Pio X Riese, *Santa Veronica Giuliani implicata inseguitrice di amore e di dolore* (Padua: Ed. Messaggero 1998), Chap. 12; L. Radi, *Veronica Giuliani e la mistica dell'espiazione* (Assisi: Cittadella 1997), Chap. 15.

<sup>2</sup>M. da Nembro, *Misticismo e missione di S. Veronica Giuliani* (Milan: Centro Studi Cappuccini Lombardi 1962), Pt. 2; "L'itinerario spirituale di S. Veronica Giuliani dalle pagine del suo 'Diario,'" in *Santa Veronica Giuliani* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Ordinis Fr. Min. Cap. 1961), pp. 35-102.

<sup>3</sup>See the penetrating study by M. Courbat, *Dico e ridico e non dico niente: il fenomeno del diario sdoppiato in Santa Veronica Giuliani* (Siena: Cantagalli 1994), Pt. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Vols. 1-4 of the *Diario*, ed. O. Fiorucci (Città di Castello: Monastero delle Cappuccine 1969-74); vol. 5 (includes Relazioni autobiografiche), eds. L. Iriarte, A. de Felice (1987); vol. 6 (letters), eds. M. G. C. Fulvi, L. Iriarte (1989); vol. 7 (analytical indices and bibliography), ed. L. Iriarte (1991). These vols. are not critical editions, since Veronica's spelling and grammar are "corrected." A photocopy (61 vols.) of the *Diario* ms. is available at the Centro Studi next to the Monastery. I wish to thank Badessa Suor Serafina and Don Luigi Guerri for their generous assistance during my visits to the Centro in May-June 2002 and 2003.

<sup>5</sup>See U. Picciafuoco, "St. Francis in the Piety and Mystical Experience of St. Veronica Giuliani, Based on Her Diary," *Greyfriars Review* 10.1 (1996), pp. 89-106.

<sup>6</sup>*Diario*, vol. I, p. 360 (henceforth D I, 360); II, 250-55, 264, 274, 515-19, 742, 745, 963-67, 1173; III, 183, 843, 1142; IV, 300-306, 787; V, 63.

<sup>7</sup>For influences on V, see M. G. C. Fulvi, "1697: Anno 'Cerniera' nell'esperienza religiosa di Veronica Giuliani," in M. Duranti, ed., *Il "sentimento" tragico dell'esperienza religiosa Veronica Giuliani (1660-1727)* (Perugia-Naples: Università degli studi di Perugia 2000), pp. 269-301. For the monastery library see Duranti, "La 'fabbrica' del monastero . . ." in this same vol., pp. 149-224.

<sup>8</sup>D I, 173, 212, 251, 371, 380, 426, 478, 493-94, etc. Some of these *mezzana* texts are conveniently assembled in L. Iriarte, ed., *Esperienza e dottrina mistica* (Rome: Laurentianum 1981), pp. 201-30. See L. Iriarte, *Le cappuccine passato e presente* (Rome: Istituto storico dei cappuccini 1997), pp. 154-63.

<sup>9</sup>D I, 368; also 289, 464, 656f.; II, 23, 31, 40, 251, 263-65, etc. At the foot of the cross, Francis offers the merits of Christ through Veronica; I, 23. When the rays of light from Christ's five wounds fall on Francis's stigmata, he is transformed into Jesus as a "new Christ"; I, 251. When Jesus permits V to see this vision, Francis gives thanks "for me" for the same stigmata. Francis not V is transformed into Christ. V is the means by which Christ's merits enter the world.

<sup>10</sup>D I, 179, 181, 188, 194, 286, 289, 355, 371, etc.

<sup>11</sup>D I, 289, 510, 771, etc.

<sup>12</sup>V assumes that religious should pray for the world as a matter of course. But even as early as 1695 V classifies herself among the elect who desire to suffer more than the others. Souls carry the cross in three ways: in the hand, on the shoulders, and "by embrace." V and some religious are included among those who "embrace the cross"; D I, 455, 462. Presumably her sisters are members of merely one Order among others.

<sup>13</sup>V discusses her first stigmata in D I, 97-103 (Relazione), 894-99; V, 796-98.

<sup>14</sup>D II, 330, 645, 822, 825, 826, 924, 927, 930, 948, 956, 1130, 1064-67; III, 104, 107, 168, 171, 185, 319, 390, 436; IV, 88, 91, 104, 663, etc.

<sup>15</sup>Intercedes for her father: II, 791, 821-28; V, 742-45. For her sisters: II, 924-34, 946; III, 1118; VI, 90, 280, etc.

<sup>16</sup>D III, 81, 93, 991, 1013.

<sup>17</sup>D III, 990, 991, 1013, 1018, 1022-24, 1084, etc. Presumably "infidels" means Turks. See I, 748-49; II, 302, 320; IV, 165, 328, etc. Cf. "infidel nations" and Jews; I, 690, 738, 777. V prays often for their conversion.

<sup>18</sup>D III, 25, 34, 71, 171, 184, 189, 986, 999, 1146, 1205, 1207, 1237. V prays for victory over the Turks: III, 990, 999, 1018, 1022-24, 1084. See F. Pierli, "Lo spirito missionario di Santa Veronica Giuliani," in L. Iriarte, ed., *Testimonianza e messaggio di Santa Veronica Giuliani* (Rome: Laurentianum 1983), vol. 2, pp. 295-311.

<sup>19</sup>D I, 402; II, 416, 522; III, 748-54, 844, 852-967, 878-888, 971-76. See L. Iriarte, "I confessori di Santa Veronica," *L'Italia Francescana* 64 (1989) 389-416; P. Zovatto, "Veronica Giuliani tra esperienza mistica e direzione spirituale," in Duranti, *Il "sentimento" tragico*, pp. 35-107; M. Borchellini, *Le colline della speranza* (Città di Castello: Edimond 1999), pp. 106-109; Fulvi article in n. 7 above.

<sup>20</sup>See P. Palazzini, "Significato e influsso di s. Veronica Giuliani nella vita della Chiesa," in *Santa Veronica Giuliani dottore della Chiesa?* Atti del Convegno di Studi (Città di Castello: Centro Studi S. Veronica Giuliani 1979), pp. 49-70; P. Fiordelli, "Chiesa e mondo nell'intercessione di Santa Veronica," in *Testimonianza e messaggio*, II, 261-76; Z. Anthonisse, "Il senso di chiesa in santa Veronica Giuliani," *Testimonianza*, II, 277-94; S. da Campagnola, "L'immagine di Veronica Giuliani tra agiografia e biografia," in Duranti, *Il "sentimento" tragico*, pp. 1-33.

<sup>21</sup>D II, 670, 673, 946; IV, 412, 432, 436, 763; V, 567. V sometimes mentions her two offices (mediator between Christ and sinners; mediator for souls in purgatory): II,

948, 956, 1130, 1208; III, 83, 88. Sometimes she holds three offices (the third is “del patire”; III, 72; IV, 763; V, 567. V’s stigmata are associated with her office (s); III, 72, 80-83, 86, 93, 104, 187.

<sup>22</sup>E.g., as rotare: VI, 350, 383, 492, 523; as abbes: VI, 475, 539.

<sup>23</sup>D I, 423, 433; II, 90, 413, 527; III, 139-46, 698-700, 730, 742f., 754, 931, 1169; V, 818.

<sup>24</sup>D I, 636, 915; II, 166-68; III, 275, 279, 352, 373-75; 422, 484, 544, 547, 557; V, 446, 463.

<sup>25</sup>D V, 730-37. See M. Courbat, “Veronica Giuliani: Writing and Rewriting,” *Greyfriars Review* 13.3 (1999) 297-317 at 302; G. Pozzi, “Il ‘parere’ autobiografico di Veronica Giuliani,” *Strumenti critici* 2 (1987) 161-92.

<sup>26</sup>D I, 711, 715, 777, 899; II, 126, 669, 713, 932, 1099, 1113, 1142; III, 115, 168, 405, 362; IV, 443, 445, 449, 540; VI, 309, 452. For *mezzana* and office see R. Piccinelli, *La teologia della croce nell’esperienza mistica di s. Veronica Giuliani* (Assisi: Porziuncola 1989), Chap. 5.

<sup>27</sup>D I, 486, 671, 688, 828, 895; II, 1233, 1235, 1241; III, 275, 279, 364, 403, 389, 718-19, 959, 1181; IV, 330-31, 349, 391, 393-94, 438, 443, 501, 503; V, 384, 446, 484. Mary makes V the “daughter of my sorrows”; III, 1233-35, 1241.

<sup>28</sup>D II, 511, 662, 678, 682, 727, 738, 741; III, 508, 512, 655 813, 1311; IV, 574, 728, 851, 898; V, 220, 226, 253, 278, 457, 468.

<sup>29</sup>D III, 828-30, 427, 433, 535, 538, 1058; IV, 540, 738, 785; V, 315; VI, 418.

<sup>30</sup>D II, 126, 669, 713; III, 115, 168; IV, 443-47. V is well aware of the difference between her role as mediator and that of Mary. The Lord gave thorns to V, and gems to Mary: I, 795. When He gave a palm to V, it became a cross. When He gave lily to Mary, it became joy. The thorns are the voyagers in this life; the gems are eternity; III, 796. The lily is pure intention; the palm, battles to prepare one’s soul.

<sup>31</sup>D III, 1058; IV, 540, 738. Cf. D III, 427, 433, 535, 538, 828-30, 726-66; IV, 841, 846; V, 127, 315; VI, 228, 418.

<sup>32</sup>D III, 275, 279, 364, 403, 406, 413, 422, 553.

<sup>33</sup>D I, 711, 715, 777; II, 932, 1099, 1142, 1145; III, 405. V is not the mediator between Mary and sinners; she is merely the instrument by which Mary’s merits come to humans. Similarly V is the means by which Christ’s redemptive merits flow to men. Cf. II, 182.

<sup>34</sup>D I, 765, 790f.; II, 13 (Christ’s wounds are voices through me), 23.

<sup>35</sup>V is clearly upset when the Inquisitors tell her that her stigmata are from the devil. She writes that they don’t understand that she is a *mezzana* with a special office in the Church; D II, 366-67. Cf. II, 3, 7, 170, 178-81, 200, 572. See Borchellini, *Le Colline*, 86-92. Scholars have paid little attention to the relationship between V and Jansenism and Quietism.

<sup>36</sup>In referring to his stigmata, Padre Pio reveals little of V’s sense of the broader social significance of his gift, except for a mention of the “presente guerra”; G. Pasquale, ed., *Padre Pio: Le mie stimmate: Le lettere del santo di Pietrelcina* (Milan: San Paolo 2002), 23-27.

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## Seeking a Contemplative Life: the Wisdom of Clare of Assisi

Kerrie Hide

*Place your mind before the mirror of eternity*

*Place your soul in the brilliance of glory*

*Place your heart in the figure of divine substance*

*Transform your whole being*

*into the image of the Godhead itself*

*through contemplation.*<sup>1</sup>

Contemplation is a gift from God. It utterly transcends all that we are, and yet, it is the only thing that can give authentic meaning to our lives. A desire for contemplative prayer is intrinsic to our being. It has its source in the extravagance of divine love that loves us into being and ceaselessly draws us to God’s self in love. God’s desire for us to live our lives in loving awareness of our source creates a restless yearning and longing to respond to this gift. It urges us make ourselves open and ready to receive this gift and be transformed in love until we are one. For Christians, contemplative prayer is a response to God’s loving expressed most poignantly in and through the Incarnation. In the words of Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians, contemplatives seek to have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth, until knowing the love of Christ which is beyond all knowledge (we) are filled with the utter fullness of God (Eph 3:18-19). A growing number of people, both within and outside formal religious structures, seek to live a spiritual life, to be contemplative and live in harmony with God, self, all people and all creation.<sup>2</sup> There are a growing number of people who cry out, as the disciples did: Lord teach us to pray (Lk 11:1).

Clare of Assisi (1193-1253) is a voice from the tradition whose writings about contemplation can enrich our prayer and give trustworthy guidelines to those who seek to companion others on their spiritual journey. And since, from Easter 2003 until Easter 2004, Franciscans throughout the world commemorated the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Clare, it seems timely to ex-

plore her wisdom. While Clare is widely known as the companion of St. Francis, *the little plant of Francis*, as she calls herself in her rule, *The Form of Life of the Poor Sisters*,<sup>3</sup> what is still coming to light in contemporary theology is the eloquence and depth of her brief writings and the significant insights about how we can nourish and support the human longing for union with God. She gives fresh, time-transcending teachings about prayer that can inspire those seeking to live a contemplative life today.

Clare writes powerful passionate letters to her dear friend Agnes (1205-1282). Although Agnes is an historical figure, a princess who founded a monastery of Poor Sisters in Prague in 1234, she also represents all those who seek union in Christ. Unfortunately, there are only four short letters to Agnes preserved to guide us.<sup>4</sup> The letters, composed over an eighteen-year period from 1234, 1235, 1238 to 1252, reveal an increasingly intense desire for God and a maturing capacity to surrender to the all-consuming love of the Trinity. Clare is a talented and creative writer who seems fluent in Latin. She draws on an extensive spectrum of Latin words with delicate nuance in meaning. Her language is articulate, eloquent and abundantly rich in imagery. She saturates her letters in loved quotes from scriptures, particularly the psalms, Song of Songs, the gospels of John, Matthew and Luke, and Paul's letters, which she would have integrated into her being through reading and reciting the *Divine Office*. Clare has a captivating letter hand that draws on her experience in prayer and engages the reader personally. Because she is writing to a like-minded contemplative, her instructions about contemplation assume a depth of knowledge.

## Christ-centered Prayer

In essence, Clare's way of prayer is Christ centered. Christ is the alpha and omega, the one who holds all things together in love. Clare shows us how to become one in love in union with the Godhead through a dynamic ever-deepening union with both the humanity and divinity of Christ, whom she affectionately refers to as the *Poor Crucified (pauperis Crucifixi)*.<sup>5</sup> As the letters progress, the poor one becomes the beloved from the Song of Songs, her spouse. She teaches us how to look deeply into the Poor One, to gaze, to remember, to participate in and seek the mind of the Crucified. She encourages us to live in intimacy with Christ, loving with all our being until we *feel what his friends feel and taste the hidden sweetness that God keeps for those who love Christ*.<sup>6</sup> Clare gives us a way of prayer that can assist us to come to a place of total loving where we can say with Paul: *it is no longer I but Christ lives in me* (Gal 2:20).

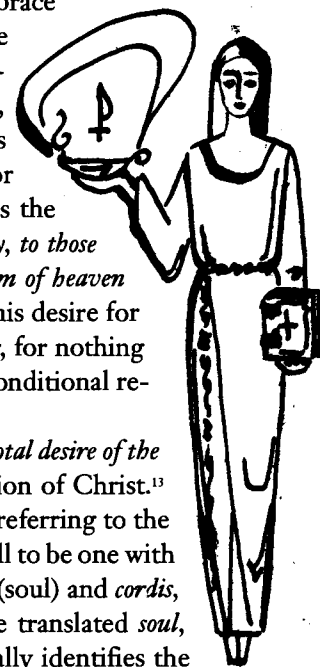
## Clare's Teaching about Contemplative Prayer

Clare shows great sensitivity to the delicate nature of contemplative prayer. Her letters are distinctive for the variety of ways she invites Agnes to contemplative seeing, to seeing Christ in a way that unites and makes one. Careful gazing at Clare's advice to Agnes reveals a deeply intensifying circular movement that begins in Christ, brings all things together in Christ and ends in Christ, only to begin again the journey of deeper transforming union. Each letter conveys a maturing sense of union, encapsulating fundamental aspects of the content and dynamic of contemplative prayer.

## Desiring Christ

The First Letter to Agnes, that Clare writes when she is about thirty-nine, oozes with desire. Every word is grounded in an insatiable longing for Christ, for union with *the poor crucified*.<sup>7</sup> From the very first lines of the letter to its conclusion, Clare rejoices and affirms Agnes in her choice to surrender all, *to choose with her total soul and heart (toto animo et cordis) a life of holy poverty*.<sup>8</sup> In the third letter Clare elaborates on what she means by *total*: *love Him totally who gave himself totally for your love (illum totaliter diligas, qui se totum pro tua dilectione donavit)*.<sup>9</sup> Our *total* desire reflects the total giving of love of the Crucified. Clare seeks to strengthen Agnes in her resolve to embrace poverty *out of ardent desire for the poor Christ*.<sup>10</sup> She contrasts the life of earthly royalty to the splendor of God-centered poverty. Poverty is blessed, holy, not for its own sake, but because it creates an emptiness where desire to be one with the poor crucified can flourish.<sup>11</sup> Clare reveres poverty as the only true possession and acclaims: *O holy poverty, to those who possess and desire you God promises the kingdom of heaven and offers, indeed, eternal glory and blessed life*.<sup>12</sup> This desire for poverty is in essence, a desire for *total* surrender, for nothing but God. There is no room for a half-hearted, conditional response.

Clare recognizes that Agnes longs with *the total desire of the mind (toto mentis desiderio)* to live a life in imitation of Christ.<sup>13</sup> The reference to *mentis (mind)* is significant. In referring to the total nature of the desire of Agnes, to surrender all to be one with Christ, Clare has already used the words *anima* (soul) and *cordis*, heart. While *anima*, *cordis* and *mentis* can all be translated *soul*, each word has its own nuance.<sup>14</sup> *Anima* specifically identifies the soul as the breath or animating principle.<sup>15</sup> *Cordis* highlights the



source of feelings and emotions,<sup>16</sup> while *mentis* refers to mind. In common usage *mentis* distinguishes the intellect, reason, judgment, discernment, consideration and reflection.<sup>17</sup> In mystical literature *mind* often includes the memory, understanding, will and imagination.<sup>18</sup> *Total desire of the mind* expands the seat of desire to include, not only feelings, affections, and the spiritual senses, but also the memory, intellect and understanding. It invites us to seek to have all that we *think* and *imagine* permeated in desire for God. It encourages us to saturate all distracting thoughts in desire. By the end of the letter, Clare distinguishes the *total* desire of our soul, our heart and our mind, the whole of our being.

Clare's first preserved letter reminds us that being attentive to our deepest desire, that is God's desire for us to be one, is the beginning of prayer. It is critical in Clare's way of prayer that the desire she describes is focused on Christ and seeks to imitate Christ's total love for us. Desire for Christ leads us to long to see Christ, to gaze at Christ in a way that leads to transforming union.

## Gazing at Christ

The second letter to Agnes, written approximately a year later, develops the prayer of gazing. It gives explicit guidelines in how to realize our longing to love with the *total desire* of the whole of our being. In this second letter, Clare invites Agnes to *embrace* (*amplectere*) the Poor Christ. Literally, to *embrace* is to wind around, touching and drawing the Beloved to one's self, holding the Beloved to our breast, hugging, encircling, surrounding, enclosing.<sup>19</sup> Clare continues: "Look upon him (*vide*), gaze upon (*intuere*), consider (*considera*), contemplate (*contemplara*) as you desire to imitate (*desiderans imitari*) the poor Christ."<sup>20</sup> The emphasis on contemplative seeing is striking.<sup>21</sup> The movement encapsulates an organic sense of looking deeply into the Crucified One and noticing his gazing at us, so that the mutual gaze unites.<sup>22</sup> "Look" (*videre*) accentuates corporeal or bodily sight. It invites us to fix our eyes on the humanity of Christ, the flesh and bones, the body of Jesus of Nazareth. The emphasis is on coming to a bodily awareness of all the details, seeking, searching, examining, watching the colors, shapes, facial expressions and visual emotions. As we look and experience a deepening sense of mutual recognition, seeing interiorly magnifies until we "gaze" (*intuere*). *Intuere* draws us into a deeper interior seeing.<sup>23</sup> *To gaze* is to wonder, to behold, to gently stay with, to admire and come to deeper intuitive seeing, seeing with *the eye of the heart*. When we gaze we see with a deeply felt understanding of love. Thus, *intuere* is an inner gazing, a looking with every particle of our being, sharing ourselves in the gaze and reverencing what we receive.<sup>24</sup> Subsequently, as the surrender to the gaze intensifies, Clare invites us to "consider" (*considera*). This is not an analytical

considering of the facts of Jesus' life, but meditating, remembering, pondering, dwelling on,<sup>25</sup> until the gaze unites us with Christ and we rest in contemplation (*contemplari*),<sup>26</sup> one with Christ. In the Third Letter Clare quotes John 14:21 in order to describe the experience of contemplation: "we shall come to him and make our dwelling place with him." Significantly, she adds:

*always carry him spiritually in your chaste and virginal body. And you will hold him by whom you and all things are held together.*<sup>27</sup>

Contemplation is the experience of holding Christ and being held by the beloved who holds all things together. Contemplation makes us aware of our mutual indwelling, not just in specific prayer periods, but in the whole of our lives in a spiritually embodied way. We *always carry Christ spiritually* in our body. The increasing intensity of the prayer of gazing draws us into the being of Christ, to rest in Christ as Christ rests in us. Contemplation in turn evokes a "desire to imitate" (*desiderans imitari*) Christ.<sup>28</sup> Each time we enter this embrace union intensifies.

## Being Transformed into Christ

The prayer of gazing draws us from an outside bodily awareness, into a deeper and deeper experience of mutual indwelling in contemplative prayer. The Third preserved letter to Agnes, written when Clare was about forty-four or forty-five, expands our understanding of Clare's teaching about *contemplari*. It gives profound insights into how we may dwell in the presence of the Beloved and be more and more completely transformed into the Beloved. Clare advises Agnes:

Place your mind in the mirror of eternity  
*(Pone mentem tuam in speculo aeternitatis)*  
 Place (*pone*) your soul (*animam*) in the brilliance of glory  
*(splendore gloriae)*  
 Place (*pone*) your heart (*cor*) in the figure of divine  
 substance (*divinae substantiae*)  
 Transform your total being (*totam ipsam*)  
 into the image of the Godhead itself  
 through contemplation.<sup>29</sup>

In this exquisite description of contemplative prayer, Clare adopts refined visual imagery to convey the intimate, immanent presence of Christ in contemplation. She does not explain the meaning of her images, but allows the imagery to touch the heart of the beholder. Notice the repetition of *mind*, *soul* and *heart* that we saw in the earlier letters, distinguishing an integrated three-



fold movement of our mind in the mirror of eternity, our soul in the brilliance of glory and our heart in the divine substance. The imagery describes a transcending progression that becomes more and more ineffable. There is also another reference to *total*. This way of prayer involves the totality of our being. The whole of who we are is transformed.

The first movement in being transformed into the image of the Godhead through contemplation is to “place our mind in the mirror of eternity” (*pone mentem tuam in speculo aeternitatis*).<sup>30</sup> In Clare’s hands, the image of the mirror of eternity becomes a symbol, in the dense doctrinal sense, of an image that gives rise to thought and then shapes the thought to which it gives rise.<sup>31</sup> When we encounter the symbolic nature of the mirror of eternity, it inspires what Avery Dulles refers to as “engaged participatory knowledge.”<sup>32</sup> It becomes what Brian Purfield describes as “an emblem of contemplation.”<sup>33</sup>

For Clare the “mirror of eternity” is the means of contemplation. In medieval times a mirror was a bronze slightly convex disk that reflected light. Because of its rounded surface, only in certain depths, and from a certain angle, was the image reflected clearly. It was only when the gaze remained steady in the depths of the center of the mirror that the image crystallized.<sup>34</sup> In literally gazing into a medieval mirror, we would expect to see an opaque vision of ourselves. But in stark contrast to what we may expect to see, Clare quotes from Hebrews and Wisdom, to reveal how the mirror is Christ, “the splendor of eternal glory” (Heb 1:3), “the brilliance of eternal light and the mirror without blemish” (Wis 7:26).<sup>35</sup> It is noteworthy that as we steady our gaze on Christ our vision transforms from the Pauline sense of “now in a mirror dimly” (1 Cor 13:12) to seeing the brilliance of the light of Christ.

Clare skillfully portrays how from the depths of the mirror shine the whole of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. She directs us to place our mind in Christ, “the mirror of eternity” (*pone mentem tuam in speculo aeternitatis*). We recall that mind (*mentis*) distinguishes our intellect, understanding, memory, will, imagination and capacity for discernment. This suggests that we must use our intellect, reason and judgment to discern Christ’s presence and to choose to be present to Christ. Faint reflections of Paul’s image of “those who turn to the Lord have the veil over their minds removed” (2 Cor 3:12-18) and his invocation to have “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16) seem apparent. “Place” (*pone*) emphasizes the activity of stationing and focusing our mind on Christ, but it also has the added nuance of surrendering, laying down, giving over the whole of ourselves so that we may become one with, and be transformed by Christ.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Clare advises us to place our mind in the mirror not simply to gaze at the mirror from a distance, but to seek to enter the mirror, to participate *in* the image reflected *in* the mirror.

In her Fourth Letter, written not long before her death, the mature Clare expounds on how the mirror reflects the whole of Christ’s life. She advises:

*Gaze (intuere) into* that mirror each day . . . and continually *reflect (speculare)* your face *in* it, (*et in eo faciem tuam iugiter speculari*) so that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes, and cover yourself with flowers and garments of all virtues. . . . (vv. 14-17)<sup>38</sup>

The stress on gaze (*intuere*) is important, because it describes deep interior seeing with the eye of the heart rather than the more external nature of looking. The gaze naturally draws us into the mirror, to linger, to stay with and participate in the presence of Christ, more and more deeply and completely. Clare’s suggestion to “reflect (*speculari*) your face in it” is critical, for Clare is telling us that our loving gaze can sensitize us to see our love reflected in the love of the Beloved. She is inviting us to become a reflection of Christ. This implies that we come to deeper self-knowledge by gazing into the mirror of Christ, because Christ is the Beloved in whom we discover our true spiritual nature. As we see Christ in the mirror, and consider our face reflected in the face of Christ, we grow in loving awareness of Christ who is always present. We also discover what makes us a true reflection of Christ, and what tarnishes the image. Clare does not focus on our tarnished image, but rather encourages us to gaze daily at the resemblance, to see our beauty and adorn ourselves within and without with garments that reflect Christ’s love. Continual gazing creates deeper and deeper resemblance.

Concurrently, as we reflect our face in Christ, the mirror of eternity, Clare invites us to deeper and deeper contemplation of the life of Christ. The contemplative guides us: “attend (*attende*) to the parameters (*principium*) of the mirror that is the poverty of Him who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. . . .”<sup>39</sup> The edges (*principium*) draw us to enter the mystery of the incarnation. Through the activity of attending (*attende*) we stretch towards the infant Christ, tend, care for, hold the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes.<sup>40</sup> Next we focus our gaze in the middle (*in medio*) of the mirror and consider (*considera*) the holy humility, the blessed poverty, the untold labours and burdens which he endured for the redemption of all humankind.<sup>41</sup> *In medio* identifies the middle between the center and the edge of the mirror.

As we have already noted, to consider (*considera*) is to meditate, remember, ponder, dwell on. Through *considering* Christ’s humility, poverty and suffering we embody how Christ has restored our broken, fractured, scarred image. Subsequently, as our gaze penetrates into the depths (*finis*) of the mirror, Clare invites us to contemplate (*contemplare*) the ineffable charity (*ineffabilem caritatem*) which led him to suffer on the wood of the cross and die there-on . . . .<sup>42</sup> We recall that contemplation (*contemplare*) is the experience of holding and being held by the Beloved who holds all things together. In the depths of the mirror in contemplation we hold and are held by ineffable charity



(*ineffabilem caritatem*). We dwell in a love that is so complete that the limitations of language can never describe the wonder of this mutual indwelling. Contemplating the cross shining in the mirror of eternity, infinitely holding all things together in love, evokes in Clare the lament from Lamentations 1:12: "All you who pass by the way, attend (*attendite*) and see (*videte*) if there is any suffering like my suffering."<sup>43</sup> Paradoxically, the center of mirror is an icon of suffering that we must *attend to* and *see*. The activity of attending enables us to surrender to the suffering, to tenderly embrace the suffering and to see divine love suffering with us in the midst of our suffering. The icon of suffering at the center of the mirror, reminds us that the way of transforming union through contemplation is the way of the cross. Contemplation involves the experience of having to die with Christ, to die to all that is not a reflection of Christ. But it is also in the center, in silence and stillness, devoid of our attachments, where we encounter the suffering Christ, that we discover that we exist within ineffable charity. Ultimately the mirror is the mirror of eternity. Time and eternity, humanity and divinity become one in love in the mirror of eternity.

When Clare asks Agnes to place her mind in the *mirror of eternity* she is inviting Agnes to become the spouse of Christ in the deepest possible way by offering her entire being to Christ. The placing of her mind in the mirror is the first movement of prayer that naturally evolves into placing her "soul in the brilliance of glory" and her "heart in the divine substance" where the distinctions between mind, soul and heart dissipate. In letter four, Clare eloquently describes Christ's brilliance of glory, sensuously evoking all our senses. When we place our soul in Christ's illuminating glory, surrender all that we are into the embrace of the Beloved, we become more and more one with Christ:

whose beauty all the heavenly host admire unceasingly,  
 whose love inflames our love,  
 whose contemplation is our refreshment,  
 whose graciousness is our joy,  
 whose gentleness fills us to overflowing,  
 whose remembrance brings gentle light,  
 whose fragrance will revive the dead  
 whose gracious vision will be the happiness of all the citizens  
 of Jerusalem (4LAg10-13).<sup>44</sup>

Our insatiable desire for God draws us to contemplation where our soul is subsumed into the beauty, love, graciousness, gentleness, remembrance and fragrance of our Beloved. In contemplating Christ we come to resemble Christ, and this resemblance evokes joy.

We gain more insight into what Clare means by "place your heart in the divine substance" in her advice to Agnes to "cling with all her heart to Christ" (*ut ei adhaereatur totis cordis praecordiis*).<sup>45</sup> *Adhaereatur* is a strong word that encourages Agnes to cleave to, stick to, to hang on to Christ so as to never let go.<sup>46</sup> Again we see the repetition of *totis cordis* but the addition of *praecordiis* (the breast, the seat of feelings, passions and desire) makes the *total desire of the heart* even stronger.<sup>47</sup> The movement is to become attentive to our passions and feelings, to our desire to be one with Christ and to place this in the divinity of Christ. There is a sense of our feelings and passions, our desire, being divinized in Christ. This description of the intimacy and capacity for human beings to unite with the Godhead stretches our imagination to the limits. The hidden sweetness is exquisite. Yet Clare continues to encourage Agnes to deepen her contemplative experience: "Let yourself be inflamed more strongly with the fervor of charity."<sup>48</sup> The journey of being enflamed in love is infinite. We never tire of seeking such love. Clare continues:

As you contemplate further His ineffable delights, eternal riches and honors, and sigh for them with great desire and love of your heart may you cry out: Draw me after you and we will run in the fragrance of your perfume, O heavenly spouse! I will run and not tire, until you bring me into the wine cellar, until your left hand is under my head and your right hand embrace me happily and you will kiss me with the happiest kisses of your mouth (4LAg30-31).<sup>49</sup>

Contemplation awakens a deeper and more insatiable desire for contemplative union with the Beloved and an awareness that all the pain and suffering endured in becoming free of attachments that hinder deeper union with God are transformed into riches, honors and ineffable delights. Each new experience of placing our mind in the mirror of eternity, our soul in the brilliance of glory and our heart in the divine substance makes us yearn more deeply for total transformation in Christ. The fragrance of the perfume is so sweet that we can do nothing but follow Christ. We cry out, begging to be drawn beyond all limitations, to enter the wine cellar<sup>50</sup> and fall into the arms of the Beloved in the mystical marriage. Clare describes a profound peace ("I will run and not tire") that comes when we surrender our woundedness to the healing power of God's transforming love through the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. She shows how in experiencing the divine embrace and *kiss* we know, at the deepest level of our being, that we are irrevocably one with Christ and share in his relationship with the Trinity. Our whole being is transformed into the Godhead. She reassures us that the weariness of longing to follow in the footsteps of the Beloved gives way to the deep joy of being always in the presence of the Beloved, always in the wine cellar, the place of ever renewing and

recreating life in Christ the mirror of eternity. Silence seems the only response to such ineffable love.

## Implications

Some critical theological and spiritual implications emerge from these brief but profound letters. Six key elements come into view:

- First, Clare describes contemplation in rich, evocative, visual imagery that draws us from seeing, to gazing, to attending, to considering, to contemplating. She gives value to the visual, imaginative way of prayer, but this way of prayer is not an end in itself. Visual prayer creates fertile ground for a way of contemplation that engenders a deeper and deeper experience of divine love that is ultimately beyond vision, beyond words. Clare shows us how the prayer of gazing unites us with the Beloved.
- Second, Clare gives lucid descriptions of the content and process of contemplative prayer. She is unique in her ability to honor both the role of our mind and heart in prayer. She teaches us how to integrate the mind, soul and heart into a totality of love that reflects the total love of Christ. She assists us to find our own way of placing our mind in the mirror of eternity, our soul in the brilliance of glory and our heart in the divine substance.
- Third, for Clare, desire is the essence of prayer. She encourages us to actively engage our desire that is grounded in God's desire that we be one in Christ. She explores the role of desire in prayer in a way that incites our desire to be one with the Beloved. Her rich evocative imagery honors the expression of passion and sensuality in prayer. She shows us how to prepare for the grace of the mystical marriage.
- Fourth, Clare reminds us that Christ is the center of all things, the one who holds all things together in love. He is the mirror who becomes an icon, a window into the contemplative awareness of the divine presence drawing us to union in the mystical marriage.
- Fifth, Clare gives us a profoundly affirmative image of human beings who have the potential to discover their life reflected in the life of Christ. She places before us the wonder and joy of the incarnation. She reminds us that the essential process of the spiritual life is the reformation of the image of Christ in human nature. We do this through gazing at the mirror of eternity every day. Through Christ, God is with us in our humanity drawing us to unite with Christ in his divinity.
- Sixth, Clare's symbol of the mirror of eternity evokes deeper and deeper interior knowledge that ultimately we are created to find our identity in Christ. When we reflect our face in Christ, the mirror of eternity, there is

a growing awareness that we are made for one another and complete one another. As we contemplate the life of Christ from the edges of the mirror to its centre, we align our lives with the life of Christ. Darkness and light unite in a transforming illumination.

Clare is a wise spiritual guide, whose brief words enkindle in us the eternal fire of love. They give us

strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth, until knowing the love of Christ which is beyond all knowledge [we] are filled with the utter fullness of God (Eph 3:18-19).

This filling of our emptiness with divine love illuminating our darkness empowers us to seek a contemplative stance in life and create a world that is filled with the utter fullness of God.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>3LAg12-13. I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to the Poor Clare Sisters of Sydney and Cambeltown who inspired and encouraged me to write this paper.

<sup>2</sup>See Sandra M. Schneiders, "Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum," *Spiritus* 3 (2003): 163-85 where she describes this growth, especially in the United States.

<sup>3</sup>Christopher Stace, *Saint Clare of Assisi: Her Legend and Selected Writings* (London: Triangle, 2001), 86.

<sup>4</sup>There is another letter to Ermentrude of Bruges which will not be the subject of this essay. There are many reasons why Clare's letters were not preserved, such as the reusing of the vellum on which they were penned, the fragility of letters being hand delivered, and the possible lack of historical awareness of some of her contemporaries.

<sup>5</sup>1LAg13. Translations are from *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. Regis J. Armstrong and Ignatius C. Brady, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), unless noted. (Each reference gives letter and line number). I underline key words that differ in translations.

<sup>6</sup>3LAg14.

<sup>7</sup>1LAg13.

<sup>8</sup>1LAg6. I have maintained the word *total* rather than *whole* so we can see how this rather strong word *total* echoes throughout the letters. *Toto* describes *all, the entire thing*. See Charlton T. Lewis, *A Latin Dictionary: Lewis and Short. Founded on Andrew's Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary Revised, Enlarged and in Great Part Rewritten* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, 1881). (Hereafter cited as LD). Joan Mueller, *Clare's Letters to Agnes: Texts and Sources* (New York: The Franciscan Institute, 2001), translates this as *whole heart and mind*.

<sup>9</sup>3LAg15.

<sup>10</sup>1LAg32.

<sup>11</sup>Clare is often misunderstood in this regard. She does not advocate severe austerity. See 3LAg40 where she advises Agnes to wisely and prudently refrain from harsh fasting.

<sup>12</sup>ILag16.

<sup>13</sup>ILag32. Cf. Armstrong and Brady's translation: *total desire of your soul* and Mueller's *every desire of your mind*. I prefer the literal Latin: *total desire of your mind* because it reinforces the repetition of total throughout the text.

<sup>14</sup>Chatillon suggests that medieval writers use heart, soul and mind interchangeably to refer to the centre. But I want to explore the possibility that because Clare chooses different words in the Latin, that she envisages a distinction. Ultimately though she is referring to the journey to the centre. See *Dictionnaire De Spiritualité Ascétique Et Mystique, Doctrine Et Histoire* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937), 2289-2300.

<sup>15</sup>*Anima* also describes the vital principle, the breath of life, that which blows or breathes. It conveys a sense of the soul as the animating principle. See LD, 120.

<sup>16</sup>We are reminded that physically the heart is the chief source of circulation of the blood and of life. Spiritually it is the seat of feeling and emotion. See LD, 468; Michael Downey, ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 468-69, (Hereafter NDCS).

<sup>17</sup>See LD, 1132.

<sup>18</sup>This emphasis on the *mind* has its source in Augustine, who gave great importance to the intellect. He described a pattern of ascent to God that evolved from purgative through illuminative, to a unitive way of approaching God. For Augustine, union with God occurs in a series of stages at the level of understanding and wisdom. By Clare's day the concept of purgative, illuminative and unitive stages of contemplative prayer was commonplace. Clare could well have integrated Augustine's stress on communion through understanding and wisdom. See Mary T. Clark in NDCS, 69.

<sup>19</sup>See LD, 110. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*. Vol. 1 and 2, ed. Lesley Brown. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), (Hereafter NSOED).

<sup>20</sup>2Lag20. Cf. Mueller: "*Gaze upon, examine, contemplate...desiring to follow your spouse....*"

<sup>21</sup>This emphasis on sight is very common in many women mystics' descriptions of contemplation. See Elizabeth Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>22</sup>Because there are only four letters there are possibly many gaps that Clare would have developed in her other letters. We have a hint that Christ's gazing at us is important in this process when she says: *his eyes don't see any imperfection in you*. 2Lag4.

<sup>23</sup>See LD, 991.

<sup>24</sup>*Gazing* seems to bear a close resemblance to *beholding* in Julian of Norwich. See Kerrie Hide, *Gifted Origins to Graced Fulfillment: The Soteriology of Julian of Norwich* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), Chapter 2 where I develop the meaning of *beholding*.

<sup>25</sup>LD, 431.

<sup>26</sup>It is noteworthy that *contemplari* still has a sense of gazing. LD, 445.

<sup>27</sup>3Lag26. The point that Clare is making here is not so much literal virginity, but the *total* giving of one's self.

<sup>28</sup>LD 890.

<sup>29</sup>3Lag12-13. Again, I have stayed with *total*.

<sup>30</sup>The image of the mirror is a wonderful classical image that draws on the Greek myth of Narcissus. Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection. In Augustine on the sixth step on the ladder of understanding we attain the purity of heart to be attentive to God and to see God as a mirror. This leads to the final step of wisdom where we contemplate God and as a peacemaker live in tranquility, seeing all things in God and

God in all things. See Mary T. Clark in NDCS, 69. In medieval love poetry the beloved is often mirrored in the eyes of the beloved. It is also found in Cistercian texts e.g. William of St. Thierry, *Mirror of Faith* and Aelred of Rievaulx, *Mirror of Charity*.

<sup>31</sup>See Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Books, 1967), 348.

<sup>32</sup>Avery Dulles, "The Symbolic Structure of Revelation," *Theological Studies*, 41 (1980): 60-61.

<sup>33</sup>See Brian E. Purfield, *Reflects Dans Le Miroir: Images Du Christ Dans La Vie Spirituelle De Sainte Claire D'Assis* (Paris: Editions Franciscaines, 1993), back cover.

<sup>34</sup>*Francis and Clare*, 204.

<sup>35</sup>4Lag14.

<sup>36</sup>See LD, 1396. Ledoux makes the beautiful connection that we lay ourselves in the mirror as Christ was laid in the manger. Claire Marie Ledoux, *Clare of Assisi: Her Spirituality Revealed in Her Letters* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1997), 105.

<sup>37</sup>3Lag7. *In* also maintains the sense of the presence of Christ within our being: *the incomparable treasure hidden in the field of the world and in the hearts of humanity*. Cf. Armstrong and Brady who have *before* and Mueller, *in*.

<sup>38</sup>4Lag14-17. My translation. See Edith van den Goorbergh, "Clare's Prayer as a Spiritual Journey," *The Way Supplement* 80 (1994): 51-60, 54, who has: *Gaze upon the mirror . . . and continually reflect your face on it*. Cf. Armstrong and Brady's *Look upon the mirror each day . . . and continually study your face within it . . .*, and Mueller's *Look into this mirror every day . . . and continually examine your face in it . . .*

<sup>39</sup>4Lag19.

<sup>40</sup>See LD, 194 and NOED, 143.

<sup>41</sup>4Lag22.

<sup>42</sup>4Lag23

<sup>43</sup>4Lag25.

<sup>44</sup>4Lag 10-13.

<sup>45</sup>4Lag9. Cf. Mueller, *to be joined with all the feelings of her heart to him*.

<sup>46</sup>See LD, 34.

<sup>47</sup>LD, 1415.

<sup>48</sup>4Lag17.

<sup>49</sup>4Lag 30-32.

<sup>50</sup>This classic image for mystical union comes from the final verses of the Song of Songs. It seems apt that Clare's last preserved letter would end in this way.

**CONTEMPLATION IS THE EXPERIENCE OF  
HOLDING CHRIST AND BEING HELD BY THE  
BELOVED WHO HOLDS ALL THINGS TO-  
GETHER. CONTEMPLATION MAKES US AWARE  
OF OUR MUTUAL INDWELLING, NOT JUST IN  
SPECIFIC PRAYER PERIODS, BUT IN THE  
WHOLE OF OUR LIVES IN A SPIRITUALLY EM-  
BODIED WAY.**

## About Our Contributors

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**Thomas Renna** is professor of history at Saginaw Valley State University. He has done work on another Franciscan woman, Margaret of Cortona. His translation of her legend is in the manuscript stage.

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## About the Art Images

The "deathbed of Veronica" image on p. 176 is a reproduction of a woodcut by N. Moneta, based upon an oil painting by Franz von Rhoden, 1839. The woodcut is in the Museo Francescano in Rome. Both images can be found in *Santa Veronica Guiliani implacate inseguitrice di amore e di dolore*, published by Edizioni Messagero Padova, 1985.

The image of Clare found on p. 186 was first used in *The Cord* in 1983. The artist is identified on the original drawing as Sr. M. Regina.

The woodcut image on p. 198 is taken from the frontispiece in a medieval Belgian work on Clare. The image was supplied by Jean-François Godet-Calogeras.

The image of Clare and her sisters at San Damiano used on p. 203 is one section of the well-known Dossal of Clare which hangs in the Basilica di S. Chiara in Assisi.

*The Cord*, 54.4 (2004)

## **"Yes, Clare, the Candles are Still Burning after your 800<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration" A Bibliographic Retrospect**

Ingrid Peterson, OSF

Clare of Assisi has emerged from the shadow of Francis in the decade since the celebration of the eighth centenary of her birth. A plethora of new studies surrounding Clare has been produced across the globe. Anthologies treating influential models of women's holiness now include essays on Clare. Clare and Francis are now being cited as the co-founders of the Franciscan tradition. Conferences, workshops, and university and graduate classes continue to investigate the enigma of Clare as a medieval woman, so distant and yet so close. Pilgrims are beginning to visit the shrines of Agnes in Prague in an effort to reconstruct the feel of history surrounding the Přemysl dynasty and to touch the impact of Clare's influence on Agnes. Popular awareness and interest in Clare is rapidly growing. Churches and infants are being named in honor of Clare. Well-informed Catholics are no longer asking, "Who is Clare of Assisi?" A plastic statue of Clare (made in China, of course), is marketed including a little story of her life and of the Christmas night vision that caused her to be named patroness of television. Generally, much that is popularly written about her is accurate scholarship.

More pertinent than interest in Clare in current religious writing is the increased amount of insightful scholarship that has recently been published. Lay scholars from the European academic community are studying the early women of the Franciscan tradition and with fresh perspective breaking through some of the ways Franciscan writers within the family have always told their stories. How the writings attributed to Clare as well as the papal documents significant to her life have been traditionally viewed has been jarred by the work of the German scholar, Werner Maleczek. The previous understanding of the explosive growth of religious houses modeled upon Clare's life at San Damiano has recently been undercut by the scholarly work of Maria Pia Alberzoni. While such new insights create a stir within Franciscan studies,

they also demand a revised view of what has been said and written about Clare. This is especially true in the English-speaking world. Consequently, much of the swell of publishing occasioned by the 800<sup>th</sup> birthday of Clare already seems outdated and in need of revision.

### New Research by Maleczek and Alberzoni

In 1995 Maleczek published an article questioning two primary documents used to establish Clare's story and influence ("Questions about the Authenticity of the Privilege of Poverty of Innocent III and of the Testament of Clare" in *Greyfriars Review* Supplement [12: 1998], 1-80). First, he challenges the authenticity of Clare's *Privilege of Poverty*, allegedly given by Pope Innocent III; next, he disputes Clare's authorship of the *Testament*. Maleczek notes the formal inconsistencies between the text of Clare's *Privilege of Poverty* and the papal chancery's formula for solemn privileges. In examining the history of Clare's community and the papal initiatives favoring the women's religious movement, he maintains there was no reason for anyone to request such a privilege prior to Gregory IX's pontificate. Maleczek argues that while a general reference to poverty is made in the *Legend of Saint Clare*, it is not sufficiently reliable evidence to trace the document to Innocent III.

Maleczek re-examines the paucity of an accurate manuscript tradition for the *Testament*, questions why the *Testament* is not cited in any thirteenth-century source, and why, if it had been such a milestone in the lives of the Poor Ladies at San Damiano, none of the witnesses in the *Process of Canonization* mention Clare's *Privilege of Poverty*. The extant manuscripts of the *Testament* apparently were written in the monasteries of Santa Luce in Foligno which was reformed in 1424, and Montelucio in Perugia, where the Observant reform was introduced in 1448. Maleczek claims that its urgent appeal to poverty reflects the concerns of the fifteenth-century Observant reform and are not consistent with the content and style of Clare's other writings. Because the nuns of these houses wanted to return to the observance of Clare's *Form of Life* which had been supplanted by Urban IV's Rule for the Order of Saint Clare, Maleczek finds cause for its fabrication. The teaching on poverty in the *Testament* of Francis had been a core text for the Observant reform among the friars. There being no similar document for a reform of the Clares, he argues it could well have been falsified as the evidence needed by the Observants. Maleczek concludes by pointing out that the original manuscript copy of the *Privilege of Poverty*, supposedly addressed to the nuns of Perugia, was also found in Montelucio. In conclusion, he dates the *Testament* of Clare to the time of the Observant Movement, contending that it was fabricated as a political statement to draw the Poor Clare's back to the primitive vision of Clare.

Maria Pia Alberzoni extends Maleczek's ground-breaking work by suggesting, first, that San Damiano may have existed as a double monastery, and secondly, that the Order of San Damian was the brain child of Pope Gregory IX, not Clare ("San Damiano in 1228: A Contribution to the Clare Question" in *Greyfriars Review* [13.1: 1998], 105-23). Alberzoni concludes that the "sisters minor" described by Jacques de Vitry in 1216 were located next to communities of men, since San Damiano was always known as a Franciscan place. Brother Bentavenga, the questor Clare named in connection with the miracle of the oil, as well as her couriers, Brother Amatus and Brother Bonaguara, must have had some institutional connection with San Damiano. Alberzoni holds that since Clare in 1216 was considered part of Francis's fraternity, there would have been no necessity for her to appeal to Rome on her own for a privilege. Furthermore, she claims that not only was Clare bound by the same statutes as Francis, but that she would have known how unwilling Francis was to request special papal privileges.

Alberzoni's re-examination of old evidence regarding Clare's relationship to the papacy, especially that of Pope Gregory IX in 1228, has persuaded other scholars to re-appraise their traditional interpretations about Clare and the instigation of the "Order of San Damian." Alberzoni places the Order of Saint Damian within the context of the papal program for the reform and renewal of religious women, which included both those cloistered and those within the new penitential movements. She concludes that Gregory IX attempted to unite Clare's Poor Ladies with the women's order he founded and named the Order of San Damian. Alberzoni determines that Gregory named his new one-size-fits-all order after the well-known and highly respected Poor Ladies of San Damiano. However, Gregory's Order of San Damian followed the Benedictine rule with constitutions based on the Cistercian observance. At the same time Gregory tried to impose the care of these nuns on Francis's friars. As a result, Gregory's Order of San Damian did not turn into the one big happy family he must have envisioned.

Alberzoni also reads the embellished account of the ladies living in the church of San Damiano given in Chapter VII of "The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano," as a panegyric about Gregory's Order of Saint Damian, rather than as personal praise of Clare and the Poor Ladies of Assisi. In fact, Thomas concludes this section by acknowledging that to tell their story would require another book. Since Gregory IX commissioned Thomas to write Francis's life at the time of Francis's canonization, Thomas's intense enthusiasm for Gregory's project becomes more understandable as a savvy pope-pleasing move on his part. Alberzoni's research charges students of Clare to be careful in not ascribing to Clare every religious house identified as belonging to the Order of San Damian.

Moreover, Alberzoni argues that in order to preserve her commitment to live without common property, Clare of Assisi could not identify with Gregory's version of the cloistered life, but was compelled to withdraw from his Order of San Damian and repeatedly to ask for a different form of life. It took years of papal correspondence before Clare received permission to live without property in imitation of Jesus and Francis under the *Form of Life* which she began to write in 1247 for the Poor Ladies who lived at San Damiano. However, in 1263 Pope Urban drew up yet another form of life following the Cistercian tradition which he called "The Order of Saint Clare." As Thomas says of the Order of San Damian, this subsequent history of Clare's *Form of Life* is also another story.

In short, the work on Clare by Maleczek and Alberzoni has incited additional discussion. At this point, most scholars are willing to acknowledge that between 1212 and 1215 Pope Innocent III probably did not give Clare the document known as his *Privilege of Poverty*. However, in 1228 Pope Gregory IX undisputedly recognized Clare's desire to live without communal property as the *Privilege of Poverty*. It was her life's project to have this poor way of gospel life recognized juridically as a *Form of Life*. In order not to confuse the way of life for women which corresponded to the gospel practices of Francis and his brothers, scholars are beginning to identify Clare and the Poor Ladies in Assisi and several other houses as the Order of San Damiano. The other diverse communities of women religious whose way of life was sanctioned by Gregory IX are being identified as his Order of San Damian. It is not until Pope Urban's pontificate in 1263 that the Order of Saint Clare is established.

Jacques Dalarun, *The Misadventures of Francis of Assisi* (St. Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002) rigorously examines the early stories of Francis against the new work of the European scholarly community. He contends that the beginning development of Francis's "fraternity" can only be understood as a community including Clare along with Elias, Philip, Leo, Juniper and Angelo. Attilio Bartoli Langeli's meticulous study of the Messina codex, the manuscript source of Clare's four Letters, *Testament* and *Form of Life* raises new questions of authorship and suggests scribal assistance by Brother Leo (*Gli autografi di frate Francesco e di frate Leone*, Corpus Christianorum Autographa Medii Aevi 5 [Turnout: Brepols, 2000]). One of Maria Pia Alberzoni's books appears this fall, translated as *Clare and the Poor Sisters in the Thirteenth Century* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications: forthcoming). Marco Bartoli's second book on Clare (*Chiara: una donna tra silenzio e memoria* [Milano: San Paolo, 2001]) is yet to be translated for the English-speaking world.

## A Decade of Articles and Books

During the past years, *Greyfriars Review* introduced a decade of the best thought from the European scholarly community to the English-speaking world, much of it translated by Edward Hagman. It generally includes three translations of scholarly works on Clare annually, including these key writings by Maleczek and Alberzoni. Their conclusions have stimulated new discussions about the historical Clare, and formulation of the expression "the Clarian question," implying that the discussion continues about many of these issues. Two annual *Greyfriars Review* supplements have been given to these on-going studies of Clare, allowing dissemination of Bezenartea's full-length Spanish work on Clare and the discernment of Spirits ("Clare of Assisi and the Discernment of Spirits" in *Greyfriars Review* Supp. [8: 1998]). Jean-Francois Godet's "A New look at Clare's Gospel Plan of Life," was published earlier (*Greyfriars Review* Supp. [5: 1991]). Kuster's response to Maleczek and Alberzoni, is translated as "Clare's *Testament* and Innocent III's *Privilege of Poverty*: Genuine or Clever Forgeries?" in *Greyfriars Review* [15.3: 2001], 171-252). *Franciscan Studies* published Mueller's early work on Agnes, "Agnes of Prague and the Juridical Implications of the Privilege of Poverty," *Franciscan Studies* [58: 2000], 261-87). *The Cord* printed another product of Mueller's Eastern European research, an interesting account of her experience in Prague, "Visiting Agnes of Prague: A Visitor's Report," (*The Cord* [50.4: 2000], 261-287).

The year 2001 brought three full-length books on Clare to the English-speaking world. The Dutch work by Edith Van den Goorbergh and Theodore Zweerman appeared in an English translation entitled *Light Shining through a Veil: On Saint Clare's Letters to Agnes of Prague* (Trans. Aline Looman-Graaskamp and Frances Teresa OSC, Leuven: Peeters, 2000). It is the most extensive and insightful study of Clare's letters written to date. Joan Mueller's *Clare's Letters to Agnes: Texts and Sources*, introduces the Czech studies on the Přemysl line to the English-speaking world to augment an understanding of Agnes of Prague, her royal family, and her influence. Mueller's work also contributes three valuable sources for the study of Clare: a translation of "The Legend of Saint Agnes," essays on the primitive climate of the early brothers, and on the royal correspondence surrounding the privilege of poverty. The correspondence between Agnes and the papacy which revolves around her wish to live without property parallels the long struggle of Clare to live without common ownership of property.

Both Van den Goorbergh and Mueller present the Latin texts of Clare's letters and new translations and insights that complement the familiar translations by Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady in the Paulist Press Classics of Spirituality, *Francis and Clare: The Writings* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1982),

and *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, rev. Regis Armstrong, *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* (St. Bonaventure NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1993). Mueller's translations appear again with her personal reflections in *Clare of Assisi: The Letters to Agnes* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003).

## Poor Clares Speaking from Experience

In addition to the work of Edith Van den Goorbergh, other Poor Clare sisters have produced high quality writing authenticated by their lived experience. Teresa Frances Downing's *Living the Incarnation* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1993), and *This Living Mirror: Reflections on Clare of Assisi* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995) provide penetrating reflections around themes of compassion and community. The intelligence of Marie Beha coupled with practical insight is evident in numerous articles throughout the years appearing in *The Cord*, *Human Development* and *Review for Religious*.



Besides her earlier work in *The Cord*, Beth Lynn's succinct summary of Maleczek and Alberzoni's research, "What Difference Does a Rule Make? Clare's Poor Sisters and Gregory IX's Nuns" digests pages of dense argument into reader-friendly prose (*Magistra* [5.1: 1999], 25-42). Among many unsung accomplishments, Mary Francis Hone's, *St. Clare and her Order: A Bibliographic Guide*, lays out a menu for future study of the Clare tradition (Clare Centenary Series 5, St. Bonaventure NY: 1995). These and other

tireless Poor Clare sisters deserve attention as highly credible scholars.

After completing an extensive succession of theological reflections involving the Poor Clares from the Holy Name Federation and the Mother Bentivoglio Federation, *Doing What Is Ours to Do: A Clarian Theology of Life* was published in 2000 by the Franciscan Institute. The book describes the efforts of the Poor Clares themselves to articulate a theology of life. The results are synthesized in five essays written by women who continue to live the tradition of Clare in the modern world. Their project is described and summarized under themes of place, love and suffering, family, relationships, and the Trinity.

Claire Marie Ledoux presents a book-length reflection on Clare's writings in *Clare of Assisi: Her Spirituality Revealed in her Letters* (Trans. Colette Joly Dees, Cincinnati: Saint Anthony Messenger Press, 2003).

## Clare in the Multi-Media World

New images of Clare crop up to accompany the new words being spoken. Artistic representations of Clare as healer, spiritual leader, and peacemaker are being commissioned by health care institutions, religious houses, and organizations dedicated to peace and social justice. Historical study has helped the aesthetic imagination about Clare migrate away from the lilies and stereotyped monstrosity in the same way that Francis has moved beyond the bird bath of popular culture. William Cook has tracked down early images of Francis and Clare, published as *Images of St. Francis in Painting, Stone, and Glass from the Earliest Images to ca. 1320: A Catalogue* (Florence: Leo Olschki Editore, 2000) distributed through Franciscan Press, Quincy IL.) Robert Melnick and Joseph Wood produced *Clare of Assisi: Love's Reflection in the Window* (Libertyville IL: Marytown, 1995), a stunning coffee table book of recent photographs and prose poems illustrating Clare's Assisi. Jeryldene Wood's *Women, Art, and Spirituality: The Poor Clares of Early Modern Italy* presents a visual and historical perspective of the spirituality of the Poor Clares (Cambridge: University Press, 1996). Discussion of Clare was featured in Hallmark's video spin-off of Donald Spoto's *Francis of Assisi: The Reluctant Saint* (2003).

There are other new sights and new sounds. Robert Huttmacher adapted thirteenth-century melodies and chants from musical settings of psalms, antiphons, and hymn texts about Clare (*O Let the Faithful People Sing* (St. Bonaventure NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1993). Karen Lee wrote and produced a dramatic portrait of Clare, and Arturo Sbicca's 1993 video, *Clare of Assisi*, presents a contemplative portrait of Clare. Cathy Tisel Nelson's compact disc *What You Hold*, contains her songs based on the words of Francis and Clare. Briege O'Hare OSC's *Taste the Hidden Sweetness: Songs of the Mystical Life* contains songs adapted from the Letters of Clare to Agnes.

GIA Publications released an attractive guide, focused around Clare, for small faith communities accompanied by a CD which includes music, prayer, Scripture, reflection, time for sharing and allows for a "going forth in action" (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2003). It is the work of Rosemary Bleuher, Denise LaGiglia, Gil Ost diek OFM, Robert Piercy and Stephen Petruna. Madeline Pecora Nugent wrote *Clare and her Sisters: Lovers of the Poor Christ*, a fictionalized biography intended to appeal to younger readers (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 2003). Guido Visconti and Bimba Landmann produced a stunning book, *Clare and Francis*, illustrated with luminous contemporary icons (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2003). Ed Fisher, cartoonist



for Minnesota's *Rochester Post-Bulletin* even came up with a Francis and Clare coloring book, and Evelyn Sherry, children's librarian, has nearly completed a children's book on Clare.

The catalogues of St. Anthony Messenger Press are popping with materials in Franciscan spirituality, including an updated version of Murray Bodo's *Clare: A Light in the Garden* (1992); *A Retreat with Francis and Clare of Assisi*; and *Following our Pilgrim Hearts* by Murray Bodo and Susan Saint Sing (1996) available as either a book or an audiobook. They offer two videos: *Francis and Clare of Assisi: an Account of their Extraordinary Lives* (Oriente Occidente Productions) and *St. Clare and the Poor Clares* (Oriente Occidente Productions) which features the life of Clare as well as a presentation of Poor Clare life today.

Questions about Clare persist. Each year at the annual International Congress on Medieval Studies held at Western Michigan University, papers on Clare are presented, not only within the sessions sponsored by the Franciscan Institute and the Franciscan Federation, but also in sessions organized by other groups. *An Unencumbered Heart: A Tribute to Clare of Assisi*, a 2004 issue of the Franciscan Institute's Spirit and Life series includes recent Medieval Congress papers revised as essays by Jean-François Godet-Calogeras, Lezlie Knox, Jacques Dalarun, Pacelli Millane OSC, and Eileen Flanagan.

All of this not only promises yet more scholarship on Clare, but it has also sparked interest in other early Franciscan women, such as Kathleen Garay and Madeleine Jeay's *The Life of Saint Douceline, a Beguine of Provence, Translated from the Occitan with Introduction, Notes and Interpretive Essay* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001). Sean L. Field, *The Writings of Agnes of Harcourt, the Life of Isabelle of France and Letter on Louis IX and Longchamp* (Notre Dame IN: The University of Notre Dame Press, 2003) provides the translation of the life of another significant woman in the Clare tradition, Isabelle of France, sister of King Louis IX (Saint Louis) who left the court in 1260 to found the royal abbey in Longchamp. Agnes's is the first life of a woman written by a contemporary woman in the French language.

Since her eighth centenary, Clare has burst from her designated role within the cloister and is studied by a broader world of lay scholars. James Cowan's book, *Francis: A Saint's Way*, argues that because Francis and Clare are larger than their religious structures they embody a spirituality that meets the need of today's spiritual seekers, persons often disillusioned with organized religion (Ligouri MO: Ligouri/Triumph, 2001). Gerald Straub's *Sun and Moon Over Assisi: A Personal Encounter with Francis and Clare* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2000) illustrates how Francis and Clare animated his own spiritual quest.

The way of Clare suggests some norms for living in today's world. Her relational model has been appropriated by leadership mentors of quality man-

agement. Clare's *Form of Life* indicates how she provided a time and place to gather the concerns and needs of her community and how she valued the contributions of the least of the group. In the face of violence, Clare was not concerned about her safety, but only mindful of the welfare of the sisters in the monastery for whom she was responsible and whom she loved. In a world of constant change, Clare personifies perseverance and stability. The story of Clare's conversion in 1212 begins with Francis, Leo, Angelo and Rufino. More than forty years later at Clare's deathbed, Leo, Angelo, and Rufino still accompany her. After nearly sixty years, women and men who knew Clare as a child and young woman testify to her sanctity.

The pope and other ecclesial figures with whom she had so many differences came to bury and honor her. In the midst of a world of enormous transformations and shifts of power, Clare held fast to her convictions and to her faith, obviously drawing strength from a source larger than the human powers of her church or society. Her writings indicate that Clare's prayer life was anchored in the words of scripture and fidelity to the liturgical life of the church.

## What to Make of All This Flurry?

Perhaps the most enduring testimony within Franciscan studies to the renewed sensibility for Clare of Assisi comes with the publication of the three volumes of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*. It was a project ten years in production, undertaken to present for the English-speaking world a chronology of new translations and essential primary sources within the first one-hundred-fifty years after Francis's death. *Francis of Assisi: History, Hagiography and Hermeneutics in the Early Documents*, edited by Jay M. Hammond as the first full-length anthology of critical essays stemming from the publication of the *Early Documents*, includes an essay by Ingrid Peterson, "Clare of Assisi: Hidden Behind which Image of Francis?" (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004: 39-63).

The preface to *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, volume one, *The Saint* begins:

Appropriately Clare of Assisi, undoubtedly Francis's most faithful disciple, may have inspired this endeavor. At a celebration honoring the publication of *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, conversation eventually turned to the need for a new edition of *St. Francis of Assisi: Omnibus of Sources*.

The tables are turned when this long-awaited work, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, rests in the shadow of the work on Clare. The imposing scholarship of these three volumes on the primary sources for the study of Francis



and the interest in Clare during the past ten years are abundant evidence that Francis and Clare are not casualties of modern times, but have become increasingly relevant to the needs of the contemporary world.

What difference does this burst of enthusiasm and interest in Clare studies make? It indicates a new consciousness of the role of Clare in articulating and understanding the Franciscan tradition. Within the Franciscan family, Clare has moved beyond the property lines of the Second Order and is claimed as an essential heritage figure by the First and Third Orders as well the laity. Study of Clare is included in formation programs, course work, retreats, and programs on Franciscan spirituality. Teachers turn to both Francis and Clare to trace the roots of the Franciscan heritage.

The Franciscan publications of the English-speaking world in India, Africa, the Pacific rim, and The Philippines are also exploding with new interest and insight into Clare's place in the Franciscan tradition and in the work of spiritual formation. Anyone familiar with Clare studies will recognize many omissions in this brief account of some of the recent attention to Clare. The inability to mention every work in itself resolves the question of Clare's return to the enclosure following her 800<sup>th</sup> birthday party. "Yes, Clare, your candles burn brighter than before the celebration."

Author's note: I want to express sincere thanks to Dr. Lezlie Knox, of Marquette University, for her careful reading of this piece, and for her suggestions with respect to the most recent research. Her expertise certainly enriched the finished product.

**When the blessed Francis saw . . . that although we were physically weak and frail, we did not shirk deprivation, poverty, hard work, trial, or the shame or contempt of the world — rather, we considered them as great delights, . . . he greatly rejoiced in the Lord. And moved by compassion for us, he bound himself, both through himself and through his Order, to always have the same loving care and solicitude for us as for his own brothers.**

(Testament of Clare, 27-29)

## Lady Jacoba's Meal of Remembrance

Joanne Schatzlein, OSF

### Introduction

The inspiration for this ritual prayer comes from two sources. The first is a "Franciscan Seder" I composed years ago. The second source emerged from an invitation to incorporate the role of Lady Jacoba during a Holy Week session on "Franciscan Community Life" given at the Common Franciscan Novitiate in Joliet, Illinois, in 2003 and 2004. The topic for discussion was a concept of Parker Palmer inviting us to "stay at the table." It seemed an excellent

opportunity to merge these two sources into "Lady Jacoba's Meal of Remembrance."

The term Seder is not used to respect the Jewish High Feast. But the names of the Passover symbols are used freely after consultation with and encouragement from Jewish friends.



The ritual of Passover and its symbols foreshadow many of our Franciscan traditions. As we recall Francis's final moments during the Transitus, we share the stories of the past and reflect on the ways we as Franciscans keep the charism alive today. Images of praising God for the gifts of our earth, of the bitter/sweet, of making the bricks and rebuilding, of the Incarnation and Paschal

events, not to mention the simple Franciscan joy of sharing wine and a good meal, all contribute to make this ritual an appropriate celebration both during Holy Week and in anticipation of the Feasts of Francis and Clare.

## Setting of the Table

*The room is prepared for a truly festive occasion. The table is set with the best silver, dishes, Jacoba's special linen and flowers. A separate table may be prepared for the beginning ritual. The ritual and meal include symbolic foods used for the Passover Feast and times of remembering. (All stand)*

## Opening Song: WE PRAISE YOU

We praise You, O Lord, for all your works are wonderful.  
We praise You, O Lord, forever is Your love.

You fill our jars with flour and our jugs with oil;  
You nourish us throughout all time.  
We come to break and share your Bread of Life  
And offer thanks and praise. *We praise You . . .*

We praise You God, for You have called us each by name;  
You breathed in us your holy life.  
You guide us and protect us all our days,  
And gently lead us home. *We praise You . . .*

© The Dameans, from the album: *Remember Your Love*.  
Composer of verses unknown.

## Opening Prayer

JACOBA: This evening, O Spirit of God, fill our hearts with the warmth of your love. In this evening of sharing at the table may we remember who You are, O God – and who we are as children, daughters and lovers – who we are as brothers and sisters united as one in the community of God's people, in the unity of the Church, and in this Franciscan family.

All glory be to you Creator God, through your Son, Jesus Christ,  
with the Spirit who brings life and blessing forever and ever.

ALL: Amen.

## Lighting the Festival Candle (All remain standing)

*The festival candle is lit by the eldest in the house with the following blessing being said simultaneously:*

JACOBA: May the festival light we now kindle inspire us to use our powers to love and not to hate, to create and not to destroy, to spread joy and not sorrow,

to serve You, O God of freedom. May our home be consecrated, O God, by the light of Your Countenance, shining upon us in this blessing and bring us peace.

ALL: All Praise be Yours, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has brought us life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this season of joy. May the brightness of this light inspire us and bring spiritual joy and promise to all of us. Amen. (Be seated.)

## Explanation of Symbols

*Lady Jacoba lifts and explains each symbol.*

**KARPAS:** A green sweet vegetable that reminds us of springtime and the goodness of Mother Earth, who provides food which nourishes us.<sup>1</sup>

**MAROR:** Bitter herbs that remind us of all that seems bitter to us as it did to Francis when facing the leper.

**HAROSET:** Chopped apples, cinnamon, and nuts which remind us of the mortar used by our ancestors in Egypt and by Francis in rebuilding the "house fallen into ruin."

**SALT WATER:** Symbol of tears . . . tears of bitterness and tears of joy.

**MATZO:** Unleavened bread sometimes called the "Bread of Affliction" because it is simple, poor food without yeast and, like the bread of the poor, difficult to digest.

**CRUCIFIX:** Our San Damiano Crucifix reminds us of the mysteries of this Holy Week, depicting not only our own weaknesses which are transformed through Jesus' life and death on earth, but also recalling the three great mysteries of our faith: the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension.

**EGG:** Traditional Easter symbol of new life . . . Resurrected Life.

**WINE:** Symbolizes joy and is the biblical drink which cheers our hearts. This evening it reminds us of the blood of Jesus poured out for us, and that we are people of faith.

## The Washing of the Hands

*This is a ritual of purity that symbolically prepares an individual for entering a sacred place, for beginning a liturgical celebration, or for partaking of food. This evening it also reminds us of Jesus' call for us to be servants to each*

*other, as Jacoba was to Francis, washing and preparing his body for death. It also reminds us of the desire Francis and Clare had for us to be ministers of love and compassion.*

## The Blessing of the First Cup – The Cup of God's Call and Blessing

*The first cup of wine is poured.*

JACOBA: (*Lifts the first cup*)

All Praise be Yours, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe and Creator of the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You who have chosen us and sanctified us with your Commandments. In love you have given us these solemn days of joy and this festival of unleavened bread. You have chosen us for service and have made us sharers in the blessing of Your holy festivals.

ALL: (*Lifting up the glass of wine*)

Praise to You, Lord our God, for you have preserved us and sustained us, bringing us to the joy of this season. We remember what Jesus said at the Last Supper: "From now on, I tell you, I shall not drink wine until the Kingdom of God comes."

*All drink the wine.*

## The Blessing of the Karpas

JACOBA: (*Lifts up the sweet Karpas*)

All Praise be Yours, O Lord our God, for you have gifted us with the fruits of this earth, which nourish us and give us life. May we never forget the gift that food is.

*Lady Jacoba invites all to take a piece of Karpas.*

ALL: (*Lifting up the Karpas*)

Praise to You, Lord our God. We thank you for your generosity to us. We remember our brothers and sisters who are not able to share in these gifts on this holiest of nights.

*All eat the Karpas.*

## The Blessing of the Matzo

JACOBA: (*Lifting up the Matzo*)

All Praise be Yours, O Lord our God, the God of the people Israel who hungered in the desert of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. May we be freed from all that binds us and keeps us from nourishing others both now and in the future.

ALL: Amen. (*The Matzo is broken, shared and eaten by all at the table.*)

## The Second Cup of Wine: The Cup of Memory

*The second cup of wine is poured and consumed during the sharing which follows.*

This is the time we remember our stories. It is a time during which we recall the history of our Christian and Franciscan ancestors and their struggle for freedom. This is the time when that which has been bitter to us in the past, becomes sweet in the redeeming power of our Lord Jesus Christ who gives His entire life for our freedom. Let us now recall some of the bitter times we have lived through.

## Sharing of Maror Dipped in Salt Water

*All take the bitter herbs, dip them in salt water, and eat them in memory of the bitter times of our lives.*

## Sharing of the Haroset (*Read silently*)

The Haroset is a mixture which is sweet. The bitter/sweet imagery of Francis reminds us that when we embrace that which is bitter, we experience a sweetness that is overwhelming. On this night we recall times of "sweetness" and ways in which we are called to rebuild the "House" as Francis did, as our ancestors did in Egypt, and as those in our Congregations or Fraternities, families and friends who have gone before us did as an example for us.

## The Mingling of the Maror, Haroset and Matzo (*Read silently*)

In recalling that which is bitter and sharing that which is sweet, we recognize that it is the poor who are God's revelation for us. To symbolize this let us now combine the bitter and sweet, placing it between the Matzo, praising God for our Franciscan call to be poor and simple, always mindful of our challenge to live with and among the poor as Jesus did.

## The Third Cup of Wine: The Cup of Redemption

*The third cup of wine is poured and served with the meal.*

## The Meal

*The candle blessed in the ritual is brought to the table. A simple meal of chicken, rice, an apple salad and vegetable is served, with almond cookies for dessert. The circular shape of the cookie can be seen as a symbol of eternal life. The egg and other symbolic foods can become part of the meal.*

## The Fourth Cup of Wine: The Cup of the Final Coming

*The fourth cup of wine is poured and shared as we again reflect on the San Damiano Crucifix in anticipation of the death of Jesus, yet looking forward to the Resurrection.*

## Closing Psalm Prayer

Psalm 9 (from *The Geste of the Great King:*  
*The Office of the Passion of Francis of Assisi* <sup>2</sup>)

Sing a new song to the Lord,  
the worker of wondrous deeds,  
God's right hand and holy arm  
sacrificed the beloved Son.

The Lord made salvation known,  
revealed justice to the nations.  
On that day the Lord sent mercy  
and song in the night.  
This is the day the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord;  
the Lord is God, and has shone upon us.

Let the heavens rejoice and earth exult,  
let the sea and all that is in it roar,  
let the fields and everything in them sing for joy.

Bring to the Lord, families of nations,  
bring to the Lord glory and honor,  
bring to the Lord the glory due his name.

Kingdoms of the earth sing to God,  
chant psalms to the Lord.  
Chant psalms to the One who ascended to the East  
above the heaven of heavens.

Behold, God speaks with a voice of power;  
give glory to God, who governs Israel,  
whose splendor and power is on high.

God, wonderful in the saints, the very God of Israel,  
will give the people power and might.  
Blessed be God!

ALL: Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

## Closing Blessing

JACOBA: (IN THE WORDS OF FRANCIS)

"All powerful, all holy, most high, supreme God: all good, supreme good, totally good, You who alone are good, may we give You all praise, all glory, all thanks, all honor, all blessing, and all good. So be it! So be it! Amen." (PrsH 11)

ALL: Amen.

JACOBA: (IN THE WORDS OF CLARE)

"What you hold, may you always hold. What you do, may you always do and never abandon. But with swift pace, light step and unswerving feet, so that even your steps stir up no dust, go forward securely, joyfully and swiftly, on the path of prudent happiness . . ." (2LAg: 11-13)

ALL: Amen.

TOGETHER: (A PARAPHRASE OF THE WORDS GIVEN TO BROTHER LEO)

God bless us and keep us. May God smile on us, and be merciful to us; May God turn toward us and give us Peace. May our gracious God bless us. (BIL)

ALL: Amen.

Closing Song: God You Are Good by Cathy Tisel Nelson

The music can be found on *What You Hold*, a CD produced by Cathy Tisel Nelson in 1996.

## Notes

Franciscan Clipart is available through [www.ciofs.org/clipart.htm](http://www.ciofs.org/clipart.htm). It is the work of Fr. P. Philippus, OFM, Cap, and is freely shared. I use a color picture, labeled dephc058 from his home page. It depicts Francis and Clare at a meal, with a woman (I think of her as Lady Jacoba) in the lower right hand corner.

General information about the Passover Meal was taken from Rabbi Leon Klenicki, editor, *The Passover Celebration: A Haggadah for the Seder* (Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1980).

Laurent Gallant, OFM and André Cirino, OFM, "Psalm 9," *The Geste of the Great King: Office of the Passion of Francis of Assisi* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2001), 97-99.

The music and CD of *What You Hold* may be purchased directly from the composer, Cathy Tisel Nelson, 4512 Stratford Lane NW, Rochester, MN 55901.

## Lady Jacoba's Almond Cookie Recipe

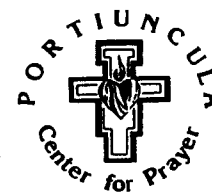
1 cup butter or margarine, softened	2 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 1/2 cups white sugar	1 teaspoon soda
2 eggs	1/2 teaspoon salt
1-2 teaspoons almond flavoring	1 cup chopped almonds
2 3/4 cups unsifted flour	white sugar

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In mixing bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in eggs and almond flavoring. Stir in flour, cream of tartar, soda, salt and chopped almonds. Shape dough into balls, using rounded teaspoon of dough for each. Roll balls of dough in white sugar. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake 8-10 minutes or until edges are set. Do not overbake.

Note: With self-rising flour, omit cream of tartar, soda and salt.

Makes about 44 cookies.

NB: This recipe is an adapted version of the Snickerdoodle Cookie Recipe.



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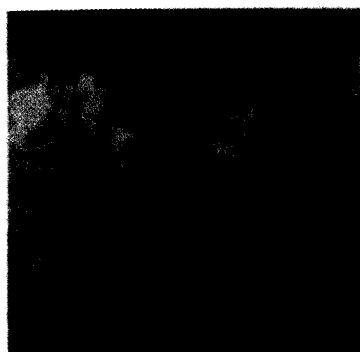
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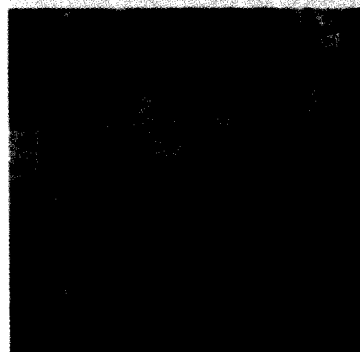
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### ***You are invited to participate!***

The Commission was established by the English-Speaking Conference of the Order of Friars Minor in March 2001. The Commission was asked to develop, coordinate, and encourage a variety of initiatives that would promote the retrieval of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition as a vital resource for contemporary Franciscan life and pastoral ministry within the Church. Visit our Website and find out more about this exciting and rapidly expanding project at: [www.CFIT-ESC-OFM.org](http://www.CFIT-ESC-OFM.org).

Among the Commission's early initiatives was the creation of *The Franciscan Heritage Series*. Each volume in the series will explore a dominant theme in the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. In each book (40-50 pages), the author will pay special attention to some of the unique and distinct contributions of both vernacular and academic theologians from within the Franciscan Tradition. These books will also invite the reader to explore the contemporary pastoral implications of the theme. It is hoped that formation directors, college professors, Franciscans in various types of pastoral care, preaching ministry and the like will find the volumes to be an excellent source of information and provide the sound basis for further reflection and discussion. While the volumes presuppose some training in philosophy and theology, the authors have kept references to a minimum and avoid the use of technical language if possible. Over time, it is hoped that the

*Heritage Series* will provide a comprehensive introduction to a broad range of important topics in the areas of theology, history, economics, the arts, and other topics. Two volumes were published in 2003 and a number of other volumes are being prepared. Volume One, written by Kenan Osborne, OFM, is entitled: *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, Tracing Its Origins and Identifying Its Central Components*. Volume Two, written by Ilia Delio, OSF, is entitled: *A Franciscan View of Creation, Learning to Live in a Sacramental World*. Our goal is to publish two or three volumes in each of the coming years.

Would you be interested in helping us to develop additional teaching resources that might make this material more readily accessible to a variety of audiences—persons in various stages of formation for Franciscan life, college students, partners in ministry, adult education seminars? Are you a skilled developer of resource materials? Do you have the kind of creative imagination that finds practical ways to invite others into a deeper level of conversation with and reflection on the contents of a book? If so, we would like to hear from you. Our hope is to be able to make more broadly available resources, lesson plans, that others might be easily and effectively able to use to invite a wider circle of brothers and sisters into conversation with the richness and pastoral relevance of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. Would you like to become a partner in the ongoing development of this project? If so, please be in touch with Edward Coughlin, OFM, who is serving as the Commission's liaison for this part of our project, at: [fec@hnp.org](mailto:fec@hnp.org).

We hope to hear from you.

Commission on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition

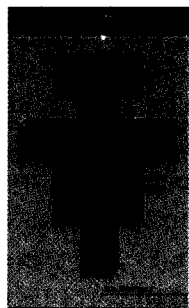
Joseph Chinnici, OFM, Margaret Carney, OSF, Edward Coughlin, OFM, Ilia Delio, OSF, John Petrivic, OFM Cap., Cyprian Rosen, OFM Cap., Daniel Pietrzac, OFM Conv., Pierre Brunette, OFM, Austin McCormack, OFM, William Short, OFM, Michael Cusato, OFM.

## Commission for the Retrieval of The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition (CFIT)



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## The Franciscan Heritage Series

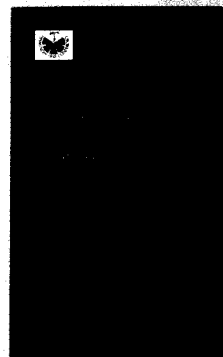


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This series contains the papers presented at the annual symposium sponsored by the Franciscan Center of the Washington Theological Union. Each symposium seeks to explore a contemporary theological question and looks to the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition as a primary resource for approaching, exploring, and discussing the topic. The publication of this stimulating lecture series is intended to invite a wider group of men and women into a deeper level of conversation with the richness of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition as a resource for Franciscan life and pastoral ministry in the contemporary Church and world.

Volume 1: *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition* (2001)

Volume 2: *Franciscan Identity and Post Modern Culture* (2002)

Volume 3: *Franciscans and Creation: What is our responsibility?* (2003)

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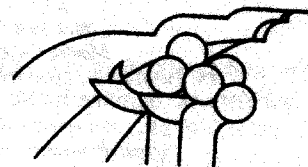
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## On the Franciscan Circuit Coming Events 2004

**Franciscan Federation 39th Annual Conference. Thursday, August 15-Sunday, August 18, 2004.** Keynote speakers: Bill Short, OFM and Gabriele Uhlein, OSF. For information, contact the Federation Office. Phone: 202.529.2334 or Fax: 202.529.7016.

**Conscious Contact Mini-Retreat – “The Peace Prayer”**  
**August 18, 2004. Wednesday, 5:00-8:00 p.m.** Sr. Catherine Cahill, OSF. The Franciscan Center, 3010 N. Perry Ave., Tampa, FL 33603-5345.

**Dreams of Earth Retreats. August 6 - August 8, 2004. Friday, 7:00 p.m.-Sunday, 2:00 p.m.** Weekend Retreat which focuses on dream-tending as a form of spiritual experience. At Holy Spirit Retreat Center, Janesville, MN. Cost: \$150.00. For more information, contact Sr. Patricia Sablatura, OSF, at [www.dreams-of-earth-retreats.com](http://www.dreams-of-earth-retreats.com).

**Dreams of Earth Retreats. August 9 - August 14, 2004. Monday, 7:00 p.m. through Saturday, 2:00 p.m.** Week-long retreat which focuses on dream-tending as a form of spiritual experience. At Holy Spirit Retreat Center, Janesville, MN. Cost: \$395.00. For more information, contact Sr. Patricia Sablatura, OSF, at [www.dreams-of-earth-retreats.com](http://www.dreams-of-earth-retreats.com).

**The Journey Into God: A Retreat Experience with Bonaventure, Francis and Clare. August 6 - August 14, 2004. Friday through Saturday.** With Josef Raischl, SFO and André Cirino, OFM, at the Portiuncula Retreat Center, Frankfort, IL. For information, contact the Center at 815.464.3880.

## Looking Ahead 2005

**The 40 Day Franciscan Hermitage Retreat. February 12-March 24, 2005.** This retreat uses the Third Order Regular Rule and M. E. Imler's *A Franciscan Solitude Experience*. See ad, p. 211, for complete information.

## 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
OfP	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
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

# A WORD FROM BONAVENTURE

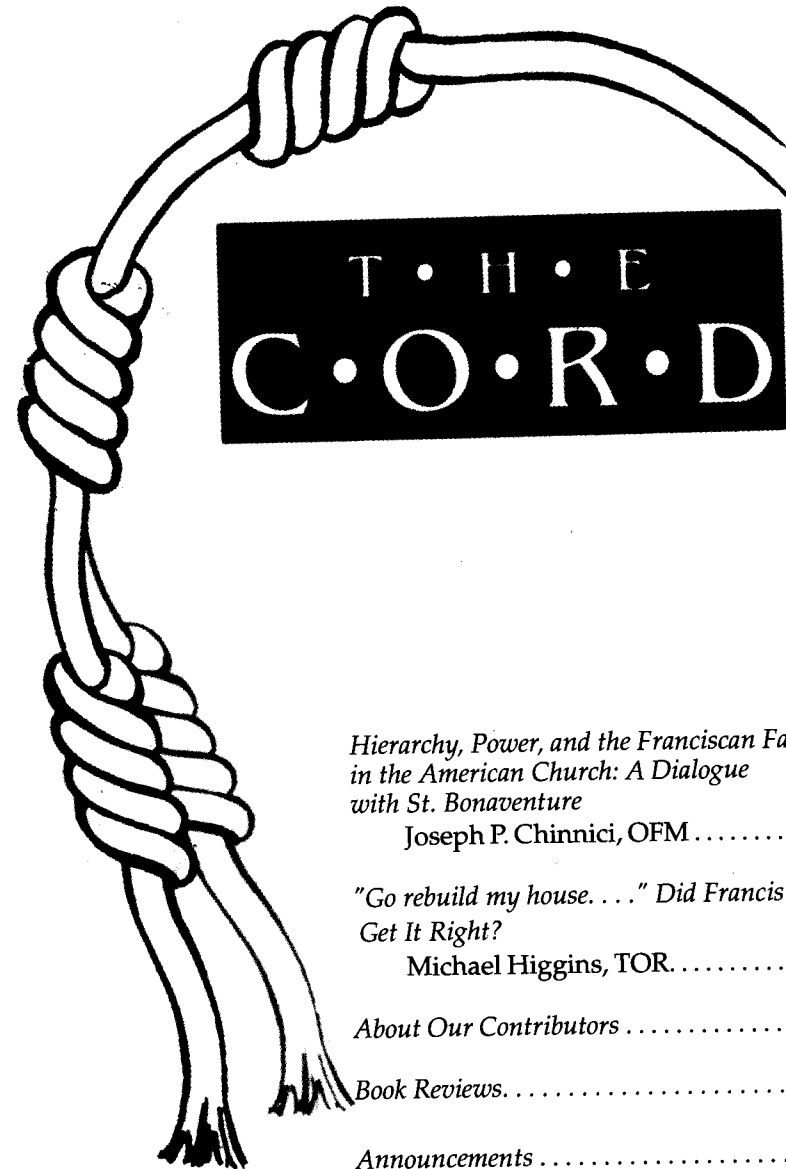
DEAR DAUGHTERS IN THE LORD, I HAVE RECENTLY LEARNED FROM OUR DEAR BROTHER LEO, ONCE A COMPANION OF OUR HOLY FATHER, HOW EAGER YOU ARE . . . TO SERVE THE POOR CRUCIFIED CHRIST IN TOTAL PURITY. I WAS FILLED WITH A VERY GREAT JOY AT THIS, SO THAT I NOW WISH, THROUGH THIS LETTER, TO ENCOURAGE YOUR DEVOTION AND YOUR GENEROUS FOLLOWING OF THE VIRTUOUS FOOTPRINTS OF YOUR HOLY MOTHER, WHO, BY MEANS OF THE LITTLE POOR MAN FRANCIS, WAS TAUGHT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"MAY YOU DESIRE TO HAVE NOTHING ELSE UNDER HEAVEN" EXCEPT WHAT [YOUR] MOTHER TAUGHT. . . .

LETTER OF BROTHER BONAVENTURE, MINISTER GENERAL TO THE ABBESS  
AND SISTERS OF THE MONASTERY OF SAINT CLARE IN ASSISI (1259)

The Cord  
The Franciscan Institute  
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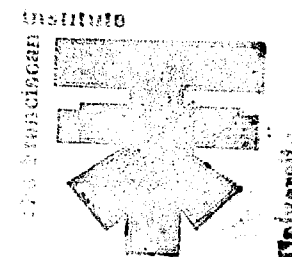
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**THE CORD**  
*A Franciscan Spiritual Review*

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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).

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## Editorial

Well, it is time to celebrate the roots and core values of the Franciscan vocation once again, as the autumn of the year arrives and the feast of Francis looms just ahead. The vocation to follow Christ as a Franciscan is gift, to be sure. But it is also hard work to remain faithful to our call. Awareness of the difficulties and pain involved in being truly Franciscan was at the heart of the presentations given in February, 2004, at the Franciscan Forum held in Denver, Colorado. This issue consists of only two articles: the first is by one of the presenters and one is by an attendee who did not hold the stage at any time. Both offer us significant material on which to reflect as we move through the golden days of September and October.

The theme of the Denver meeting was "Repair my house," from the so-very-well-known story of the beginning of Francis's conversion. Both Joe Chinnici and Mike Higgins have spent a fair amount of time in ministries that have shown them first-hand the real need for understanding the many levels of grace required to enter into a time of repair and regeneration, either individually or as members of the institution we call the Church. It is with deep appreciation for their willingness to share these articles that I write this editorial.

Joe Chinnici writes a masterful and profound piece about the enormous challenge of living the Franciscan vocation in the American Church today, with a focus on encountering the underside of hierarchical thinking, structures and behaviors. It is a much longer article than is the norm for this journal, but it contains, at least for me, so much to think about and pray over that it would have been unconscionable to divide it into two parts or to prune it in any major way. Joe calls upon our willingness to hear the wisdom of St. Bonaventure encouraging us to know the beauty and the travail of standing in the world as brother and sister to all. Take his writing into your hands with a readiness to have your intellect challenged and fed at the same time, and to have your soul touched by the mystery of grace.

To embrace the Cross means being broken and changed into a new person, never easy and always intense. Michael Higgins's reflection moves us into a place where we once again look at the church of San Damiano and the encounter between Francis and Jesus, a scene familiar to all of us. Is this a place where we are able to reconsider the cost of discipleship—both for Francis and for ourselves? Francis did not turn away, nor should we.

May the grace of vocation be replenished by the words of these writers and may the local churches in which we witness be blessed by our presence, our example, and our hope.

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*

## Hierarchy, Power, and the Franciscan Family in the American Church: A Dialogue with St. Bonaventure

Joseph P. Chinnici, OFM

The word “repair” in the phrase from II Celano VI.10, “Repair my house, which, as you see, is falling into ruin” has multiple implications for our Franciscan life in the Church and society today. Associated with the cross of San Damiano and Francis’s early conversion, “repair” has entered into our lexicon as one of the identifying marks for Franciscan identity. Yet we know that its meaning has a rather checkered history in the Church, and, for us, the word mutates depending on circumstances and people, political situations and ecclesiastical possibilities. It demands a thorough examination. In what follows, I would like to begin to develop an interpretation of “repair” suited for our own times. It is a complicated matter, as we shall see. By way of introduction, let me explain why.

### Introduction

The Latin word “*repara*” falls in a common word field encompassing a host of meanings: *recreate, convert, correct, remake, restore, return, reform, revert, regenerate, recover, renew, recuperate, revive, resuscitate, reflower, regrow, reflourish, relight, rekindle*.<sup>1</sup> The meaning we assign to the reality behind these words depends on one’s own background, be it that of an architect who wants to re-imagine an old building or completely plan a new one, a builder who wants to remodel the whole house or instead strengthen the foundation of a pre-existing structure, or a gardener who wants to replant with water-resistant weeds or flower-producing roses. The tools used for a “repair” will also vary: a spiritual director trained in the *Exercises of Ignatius* will simply not take the same course as a lawyer who believes the public is best served by correct legal arrangements; a systems manager who wants to get something done and involve everyone in doing it will not approach “repair” the same way as a philosopher with an innate sense for distinctions and clear thinking; a theologian versed in a biblical worldview will not cotton to the iconic methodology of Hans Urs

von Balthasar; a curator who uses controlled temperature and resin to preserve an artifact in a pristine state will hardly work in the same way as the marketing agent who is worried about loss of clientele. In addition, the reality behind the word “repair” also differs whether one is responsible only for oneself, or a few people, or a large group. And, finally, what exactly are we “repairing”: a warehouse, a hermitage, a house for people, a fraternity, or a global Church? In other words, we best be honest at the beginning of this discussion about who we are, the tools we bring to the discussion, for whom we are responsible, and what we are trying to do.

I have found in the course of my own life that my own emphases have changed depending on the gravitational pull exercised upon me at any given time: novice, priest, teacher, formation director, brother to the Poor Clares, friend, retreat master, responder to the challenges of my sisters and brothers, provincial councillor, provincial, academic dean. There are a myriad number of differences between these positions and a host of methodologies for “repair” involved in them. Each instance of “repair” engages a person in relationships with other human beings, who themselves are free, full of agency, and more or less, as is oneself, opaque/transparent, docile/stubborn, gentle/vicious, generous/mean, brilliant/stupid, creative/bureaucratic, often simultaneously. All of this would seem to indicate that “repair” is a relational reality which operates circumstantially in the space between people—living-with-other people. And therein, for most of us, I think, lies the true rub: If only “repair” were based on an ideal, a model, a preconceived plan, and not a relationship; if only it involved things and not people; if only it remained static and did not engage moving targets; if only it could fixate its rules of behavior and was not so embedded in personal choices governed by personal and communal beliefs, talents, roles, responsibilities, virtues and vices, historical possibilities and political impossibilities. And when we are dealing with “repair” in the context of a holy patrimony, we best be very cautious, taking off our sandals lest we leave very unseemly footprints.

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J. Chinnici, OFM

With these *caveats* in mind, then, let me try to focus this discussion in a very narrow direction: "repair" as it applies to our relationship as men and women of the Franciscan family to the structural Church, particularly, but not exclusively, in its hierarchical dimension. I choose this focus because it is one of the issues we rarely talk about publicly. As an historian, I would like to examine this dimension of "repair" with the help of one of our master theologians and ministerial leaders, St. Bonaventure: First, by trying to identify in broad strokes the origins of our difficult contemporary experience and attitude towards authority, law, institution, structures, offices, hierarchy, and power in the Church. It is the contemporary situation, after all, which poses the challenges and shapes the living interpretation. Second, by describing some Bonaventurian approaches to the Church and the role of the Franciscan family within it. Through this dialogue between the present and the past, I hope to provide us with a few guiding principles in our task of "repairing" in relationship to the **public power structure of the Church**. Generations of Franciscans have been there before us. I would like to conclude with some reflections on the modern origins of this understanding of "repair" which I am trying to articulate. Throughout I would like to keep in mind that we have only just begun that process which that greatest of medieval religious historians, Jean Leclercq, has described so eloquently in his memoirs:

With regard to the renewal in each one of these areas, the following process appeared: longings "at the base," in the men and women who are the subjects and the agents of history; resistance; a medieval research that contributed to liberating the present from certain dead weight inherited from the past, generally recent, and to elaborating a doctrine; progressive pacification; the appearance of islands of immobility; and finally, always, life would win.<sup>2</sup>

## I. Identifying Our Ecclesiological Journey

"The soul does not have illumination, except when considering the Church in relation to its times," wrote Bonaventure in his *Collations on the Six Days* (April 29-May 28, 1273).<sup>3</sup> Bonaventure may have been referring to the "ages of the Church," but he certainly composed most of his reflections from 1256 onwards with a view to the "signs of his times" in the Church, Order, and society in which he lived. So also, we cannot consider the meaning of "repair" unless we attempt seriously to understand what our own contemporary experience has bequeathed to us as members of the Franciscan family. To get us going, at this point I would like to single out some significant developments which I think have converged to shape our view of **repair as it relates to public power and hierarchy** and made our own experience with respect to the structures of the Church highly ambivalent.

Our understanding of what "repair" and "reform" might mean as applied to the hierarchical structures of the Church has been seriously affected and maybe even distorted by the developments of the last forty years. We are all inheritors of one of the greatest ecclesial events of modern times, the Second Vatican Council. We are familiar with its decrees; we have been shaped by its catechesis; we have been inspired by what we think to have been its vision. During the first phase of its reception in the United States, approximately 1965 to 1983, the Council served on the institutional level to unleash a host of new structural elements in the Church. Fueled partially by the conciliar teachings on the liturgy, the Church, and the apostolate of the laity, here in the United States people on all levels—laity, clergy, and religious—promoted a broad range of developments: parish councils, lay governing and consulting boards, the employment of laity in parochial structures, an explosion of lay ministries, grass roots national organizations which received institutional verification in the National Office for Black Catholics, National Encuentros, the National Association for Lay Ministry.<sup>4</sup> Among the priests and religious new social ministries developed which required their own structural expressions: the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry, the National Federation of Priests Councils, the Franciscan Federation, a host of urban civic programs, educational and advocacy works, chaplaincies, and the associations they engendered.<sup>5</sup> All of these developments, when compared to the structures of the 1950s, implied an incredible *diversification of ministries* among religious orders and an *insertion into the social problems* of the time. These developments are well known and many of us, whether religious or lay, can recollect from our own experience the great sea change which we thought this represented: personal dignity, freedom to choose, collegiality, co-responsibility, participative structures, team ministry, power sharing. For purposes of this essay I want to call our attention to the fact that these developments affected the inherited status categories which discriminated and *to some extent created order* between public roles and functions in the Church: ordained priest, laity, religious. Our search for new structures which crossed these inherited status boundaries and formed one community seemed at the time the natural application of the very theological reversal which the Council had encouraged. All we needed to do was read *Lumen Gentium* to equate "reform" and "repair" with major structural change.

Note, for example, how the chapters of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church were structured: (1) The Mystery of the Church; (2) The People of God; (3) The Church Is Hierarchical; (4) The Laity; (5) The Call to Holiness; (6) Religious; (7) The Pilgrim Church; (8) Our Lady. The Council teaches that all states of life—clergy, laity/religious as hierarchically arranged—are first part of the working of the Incarnate Christ in history; all in the Church share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ (31). The first chapter discusses the mystery of the Church in the light of the Trinity; the second, the

Church as the people of God. It is within this context of unity that distinctions will emerge. The key example is priesthood: "Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less ordered one to another; each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ" (10). And then, "All children of the Church should nevertheless remember that their exalted condition results, not from their own merits, but from the grace of Christ. If they fail to respond in thought, word and deed to that grace, not only shall they not be saved, but they shall be the more severely judged" (14). The Council's emphasis on the unity of the Church within the mystery of the Trinity and the Incarnate Word and the communion of all the people of God in the life of grace is clear. Hierarchical expression has its role within this context of unity.<sup>6</sup>

This view of the Church, with its dominant image of "People of God," was received into an American ecclesial body which also participated in the national atmosphere of the 1960s. As historians are now indicating, the decade was marked by a severe criticism of the social, cultural, and gender arrangements of the post-World War II period. This critique called into question inherited patterns of authority and hierarchy in family life, political processes, and social arrangements. In summary fashion, the Civil Rights movement leveled a devastating *moral critique* of structures of discrimination in law, culture, and government. This demand for moral consistency rooted in personal conscience and sisterhood and brotherhood cut through the anti-war movement, attitudes towards the environment, and the first stage of feminism. Political authority and its exercise through structures of governance was measured against the basic human rights and relationships of interdependence and found morally complicit in sin, morally compromised by institutional dishonesty. We need only to recall the key terms "authenticity," "honesty," and "freedom" to catch the spirit of the times.<sup>7</sup> A *romantic critique*, particularly present in the counter-culture, questioned the authenticity of older manners, patterns of speech, hair and clothing styles, rules of courtesy, etiquette and patterns of decorum. Inherited social constraints seemed to imply on a daily basis the acceptance of gendered and oppressive social structures. Daily practices needed to change so as to express new values. Romanticism, as one acute observer remarked at the time, "exalted poetic vision, the power of imagination, and quasi-mystical intuition over the discursive processes of reason. Feeling and instinct took priority over rational analysis."<sup>8</sup> A *democratic critique*, part and parcel of the civil rights movements and the student culture of the times, demanded equal protection, individual rights under the law, and the formation of participatory government. An *intellectual critique* influenced strongly by the sociological analysis of power and managerial arrangements and the class consciousness of Marxist theories of alienation formed a cognitive umbrella of concepts unifying many of these diverse phenomena.<sup>9</sup>

It does not take much imagination to understand how these broader movements impacted the understanding and practice of ecclesial reform then under way. Certain biblical images resonated with popular aspirations: human dignity founded on the *imago Dei* (Genesis 1.26-27); the liberation from slavery narrated in Exodus; the new law of Baptism in Christ where there "does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or free man, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3.28); the image of authority presented in "Who is in fact the greater—he/she who reclines at table or he/she who serves the meal? Is it not the one who reclines at table? Yet I am in your midst as the one who serves you" (Lk. 22.27). In retrospect, we are able to see clearly why social justice stemming from experiential knowledge of the inner city poor and the critique of the Vietnam War became the cutting edge of ministerial and then communal life. Eventually, the language of protest against racial oppression entered into the critique of the gender- and lay-enslaving structures of the hierarchical Church.<sup>10</sup> We knew immediately that our old custom books with their hierarchical arrangements had to change.<sup>11</sup> It made sense to receive communion in the hand and practice personalized prayer styles as a sign of our adult maturity; to establish a consensus methodology of decision-making and participative structures that recognized fundamental human equality; to listen receptively as the returning missionaries of the 1980s spoke the language of "prophecy" and "liberation."<sup>12</sup> Finally, there was some truth that all of these fundamental critiques were negatively contained in the symbolic words "hierarchy" and "patriarchy." Our theological language and our social language went together so as to form a civil and ecclesial universe that spoke to aspirations of freedom and personal meaning. But what would happen were the social language of "reform" and "repair" to undergo *another* mutation, symbiotic with a change in the religious atmosphere? How would the public language of "reform" and "repair" change after the rise of the "new Right" and the rebirth of social and biblical fundamentalism?<sup>13</sup>

Nowhere were these new developments embodied more clearly than in the practices, ministries, and models of governance developed by the religious sisters during this period. Their story, to some extent, may be seen as iconographic: members of the lay status group in the Church, professional women, without social niche, migrating away from the domestic and managerial structures of the 1950s.<sup>14</sup> The study document sent out by the Canon Law Committee of the Council of Major Superiors of Women in 1966-1967 called attention to five values which would affect "the life of the Church for many generations": "the personal dignity of every individual, the biblical and liturgical sources of Christian life, collegiality, openness to the world, ecumenical attitudes and action."<sup>15</sup> A review of the renewal chapters of groups within the Franciscan family indicates that they followed a pattern of decision-making based on the same values.<sup>16</sup> Congregations then embarked on a twenty-year

process of constitutional revision, during which people learned to govern their own lives, to discover, in contemporary terms, "their own agency." As would be revealed in the listening sessions conducted during the mid-1980s, this process of establishing self-governance accomplished a significant and widespread change in the way religious viewed the exercise of authority. "... Shared decision making, discernment processes in dialogue with authority, shared responsibility and subsidiarity. . . . Most religious saw participative government as life-giving and unifying. A few religious experienced it as fragmenting and aimless."<sup>17</sup> To be sure, the congregations, among them the Franciscans (who probably tended to be more moderate), covered a wide spectrum of views and fell along a continuum of reactions to hierarchical arrangements.<sup>18</sup> Still, in 1977 the Episcopal Conference invited the LCWR to help evaluate the draft of the new law for religious. Fifty-two percent of the leadership group representing thousands of sisters responded to a lengthy questionnaire. "The concept of authority pervading the schema," the final report noted,

is perceived as primarily hierarchical and paternalistic, whether it refers to internal relations between moderators and members of an institute or to the relationship between an institute and ecclesiastical entities. The models of governance offered throughout appear pyramidal; the style of leadership proposed tends to be authoritarian.<sup>19</sup>

One year later the Liaison Committees of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious published the results of a thorough survey of "patterns of authority and obedience" among religious women. The summary study called attention to changes in the structures of government and processes of decision-making. At the heart of the ecclesiological development was the problem of office and the exercise of power. Four key ideas emerged with respect to the Church:

- A deepened awareness of the Church as a commission of persons distinctively gifted by the Spirit. Since the Spirit pours out gifts for the sake of the mission, every person is invaluable; her gifts—as well as those of all the sisters as community—are vital to the life of the Church.
- The presence of the Spirit in all. Each one is made capable, through baptism, of receiving and sharing something of God's self-revelation.
- The image of the Church as servant—in and for the world—with the primacy this view confers on ministry and on the social responsibility of the individual and the community.
- The model of church (and its members) as a pilgrim people ever in process of evolving or searching, rather than in possession of finality and certitude.<sup>20</sup>

Significantly, on the eve of the 1980s, after ten years of constitutional revisions and participative processes, the report called attention to the following tensions:

**Styles of leadership:** Enabling and participative modes of leadership/decision-making prevalent in many congregations seem in direct conflict with traditional authoritarian modes still current in the institutional church. Some bishops evidence little grasp and deep suspicion of emerging collaborative structures.

**Non-employment of "canonical" powers:** Some bishops express confusion because "canonically" religious administrators have certain juridical powers and yet, given evolving patterns in their communities, deliberately opt not to exercise them.

**Nature of ministry:** Some religious face the disapproval and outright opposition of members of the hierarchy regarding new directions in ministry.

**Roles of women:** A number of bishops appear unwilling to accept women in changed ministerial and decision-making roles. They challenge the increased self-direction and autonomy of religious congregations which seem such a departure from previous dependency. Because religious congregations and dioceses have not yet, in many localities, developed corporate approaches to pastoral planning and action, there is an **absence of common goals**.

These tensions expressed themselves publicly and very clearly first at the women's ordination conference in Baltimore, 1978,<sup>21</sup> and then when Sister Theresa Kane greeted the Pope on October 7, 1979 and argued for the "full inclusion of women" in the Church.<sup>22</sup> "Reform" and "repair" were beginning to coalesce around a significant symbolic issue which touched doctrine and practice: women in the priesthood. In November, 1979, representatives from LCWR met with Cardinal Pironio to express concern at what they felt was the pope's ignoring of the societal dimensions of Christian discipleship for religious women. The representatives at the Sacred Congregation also seemed to imply a distinction between the charismatic and juridical elements in constitutional revisions, whereas LCWR felt charism should shape the legal formulations as to structures and processes.<sup>23</sup> The following August Theresa Kane addressed the national assembly in "To Speak the Truth in Love":

For two thousand years women have been systematically excluded from the Church as institution. The Church cannot profess dignity, reverence and equality for all persons and continue to systematically exclude women as persons from fully participating in the institutional Church. In addition to being excluded from the institutional Church, women have at times been victims of the Church's structure.<sup>24</sup>



This language of "reform" and "repair" also extended to fundamental social approaches to moral issues. In April, 1982, The National Coalition of American Nuns, reaffirming its opposition to abortion, issued a statement opposing the Hatch Act that gave individual states the right to legislate abortion, an amendment supported by the National Conference of Bishops. A few sisters went public with their opposition on the Phil Donahue show in June of that year. The public battle over the structural possibilities and limitations embedded in reform and repair had begun in earnest. By November, 1982, a select group of bishops and archbishops met in Washington to discuss the "problems" with religious life. The following April Pope John Paul II announced the formation of an apostolic commission on religious life. May 31, 1983, saw the release of the Document, *Essential Elements*.

As a result of these developments, if we see religious women as a bellwether of what was happening in other sectors of the Church, it had become clear by the late 1970s that two constellations of values representing different ecclesiological emphases and having vast implications for doctrine, moral practice, and social mission were being held in tenuous public relationship. One of these ecclesiologies emphasized structures rooted in the calling to episcopal office and apostolic authority, the other defined structures as primarily rooted in the authority of personal experience, spiritual traditions, and popular aspirations for equality. In the late 1970s the two tendencies still existed within the same Church body; they were sometimes juxtaposed: "hierarchical" and "participative," "patriarchal" and "egalitarian" (as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza put it),<sup>25</sup> "Roman" and "American," "Diocesan" and "Religious," "clerical" and "lay," "institutional" and "charismatic," "bureaucratic," and "prophetic," one of "mission" and one of "maintenance." Archbishop John R. Quinn went to the heart of the ecclesiological issue when, as pontifical delegate for the study of religious life, he spoke to the American bishops, November 15, 1983:

Because all of this touches on the fundamental issue of ecclesiology, it seems to me appropriate here to say something about what are called "differing ecclesiologies." I think we all recognize that from the New Testament through the Fathers and the ensuing history of theology there have been a variety of legitimate ecclesiologies. *Lumen Gentium* itself, especially in chapter one, witnesses to this variety. At the same time, it is important to recognize with equal clarity that all authentically Catholic ecclesiologies are rooted in and expressions of a single more basic reality—the living Church—which is both Trinitarian and Incarnational, and whose objective reality always involves the compenetration of the visible and invisible, the human and the divine, the charismatic and the hierarchical.

This legitimate variety becomes defective, however, when the institutional component of the Church is considered separable from

the spiritual, or when the apostolic-hierarchical element is considered separable from the charismatic.<sup>26</sup>

It would be incorrect to assume that the issues identified here were related only to religious women. The Conference of Major Superiors of Men responded to the release of *Essential Elements* in these terms:

The problem [of the treatment of authority] touches both the inner life of the religious community and the relationship of religious communities to the hierarchical church as such. The document reflects a bias toward the hierarchical and monarchical model of authority, governance and obedience. The case is put too sharply with no acknowledgment of a legitimately broader understanding of authority. All of authority seems to be located in the authority of office with very little recognition of the authority of persons and of the authority of community.<sup>27</sup>

In fact, the reaction among religious women and men, historically certainly those most connected with Church structures, may be taken as emblematic of what was happening among the laity at large. At the heart of the situation for the laity was moral decision-making and institutional authority related to birth control, divorce and remarriage, premarital sex, war and peace, economic justice.<sup>28</sup>

During the course of the 1980s the ecclesiological forces held in unified tension during the previous decade would shatter apart. Significant battles between bishops, religious, priests, and laity, reflected and helped fuel the broader culture wars addressing fundamental questions of human relationships and how they were to be publicly ordered. The flash points for the explosion would be the Equal Rights Amendment, women in the priesthood, abortion rights, the publication of the new *Code of Canon Law in 1983*, homosexuality, the separate integrity of the ordained priest, political correctness, inclusive language, the teaching authority of theologians, the meaning of religious priesthood, and the role of the laity in the internal affairs of the Church.<sup>29</sup> Often it seemed that sexual practice was at the center of the debate. But sexuality, historically, is a symbolic social code for how the affective and physical ties between people are defined and exercised. What ethic governs how people relate? How do they use their bodies? What patterns of exchange bind individuals together? Are they consistent or inconsistent with professed values or received values? What bonds are acceptable or unacceptable within a group identity? How are the boundaries between people established and recognized? What roles differentiate one person from another, one group from another? Who has power and who does not? When is an act private? When does it have public consequences? When is it appropriate or inappropriate? In society, the

argument was about social construction, individualism, and the revolution in rights of the 1960s; in the Church, it was about public order, status, and the relationships of power between people.

The ecclesiological emphases and their implications for doctrine, moral practice, and social mission were quickly and easily polarized into the two broader theological/juridical status categories which the Council had identified when it described the divinely constituted hierarchical structure of the Church: "the only essential difference of status within the Church is that between clergy and laity."<sup>30</sup> *Lumen Gentium* also put the matter very clearly with respect to religious life: "This form of life has its own place in relation to the divine and hierarchical structure of the Church. Not however, as though it were a kind of middle way between the clerical and lay conditions of life" (#43).<sup>31</sup> Religious were part of the lay sector of the Church, and in this sense were "subject," "subordinate," "under," when situated along the vertical axis: hierarchy/laity. Along this same axis, the role of the hierarchy in relationship to the "people of God," now linguistically coded to mean "lay," was clearly defined by the Council:

It is the task of the Church's hierarchy to feed the People of God and to lead them to good pasture (cf. Ez. 34.14). Accordingly it is for the hierarchy to make wise laws for the regulation of the practice of the counsels whereby the perfect love of God and of our neighbor is fostered in a unique way. Again, in docile response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit the hierarchy accepts rules of religious life which are presented for its approval by outstanding men and women, improves them further and then officially authorizes them. (45)

These debates of the 1980s engendered in the ecclesial community at large—among bishops, priests, laity, and religious—great feelings of dismay, incomprehension, disillusionment, resentment, anger, alienation, embitterment, and eventually feelings of institutional weariness and impasse.<sup>32</sup> Many experienced the issues and their accompanying emotional reactions—now interpreted as lay issues of "reform" and "repair" in opposition to the immobility of the hierarchical church—in the Seattle investigation, the study of seminary training, the Commission on Religious Life, the signing of the *New York Times* ad on abortion, the problem of the clergy and AIDS. And in the middle of this experience, at its peak of tensions in 1984-1986, is it any wonder that the deeper issues of institutional power, jurisdiction, and office would come to be expressed in the most dense and metaphoric problem of the post-conciliar years: the sexual abuse of minors (*minores*) by the clergy (*majores*), the most violent act of crossing boundaries and hierarchical misuse of power possible? At stake in all of these events were relationships between the strong and the weak, the

healthy and the sick, the deviant and the not-so-deviant, all of whom claimed to belong to the same Body. Involved also were contemporary questions of the differences between managerial and open cultures; questions of the crossing of the affective boundaries of ordered relationships; questions of how the holy and the profane are separated or mixed. At any rate, by the time of the late 1980s, the two ecclesiological tendencies had either split into open oppositional stances or come to an uneasy truce represented by retreat into enclaves of private resistance, clerical, lay and religious cultures, or extra-institutional migrations. It is no accident that in today's Church we find ourselves caught between two poles: the Voice of the Faithful and the Hierarchy. There is no middle position which has public viability at the present time.

I became a major superior at the end of the 1980s, June 6, 1988, to be exact, and occupied that position until January 12, 1997. Although I did not know it at the time, I experienced the results of this history, played out continually in often contradictory ways: the placement of lay brothers in parochial structures, which, oddly, the clerics saw as an intrusion into the parish's practice of lay ministry; the disallowance by the bishop of a well-trained laic friar to preach; the challenges to our care for the ecclesially poor (divorced and remarried, gay and lesbian peoples), posed by a particular parish congregation's neo-fundamentalists; the objections of the diocesan deanery to a parish's housing of the homeless in its empty school ("If you do it, we would all have to do it."); the overt struggle for power with lay people who wanted control of a ministerial board of an institution we owned while they claimed that we friars were too "hierarchical"; the impossibility of establishing a religious ministry not connected with a parish and therefore not under the jurisdiction of a pastor now appointed according to the new code not by the provincial but by a bishop; the invisibility of presence of myself and a woman religious when serving on an episcopal committee; the arbitrary reduction of a large *domus religiosus* with its juridical right to mission beyond the geographical boundaries of the parish to the status of a small rectory; the increasing escalation of anti-episcopal and anti-Roman feeling; the refusal of a laic friar to attend the mass of a cleric friar belonging to his own community; the migration of a father outside of a local parish because his daughter could not become a server; the removal of some sisters from a convent

**"Repair"**  
is a  
relational  
reality  
which  
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J. Chinnici, OFM

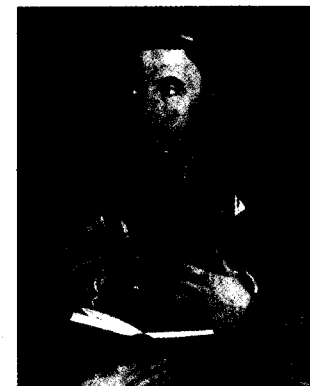
because they no longer served the people within the right territory; the periodic playing of emotional trump cards (such as, "I feel violated") on the part of religious, laity, and bishops; the incomprehension of the diocese that anyone would choose to work with a lay board in the abuse inquiry and then go public with the results; the anger of religious sisters when I, a cleric, celebrated the eucharist with them; the disillusionment of the Catholic laity over ecclesial power-sharing and decision-making. The divisions cut in all directions.

And in the midst of all of this violence and polarization two things seemed to me significant for our Franciscan life. On the one hand, the distinctiveness of our modern Franciscan identity within the structures of the Church had become more sharply defined for all of us. Whether lay or religious, we received a new rule and new constitutions; we developed significant experiments in mutual collaboration; we adopted diverse ministerial styles; we appointed lay people as guardians and argued that they should be allowed to become major superiors; we defined ourselves as "evangelical" to distinguish ourselves from the dominant models of monastic, apostolic, and secular life; we clarified the meaning of the ministerial priesthood within our own male religious life; we began to mine our own sources of philosophy and theology for a distinctive tradition.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, influenced as it was by this history, the community at large had transferred the language of "repair" and "reform" into the categorical divisions "hierarchy" and "laity." As a consequence, the public rhetoric of reform left no room for middle positions.<sup>34</sup> Religious lost completely the language and tradition of their public place in the Church as mediating agents of institutional "repair" and "reform." They had become institutionally invisible, dwarfed as it were between the power-sharing battle between bishops and laity. Confined by definition to the ranks of the laity, depleted in numbers and reducing our ministerial commitments, selling our motherhouses and migrating to apartments, absent the verifying social language of a more perfect way, and defeated by historical impasse, we took our public ecclesial definition of ourselves in relationship to the hierarchical church from the surrounding context. We never clearly articulated how Franciscans related to the institutional structures of the Church, how they might remain inside yet still faithful and hopeful. We never really examined our relationship to that fundamental distinction which the Council defined as constitutive of the Church's hierarchical nature: the division between clergy and laity (and therefore male and female, religious and secular). Do we have a distinctive ecclesiological contribution to make to the current divide between clergy and laity? Do we have a publicly visible charismatic-institutional style which can mark our presence, one which is not the style of so many others? Do we have an evangelical "repairing" style? Is there some way we can as Franciscan religious and laity bridge the gap between the warring power centers? Is it possible for us to make visible to the present Body of Christ the greeting revealed to Francis and Clare and so em-

present Body of Christ the greeting revealed to Francis and Clare and so emphasized by Bonaventure: "May the Lord give you peace"? How might we continue in this Church so sharply "hierarchized" to repair without anger, to be present without institutional invisibility, to practice the reform of our ecclesial faith without migrating to the periphery?

## II. An Engagement with St. Bonaventure

*In these circumstances*, as a guide for our interpretation of "repair," what it means, and how we persevere in doing it, I would like to suggest that we enter into conversation with the life and thinking of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. Here I would like to ask the Seraphic Doctor to share some of his reactions to my own historical reflections. I am hoping he will have something to say about (1) our public place in the Church, (2) the images which need to capture our imagination and affections and thus govern our lives.



### The Public Place of the Evangelical Life in the Church

While Bonaventure, like Francis and Clare before him, accepted the division of the Church into the hierarchically arranged duality of clergy and laity,<sup>35</sup> he also came to know "repair" and "reform" as part of the very public identity and mission of the evangelical vocation within the Church. This was his inheritance from Francis, Clare, and the brothers and sisters who preceded him. Historians speak about the twin crises of the twelfth century which spawned an evangelical-pauperistic awakening: the crisis of inadequate structures and the crisis of how to discipline spontaneous movements.<sup>36</sup> The arrangements of the Gregorian Church and their subsequent codification in law were designed to differentiate sharply the clerical and lay centers of sacral power. Monks and religious themselves were defined as part of the laity and legally excluded from the public exercise of an *officium* such as preaching and administering the sacraments.<sup>37</sup> In addition, Luigi Pellegrini speaks about the reorganization of the instruments of the *cura animarum* in the late twelfth century to create an organized and territorial system of parochial care. Ecclesiastical discipline expressed in synods and Councils reinforced a stricter alliance between the members of the faithful and the parish priest.<sup>38</sup> This strong separation of sacral clerical powers from laic responsibilities and the parochialization of religious practice could not structurally accommodate the mobility, economic ascendancy, and communal political participation so preva-

lent in the changing urban society at that time. As a result, the relationship between the salvific institution which exercised power and the popular aspirations among both men and women which demanded that *their* power be recognized (the power to make decisions, the power to shape public laws, the power personally to reclaim and preach the Word of God, the power to participate and even celebrate the sacraments) came into direct conflict.<sup>39</sup>

Institutionally speaking, the first hundred years of the Franciscan movement can only be understood fully when seen in relationship to this struggle for equilibrium in social and ecclesial institutions. Francis, Clare, and their followers witnessed the increasing social prevalence of organized patterns of assertion and counter-assertion, vengeance, anger, recrimination, domination, rebellion, and the forceful clarification of boundaries—in short, the struggle between separate but intertwined and now warring centers of power.<sup>40</sup> Violence took many forms: arms, yes, but also juridical, inquisitorial, linguistic, verbal, and spiritual shapes. This social atmosphere cut through the Franciscan movement. We see its challenge emerging in Francis's own dealings with personal anger and sorrow, his calling attention to the fact that the Lord gave him "faith in priests," (Test. 6) and his demand that the friars "be Catholic" (Earlier Rule XIX);<sup>41</sup> in Clare's admonition against internal "dissension and division" (Rule of Clare 10.7), and in her struggle to believe while being struck in the cheek so many times that blood filled her eyes and clouded her vision (Legend of Clare, 30);<sup>42</sup> in the challenge to all the members of the family to practice penance;<sup>43</sup> in the gradual but definite development among the friars of a stratification and clericalism consequent upon their increasing insertion into dominant ecclesiastical structures.<sup>44</sup> Even so, in this context, the "conversion to poverty"—another term for "repair" and "reform"—in which the Franciscan family participated implied not simply personal moral conversion and identification with all those who suffered but also *a new public presence for religious peoples and a new psychology of power and how to exercise it*. It implied a choice to migrate into the region of contested power relationships between clergy and laity, to become truly vulnerable between warring centers of power, so as to create both in the city and in the Church: a personal and communal witness of how to claim power without destroying someone else's power, this witness took form in

- Public centers of affiliation and social arrangements such as fraternities, confraternities, parishes, chapels, schools, hospitals, mobile preaching bands, civil organizations, and pilgrimage groups, where the lay and clerical centers of power creatively shared power. They embodied a way of life
- Which both respected vertical hierarchical arrangements yet embodied key horizontal values: the creaturely dignity of each person; relationships of exchange between brothers and sisters; the interde-

pendent sharing of temporal and spiritual goods; the mutual acknowledgment of diverse but compatible God-given individual centers of power, agency and influence even in the Church.

- "Reform" and "repair" in this vision encompassed **anthropological dimensions**: personal moral reform as to the appropriate use of power and the recognition of the God-given power of others; **sociological dimensions** which took shape in institutionalized public squares; and **ecclesiological dimensions**, a publicly professed religious way of life in the Church part of whose specific mission was to witness to human values.

The struggle to establish this public presence for the Franciscan family in Church and society dominated the life of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. From the *Commentary on Luke* first composed during the early magisterial period (1248-1250), through the battle with the seculars and the major commentaries on the Franciscan life (*De Perfectione evangelica*, Summer ca. 1256; *Determinationes quaestionum circa regulam*, ca. 1264; *Apologia Pauperum*, 1269), through the *Collations on the Holy Spirit* (1268) and the *Hexaemeron* (1273) written in the year before his death, he tried to carve out within the structures of the Gregorian Church a theological and juridical case for the existence of the anthropological, sociological, and ecclesiological dimensions of evangelical reform.<sup>46</sup> As Bonaventure surveyed the ecclesial and social scene before him he saw, among other things, a Church which was poor in merits, suffering in its head and members, lacking in piety, abandoned by its pastors, ignorant in its preaching, filled with evil counselors, and laced through with hypocrisy, simulation, arrogance, with an incredible divorce between speech and action. Reacting with impatience and anger, the members of the Church judged evil of each other. The souls of many were being killed! Christ, now crucified again in his people, cried out from the cross, "Why have you forsaken me?"<sup>47</sup> "Where is piety today?" Bonaventure asked. "Piety has no place because God has suppressed the extremes [patience and charity]. Today people are not able to satiate their vengeance; impatience and anger reign. People make wrong judgments; even if a person has not offended me, nevertheless I judge evil of him/her. Where does this come from?"<sup>48</sup> The people, he described in the *Apologia Pauperum*, resembled an uncultured garden, thorny, arid, lacking in wisdom and virtue; they were like sheep wandering away from the faith, scattered in the midst of wolves, burdened with guilt, living with swords over their heads; they were a "building in ruins," overwhelmed with the "frequency of scandals, perpetration of crimes, and the despotic rule of [civil] tyrants. . . ."<sup>49</sup> The prelates, the people and the members of the Franciscan family themselves were hardly immune from these frailties and sins. In its members and between its

members, the Church mixed the good and the not so good together.<sup>50</sup> "Now in this body, which is the Church," Bonaventure wrote in his *Sentence Commentary*, "there are many and diverse people. There are wayfarers and infirm people. There are also folks beset by daily sins."<sup>51</sup> "It is certain," he writes elsewhere, "that since sin is only expiated through a genuine sacrifice and that the Church sins, it is necessary that sin be expiated through the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Lord."<sup>52</sup> Clearly, reform and repair were needed on all sides.

In the middle of this situation, a *fanaticism for tradition* was preventing mission to the people. Bonaventure, when commenting on the *Gospel of Luke*, Chapter 6.1-5 where the Pharisees questioned Jesus about why his disciples picked the heads of grain on the sabbath, wrote:

Now this objection of wrongdoing stemmed partly from *ignorance of the Law*, partly from *pride of mind*, partly from *the pretense of hypocrisy*, partly from *fanaticism for tradition* . . . to] which they granted greater authority than the Law.<sup>53</sup>

It was in the name of a false tradition of legalism that the secular masters argued against the insertion of the mendicants, their vision, praxis, and mission into the pastoral structures of the Church.<sup>54</sup> In 1268 Bonaventure identified what he called "false counselors," those who changed great things into nothing (the Pharisees and lawyers) by using Scripture and the law to argue that the Friars Minor and the preachers had been "invented recently."<sup>55</sup> "Beloved," Bonaventure responded, "although this order has been invented recently, it is nevertheless good." What was at stake in the existence of the Order within the Church was, as Bonaventure saw it, the correct interpretation of Scripture and Tradition in their multiform dimensions revealed over time (*something genuinely new was possible*),<sup>56</sup> the absolute primacy of the following of Christ, who manifested the condescension and mercy of God by becoming poor in this world, and the centrality of love as the form of all things.<sup>57</sup> What was also at stake was the reality of a Body of Christ which could be continually responsive to the emerging needs of the time and therefore continually engaged at all levels in the process of self-repair, personally, sociologically, and ecclesiologically.

Bonaventure's *Determinations on Questions Concerning the Rule of the Friars Minor* (ca.1264) contained one of the clearest statements defending the presence within the Church of this institutionalized vision of reform and repair. Although his reflection was intended only for the Friars Minor and their way of life, I would like to try to understand these questions as they might be applied today.<sup>59</sup> Only a few sections are necessary to see how the theologian and pastoral leader argued to support a distinctive public presence for the Franciscan

family in the Church. Bonaventure made it clear in the *Prologue* that such an Order existed in the Church for the purpose of building up the people in faith and conduct by words of doctrine and examples of good life. The members of the family were to do this in such a way that they could be imitated. The very use of the words "*verba doctrinae et exempla bonae conversationis*" [words of doctrine and examples of good conduct] placed the enterprise in the trajectory of institutional change.<sup>60</sup> Such a task required an irreprehensible life, a knowledge of Sacred Scripture so that the friars could usefully teach, the authority to preach and hear confessions, and a satisfactory explanation of why they existed at all! This mission statement was followed by five significant questions:

1) **Why did Francis found an Order at all?** Bonaventure replied that Francis, "full of the Holy Spirit and totally ignited by the zeal of charity for God and neighbor," wanted to imitate Christ most perfectly, to adhere to God through contemplation and to save the people for whom Christ died. He wanted others to do this with him. Yet when he looked around he did not find any place in the Church where all three things were being done in one Order, even though there existed monks, hermits, and clerics. *In other words, Francis [and we might add Clare, and the multitude of penitents with them] found no place in the current structures of the Church where they could find a spiritual home! There existed no public body where the fullness of Christ's life could be exemplified: his care for others not from necessity but from liberty of spirit, his teaching, forgiving, and union with God.* We note immediately how personal this presentation is. The place from which the members of the family will reform will be a personal relationship with Christ developed in contact with others of a similar call. How they choose to witness will integrate in one person and in every action all the dimensions of life: contemplation will move into the world, the world will be taken into one's relationship with God.

2) **Why do the friars preach and hear confessions when they ordinarily do not have the care of souls?** Here Bonaventure recognized that this new way of life upset the ordinary order of things. The heart of the problem was the juridical situation of the received *hierarchical* order. The friars, whom custom and law defined as belonging to the laic side of the duality cleric/laic, had been accused of sowing in another's field [i.e. the parish, the diocese, the monastery], of competing, of doing things without juridical rights, of violating the canonical statutes. Not having a *cura animarum* authorized by the inherited way of doing things, they had crossed the boundaries of public order. They acted in this way, Bonaventure argues, because they were authorized by the Apostolic See who possessed the *cura animarum* over all, and who saw in these dangerous times that the laborers were few, that sin was being daily multiplied in the Church, that bishops engaged in business affairs were unable to maintain spiritual realities, and that few pastors resided in their parishes

personally but often substituted mercenaries who ruled over the people; in short, that the Church needed repair. And so the friars [sisters and laity, we might add today] were called to help!<sup>61</sup> Bonaventure will argue later that good priests should “ardently desire co-evangelists.”<sup>62</sup> The whole situation was like that in the Gospel when Peter and his coworkers, realizing they might lose some fish or that their boat might sink, called for companions from a neighboring ship (Lk. 5.7).<sup>63</sup>

In the *Apologia Pauperum* (II.13) Bonaventure continued to argue for institutional validation of the call to become co-evangelists. He listed the manifold actions which shine forth from Christ: power, wisdom, severity of judgment, dignity of office, condescension, the revelation of the perfect life. The hierarchical gifts of strict judgment and dignity of office, he noted, are distributed to those in leadership and to prelates. The purpose of these offices is “to lead back to God those under its authority by means of a sevenfold hierarchical action” (XII.13). He listed the priestly actions along with the appropriate metaphor to express them:

#### Sevenfold Hierarchical Actions

Actions	Metaphor
Instructing in matters of faith	Builder
Developing virtues	Gardener
Giving examples	Shepherd
Interceding through prayers	Trustee
Healing injuries inflicted by enemies	Physician
Warning against imminent dangers	Watchman
Repealing actual assaults	Leader

Bonaventure’s point was very simple: What gardener, or shepherd, or trustee, or physician, or watchman or leader, seeing the danger to which people were exposed, would refuse help? He asked rhetorically,

If therefore, the Christian people have already been made to resemble a building in ruins, as happens because of the great number of those who wander away from the faith, would any builder [i.e. the hierarchy] discard the men who, together with him, are erecting and supporting its structure, unless he believes himself to be so wise as to be self-sufficient—or is in fact so foolish as to want the edifice of the Church to fall apart under his hand? (XII.6)

It should be noted how in this passage Bonaventure has broadened the notion of “hierarchy” to include all sorts of activities, while still maintaining

the hierarchical order of things. He is very careful to indicate that these new laborers who have been invited into the vineyard have no authority in themselves but are authorized by the mission of the Apostolic See and the benevolence of bishops. (If this sounds like the Rule of the friars, 9.1, then we have the point!) *In other words, he places at the heart of the life of the hierarchical church the demand to respond compassionately to a new situation, the Gospel teaching to invite others to share in their mission, and the humility it takes to recognize another’s calling which breaks in some measure from the pre-established order of things. Reform must take institutionalized shape in the willingness to create new structures and to share, as much as possible, power. It will take an act of great condescension. And at the heart of the identity of the new laborers he places institutionalized poverty: They exist on mission by the gracious will of another more officially and juridically powerful than they. And they must prove their worth by their overwhelming zeal, their liberality of spirit, their obedience, and their humility.*<sup>64</sup> As he will say in the *Apologia Pauperum* (12.8): [The Vicar of Christ] “carefully provided for the salvation of souls, and without prejudice to the authority of the Popes, he adorned the hierarchy of the Church without disorganizing it.” In fact, in this view, those not members of the hierarchy are called upon, by a grace which has been formalized but not conferred as a right, to perform a hierarchical task: preaching and teaching! Such a public presence will demand of these followers of Francis and Clare a personal and collective choice to follow in the footprints of Jesus Christ within the context of the institutional Church. Their freedom and their mission will exist in giving themselves totally to another, who is both above and alongside them, through a perfect act of charity.<sup>65</sup>

3) **Why do the friars study?** Here Bonaventure argues simply that Franciscans study—and here he means primarily Scripture but also all the different kinds of knowledge which bring clarity—so as to teach well, avoid error, and instruct themselves in good conduct. They should be able to discern the virtues from the vices in themselves, to know the promise of future things, and to be with everyone in the most fruitful way. Many misinterpret the Scriptures and lead others into error. In Bonaventure’s mind, the Church will be dry without the life-giving waters of Scripture, its profundity, its multiple levels of significance. He will note in his *Collations on the Holy Spirit* his own revulsion when prelates and others in the Church do not take the time to learn the Scriptures and live according to that knowledge.<sup>66</sup> We recognize immediately that it was under the “Gospel as an Absolute in Christendom” that the evangelical movements pushed for ecclesial reform.<sup>67</sup> Holding dearly to the immediacy of the Word of God, Bonaventure will find in the multiform meaning of the Word of God, interpreted within the context of the Church, the key to reform and the courage to break from a fossilized order of things.<sup>68</sup>

4) **Why do the friars beg?** The poverty of the friars—their reliance on alms and not on benefices, lands, contracts for payment, or common owner-



ship—as the contemporary commentators noted, implied a great break from the traditional public order of things. In arguing for its reasonableness, Bonaventure made sure to root his argument in an experience of God that was willing to take God's promises seriously: "Jesus said to them, 'Amen, I say that you who have followed me, in the new age, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will yourselves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'" (Mt. 19.28) He will justify the life by appealing to a series of Scripture texts: "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head" (Mt. 8.20); "If you wish to be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me" (Mt. 19.21); "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" Mt. 5.3; and Mt. 10.9-10: "Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts, no sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals, or walking stick. The laborer deserves his keep." The whole argument was designed to show that at the heart of the present order of things there needed to be something more, and people who witnessed to that something more by the way they lived and related: the partial realization of the kingdom. The praxis of poverty placed at the center of life within history and society the promise of the generosity and faithfulness of God, a faithful following of Christ which brought liberation, and the freedom to preach without fear and teach everyone to live in hope. Freeing people from the superfluous, poverty encouraged an economy of reciprocity, a temporal-spiritual exchange of goods, in our modern terms "solidarity." "He who lacks little, needs little from others."<sup>69</sup> The praxis of poverty contained within itself a living protest against those evils which were driving the avaricious, litigious, and divisive patterns within the society and Church. Bonaventure will write in the *Apologia Pauperum* (IX.29):

If the enemy of the poor [the friar] believes that the desire for the resources and honors of the Church is meritorious and holy, since no vice is more abominable than the covetousness and ambition of ecclesiastics—because in these two sins the Holy Spirit is either bought or sold, so that the house of God becomes a *den of thieves*—he is attacking both the foundation of Christian religion and evangelical poverty.

**5) Why do the friars remain in the cities and towns?** We might say here, why do the members of the family make themselves publicly present within the hustle and bustle, the daily life of the people? Bonaventure's answer was relatively simple: That we might more easily be with people, that they might see in us the example of a good life and a reason for hope. If we were removed from them, we could not be with them when they needed us; nor could they easily approach us. We also rely on them for our sustenance; we

cannot exist without their help! Once again, we note the reality of the law of reciprocity.

On close examination we can see how these five points coalesced to form the grounding for the institutional presence of the Franciscan family in Church and society: the following of the whole Christ, the public insertion into the Church's hierarchical structure, the primacy of Scripture and professional competence, the creation of an economy of interdependence in both spiritual and temporal realities, the willingness, like our Lord, to take on the daily burdens of peoples' lives and there to compassionate with them and witness to a most bountiful God. It is important to recognize how "repairing" was this whole *conversatio* when placed within the context of the inherited juridical and social order of things. It challenged everyone (including the members of the family), especially the two poles of the Church's hierarchical structure, to take seriously the values of reciprocity, interdependence, mutual exchange, mercy, and condescension, in short, Gospel life. This way of life, so hard to live that it might be termed the "most perfect way of life," met with great opposition as it cut against the self-interest in all people and institutions. To some extent, since the members of the family themselves could not live the project perfectly, its very profession would be used by its enemies to undercut its public acceptance.

Finally, to establish an even more concrete picture of how such a way of life was meant to become a public presence in the Church and society, it may be helpful to summarize just a few of the other questions in the *Determinationes* and to see the picture of the Church which emerges from them.

**Question XV:** Why are useless people received into the Order?

**Response:** There are many reasons: compassion lest they be lost. Also, by knowledge and work they might improve. For the building up of others, so that people might be impressed by their example of conversion. For the increase of prayers which they make for themselves and others make for them. Thus the farmer sows and plants in hope that all might become strong. Many furrows are sown, so that if some seeds perish, others might grow strong for them.<sup>70</sup>

**Question XVI:** Why do we see some religious living like seculars: vain, angry, avaricious, gossiping, contumacious, dissolute, lascivious. . . ?

**Response:** Religion is a "school of virtues," and as in other arts and disciplines, each can make the other more skilled or more rough. Often religious lack good teachers, or good examples, or are new in Religion, or are not equal in the grace of spiritual gifts, or are simply self-willed.

**Question XVII:** Why not purify the Religion by throwing the undesirables out?

**Response:** For many reasons: There is always hope of correction. There may be no convincing proof of the problem. Scandal prevents dismissal, for

when a person reputedly good is thrown out, bad judgments are made about the others. The Lord tolerated Judas, until his crime became public!

**Question XIX.** Why, when religion is outwardly professed, are people so deficient?

**Response:** Anyone who does not have being in themselves, tends to non-being, unless he/she is sustained by another. This is true in human life, among religious, bishops, clerics, and laity. In truth, good and bad are mixed so that the good might acquire merit before God. Even the Apostle gloried in the occasion for virtue which came to him from false brothers (2 Cor. 11.26). The whole mixed situation encourages a zeal for justice, compassion, patient acceptance. . . . The virtues of the just thus shine out more clearly and more beautifully. . . .

**Question XX.** Why is there so much dissension and envy among religious?

**Response:** For those who do this irrationally, no fitting reason can be given. But dissension also exists among the good, and this is because not all know the truth equally in all things. Dissension need not be perverse. Thus, there was disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. Another cause is when a person does not know the intention of another and so gets angry, but when he knows the intention. . . .

**Question XXVII.** What are the reasons that the greater clergy hate us and laity and simple seculars follow along?

**Response:** Just as not all laity love us, so also not all clerics hate us. They may fear us for they may see in us what they ought to be through whom the Church is governed. They may envy our popularity, and in comparison may fear to appear of less worth in knowledge, life, or even doctrine. They are pained lest by our counsel another with whom they were companions be moved to a better life. They are afraid to lose donors who may give to us. . . . Clergy however also love and promote us as their children and helpers and co-operators. . . .

What emerges from these few questions is a certain vision of society and Church which permeated Bonaventure's reflections. Bonaventure sees diversity at all levels. He simply had too much experience of human life to think that everyone was equal in virtue, or that the members of the Church would not be sinful, or that the doing of good would not be accompanied by persecution and rejection, or that people did not need each other. It is all part of God's creative energy: in the present state of things, *good is mixed with the not so good; all are called to holiness, but not all are given grace in the same way; people are built for freedom in communion not isolation. If all were equal, there would be no all.*<sup>71</sup> He will argue elsewhere that it is manifestly clear that "diverse people have diverse and contrary thoughts and affections." This diversity itself is a manifes-

tation of divine bountifulness, as God distributes a multiformity of graces.<sup>72</sup> Three central realities seem to be intertwined. First, his argument presupposed a view of society, Church, and Order which makes room for the sinful, the poor, the useless, the weak, the infirm, the generous and the avaricious. The vision places at the center of the experience of life both hope for everyone in a God who is gracious and very near, and the daily demand to practice charity. In such a world it is the great commandment which should govern everyone. Love becomes the unifying form of all things.<sup>73</sup> Second, it is this very realistic view of the human condition that will demand a strong principle of authority that is capable of insuring public order, judgment, and discipline. Experience dictates that "order is an arrangement of like and unlike things whereby each of them is disposed in its proper place."<sup>74</sup> Bonaventure's world demands hierarchical *stabilitas* lest the members of the Church spin off into discord and deviance, lest *wayfarers* in their multiformity lose the unity of their creatureliness. He has no desire to overturn this Order of things. Such a view will place a high premium on virtuous leadership. As he will write of the *anima contemplativa*: when the Church is struck with the winds of impatience and anger, what is needed is "the affective condescension of kindly mercy, the emulating rectitude of severe control, and the victorious bearing of cruel or human tribulations."<sup>75</sup>

Third, lest the dynamic between diversity and hierarchy lead to endless dissension and those charged with "order" be constantly tempted to confine people and their questions to inherited divisions of the powerful and the weakest order be imposed by tyranny and not virtue, by custom and law and not Gospel—what is needed is a sociological and ecclesiological locus of continual reforming effort, a place where order, distinction, and multiformity try to co-exist.<sup>76</sup> This is the public ecclesial role of the God-centered Franciscan family, mixed as it is of cleric and laic, male and female, lay and religious, old and young, the virtuous and the vicious, the productive and the useless. In fact, just as one who does not want little creatures in the world fights against its universality, so also one who wants to rid the Church of the vile and abject [the poor, human creatures, of whom Franciscans are a symbol] attacks its universality.<sup>77</sup> This way of life argues in the Church for the possibility of a diversity of approaches and ways of life. It is meant to give living proof of the possibility of disagreement between good people and the arrival at truth by the sharing of perspectives. Challenged to respond to the new desires of suffering human beings, this profession carries within itself the aspirations for the higher things of life, the Gospel vision of condescension and mercy, the beauty of diversity, and the constant zeal to move beyond inherited structures. It is, in short, an anticipation of the heavenly city's marketplace, and a dense embodiment of what it means to be "Church."



By the time of his death in 1274, Bonaventure had helped to place this understanding of a "state of perfection" within the institutional structures of the Church. It was a struggle he had shared with his contemporary Thomas Aquinas.<sup>78</sup> For Bonaventure, the Franciscan life represented within the established vertical hierarchy of clergy and laity the Church's continual commitment to a Trinitarian life of mutual self-giving exchange between people equal in their creatureliness, a Christological life of condescension and mercy, and a personal life completely guided by Indwelling Charity.<sup>79</sup> On a very popular level, its spiritual center was all contained in an image!

## An Image Which Might Help Us: A Bonaventurian Reflection

In trying to make this vision of Church repair present to our imaginations, I would like to reflect on a central icon of our Franciscan tradition from a Bonaventurian point of view. The San Damiano cross, so central to our Franciscan identity, contains within its borders an ecclesiological commentary. A few particular intersections between this image and our vision of Church reform are readily discernible.

- a) The cross is surrounded by sea shells representing Baptism, that ecclesial event whereby the Christian enters into community and becomes interiorly stigmatized by the mark of Christ's death and resurrection, just as Francis and Clare were marked in their Baptism.<sup>80</sup> In this event many individuals are incorporated into one Body. We note in passing that while the people join the commune in the space of the cross and become members of one Body, they do not lose their individuality nor their fragility. Bonaventure will make it a point in his commentary on Baptism to note that this sacrament, which is the basis of all others, takes effect through the faith of the Church, even though particular individuals may be deficient.<sup>81</sup> He is well aware of the disjunction between the Church's inner life of charity and the sacramental realization of charity among its members.<sup>82</sup> As we have seen, it was precisely this disjunction which gave rise to the quest for reform. The problem is a difficult one: if holiness in members was the criterion for sacramentality, there would be no order and stability. The spiritual gift which makes a person fit for office is not the same as that which renders him or her pleasing to God.<sup>83</sup> Viewing the reality of the Church as he did and knowing his own weakness, Bonaventure must have felt some consolation in being able to write, "the sacraments can be performed by the good and by the bad, by the faithful and by the heretic, within the Church and outside. . . ."<sup>84</sup> In all cases there is no expectation that the Church be perfect; how could there be, when even those professed to live a life of the Gospel are riddled with fragility and at times sin?

- b) Through this sacrament of Baptism the believer comes under the *influence of grace* and is inscribed into this terrestrial community of the struggling redeemed and the celestial community of the Church. The wayfarer thus shares through Christ in the life of the Triune God. Let us look closely at this *influence of grace*.<sup>85</sup> In the second chapter of the *Apologia Pauperum* Bonaventure paints a beautiful picture of just what this means in the community of the Church. He comments on John 1.16: "*of whose fullness we have all received.*"

Within [the states, levels and orders of the Church] the manifold perfection of Christ is distributed according to a multiform participation, in such a way that it is found at the same time in all things. And yet it does not glow in any one of them in the fullness of its universal plenitude; but each state and level in proportion to its measure receives that kind of influence from the Exemplar and approaches its likeness to that greater or lesser degree.<sup>86</sup>

Influence comes from the heart of the Church, or, if you prefer, its head. It descends upon each of the people standing at the foot of the cross and circulates between them.<sup>87</sup> This *influentia* of Christ allows each member of the Church, male or female, to share in his power, his strength, his hierarchical activity (broadly defined). It is an effective presence which orders people one to another. We could say that *influentia* acts in each person like a chain which binds people together, or a weight that causes them to tip this way or that, or a force which energizes their natural gifts and moves them towards each other and God, or a sympathy which enables them to co-inhere in each other, or a grace which bestows on them a particular calling and mission. It acts like the rays of the sun that energize a plant to grow, or the waters of a river that flood the plains of the earth and make them fertile. It is like light shining through a prism and becoming fractured into the multi-form colors of the rainbow. **Influence has public power, and with influence comes the ability to repair the Church.**

The gift of influence brings with it a methodology of change which is organic, working from within, patient over time, allowing people to develop the freedom to agree and allowing oneself the time to be purified. This *way of influence* fills the diverse dimensions of the house of God with a single presence, making it a tabernacle or a small dwelling place: "The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom. 5.5). *Influentia* establishes relationships with God, with self, and with neighbor, relationships that purify, illuminate, and transform. Through influence God distributes the grace of office to one person, the grace of healing to another, the grace of perfection to a third. *No one person has all the graces.*

Once again, in this vision of the Church, we see an inter-dependent community, where the riches of one enhance the poverty of another. It is so for bishop, priest, lay person, and religious. Of Christ's influence we have all received!

*Influentia* is power. In our Franciscan family, this power which comes from Christ to each of us demands three things:

- 1) *The claiming of one's own share in the fullness of Christ's power and the humility this kind of incarnation in each of us demands;*
  - 2) *The public recognition and honoring of the different measure someone else has been given.* Bonaventure will write: To know God in the creature is to know his presence and influence in the creature.<sup>88</sup>
  - 3) *The practice of humility and the experience of public humiliation,* which in Bonaventure's terms is (a) experiential knowledge of God's sublimity and our own nothingness, (b) the just rendering to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves of what is due, and (c) gratefulness for the gift of divine adoption and condescension.<sup>89</sup>
- (c) In the Franciscan world, the cross of the Church is dominated not by hierarchical structures but by people in relationship. In the middle of this community of men and women, apostles and disciples, the *major players of whom are all on the same horizontal level, stands* the risen Christ. He is vertically above them yet one of them, inscribed on the same panel of wood. He is in the foreground, they in the background; he above, they below. Their whole posture is determined by their relationship to him: *One* of them, in *front* of them, *above* them, *standing* in their midst.

This image of Christ *standing in their midst* on the San Damiano cross is caught between these two passages from the Gospel of John, one at the beginning and one at the end:

There is one **standing among you**, whom you do not recognize.  
[“medius autem vestrum stetit quem vos non scitis”] 1.26

Jesus came and **stood in their midst** and said to them, “Peace be with you.” [“venit Jesus et stetit in medio et dicit eis ‘pax vobis.’”] 20.19; cf. 20.26

It should be noted that Bonaventure begins his *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, otherwise known as the “illuminations of the Church,” by quoting from Ecclesiasticus: “In the *middle of the Church* the Lord shall open his mouth, and shall fill him with the spirit of wisdom and understanding and shall clothe him with a robe of glory.” In his *Commentary on John*, Bonaventure indicates that this place of *standing in their midst, the Church, has the following characteristics*:

- It is a **place of humility**, as the Lord indicates, “I am among you as the one who serves,” and “For where two or three are gathered together in

my name, there am I in the midst of them,” and “he called a child over and placed it in their midst.”

- It is a **place of community**, because the Lord conducts himself equally towards all: “In truth, I see that God shows no partiality.”
- It is a **place of unity**, because extremes are united in the middle: “For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh.”
- It is a **place of stability**, because it is fixed in the middle of the earth: “No one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ.”
- It is a place of **accessibility**: “So that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him, though indeed he is not far from any one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being.’”<sup>90</sup>

In other words, **where** Jesus stands in the middle, **when** he stands in the middle, there is **humility, community, stability, unity, accessibility** the precise characteristics of which the Church of Bonaventure's time was less than full. Perhaps we could say that the Church of Bonaventure's time had partially lost its “Christological center.” As the Gospel says, “There is one standing among you whom you do not recognize.”

Yet the Lord still stands there, as one most merciful, giving life, purifying, reconciling, forgiving, illuminating, freeing from evil, perfecting, and repairing!<sup>91</sup> And as Francis says and Bonaventure comments, “In this way the Lord is always with His faithful, as He Himself says: *Behold I am with you until the end of the age*” (Adm. 1, 22; Mt. 28.20). We see this same mystery of the ecclesiology of the cross acted out daily in the eucharist. Bonaventure will write:

Now in this body, which is the Church, there are *many and diverse people*. There are **wayfarers** and **infirm** people. There are also **folks beset by daily sins**.

- (1) Since there are **many in one body**, they lack **connectiveness**.
  - (2) Since they are **wayfarers**, they lack **food**.
  - (3) Since they are **encompassed by daily sins**, they need a **sacrifice**.
- And this situation had to be dealt with not only interiorly by the grace of the virtues, but also externally by the grace of the Sacraments. –

- (1) For it was fitting that they might have one **connecting** them externally just as they had one **connecting** them interiorly. But this one had to be where the members were and so, since the members are in **many** locations, it had to be such that it might fittingly be in **many** locations. But only God can do this, or one united to divinity. But God is interior; the body of Christ is united to the divinity. Therefore, the body of Christ had to be given in the external Sacrament,

which is **one**, in which all the faithful are united in eating the **one and same food**. –

- (2) It was also fitting they might have an external refreshment in the Sacrament. But only God can refresh the soul, or one united to God. And this is the true body of Christ. And so it was fitting that the true body of Christ would be in this **Sacrament**. –
- (3) It was also fitting that they might have an external sacrifice. But by offering himself in a unique sacrifice, the Lord eliminated all other sacrifices. Therefore, if he ought not restore what he had eliminated, he had to give us that same **sacrifice** which he had offered, and not some other. Wherefore, as the body of Christ was a true **sacrifice** on the cross, so too is it **sacrificed** on the altar.<sup>92</sup>

There on the cross and in the eucharist is the model for evangelical “repairing”: a person who is crucified and risen, whose mark we bear and to whom we belong, someone who stands in the midst of an assembly of people made in his image, who comes to us at the hands of a sinful priest, and who gives life by the way in which he *influences* others. It is a model which gives a public body to the mystery of Christ embodied in communities, fraternities, houses, schools, and institutions. Respectful of, needing, and humble before the established ecclesial hierarchy, it also claims the diffusion of sacred power which comes to each person from the fullness of Christ. In the evangelical way of life, there is no model of Church renewal other than the community of those who love God; self, and neighbor, and who follow in the footsteps of the Lord. If the imagination unlocks the deepest resources of our being, then having these images of the cross and the eucharist ever before us will be central to our negotiation of the ecclesial disjunctions present in the contemporary world. Only by gathering together for protection and under the guidance of these images can the courage to repair become a public witness. In our work, our prayer, and our relationships with our brothers and sisters who are given different gifts, including that of office, and who often abuse what has been given to them, these images of the one who became human for us will enable the disciples to

... go forward, securely, joyfully, and swiftly, on the path of prudent happiness,

Believing nothing,  
Agreeing with nothing  
Which would dissuade you from this resolution,  
Or which would place a stumbling block for you on the way. . . . (2 LAg.13-14)

## In Conclusion: An Excursus on Some Modern Ecclesial Reformers

In conclusion and for the sake of thoroughness, I would like to indicate some of the sources which have made me rethink this issue of “repair” as it relates to the public power structures of the Church. I think the inheritance of “repair” embedded in the evangelical life made a significant contribution to Vatican Council II. This is an important truth for us to claim. The thrust for the “repair” of the Church which culminated in the speeches of John XXIII and the work of the Second Vatican Council began long before 1945 but takes on particular relevance for the Franciscan family through the developments in France in the immediate post World War II period.<sup>93</sup> During that time two of the most prominent spokesmen for “reform” were the French Dominicans M.-D. Chenu and Yves Congar.<sup>94</sup> They called for concrete steps to render the Church meaningful for a new situation in liturgy, catechetics, preaching, and the pastoral structures of daily life. The institution’s outward forms no longer corresponded to people’s needs; its structures of life were incomprehensible; its leadership and action caught in a state of “historical failure.” “Reform” needed to touch not simply particular abuses but also the pastoral practices themselves.<sup>95</sup> In his classic study of *True and False Reform in the Church* (1950), Congar noted various struggles within the Church of his era: (1) the tensions between the periphery and the center; (2) the tension between a larger tradition and the requirements of communion in the present Church; (3) the tension between an appeal to a perception of authenticity which one is not able to doubt and the submission to a living Church. He spoke clearly of the sin of an institution which does not listen and the twin problems of turning means into an end and the refusal to surpass current sociological forms. If one takes the Church in its concrete form, he wrote, “this Church is at the same time holy and full of sin, indefectable and fallible, perfect and subject to multiple historical imperfections.”<sup>96</sup> He concluded his work with a long essay on “Integrism” as a continuing element in the contemporary Church related to a doctrinal position, a manner of feeling and affirmation, a mentality and an attitude. At the center of Integrism was the equation established between the law, the determination of things and people by authority and external norms, and fidelity to Catholicism.<sup>97</sup> Integrism and its polar opposite of schism, a prophetic reforming mentality and action which breaks with structural communion, have engaged in pitched battle throughout the history of the Church. It is significant, I think, that Archbishop John R. Quinn raised the issue of Integrism in June 1985 in a talk on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. “Integrism,” he wrote, “is against life” because:

... it believes that faith, the Church, doctrine, coming from the past, must remain unaffected by the present or the future, admit of no diversity of expression, and no new horizons of understanding.

One of the worst features of integrism is its contempt for truth. Under the guise of love for truth, it resists any further probing of the truth and any efforts at reformulation. For integrism, the window unto faith created by the human sciences and human experience remains firmly shut with drawn blinds. It all amounts to a statement that truth is not worth probing or reformulating. Integrism is a form of petrifying changelessness incompatible with life. If it were to reign the Church would become a sect, a frightened little enclave of people with closed minds, troglodytes.<sup>98</sup>

How does one negotiate the shoals between the sanctity of the Church and the sin of its members, between the fixation on current forms and order and the higher appeal to the plenitude of the Gospel life? How does one distinguish "true" from "false" reform? As one who "repairs," how does one not fall into either Integrism or its polar opposite, schism? Congar used as a key example of the Catholic approach to "repair" in the Church the mendicant movement of the thirteenth century, particularly as that was embodied in the figure of St. Francis.<sup>99</sup> The *poverello* was the true reformer, balancing life on the periphery with fidelity to the center. In 1952 the Dominican ecclesiologist wrote an insightful essay on Francis entitled: "The Gospel as An Absolute in Christendom."<sup>100</sup> His companion and teacher, M.-D. Chenu, also provided a magisterial synthesis of the relationship between the Franciscan movement, the lay evangelical awakening of its time, the commitment to poverty, and the call for reform in the Church.<sup>101</sup> We should note, of course, that more than anything else he wrote, *True and False Reform* led to Congar's silencing.<sup>102</sup>

My point here is very simple: the mendicant inheritance of "repair my Church" through these French Dominicans and others partially prepared the way for the great reforming event of our times, the Second Vatican Council. They saw an intrinsic connection between the evangelical way of life and the commitment to reform. When the members of the American Franciscan family returned to the sources in earnest after 1982,<sup>103</sup> this reality of evangelical reform is precisely what we found. This, I believe, is a "sign" which we should recognize. This inheritance of "repair" with the energy and enthusiasm it generates, its clarity of thought, its demand for justice, its roots in peoples' aspirations and hopes, its expressions in new structures of life, its placement of the Gospel at the center of one's self-definition, its struggle with certain ways in which authority is exercised, and its commitment to remain faithful to that dimension of the Church which is hierarchical, is part and parcel of our deepest identity. To be a follower of Francis and Clare is to be a "repairer": one

who can identify the disjunctures between life and structures, enter into them, and work to heal them. At the same time, this work is meant to have a public impact on our ecclesial institutions; it is accompanied by an operative ecclesiology. Lastly, "reform" or "repair" involves profound discernment, the ability to steer the clear course between Integrism and schism. It involves a spirituality of cross and eucharist.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>For the common word field of "repair" see Giles Constable, "Renewal and Reform in Religious Life: Concept and Realities," in Robert Benson and Giles Constable, eds., *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 37-67. For a more recent and comprehensive analysis see Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>Jean Leclercq, *Memoirs from Grace to Grace*, trans. Paul C. Duggan (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 2000), 86.

<sup>3</sup>For the most recent helpful guide to the *Hexameron* see C. Colt Anderson, *A Call to Piety: Saint Bonaventure's Collations on the Six Days* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 2002); also, Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971); for the actual text see *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia* (Quaracchi: Collegii Sancti Bonaventurae, 1882-1902, 10 volumes), V, 329-449: "Unde non habetur illuminatio, nisi quando Ecclesia consideratur secundum sua tempora" (20.27, p. 430). Subsequent references will be to this edition unless otherwise noted.

<sup>4</sup>For deeper background cf. Zeni Fox, "The Rise of Lay Ministry in the Years Since Vatican II," in Pierre M. Hegy, ed., *The Church in the Nineties: Its Legacy, Its Future* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 230-41; Debra Campbell, "The Struggle to Serve: From the Lay Apostolate to the Ministry Explosion," in Jay P. Dolan, R. Scott Appleby, Patricia Byrne, Debra Campbell, *Transforming Parish Ministry: The Changing Role of Catholic Clergy, Laity, and Women Religious* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 203-80.

<sup>5</sup>Probably the best reviews are still those of R. Scott Appleby, "Present to the People of God: The Transformation of the Roman Catholic Priesthood," and Patricia Byrne, "In the Parish but Not of It: Sisters," in Dolan et al., *Transforming Parish Ministry*.

<sup>6</sup>For the interpretation of *Lumen Gentium* see Gérard Philips, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, History of the Constitution," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Herbert Vorgrimler, ed. (London: Burns and Oates, Herder and Herder, 1967), I:105-37; Yves Congar, "The Church: The People of God," *Concilium* 1 (1965): 11-37.

<sup>7</sup>The first three chapters of Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) are a particularly clear description of the spirit of the times as it affected religious institutions and feelings.

<sup>8</sup>Philip Gleason, "Catholicism and Cultural Change in the 1960s," in *Keeping the Faith: American Catholicism Past and Present* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 82-96, with quotation from page 92. See Andrew M. Greeley, *The Communal Catholic: A Personal Manifesto* (NY: Seabury Press, 1976), "The Triumph of the Romantics."

<sup>9</sup>See as a beginning point the fine collection of essays in David Farber, ed., *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), especially the essay of Kenneth Cmiel, "The Politics of Civility," which identifies the romantic and democratic critiques, pages 263-90. For an intellectual history, see Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>10</sup>It is instructive to see the application of the linguistic and social categories of the civil rights movement to Church issues as indicated in John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century North* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), Chapter 9.

<sup>11</sup>See for just one example *Pre-Chapter Compendium of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet, Illinois, September 1967* (found in Library, Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University), 182, where recommendations are made as to collegiality and house chapter: "It is further suggested that the superior need not be the chairman at these meetings, but that this office can be rotated among the Sisters of the house."

<sup>12</sup>Much of the research supporting this paragraph will be published in my essay "The Catholic Community at Prayer: 1926-1976," in James O'Toole, ed., *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004). For the impact of the new Catholic "Left" see Charles A. McConis, *With Clumsy Grace: The American Catholic Left 1961-1975* (NY: The Seabury Press, 1979); for reflections on the impact of missionary work see Margaret Eletta Guider, OSF, "'On Planting Dates,' The Consequences of Missionary Activity on U.S. Based Franciscan Sisterhoods (1960-2000)" in Dana L. Robert, ed., *Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers: Missionary Women in the Twentieth Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 157-70.

<sup>13</sup>See as background Thomas Byrne et al, "The New Right: Populist Revolt or Moral Panic?" in Francis Couvares, Martha Saxton, Gerald N. Brog, George Athan Billias, eds., *Interpretations of American History: Patterns and Perspectives* (New York: The Free Press, 2000); Robert Wuthnow, "Divided We Fall: America's Two Civil Religions," *The Christian Century* 105.3 (April 20, 1988), 395-99; Patrick M. Arnold, "The Rise of Catholic Fundamentalism," *America* 156.4 (April 11, 1987): 297-302.

<sup>14</sup>The parallels are easily drawn from Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking, 2000); Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, *Women in the Vanishing Cloister: Organization Decline in Catholic Religious Orders in the United States* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993); Lora Ann Quinonez, CDP, Mary Daniel Turner, SNDdeN, *The Transformation of American Catholic Sisters* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

<sup>15</sup>CMSW, Canon Law Committee, 1966-1967, "Vatican II and Religious Women," Mother Mary Luke Tobin papers, RGIII, 10, Box XXI, #9, Archives of the Sisters of Loreto, Nerinx, Kentucky.

<sup>16</sup>There is an invaluable collection of renewal documents in the Franciscan Institute Library at St. Bonaventure University. I have examined documentation for groups in Joliet, Allegany, Stella Niagara, Williamsville, Milwaukee, Holy Cross, La Crosse, Pittsburgh, and Chicago.

<sup>17</sup>The quote is taken from the report on the listening sessions held in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, May 1, 1984, Archives of the Archdiocese of San Francisco (AASF). This is confirmed by the reports offered from many other dioceses.

<sup>18</sup>For two Franciscan examples which capture the diversity and struggle see Jordan Dahm, OSF, *A Common Heart: The Dubuque Franciscans' Faith Journey 1975-2000*

(Dubuque, IA: Sisters of St. Francis, 2000); Sister Mary Assumpta Ahles, OSF, *In the Shadow of His Wings: A History of the Franciscan Sisters* (St. Paul, MN: The North Central Publishing Company, 1977).

<sup>19</sup>See "LCWR recommendations: schema of CANONS on religious life," mss. LCWR materials, page 9, AASF.

<sup>20</sup>NCCB/LCWR Liaison Committee, "Patterns in Authority and Obedience, An Overview of Authority/Obedience Developments Among U.S. Women Religious," May 15, 1978, pages 9 and 13, AASF.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Maureen Dwyer, ed., *New Woman, New Church, New Priestly Ministry*, Proceedings of the Second Conference on the Ordination of Roman Catholic Women, n.p., n.d.

<sup>22</sup>See the series of papers in "Women in Ministry, Response to Sister Theresa Kane and Pope John Paul II," *Theology in the Americas*, Documentation Series, Document No. 11, AASF.

<sup>23</sup>Lora Ann Quinonez, CDP to LCWR Members, December 28, 1979, AASF.

<sup>24</sup>"To Speak the Truth in Love," AASF.

<sup>25</sup>For a good review and criticism of the use of the language of egalitarianism see John H. Elliott, "Jesus Was Not An Egalitarian: A Critique of an Anachronistic and Idealist Theory," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 32: 75-91.

<sup>26</sup>Quinn, "Special Pastoral Service: A Shared Pilgrimage," November 15, 1983 (published in Origins), mss., AASF.

<sup>27</sup>CMSM, "For members of the National Board," March 1984, AASF.

<sup>28</sup>See Andrew M. Greeley, *Religious Change in America* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

<sup>29</sup>Some perceptive commentaries on these developments are Karen Sue Smith, "Catholic Women: Two Decades of Change," in Mary C. Segers, *Church Polity and American Politics: Issues in Contemporary American Catholicism* (NY: Garland Publishing Company, 1990), 313-33; Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (NY: Harper Collins, 1991); Kenneth Briggs, *Holy Siege: The Year that Shook Catholic America* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992); Rembert G. Weakland, "The Church in Worldly Affairs: Tensions between Laity and Clergy," *America* 156 (October 18, 1986): 201-05, 215-16; Joan Chittister, OSB, "Roman and American Religious Life," *America* (November 1, 1986): 257-60; Sr. Sharon Holland, IHM, "Laity and the Power of Governance," *Bulletin on Issues of Religious Law* 4.2 (October, 1988).

<sup>30</sup>For commentary see Friedrich Wulf, "Introductory Remarks on Chapters V and VI" in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Volume I (London: Burns Oates/Herder and Herder, 1967), 253-60, with quotation from page 253.

<sup>31</sup>The text for the Council is taken from Austin Flannery, OP, ed., *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1975). Here the Council was merely articulating the classic teaching already embedded in the Code of Canon Law: "The Church is by divine institution a *hierarchical society*, Hence the distinction between *clerics*, who participate in the powers of order and jurisdiction, and the *laity*, who do not, is of divine origin. . . ." See T. Lincoln Bouscaren, SJ, and Adam C. Ellis, SJ, *Canon Law a Text and Commentary* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1951), commentary on canon 107, page 93.

<sup>32</sup>I have been influenced greatly in this interpretation by The Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, "Women Religious and Priests: a Brief Reflection," November 1, 1985; "Response of NCCB Priestly Life and Ministry Committee to

*Attitudes of American Priests in 1970 and 1985 on the Church and Priesthood*, September 22-23, 1986; Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, February 2, 1987, AASF; Constance FitzGerald, OCD, "Impasse and Dark Night," in Joann Wolski Conn, ed., *Women's Spirituality, Resources for Christian Development* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 287-311.

<sup>33</sup>Here I want to mention only one significant development as it touches order and ministry. In 1991 the English Speaking Conference published *Religious Priesthood within the Franciscan Tradition: An Initial Statement and Theological Outline* (Chicago: Croatian Franciscan Press, 1991). This pamphlet occurred within the context of the problems outlined in this paper as they focused on the differences between diocesan and religious structures of mission and priesthood. In this area, the Council located the exercise of the ministerial priesthood within the context of a ministry firmly tied to diocesan structures. Priesthood, it presupposed, is a ministry to the faithful which takes place in a stable community of faith (a parish) and is done by the clergy in hierarchical union with the order of bishops. Ministry here is tied squarely to Church order in office, status, hierarchical structure, public power, canonical discipline, ritual and sacramental actions. Ministry among the mendicants was tied more to discipleship, an internal call and conversion, exemplarity and witness, itinerancy beyond the local church, an egalitarianism expressed in a variety of charisms, and fraternal expressions such as confraternities and third orders. Priesthood among the Franciscans, it might be said, was linked more firmly to the Word, to preaching, to education, social work, and a ministry among the people. This style of religious priesthood only expanded during the time of the sixteenth century and the foundation of an apostolic society such as the Society of Jesus. At the time of the Council, the typological differences between these two expressions of the one priesthood, their divergent ecclesiological and formational presuppositions, were not that evident. By the late 1980s, a major difference had come to the surface. For implications for the Friars Minor see Benedikt Mertens, "Franciscan and Parochial Ministry: Past and Present Aspects of a Debated Question," *Antonianum* LXXV (July-September 2000): 523-34. My own view is heavily dependent on the seminal insights of John O'Malley, SJ: "Priesthood, Ministry, and Religious Life: Some Historical and Historiographical Considerations," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988): 223-57; "Diocesan and Religious Models of Priestly Formation: Historical Perspectives," in Robert J. Wister, ed., *Priests, Identity and Ministry* (Wilmington: Michael Glazer, 1990), 54-70; "Spiritual Formation for Ministry: Some Roman Catholic Traditions—Their Past and Present," in Richard John Neuhaus, ed., *Theological Education and Moral Formation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 79-111; "One Priesthood: Two Traditions," in Paul K. Hennessy, CFC, *A Concert of Charisms, Ordained Ministry in Religious Life* (New York: Paulist, 1997), 9-24.

<sup>34</sup>A review of some of the literature can start with Justus George Lawler, *Popes and Politics, Reform, Resentment and the Holocaust* (New York: Continuum, 2002); George Weigel, *The Courage to be Catholic: Crisis, Reform, and the Future of the Church* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

<sup>35</sup>For a clear statement see *Sent. IV, dXXIV, p.I, Art. I, "Utrum Ordo sit in Ecclesia"* (IV.614-615).

<sup>36</sup>A good overview may be found in Grado Merlo, "La conversione alla povertà nell'Italia dei secoli XII-XIV," in *La Conversione alla Povertà nell'Italia dei secoli XII-XIV*, Atti del XXVII Congresso storico internazionale, Todi, 14-17 Ottobre 1990 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1991), 3-32.

<sup>37</sup>A classic statement is that of the First Lateran Council (1123), canon 17: "We forbid abbots and monks to impose public penances, to visit the sick, to administer extreme unction, and to sing public masses. The chrism, holy oil, consecration of altars, and ordination of clerics they shall obtain from the bishops in whose dioceses they reside." H.J. Schroeder, OP, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1937), 189. For the importance of this legal codification as background for the structural relevance of the Franciscan movement, see C. Colt Anderson, *A Call to Piety*, pages 16 ff.

<sup>38</sup>Pellegrini, "Mendicanti e Parroci: Coesistenza e Conflitti di due strutture organizzative della 'cura animarum,'" in *Francescanesimo e Vita Religiosa dei Laici nel 1200*, Atti dell'VIII Congresso Internazionale (Assisi, 1981), 131-67.

<sup>39</sup>The literature here is vast but see as beginning points Giovanni Gonnert, "La Donna Presso I Movimenti Pauperistico-Evangelici," in *Movimento Religioso Femminile e Francescanesimo Nel Secolo XIII*, Atti del VII Congresso Internazionale, Assisi, 11-13 Ottobre 1979 (Assisi, 1980), 103-29; Kurt-Victor Selge, "I movimenti religiosi laici del XIIsec., in partolare I Valdesi, quale sfondo e premessa del movimento francescano," *Protestantesimo* 43 (1988): 71-92; Raoul Manselli, "Evangelismo e Povertà," in Manselli, *Il Secolo XII: Religione Popolare ed Eresia* (Jouvence, 1983). The broader currents of reform as they affected religious life just before the time of Francis are well treated in Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, especially 296-328.

<sup>40</sup>See Pellegrini, "Mendicanti e parroci"; Grado Giovanni Merlo, *Eretici ed Eresie Medievali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989); *Contro gli eretici* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996).

<sup>41</sup>See Giovanni Miccoli, "Gospel and Intuition," *Greyfriars Review* 11 (1997): 114-141; André Jansen, OFM, "The Story of True Joy: An Autobiographical Reading," *Greyfriars Review* 5 (1991): 367-87.

<sup>42</sup>For some background see Maria Pia Alberzoni, "San Damiano in 1228: A Contribution to the 'Clare Question,'" *Greyfriars Review* 13 (1999): 105-23; Alberzoni, "Nequaquam a Christi sequela in perpetuum absolvi desidero: Clare between Charism and Institution," *Greyfriars Review* 12 (1998): 81-121; Lezlie Knox, "Audacious Nuns: Institutionalizing the Franciscan Order of Saint Clare," *Greyfriars Review* 16 (2002): 155-78.

<sup>43</sup>Fundamental to this approach is Jacques Le Goff, *Saint Francis of Assisi* (New York: Routledge, 2004), translated by Christine Rhone, especially chapters 3 and 4 on social categories and cultural models.

<sup>44</sup>A nuanced description of the evolution of the Friars Minor can be found in Jacques Dalarun, *Francesco d'Assisi, il potere in questione e la questione del potere* (Milano: Edizioni Biblioteca Francescana, 1999). I am not concerned so much in this paper with the internal issue of clericalism as with the ecclesiological issue of public institutional presence, even though the two dimensions are obviously connected. For a wider lens on developments among the laity see Giovanna Casagrande, *Religiosità Penitenziale e Città dei Comuni* (Roma: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1995), 113-27.

<sup>45</sup>I have expanded on some other aspects of this approach in "Penitential Humanism: Rereading the Sources to Develop a Franciscan Urban Spirituality," in Ken Himes, OFM, *Franciscans in Urban Ministry* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), 109-28; "Conflict and Power: The Retrieval of Franciscan Spirituality for the Contemporary Pastoral Leader," in *Franciscan Leadership in Ministry: Foundations in History, Theology and Spirituality, Spirit and Life, A Journal of Contemporary Franciscanism* 7 (1997): 205-21.



<sup>46</sup> For an overview of the works and their dating see J. G. Bougerol, *St. Bonaventure et la sagasse chretienne* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1963); Bougerol, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure* (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1964), translated by José de Vinck. I have relied particularly for the historical background on Roberto Lambertini, *Apologia e crescita dell'Identità francescana (1255-1279)* (Roma: Palazzo Borromini, 1990); Roberto Lambertini, Andrea Tabarroni, *Dopo Francesco: L'Eredità Difficile* (Torino: Abele, 1989); Lambertini, *La Povertà pensata, evoluzione storica della definizione dell'identità minoritica da Bonaventura ad Occam* (Modena: Mucchi, 2000); Ovidio Capitani, *Figure e motivi del francescanesimo medievale* (Bologna: Pátron Editore, 2000), chapters 1-4; C. Colt Anderson, *A Call to Piety: Saint Bonaventure's Collations on the Six Days*; Richard W. Emery, "The Second Council of Lyons and the Mendicant Orders," *The Catholic Historical Review* XXXIX (October, 1953): 257-71.

<sup>47</sup> I take these examples from just one work, *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus sancti* in *Opera Omnia* V, 457-508, and have used extensively the edition introduced and translated into French by Marc Ozilou, *Les Sept Dons du Saint-Esprit* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1997). For various references see III.7, 14-15; IV.13-14, 18, 22; VI, 13, 19; VII, 17-19.

<sup>48</sup> *Septem donis Spiritus sancti*, III.9: "Ubi est pietas hodie? Non est medium, quia Deus abstulit extrema; tanta est hodie crudelitas, quod homo non potest satiari de vindicta; regnat hodie impatientia et iracundia; male iudicat homo; etiam si non offendit me homo, male tamen iudicabo de ipso. Unde est hoc?" To see the consistency of this critique throughout Bonaventure's life, which also touched the issue of legitimate dissension in the Church, cf. *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, VI; *Determinationes Quaestionum circa Regulam Fratrum Minorum* XX, *Hexaemeron* 23.23. For the comments on Luke, I am greatly dependent on the work of Robert J. Karris, OFM, in *Works of St. Bonaventure*, VIII.1, *St. Bonaventure's Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> *Apologia Pauperum* XXX.7, *Opera Omnia* VIII, 318; for translation see *The Works of Bonaventure*, IV, *Defense of the Mendicants* (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1966), translated by José de Vinck.

<sup>50</sup> See C. Colt Anderson, "Bonaventure and the Sin of the Church," *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 667-89; for a description of the friars see Bonaventure's two encyclical letters of 1257 and 1266 in *Works of Saint Bonaventure*, *St. Bonaventure's Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), introduction and translation by Dominic Monti, O.F.M.; *Determinationes Quaestionum circa Regulam Fratrum Minorum* XIX, *Opera Omnia* VIII, 350-51: "Ista et alia bona sunt, quae Deus elicit ex consortio malorum cum bonis. Sicut enim in caelis gaudium bonorum cumulat vis poena damnatorum, sic etiam in Ecclesia quodam modo decorat rectitudinem iustorum deformitas iniquorum, disponenete huiusmodi superna sapientia, quae nil inordinatum in omni regno dimittit."

<sup>51</sup> *Sent.* IV, dX, aI, q1, conclusio #2 (IV.218). I am indebted to Robert Karris for translating the entire text on page 218.

<sup>52</sup> *Circumcisio Domini*, *Sermo* I, *Opera Omnia* IX, 135-36, with quotation from 136. Again, I thank Robert Karris for his translation of the entire text.

<sup>53</sup> Karris, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, 460. In *Hexaemeron* 23.23, Bonaventure refers to "pious zealots."

<sup>54</sup> A good summary may be found in Lambertini, "Momenti della formazione dell'identità francescana nel contesto della disputa con i secolari (1255-1279), in *Dalla "Sequela Christi" di Francesco d'Assisi all'Apologia della Povertà*, Atti del XVIII Convegno

Internazionale Assisi, 18-20 Ottobre, 1990 (Spoleto, 1992). See also C. Colt Anderson, *A Call to Piety*, 16 ff. for a description of the controversies; Kevin Madigan, *Olivi and the Interpretation of Matthew in the High Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), Chapter 4.

<sup>55</sup> *De Septem Donis Spiritus Sancti* VII.17-18, *Opera Omnia* V, 492, with quotation from 17: "Tales consiliarii fuerunt Pharisei et Legisperiti, de quibus dicitur: *Pharisei et Legisperiti spreverunt Dei consilium*. Utinam nulli sint modo tales! Dicet aliquis: "laudas mihi, quod sequar consilia et intrem religionem fratrum Minorum vel Praedicatorum"? Dicit: "ordo fictitius est, de novo institutus, habet signa exteriora." Ulterius dicit: "parum est spernere temporalia; non possumus ea dimittere. Quare debemus dimittere ista pauca bona? Quid valet nuditas pedum? *Corporalis exercitatio ad modicum utilis est, pietas autem ad omnia*."

<sup>56</sup> For Bonaventure's progressive view of Scripture and Tradition, see Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, 1971.

<sup>57</sup> It is instructive to read in this light the 1267 work *Collationes de Decem Praeceptis*, *Opera Omnia* V, 505-32. Cf. F. Edward Coughlin, OFM, ed., *Works of Saint Bonaventure, Collations on the Ten Commandments* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1995), introduction and translation by Paul J. Spaeth.

<sup>58</sup> For the setting see Luigi Pellegrini, OFM Cap., "L'Ordine Francescano e la società Cittadina in Epoca Bonaventuriana Un'analisi del *Determinationes quaestionum super Regulam Fratrum Minorum*." *Laurentianum* 1-2 (1974): 154-200. I use the *Determinationes* text, which may be found in *Opera Omnia* VIII 337-56, as only an example. Clearly the most sophisticated response is contained in the *Apologia Pauperum* of 1269.

<sup>59</sup> This methodology views the Friars Minor as more of a symbolic life-form which is meant to witness to the center of a life shared in common with many others, such as that of the Poor Clares and the Lay Penitents. One of the difficulties has been the compartmentalization of the different "orders" into separate spheres of reality. We know that the juridical situation of the Clares and Penitents was fairly fluid up to last quarter of the thirteenth century, and that almost every major reform of the family has revealed the inter-dependence between the religious and lay elements, the enclosed and the active elements.

<sup>60</sup> See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Docere Verbo et Exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979).

<sup>61</sup> The argument is very similar to that contained in *Quare Fratres Minores Praedicent et Confessiones Audiant*, *Opera Omnia* VIII, 377-81.

<sup>62</sup> *Apologia Pauperum* XII.7. The Latin is "cooperatores evangelistas." (VIII 318).

<sup>63</sup> See Karris, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, I, 388-92. It should be noted that in his *Collations on the Gifts of the Spirit* XIII.14 Bonaventure interprets the passage 2Kg 4.1-7 in a similar fashion. Elisha tells the widow, a type of the Church, to go out and beg vessels from all the neighbors. "Quando Ecclesia paupercula est in meritis, et oportet, quod impleat vasa vicinorum. Vis, quod pietas matris Ecclesiae ad te descendat? Impleas vasa vicinorum. Istum oleum pietatis apud omnes debet haberi. Unde in Cantico: Oleum effusum nomen tuum."

<sup>64</sup> This argument is carefully made in *Apologia Pauperum* XII.7-11. Cf. the same approach in the earlier *De Perfectione Evangelica*, QI, on Humility, and QIV, aIII, on obedience to the supreme pontiff. The only way Bonaventure is able to break through the legal restrictions imposed by his own way of life and the public order of the Church is to appeal to a higher juridical authority. This appeal will make the arrangement



dependent on the graciousness of the Apostolic See. Taken out of context and applied universally, the argument exalts the papal *plenitudo potestatis*. Cf. Brian Tierney, "From Thomas of York to William of Ockham, The Franciscans and the Papal *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum* 1250-1350," in Joseph D'Ercole, Alphonso M. Stickler, *Communione Interecclesiale Collegialita'-Primato Ecumenismo*, Acta Conventus Internationalis De Historia Sollicitudinis Omnium Ecclesiarum, Romae 1967 (Roma: Communion, 1972), 607-58. This will have serious consequences at the time of John XXII.

<sup>65</sup>Cf. Peter D. Fehlner, *The Role of Charity in the Ecclesiology of St. Bonaventure* (Rome: Miscellanea Francescana, 1965), 160-65.

<sup>66</sup>Cf. *Collationes de Septem Donis Spiritus sancti*, IV, *De Dono Scientiae*.

<sup>67</sup>This phrase refers to an essay on Francis by the same title and written by Yves Congar. It has been translated and is readily available in Maurice W. Sheehan, OFM Cap, ed., *St. Francis of Assisi: Essays in Commemoration* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1982), 59-76.

<sup>68</sup>See the fine exposition in Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, Chapter II.

<sup>69</sup>*Determinationes* V (VIII.341): "Qui paucis indigent, pauca ab aliis requirere necesse habent," referring to why the friars remain in the cities.

<sup>70</sup>The summary and interpretation of some of the questions in the *Determinationes* is my own; it is perhaps a summary of the spirit of the text, if not the exact letter.

<sup>71</sup>*De Perf. Evangelica* IV, aI, #6, (V.180).

<sup>72</sup>*Sent.* II, dXVIII, aII, qI, conclusio (II.447).

<sup>73</sup>*Sent.* III, dXXXVI, aI, qVI (III.805). Cf. *Collations on the Ten Commandments*, IV.12-14, where he writes: "The turning of a soul back to God is accomplished by means of seven works. . . . For love is the perfect form of all things, and the one who has love has all six requirements."

<sup>74</sup>See the comments in *De Perf. Evangelica* QIV, aI, #4 (V.179), where he quotes, as Scotus will do later, Augustine's definition of order from *De Civitate Dei* XIX.13.

<sup>75</sup>*Hexaemeron* 23.23 with translation from deVinck: "benignae miserationis affectuosa *condescensio*, severae distractionis aemulatoria *rectitudo*, acerbae vel humanae tribulationis victoriosa *perpassio*." (V.448)

<sup>76</sup>This sociological problem, I think, needs correlation with Bonaventure's approach to the relationship between the particular and the universal on a philosophical level. For the distinctiveness of the Franciscan approach which is uncomfortable with logical or legal contraries, see Louis Mackey, *Peregrinations of the Word: Essays in Medieval Philosophy* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 147-80.

<sup>77</sup>Cf. *De Perf. Evangelica* qI, conclusio, #15 (V.124).

<sup>78</sup>For "state of perfection" see G. Lesage, G. Rocca, "Stato di Perfezione," *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione* (Roma, 1997), IX.203-216; G. Rocca, "Perfezione," *DIP* (Roma: Ed. Paolini, 1980), VI.1466-78.

<sup>79</sup>Cf. Marietta Jenicek, OSF, "Franciscan Vision of the Notion of Hierarchy," *Analecta TOR* 34 (2003): 811-30 for further reflections on the relation between Trinitarian thought and the meaning of hierarchy.

<sup>80</sup>For the importance of this image of "stigmatized" as referring to Baptism, see Chiara Frugoni, *Francis of Assisi: A Life* (London: St. Albans Press, 1998), 126.

<sup>81</sup>*Sent.* IV, dIII, dubia II (IV.105). Cf. *Breviloquium* 6.5.

<sup>82</sup>Fehlner, *The Role of Charity*, 44-45.

<sup>83</sup>*Sent.* IV, dXXIV, pI, aII, qI, conclusio #4 (IV.615).

<sup>84</sup>*Breviloquium* 6.5, with translation from Erwin Esser Nemmers, *Breviloquium*, St. Bonaventure (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1947), 185-86.

<sup>85</sup>For the importance of this concept, see Jacques Bourgerol, OFM, "La role de l'influence dans le théologie de la grace chez Bonaventure," *Revue de théologie de Louvain* 5 (1974): 273-300; J.A. Wayne Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order in Bonaventure's Theology* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2001); Fehlner, *The Role of Charity*.

<sup>86</sup>*Apologia Pauperum* II.12 (VIII.242), translated with some modification in de Vinck, *Defense of the Mendicants*, 30-31.

<sup>87</sup>Cf. Fehlner, *The Role of Charity*, 68-72.

<sup>88</sup>Cited in Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order*, p. 218, fn 96: "Cognoscere in creatura est cognoscere ipsius praesentiam et influentiam in creatura." *Sent.* I d3, pI, q.III, resp (I.74b).

<sup>89</sup>*De Perf. Evangelica*, qI, conclusio (V.120-124).

<sup>90</sup>Bonaventure, *Comment. In Joannem*, 1.59, *Quaest II*, *Opera Omnia* VI, 259 ab. The connections between these passages can be more easily discovered from the appropriate Latin text: Sirach 15.5, as Bonaventure read it, "in medio ecclesiae aperiet os illius adimplebit illum spiritu sapientiae et intellectus et stolam gloriae vestiet illum"; Lk. 22.27: "ego autem in medio vestrum sum, sicut qui ministrat," and "ubi enim sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo ibi sum in medio eorum," Mt. 18.20: "advocans Jesus parvulum statuit eum in medio eorum," Mt. 18.2: "in veritate conperi quoniam non est personarum acceptor Deus," Acts of the Apostles 10.34: "ipse enim est pax nostra qui fecit utraque unum et medium parietem maceriae solvens inimicitiam in carne sua," Eph. 2.14: "fundamentum enim aliud nemo potest ponere praeter id quod positum est qui est Christus Jesus" 1 Cor. 3.11; "quaerere Deum si forte adtractent eum aut inveniant quamvis non longe sit ab unoquoque nostrum, in ipso enim vivimus et movemur et sumus" Acts of the Apostles 17.27.

<sup>91</sup>"Stetit autem Christus inter homines primo ut *Pontifex clementissimus* ad purgandum delinquentes a malo culpa; secundo ut *Doctor sapientissimus* ad illuminandum verbo doctrinae ignorantes; tertio ut *Rex potentissimus* ad liberandum impotentes a malo poenae, et introducendum in bonum gloriae." I am indebted to Fehlner, 155, footnote 38 for the original reference.

<sup>92</sup>*Sent* IV, dX, aI, qI, conclusio #2 (IV.218). I am indebted to Robert Karris for this translation.

<sup>93</sup>For general background shaping the Council see Joseph P. Chinnici, "The Reception of Vatican II in the United States," *Theological Studies* 64 (September, 2003): 461-94; for the longer view in terms of the Franciscan intellectual tradition see Chinnici, "Institutional Amnesia and the Challenge of Mobilizing Our Resources for Franciscan Theology," in Elise Saggau, OSF, *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, Washington Theological Union Symposium Papers 2001* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002), 105-50. The importance of following the developments in France becomes clearer when the work of the Dominicans is compared with the most influential but conservative Franciscan interpreter of the *poverello's* life, Kajetan Esser in *Repair My House* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1963), edited by Luc Mely, OFM, translated by Michael D. Meilach, OFM.

<sup>94</sup>See G. Alberigo, M.-D. Chenu, E. Fouilloux, J.-P. Jossua, J. Ladrière, *Une école de théologie: le Saulchoir* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1985); Christophe F. Potworowski, *Contemplation and Incarnation: The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu* (Ithaca, NY:

McGill Queen's University Press, 2001); *Fifty Years of Catholic Theology, Conversations with Yves Congar*, Bernard Lauret, ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988).

<sup>95</sup>See for the context the reflection of Congar in Jean Pierre Jossua, ed., *Écrits Réformateurs, Cardinal Yves Congar, O.P.* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1995), section entitled "La Vie de l'Eglise"; and "Préface" in Congar, *Vraie et Fausse Réforme dans l'Eglise* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2e édition, 1968).

<sup>96</sup>See *Vraie et Fausse Réforme*, 301-02, with quotation from 128.

<sup>97</sup>*Vraie et Fausse Réforme*, 604-22.

<sup>98</sup>These words were first spoken in a commencement address delivered at the Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, entitled "Synod '85: Keeping Faith with the Council." The address was later published in *America* 153 (September 14-21, 1985): 135-38, with quotation from page 136. For Quinn's later reflections see John R. Quinn, *The Reform of the Papacy: The Costly Call to Christian Unity* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999).

<sup>99</sup>*Vraie et Fausse Réforme*, 229-48, with particular references at 232, 252.

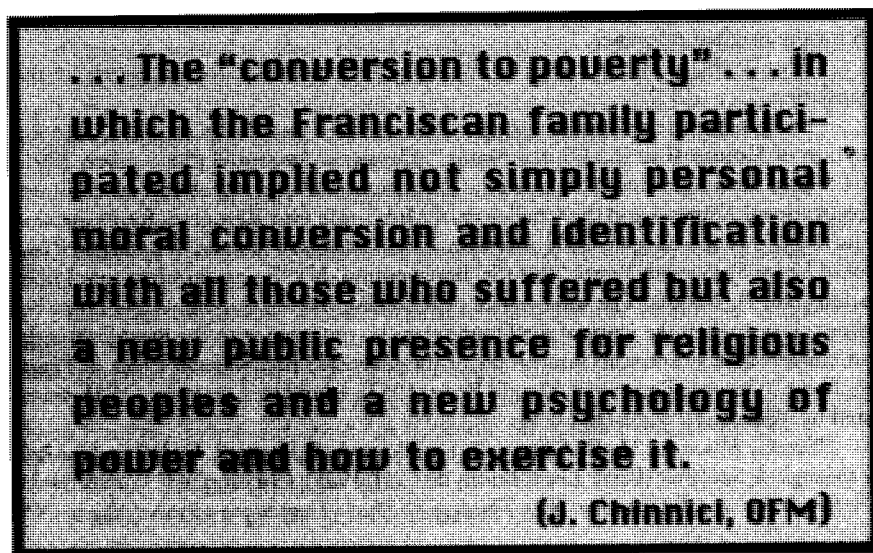
<sup>100</sup>See *St. Francis of Assisi: Essays in Commemoration*, 59-76.

<sup>101</sup>Chenu's two essays are translated and printed in *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, selected, edited, and translated by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 202-69.

<sup>102</sup>See Timothy MacDonald, SA, *The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar: Foundational Themes* (Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1984), Chapter II.

<sup>103</sup>I choose 1982 since that is the year of publication of Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap and Ignatius C. Brady, OFM, *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

EDITOR'S NOTE: The image of St. Bonaventure on page 235 is found in *S. Bonaventura 1274-1974*, Vol. 1 (Grottoferata: Tipografia Porziuncola, 1974), plate 74. The artist is identified as Morando di Paolo; the painting is found in the Museo Civico in Verona, Italy.



*The Cord*, 54.5 (2004)

## "Go rebuild my house..." Did Francis Get It Wrong?

Michael Higgins, TOR

### Introduction

At a recent theological symposium, the message that Francis received from the crucifix at San Damiano was presented as an invitation to the participants to "go and rebuild" the house of God. The presentations and discussions ran the gamut from an exegetical/artistic exploration of the San Damiano crucifix to modern expressions of Franciscan mission and ministry to the young, the needy, the marginalized, and to the Church itself. The exhortation from the crucifix was used as a refrain, tying it together, giving focus and direction to the conference. Though there was no specific examination of the original event, the traditional perception that Francis misunderstood the Lord's command from the cross was a common thread that ran throughout the symposium. The saint, it is said, thought that the Lord was asking him to rebuild the church of San Damiano when in reality he was being called to rebuild the universal Church. This has served to clarify a question that has been on my mind in recent years: Did Francis really misunderstand the exhortation from the crucifix?

### The Church of San Damiano

The little church of San Damiano is situated about a half mile outside the Umbrian town of Assisi. Some studies date its construction to as early as the seventh century, though it is more likely that it was built around the middle of the eleventh century. The church was dedicated to Sts. Cosmas and Damian, twin brothers from Arabia who were trained in the medical arts in Syria and martyred approximately 303 A.D. during the Diocletian persecution of the Church. They were well known for their generous care of the sick and injured, and are celebrated as the patron saints of pharmacists, physicians, healthcare workers, and transplant surgeons.<sup>2</sup> One of the first buildings to be dedicated to the brothers is located near the Coliseum. Situated on the Roman Forum between the Palatine and Capitoline hills, the building which houses the present

Basilica of Sts. Cosmas and Damian was built about the same time as the Coliseum, around 74 A.D. It served as a library, repository of official records, and a storage area before it was consecrated as a church in the early sixth century. The physician martyrs were chosen as patrons of the site because of its proximity to the temple of the twins Castor and Pollux and because the building is located in the center of the medical district of the Forum. Most of the physicians in Rome had offices here.<sup>3</sup> "The holy martyrs Cosmas and Damian were twins as well as physicians, and thus provided an appropriate substitute for the pagan twins. They also served to *convert* the science of medicine."<sup>4</sup>

The desire of the Church to "baptize" pagan sites and connect them to Christian saints and traditions was a common method for catechesis and evangelization. The Church tried to replace pagan rituals and superstitions with rites and symbols more in keeping with the message of the Gospel, doctrine and practice of the faith. A similar event may have happened in Assisi. Just a short walk from the church of San Damiano is the Spa of Santo Reggino:

Recent excavations have uncovered the ruins of a nymphaeum (1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.), which consisted of a wall with squared stones and three outlets for the spring water, the largest of which was decorated with reliefs. Opposite was a catch basin flanked by low walls. The discovery of votive objects during the excavation suggests that in ancient times the springs were used for cult purposes.<sup>5</sup>

This is one indication that the area may have been a cultic site before the arrival of Christianity in the Umbrian valley. People may have gathered in the area to pray for healing even before the time of St. Rufino, the first bishop of Assisi, who was martyred in the third century. Another indication of the site's connection with healing is the presence of the little church dedicated to the patron saints of physicians and health care workers and known by the local population as San Damiano.<sup>6</sup>

## Francis before the Cross

Even a cursory reading of the events surrounding Francis's conversion experience highlights the fact that it was an extremely difficult time in the young man's life. Everything he had considered important in life was being turned upside down. At one time he had wanted to be a merchant like his father; he was good at the work and successful, but money gradually became unimportant. From all accounts, Francis was an extrovert who was full of energy, someone who found great joy in being the life of the party, but he found this role to be empty and unsatisfying. He also had wanted to be a knight, to win fame and fortune by the force of arms and to ascend the social ladder, but even this dream lost its luster. Francis found himself wandering through the

mountains and valleys of Umbria searching for meaning and direction. His heart was in darkness and he did not know where to turn.

During this time Francis's world was further shaken by his encounter with a leper. As a youth he was appalled by lepers; they nauseated him and left him feeling afraid and upset. When he saw one on the road he would ride miles out of his way to avoid the person. However, God had other plans.

One day as he was traveling near Assisi, he encountered a leper on the road. Rather than flee in disgust, he was moved to approach the leper and even to embrace him in love and compassion. This was a crucial point in Francis's conversion experience. As 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 1-3).

It is significant that Francis states that the key moment in his turning to the Lord was in the act of showing mercy to one who was in need. This was, according to the saint, the catalyst for him to "leave the world," to definitively leave the lay state and embrace a life of prayer and service as a religious.

Another important moment of Francis's conversion experience occurred during a time of intense prayer. Worn by his painful quest for direction in life, Francis entered the small church of San Damiano and prayed for healing and peace. Troubled to the core of his being, Francis approached an old painted cross that hung above the altar and poured out his heart to God:

Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out Your holy and true command (PrCr).

This prayer is often read or prayed in a lighthearted, even joyful, way and is sung in the same manner. However, it is really a heart wrenching cry from a man who felt totally and utterly lost and alone. To capture the spirit of the prayer, it is better not to picture Francis kneeling serenely in front of the cross gently staring into the face of the crucified Lord as he joyfully mouthed the words of the prayer. A more realistic picture would be to see him lying prostrate on the floor of the church, tears streaming down his face as he tried to deal with a life that was coming apart at the seams. We have all had experiences like this in our lives, when everything seemed to be falling apart and nothing makes sense. With this in mind, the prayer takes on a deeper urgency and richness as Francis prayed each part of the prayer as a cry for help from

the depth of his inmost being: "Most High . . . glorious God . . . (please, I beg you Lord) enlighten the darkness of my heart . . ."

The *Prayer Before the Crucifix* is the first prayer attributed to Francis and dates to approximately 1205 or 1206.<sup>7</sup> The *Legend of the Three Companions* is the first of the legends to record the experience before the crucifix at San Damiano. It describes that after Francis poured out his heart in prayer, he heard the cross speak to him, "Francis, don't you see that my house is being destroyed? Go, then, and rebuild it for me" (L3C 13).<sup>8</sup> The God of love touched his life and left an indelible mark. Francis was left amazed and overcome with a sense of awe and wonder. He finally found meaning and a direction that would consume the whole of his life. To live for, and put himself at the service of God's love became his paramount goal. Overjoyed that God had spoken to him, he put all his energy into obeying the command that he had received. He sold some of his belongings, even those that belonged to the family business, and gave the money to the priest who was in charge of San Damiano. He started to collect stones and building materials as he threw himself into the restoration of the church.

Both Celano and Bonaventure state that when Francis began to work on the physical restoration of San Damiano it showed that he had misunderstood Christ's command.

He does not forget to care for that holy image nor hesitate to carry out the command. He gives the priest money to buy a lamp and some oil, lest the image lack, even for a moment, the honor of light. He then runs quickly to fulfill the rest, working tirelessly to rebuild that church. Although the divine word spoken to him was really about that Church which Christ acquired with His own blood, he did not immediately reach that level, but moved gradually from flesh to spirit (2C 11).<sup>9</sup>

Celano and Bonaventure were concerned with connecting Francis and his movement with the Church and stressed that this was the true meaning behind the words of Christ from the cross. Perhaps due in part to the influence of Bonaventure's *Major Legend* on Franciscan hagiography, most modern authors repeat the assertion that the saint misunderstood the message and state, as Chiara Frugoni does in her biography of Francis, that "the symbolic meaning of the words escaped him: he thought that he had to save the material building from ruin and was far from imagining the task which awaited him: to save the spiritual building, the church."<sup>10</sup>

Another way of looking at this was that Francis understood very well what was being asked from him as he started collecting stones to rebuild the crumbling structure of San Damiano. If we return to *The Legend of the Three Com-*

*panions*, we read that Francis was shaken by the experience of hearing the "tender and kind voice" of the Lord from the cross that directed him to rebuild His house.

Stunned and trembling, he said: "I will do so gladly, Lord." For he understood that it was speaking about that church, which was near to collapse because of its age (L3C 13).

At this time in his life and spiritual journey he was not ready to embark on the great task of building up the universal Church. He was far from able to evangelize, to preach, to write a letter, or to go on mission. He was, however, able to pick up a stone and to concentrate on the physical activity of repairing a dilapidated church. God asked Francis to do what he was able to do at the time. And, as with the leper, Francis's self absorption was interrupted as he was led by the Lord to focus on something outside of himself. The paradox was that as he focused on the needs of others he began to find himself.

## Conclusion

The encounter with the leper and the challenge from the cross encouraged Francis to change the priorities of his life and led to the gradual separation from his family and his father's business. Perhaps it was these events which enabled Francis to view and evaluate life in a way that he had not done before. His life became characterized by simplicity and focused solely on the desire to know the will of God and to acquire the courage to follow it. Francis discovered that the lure and grandeur of money and possessions were illusory,

that fame was fleeting and left him empty and restless, and that his work as a knight did not satisfy the deepest aspirations of his heart and spirit. For Francis, everything which he had once perceived as sweet had turned bitter; but now, how sweet life had become.

The paradox is that as Francis started rebuilding the house of God, God started rebuilding Francis. Did Francis misunderstand the message of the cross? I don't think so.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Giovanni Boccali, "San Damiano," in *Dizionario Franciscano*, 2nd edition, ed. Ernesto Caroli (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero Padova, 1995).

<sup>2</sup>Herbert Thurston and Donald Atwater, eds., *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, 4 vols. (New York: Kennedy, 1956).

<sup>3</sup>Lino Temperini, *Basilica Santi Cosma e Damiano* (Rome: Editrice Franciscanum, 1994), 5.

<sup>4</sup>Temperini, 5.

<sup>5</sup>Pier Maurizio della Porta and Maurizio Zubboli, eds., *Guide to Assisi: History and Art* (Assisi: Editrice Minerva, 1992), 169. A nymphaeum is a spring or fountain that was believed to be especially blessed by water deities. It was not unusual that people would frequent them in order to pray for their health or for the recovery of a loved one.

<sup>6</sup>It is interesting to note that the ministry of healing at San Damiano continued in a dramatic way during Clare's stay at the site. For a discussion of this time cf. Chapter 4, "Healing Touch," in Ingrid J. Peterson, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy, Illinois: Franciscan Press, 1993).

<sup>7</sup>Lehmann points out that the prayer was probably not composed in 1205 in exactly the way it has come down to us. It is more likely that Francis prayed it many times before it was finally recorded. Cf. Leonard Lehmann, *Francesco: Maestro di Pregbiera* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1993), 41-60.

<sup>8</sup>The more well known account of this experience is found in 2 Celano: "Francis, go rebuild My house; as you see, it is all being destroyed" (2C 10) and was included by Bonaventure in the *Major Legend* as: "Francis, go and repair my house which, as you see, is all being destroyed" (LMj II:1).

<sup>9</sup>Bonaventure makes this assertion even stronger. He states that after the crucifix spoke to him, Francis started "... repairing the material church, although the principal intention of the words referred to that which Christ purchased with his own blood, as the Holy Spirit taught him and as he himself later disclosed to his brothers" (LMj II:1).

<sup>10</sup>Chiara Frugoni, *Francis of Assisi: A Life*, trans. John Bowden (London: Continuum Publishing Company, 2000), 25-26.

**It is significant that Francis states that the key moment in his turning to the Lord was in the act of showing mercy to one who was in need.**

## About Our Contributors

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Francis of Assisi Performing the Gospel Life*. Lawrence S. Cunningham. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004. 160 pp.

The Word of God is like a musical score. It may be studied and there may be great efforts to establish a clear text and the intention of the text . . . but the full meaning of the text appears only when it is performed. Fidelity to the text is the bottom line, but there is a difference between a beginner plunking away at Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* and the same piece at the hands of a seasoned performer. Some read so deeply into the mind of the composer that we honor such a person as a musical virtuoso. It is safe to say that Francis was such a virtuoso whose music is still heard today and enriches us in the hearing.

Cunningham styles his little book as meditative, and hopes to shed some light on the staying power of the Franciscan charism. Along the way if he can de-romanticize the sentimental stereotype of Francis of Assisi popularized in garden birdbaths, so much the better. The work he does, however, in situating Francis in his historical context, both civilly and ecclesiastically, belies his description.

The author treats seven aspects of Francis: his beginnings, his companions, his relationship with the institutional church, the Rule, the Stigmata, love for creation, and his final years. At the end of these chapters, he sums up his insights before adding a chapter with helpful directions to more purposeful and detailed resources for the motivated reader. An Appendix, placed right before the Index, sets the record straight about the so-called "Prayer of Saint Francis."

Two areas of Cunningham's scholarship jarred this reader out of a state of pleasant perusal. Three references to Clare do not reflect recent studies: dating her Palm Sunday flight to the Portiuncula in 1209 (but he gets it right nine

pages later), assigning the Privilege of Poverty of 1228 to *three* Assisi convents, and associating Hugolino's rule of 1218-1219 for his Order of Saint Damian with the "Poor Clares," a term which can be used appropriately after 1263 but not before. The second dissonant note is in a description of Francis's relationship with Anthony of Padua. Cunningham's account of Francis's letter to Anthony is somewhat ambiguous about Anthony's role as theologian for the friars, but is clearly incorrect in identifying Francis's concern to be about "holy poverty." Those familiar with the text of the letter and with recent interpretations would name Francis's primary concern as his desire that Anthony not allow theological study to "extinguish the Spirit of prayer and devotion" described in the Rule.

Cunningham accomplishes his goal with a skillful pen. Most readers will enjoy the synthesis of themes from Franciscan sources with the results of the author's contemplation. If, however, you have a couple, or even one, of the books listed in "A Reading Essay" you might prefer to read it meditatively and develop your own synthesis.

Daria Mitchell, OSF  
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778

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*Saint Anthony Community Hospital, Warwick, N.Y., & The Franciscan Sisters of the Poor.* Delaney, Rose Margaret, SFP, and David Flood, OFM. Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, 21 Ball Road, Warwick, NY 10990. 2004. 36pp. \$5.00, includes mailing.

The Franciscan Sisters of the Poor came to the United States (from Aachen, Germany) in 1858. Soon they had a string of hospitals under their care, from New York to Teutopolis, Illinois. The Sisters got a hospital going in the rural town of Warwick, N.Y., in the late 1930s. From 1950 on, both medical technology and health insurance developed rapidly. At the same time civil rights legislation changed the context in which hospitals operated. Into that mix drifted then the changes consequent to the Second Vatican Council. At one moment, with the rising complexity of hospital administration and the decrease in the number of Sisters, the Congregation began withdrawing from its involvement in hospital work. The booklet follows the intermediate solutions prior to the final and difficult decision to continue its service to the needy in other forms. However particular the story, it parallels the experience of many other sister communities in the second half of the twentieth century. The account ends with the bibliography (36) essential to the study of the process. — D.F.

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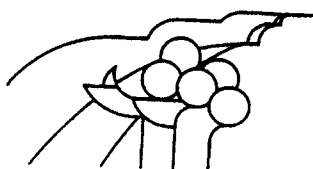
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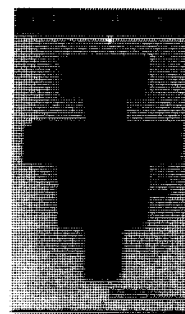
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Four of the five contributions comprising this volume were presented in May, 2003 at the 38th International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, Michigan. The fifth article is excerpted from an as yet unpublished doctoral dissertation. All focus on the development of the *Forma vitae* written by Clare and approved just before her death in 1253 or on her letters to Agnes of Prague.

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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 Alighieri
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 of 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
OP	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		
RCl	Rule of Clare		
TestCl	Testament of Clare		
BCl	Blessing of Clare		

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KnSF	The Knowing of Saint Francis
ChrTE	The Chronicle of Thomas of Eccleston
ChrJG	The Chronicle of Jordan of Giano

**A WORD FROM BONAVENTURE**

**ANYONE WHO DOES NOT HAVE BEING IN THEMSELVES, TENDS TO NON-BEING, UNLESS...SUSTAINED BY ANOTHER. THIS IS TRUE IN HUMAN LIFE, AMONG RELIGIOUS, BISHOPS, CLERICS, AND LAITY. IN TRUTH, GOOD AND BAD ARE MIXED SO THAT THE GOOD MIGHT ACQUIRE MERIT BEFORE GOD....THE WHOLE MIXED SITUATION ENCOURAGES A ZEAL FOR JUSTICE, COMPASSION, PATIENT ACCEPTANCE ....THE VIRTUES OF THE JUST THUS SHINE OUT MORE CLEARLY AND MORE BEAUTIFULLY....**

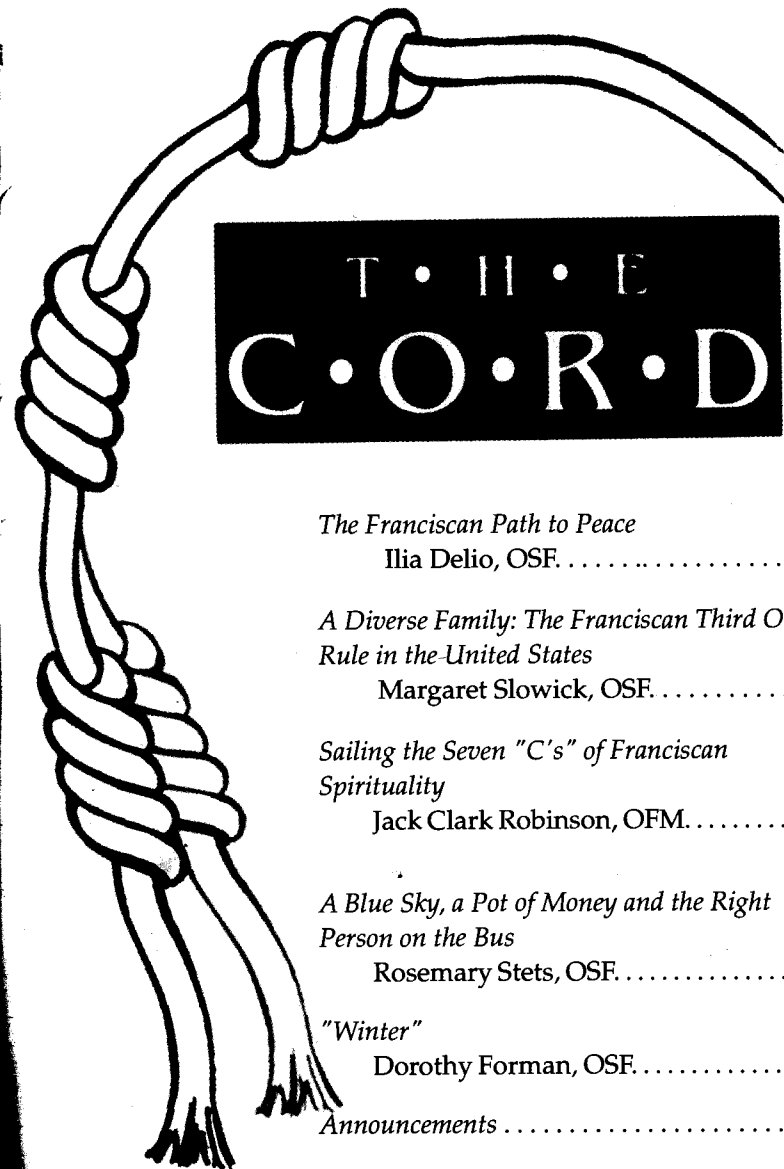
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**THE CORD**  
*A Franciscan Spiritual Review*

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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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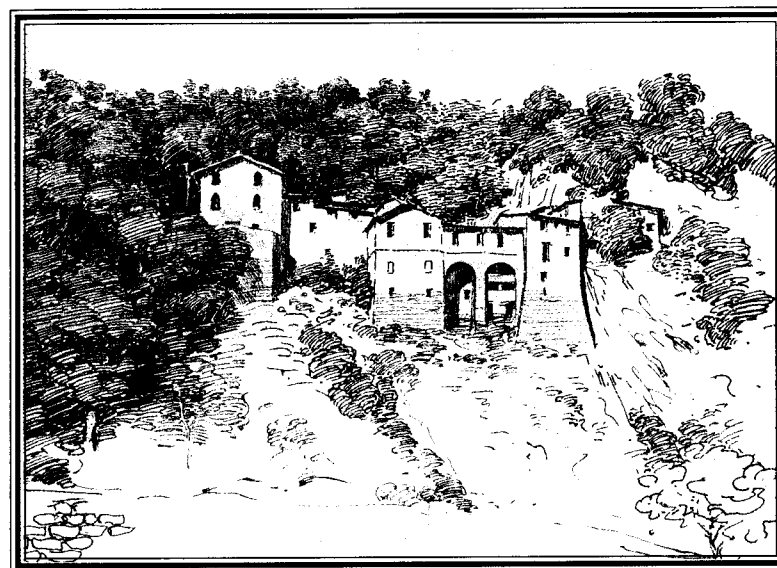
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*The Cord*, 54.6 (2004)

**Editorial**

***As you announce peace with your mouth,  
make sure that greater peace is in your  
hearts... may everyone be drawn to peace,  
kindness, and harmony through your  
gentleness. For we have been called to  
this: to heal the wounded, bind up the  
broken, and recall the erring.***

(Leg. of the Three Companions, 14)



In the coming seasons of Advent and Christmas, may we ponder the meaning of the Gospel text above. The articles and poem in this issue are intended to celebrate the Incarnate Word who dwells with us and the Third Order Regular of Francis of Assisi. I am grateful for all those who have touched my life in the past year, especially our subscribers, authors and artists. May we continue the journey in good faith in 2005.

*Roberta A. McKelvie, OSF*



## The Franciscan Path to Peace

Ilia Delio, OSF

Franciscan peace and social justice committees abound today and rightly so. In a world bent on "fighting terrorism" the human family seems poised for mass extermination, if not from the terrorists themselves then from those who aim to combat terrorism. However we describe the world situation today, we must admit, it is a perilous one.

The Franciscan tradition is a peace tradition. To be a "peacemaker" is at the heart of its charism. While the quest for peace is a noble cause we have, in some ways, transposed this cause into the American cultural ethic of work and progress. The idea of "working for peace" has become its own end, as if peace is something that can be attained if one works hard enough. There is no doubt that non-violent resistance, lobbying, and other actions of protest can raise the consciousness of the need for peace and justice. But in the end, do they bring about peace? While I applaud those who undertake actions of working for peace, I want to underline the fact that the Franciscan path to peace is a *path*, a spiritual journey. Peace is not a work "to do" but a way of being in relationship with God and others, a path of active love. It is born in the human heart by first overcoming structures of violence within oneself and then striving for just relationships with others by the gift of self-giving love. Every person who is on the journey to God must, in some way, be on the path to peace.

I would like to explore the Franciscan path to peace as a path of conversion and transformation in love—crucified love. To be a peacemaker is to imitate Christ, the Crucified One. It is a way of living a Eucharistic life, the body and blood of Christ, making that body and blood alive in one's own life. Peace is the fruit of love. Those who desire peace must live in the spirit of compassionate love.

### Francis of Assisi: From Violence to Peace

Francis of Assisi lived and preached a Gospel of peace. "At the beginning and end of every sermon," Bonaventure wrote, "he announced peace"; in every greeting he wished for peace; in every contemplation he sighed for ecstatic

peace."<sup>1</sup> The biographies of Francis describe him as a violent young man. He looked for war and found it. In the Battle of Collestrada of 1202 which was a bloody and violent battle, Francis took part and was captured and imprisoned for almost a year. It was during this time that he began to consider the meaning of his life. Bonaventure describes a dream of Francis in which God showed him a palace full of military weapons with the insignia of Christ's cross. The weapons, according to Bonaventure, symbolized violence. Yet, the weapons were stamped with symbols of nonviolence—Christ's cross. Francis was unsure to whom the weapons belonged and was told by God that all these things were for him and his knights.<sup>2</sup> Later it was suggested to him inwardly that to be a knight of Christ one must begin with the victory over one's self.<sup>3</sup> According to Bonaventure, Francis came to realize that to belong to this army was to crucify one's flesh with its passion and desires in imitation of Christ.

It was perhaps in his encounter with the leper that Francis became aware of the violence within himself. His sense of horror made him realize that he had first to conquest himself if he was to overcome his fear of lepers. Francis had to undergo an inward liberation through release of self. That is, peace was not something to acquire through a renunciation of war. Rather, peace was a way of being, a spiritual attitude. The peace that Francis sought required a change of heart. In all of his preaching, Celano writes, he prayed for peace, saying "May the Lord give you peace. . . . Many who hated peace along with slavaion, with the Lord's help [and Francis's example] came to embrace peace."<sup>4</sup>

If we seek peace through external means—money, weapons, power—we simply prolong the inevitability of war and violence. Peace is not an abstract concept; it is not a universal ideal. Peace is a way of being: a gift of the Spirit to the human person. It is born in the human heart, first by overcoming the violence within oneself and acquiring harmony of being, and then working toward just relationships by learning to love through self-gift. Francis understood that worldly peace brings war because worldly peace is a false peace in which persons can live in sin, unaware of structures that oppress and dominate. To have world peace we must first have peace within ourselves. The idea of world peace is attractive but impossible to attain unless each person strives for inner peace. This means opening ourselves to the transforming action of God's Spirit within us.

For Francis peace was not just the absence of conflict or the tranquility of order but the peace the Gospel speaks of: peace at the core and center of one's being. His simple act of turning his mind and heart to God helped him grow in awareness of who God was and who he was, and in this awareness he found the energy of transformation both for himself and the world around him. Such awareness lessened his need for frantic control and manipulation. Rather, he accepted himself as part of the problem [of sinful humanity] and strove to realize his dependency on his brothers and sisters and all of creation, realizing

his poverty of being human. Francis became a man of peace because he sought an inner peace through purity of heart. He believed that peace begins in the heart. "As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that you have greater peace in your hearts. . . . Let everyone be drawn to peace and kindness through your peace and gentleness."<sup>5</sup>

Peacemaking is an inner attitude of the heart, a spiritual attitude that flows from a heart turned toward God. Poverty enabled Francis to become a peacemaker because it freed his heart to embrace the Word of God. He came to realize his utter dependence on the goodness of God; thus he could enter into the center of evil unafraid because he had nothing to defend and could destroy evil at its root. As he grew in love of God, he became a man of peace becoming more sensitive to and critical of those solutions which, in the end, did not foster true peace, such as the battles between Assisi and neighboring towns. He came to see that peace is the grace of the Spirit which flows into the human heart. Because the heart is the dwelling place of the Spirit, it is also the place where the spirit struggles with the flesh. For Francis "flesh" signifies those things which stand in the way of a spiritual relationship with God. War begins in the human heart when the flesh [which can be opposed to God] wants to conquer the spirit [which is oriented to God]. Francis believed that human persons are essentially good because they are created in the image of God;<sup>6</sup> however, it is easy to get caught up in "fleshly" things—in material possessions as well as power, status, money. These things cause us to live carnally. When we live carnally, according to the flesh, we choke the spirit in our lives because the spirit cannot find a place to dwell within us amidst so many "possessions." Therefore, we wind up in inner conflict, the flesh "warring against" the spirit.

Because we are all capable of violence, we are all in need of continual conversion. Francis believed that peace is the grace of the Spirit but penance helps the river of grace to flow. According to Celano, Francis exhorted the brothers: "Go, my dear brothers two by two through different parts of the world, announcing peace to the people and penance for the remission of sins." His mission of peace, therefore, was one of peace and penance: 1) the total gift of heart, soul, mind and strength to God 2) love of neighbor, and 3) discipline of the body with its sins, so as to attain the Spirit of the Lord who espouses us to Christ. For Francis, the one who desires peace must first "disarm the heart." Such disarmament requires that we lay down the weapons of inner conflict through prayer and penance, while at the same time strive for self-knowledge and knowledge of God so that we may see things more truthfully in God. The relation of penance and peace means that peacemaking involves pardoning, bearing infirmities and tribulation, and suffering in the right spirit for love of God. In his Admonition on peacemaking Francis wrote, "true peacemakers are those who preserve peace of mind and body for love of our Lord Jesus

Christ, despite what they suffer in this world."<sup>8</sup> He was keenly aware that true peacemakers are those who are willing to suffer for peace and to endure in peace. In his Canticle of Creatures he exclaimed, "Praised be you my Lord through those who give pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are they who endure in peace, for by You, Most High they shall be crowned."<sup>9</sup> Penance paves the road to peace because it opens up the human heart to the Spirit of God. Nonviolence is the work of the Spirit that disarms our hearts so that we can become God's instruments for the disarmament of the world.<sup>10</sup>

Francis believed that peace is decisively incarnational. It is personal and relational because it is centered in Jesus Christ who is God's gift of peace to us. In his Letter to the Entire Order he wrote: "I implore all of you brothers to show all possible reverence and honor to the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in Whom that which is in heaven and on earth has been brought to peace and reconciled to almighty God."<sup>11</sup> Francis drew an explicit link between the Eucharist [the body and blood of Christ] and peace by which he suggested that to live in peace is to live a Eucharistic life—the life of Christ. The spiritual birth of Christ in the believer is the birth of peace in the human heart which "must shine before others by example" (2EpFid 53). Peace is the fruit of love and Christ is the fullness of love. We might say, in light of Francis, that peace and love are like the two chambers of the human heart. They are so integrally connected that there can be no peace without love and there is no real love without peace, just as the heart itself must be a single whole. Those who hope for peace, therefore, must live in love. And those who desire the love which will bring peace must be willing to die for peace. For the love that brings peace is shown to us in the cross of Jesus Christ.

## Peace and the Body of Christ

Thomas of Celano highlights the themes of peace, penance and the body of Christ in his "First Life of Saint Francis." It is not without significance that Thomas describes Francis the peacemaker as the *stigmatized* Francis, indicating that peace comes about through a woundedness in love. While Celano clearly saw the renewal of Christ in the life of Francis, he emphasized a Eucharistic theme of the body of Francis marked with the wounds of Christ.<sup>12</sup> The stigmatized Francis, like the body of Christ, was a body given over to others for the sake of the gospel. According to Celano, Francis's insistence to preach the Gospel of peace despite his frailties expressed his participation in the mystical body of Christ: "His noble spirit was aimed at heaven and he only desired to be set free and to be with Christ. But he had not yet filled up in his flesh what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, even though he bore the marks on his body."<sup>13</sup> Celano indicates that Francis's life was a Eucharistic life because his

was a body spent in love. It was in and through the body of Francis, who was willing to suffer out of love, that peace and reconciliation were brought to those who opposed the truth of the Gospel or who were enemies of the cross. Celano writes: “. . . he made of his whole body a tongue. . . . With it he 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.”<sup>14</sup> Celano, therefore, describes peacemaking as a body spent in love for the sake of the Gospel. This too is Francis’s idea as he states in Admonition 15: “True peacemakers are those who preserve peace of mind and body for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, despite what they suffer in this world” [Adm 15].

While Celano associates peacemaking with the eucharistic life of Francis, Bonaventure wrote that peace is the goal of the journey to God. For Bonaventure, there is no peace apart from conversion [of which poverty and humility play fundamental roles], imitation of Christ, and contemplation. Peace is the passage into God. In his *Soul’s Journey into God* Bonaventure indicates that he sought peace and realized that it could be attained only through the “burning love of the Crucified,” a path that Francis himself traveled. Peace, therefore, is not only the fruit of union with God but a union of love with God that includes the suffering of the cross. The one who attains peace is one who can love by way of self-gift. The path to peace, according to Bonaventure, begins in the poverty of the desert, realizing our utter dependency on God. It then travels inwardly, into the image of God in which we are created. Violence is the result of a distorted image. We are created to imitate [image] God but sin causes us to imitate things other than God. One has only to think of the cultural idols of our day to realize that imitating the wrong things can lead to violence, oppression and domination. In Bonaventure’s view, it is Christ, the true image of God, who restores the image in which we are created. Through his poverty and humility on the cross, Christ shows us that trying to be equal to God is not something to grasp at. When we are on the path of being restored as image of God in and through our relationship with Christ, we are on the path to peace.

Because Christ is the true image of God in whom we are created, coming to know Christ leads us to the contemplation of God. For Bonaventure, contemplation reaches its height when we realize that God is self-giving love poured out for us in the fullest way in the crucified Christ. The last stage of the journey, the passage into peace, is the passage into the compassionate love of God expressed in the crucified Christ. For Bonaventure love leads the seeker of peace into the heart of the Trinity. When we arrive at this unitive stage of love where lover and beloved are united in a single bond of love, we attain an intimacy with Christ. Union with God is a union in love whereby one is inflamed with the desire of crucified love. In this union of love a person is willing to

suffer or die out of love for another, following the example of Christ. It is an ecstatic passage into the Trinity of love, a re-centering of one’s heart in God whereby nothing can disturb the lover of God. That is why the path of the burning love of the Crucified is the path to peace because it is the path into the fullness of love.

In a work closely related to the *Soul’s Journey*, the *Triple Way of Love Enkindled*, Bonaventure describes the six stages of love that, like the *Soul’s Journey*, lead to peace. In the fourth stage of love, he indicates, those who love God with a type of inebriating love find solace burdensome and seek suffering instead out of love of God. In the fifth stage the soul feels capable of suffering any pain and casts aside all fear. Finally in the sixth stage, the soul reaches a level of silence and sleep deep in the heart of Trinitarian love. The soul now completely empowered by the love of God goes forth on God’s behalf and descends below oneself . . . because of one’s neighbor. What Bonaventure points out in his writings is that peace is the perfection of love, a union of love with God in and through the crucified Christ. One who attains this level of love expresses this love in one’s own life. The lover images the beloved because the two become one in a union of love. By reflecting on the life of Francis, Bonaventure claimed that love finds its expression not only in what we do but in the way we are in relationship to one another. Love is born of the spirit but given birth in the flesh. The love that brings peace and is peace is the love of the crucified Christ.

## Crucified Love and the Age of Peace

According to Bonaventure, Francis was transformed into the perfect image of his lover as he descended the mountain of La Verna marked with the wounds of Christ. Francis had hoped to win the crown of martyrdom by offering his life for the sake of the Gospel but Bonaventure indicates that Francis attained a martyrdom of the spirit that bore witness to triumph of divine love. Describing the stigmatized Francis Bonaventure wrote: “Now fixed with Christ to the cross, in both body and spirit, Francis not only burned with a seraphic love into God but also thirsted with Christ crucified for the multitude of those to be saved.”<sup>15</sup> Francis’s desire for martyrdom was fulfilled through the fire of love, and this love brought together that which was separated—lepers from other humans, creatures from creatures, and brothers from sisters. Francis, the man in whom Christ lived anew, became a peacemaker. Peace, in Bonaventure’s view, corresponds to the desire for martyrdom. One who desires peace must arrive at the level of transcendent love—a level of reckless love [since crucified love is reckless love]—with a longing for peace and a desire to become peace in this world. Through the life of Francis, Bonaventure drew a relationship between peace, poverty and the crucified Christ in a way such that we can

speak of a "Franciscan path of peace." Following the lead of Joachim of Fiore [but not entirely influenced by him] Bonaventure believed that Francis had attained the final age of peace, an age marked by the Seraphic Order or the order of 'burning love.' Francis became a man of peace, in Bonaventure's view, because he was conformed to Christ, interiorly in the Spirit and exteriorly in flesh. In Bonaventure's language, Francis ascended to God and descended to his neighbor. This means that the deeper he entered into the love of God, the more he went out to his brothers and sisters—to the extent that he desired to offer his life for the sake of others. This desire for martyrdom, according to Bonaventure, reflected the spiritual depth of Francis. Francis acquired such a deep love of God that he was willing to sacrifice his life, like Christ, so that others might be brought into the unity of God's love. This love, according to Bonaventure, was so deep that nothing could disturb it or wrestle it from its center in God. Bonaventure described this deep and steadfast love of Francis as peace.

In his theology of history, Bonaventure described a final age of peace in history which he claimed Francis attained. Although his scheme of history is complex, he indicated that for this final age to be realized, "Christ must appear and suffer in his mystical body" (Hex. 22.23), an idea which conjures up a body like that of the stigmatized Francis. If one reads Bonaventure's theology of history in light of the *Soul's Journey* it seems that he envisioned a final age of peace marked by crucified love in which "there will be a consummation of those sufferings of Christ which he now bears in his body" (Hex. 20.15). If the highest stage of love is the desire for martyrdom (shown in the life of Francis), and this stage of love is the attainment of peace, then Bonaventure suggests that there can be no peace unless one takes up the cross of Christ and finds there a union of love in God. For Bonaventure there is no other God than the God who is "for us," who comes to us in the passionate love of the crucified Christ. Thus he envisions that the final age of peace will be marked by those who, like Francis, are conformed inwardly and outwardly to the crucified Christ who is God's peace and reconciliation. Those willing to spend themselves in love, to the point of suffering [and perhaps death], will help bring about the age of peace.

Bonaventure's link between peace and the desire for martyrdom may seem entirely too radical and one wonders just how to interpret this doctrine. But what Bonaventure suggests is that the desire for martyrdom is a spiritual state that emerges from contemplation and union with God, that union by which one passes over into God and thus into the dominance of grace. One who is anchored in God's love does not fear to live fully in love, and to live fully in love is to allow one's life to be consumed by love. Bonaventure, therefore, indicates that each person must travel the way of the cross in the pursuit of

peace through a type of costly love. This means first acquiring a spirit of compassionate love by which one is willing to love the other by way of self-gift, that is, to live in a *spiritual state* of desire for martyrdom. Then one must express compassionate love in the body in a willingness to be wounded in love. Suffering is part of the path to peace. It is, ultimately, a way of imaging the crucified Christ that makes crucified love possible. There is no other peace than the peace of crucified love, in Bonaventure's view. Nor is justice anything apart from acting according to relationships of love, since we are all one in the love of God. Bonaventure's road to peace through the burning love of the Crucified is not unlike Celano's Eucharistic body of peace. Both writers, reflecting on the life of Francis, suggest that peace is a way of being that makes doing possible. It is a union in love (Bonaventure) by which the life of Christ is renewed in the body and blood of the believer (Celano). It is the gift of oneself in love that makes visible the peace of God.

### Implications for Today

What we learn by examining the Franciscan tradition of peace is that one who desires peace must be on the spiritual journey to God. Peace cannot be obtained by force or violence. It is not a commodity to bargain for nor is it an abstract ideal, attractive only to idealists and dreamers. Peace is the fullness of love. It is the love of God revealed to us in the outstretched arms of Christ on the cross who invites us into his embrace of peace. Because the nature of God is peace and we are called to image that peace, we are called into relationships of love. We must first come to dwell in God's love in the center of our lives before we can love others in a way that brings peace. For Bonaventure, poverty, prayer and a heart turned toward God pave the way to peace, for only the poor and humble can share in the humble love of God who is peace.

While this path is attractive in a world of war and violence, it is a difficult one in a culture that promotes autonomy, individualism and analgesia. The Franciscan path of peace travels through the narrow gate of the cross. On this road, love by way of suffering is the road to peace. This is a perilous path in a culture that despises the weak and powerless and is—at its Christian best—gnostic. As one television commercial proclaims, "Who has time for pain in this busy world today?" Indeed, who has time to travel the path of crucified love, to be willing to suffer so that others might live? Who has time to take up the cross so that God's love may be renewed, incarnated, in the life of the believer? Who has time to really live a Eucharistic life—to be the body and blood of Christ in a world torn apart? The Franciscan path of peace is, indeed, a counter-cultural one. It calls forth the total gift of one's life for the sake of the greater whole, the unity of humankind and creation in the love of God. It takes time

and all that we are to travel the path of the burning love of the crucified Christ to peace. God has all the time in the world. Do we?

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Bonaventure, *Itin.* prol. 1 (V, 295). Engl. trans. Ewert Cousins, *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Major Life of Saint Francis* (New York: Paulist, 1978), 53.

<sup>2</sup>Bonaventure, *Legenda maior* (*Leg. maj.*) 3 (EM, 10). The critical edition of the *Legenda maior* used here is Bonaventure *Legenda maior S. Francisci Assisiensis* [editio minor], Firenze-Quarrachi 1941. Latin texts are abbreviated as EM followed by page number.

<sup>3</sup>Bonaventure, *Leg. maj.* 1.4 (EM, 11).

<sup>4</sup>Thomas of Celano. "Life of Saint Francis," 10. *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Saint*, edited by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 1999), 171. This English edition of Francis's writings and the first life by Thomas of Celano will hereafter be referred to as *FA:ED I*, followed by page number.

<sup>5</sup>"The Anonymous of Perugia," 8.38. *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Founder*, edited by Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short (New York: New City Press, 2000), 52-53. Hereafter referred to as *FA:ED II* followed by page number.

<sup>6</sup>See Francis of Assisi's "Admonition 5" where he writes: "Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord God has placed you, for he created and formed you to the image of his beloved Son according to the body and to his likeness according to the Spirit." *FA:ED I*, 131.

<sup>7</sup>Thomas of Celano, "Life of Saint Francis," 12. *FA:ED I*, 207.

<sup>8</sup>Francis of Assisi, "Admonition 15" (*Ecrits*, 106). *FA:ED I*, 134.

<sup>9</sup>Francis of Assisi, "The Canticle of the Creatures" 10-11 (*Ecrits*, 344). *FA:ED I*, 114.

<sup>10</sup>John Dear, *The God of Peace: Toward a Theology of Nonviolence* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994), 167.

<sup>11</sup>Francis of Assisi, "A Letter to the Entire Order," 12-13. *FA:ED I*, 117.

<sup>12</sup>Ilia Delio, "Francis and the Body of Christ," *The Cord* 53.1 (2003): 28-29.

<sup>13</sup>Thomas of Celano, "The Life of Saint Francis," in *FA:ED I*, 267.

<sup>14</sup>Thomas of Celano, "The Life of Saint Francis," in *FA:ED I*, 266, 269.

<sup>15</sup>Bonaventure, *Leg. maj.* 14.1 (EM, 115). Engl. trans. "The Major Legend of Saint Francis," in *FA:ED II*, 640.



## A Diverse Family: The Franciscan Third Order Regular in the United States

Margaret A. Slowick, OSF

The story of the Third Order Regular in the United States is the story of almost one hundred congregations who follow the Rule and Life of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. It includes the stories of many distinct congregations, each one of which has its own character, each one of which was founded in unique circumstances and in a specific place and time. But it is also the story of one family. It is the story of a family that has responded to those in need as Francis did, as Franciscans always do. It is the story of a family whose members have been touched by the love of God, and have responded to that love through works of charity. It is the story of a family whose members have loved Francis and have been inspired by his example and by the example of countless Franciscans through the centuries. And it is the story of a family whose members include both women and men. Although women make up 96% of the Franciscan Third Order Regular in the United States, we cannot neglect to tell the story of the men, whose service has been an equally authentic witness to the Order.

The fact that the Order is 96% women, however, means that it is all the more important that the story is told. The words of Carol Christ are just as relevant today as they were when she wrote them more than twenty years ago:

Women's stories have not been told. And without stories there is no articulation of experience. . . . The expression of women's spiritual quest is integrally related to the telling of women's stories. If women's stories are not told, the depth of women's souls will not be known.<sup>1</sup>

The story of our Franciscan Third Order Regular family encompasses a wide variety of individual stories. We have maintained a continuous presence in the United States since 1847, encompassing a total of no less than 94 congregations. Half of these sprang up on American soil, and half came to the United States from congregations already established in other countries. Their

current membership ranges from four to well over 1,000. Some have well-established motherhouses and are deeply rooted on the same land where their founders and foundresses walked; others have been uprooted numerous times; and at least one has never had a motherhouse of any kind. Some have placed a high value on well-documented and lengthy histories, chronicling their past in volumes of 1,000 pages or more; others relate their history in pamphlet form or comic-book style booklets. For one congregation, the only material available was a hand-written letter from the Mother Superior narrating their history. That letter poignantly explained that the congregation had dwindled to six members and was dying out.

But despite the variety, or perhaps because of it, the family's story needs to be told. "We learned that the diversity was not inimical to unity in essential spirit and mission," wrote Margaret Carney, OSF, in the introduction to the 1982 Rule.<sup>2</sup> In all its diversity, the Third Order Regular Franciscan family has made substantial contributions to American education, health care, social service, and spirituality. They did this with an incredible amount of trust in the Providence of God. The women among them faced the double obstacle of anti-Catholic sentiment and gender bias. Within congregations, many struggled with ethnic differences. Those with motherhouses in Europe dealt with their own specific set of problems. Many congregations experienced conflicts with the hierarchy of the American Church. Often the differences resulted in division and the establishment of new congregations. In more recent times, some have re-united to dissolve the differences of the past. Others have merged as numbers decrease and as technology increases the ability to be connected over distance.

## Pastoral Response To Early Waves Of Immigration

The story begins with the waves of immigrants that came from Europe to the United States in the nineteenth century. During a thirty-year span beginning in 1847, no fewer than twenty-eight Franciscan Third Order Regular congregations were established in the United States, with their primary ministry being care of immigrants. Seventeen of the twenty-eight were totally new American congregations; eleven were provinces or offshoots of congregations in Europe.

Many of these congregations began immediately to address one of the most pressing needs of the immigrant population: education. The public school system was not yet established at this point, and most school systems were inadequate and uneven in quality. The sisters and brothers taught first and second generation immigrant children the fundamentals of "reading, writing, and arithmetic" along with the basics of their Catholic faith. A number of congregations established academies to promote the education of young

women. In order to keep the schools staffed by competent teachers, some congregations established summer teacher education programs; many of these evolved into Catholic colleges.

Second only to education in emphasis was the development of adequate health care facilities. The sisters began by visiting the sick in their own homes and providing home health care. This ministry soon expanded into the building of hospitals and, in time, the establishment of nursing schools in order to provide the hospitals with trained personnel. Franciscan sisters tended the wounded during the Civil War, cared for the victims of natural disasters such as the great Johnstown flood, and provided crucial nursing care during epidemics of smallpox, cholera, and other contagious diseases.

During this era, the sisters and brothers also engaged in a variety of ministries beyond education and health care as they responded to the needs of the times. The Civil War and numerous epidemics during this period created a considerable number of orphans and destitute elderly. More than one third of the congregations founded during this period made care for orphans and the aged a priority. Some congregations provided health care specifically for railroad workers as the nation's railway system was being built. A few congregations took on the task of domestic work in the nation's new seminaries. Others branched out from their nearby surroundings to minister in relatively faraway places, from Native American missions in the western United States to more remote lands such as Hawaii and China.

The Franciscan response to the German immigrant population deserves special mention. During this period, nineteen Franciscan Third Order Regular congregations were established in communities which contained a high concentration of German immigrants. The earliest of these began in 1849 in Nojoshing, Wisconsin, near Milwaukee. Both the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi (Milwaukee) and the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (LaCrosse) trace their roots to a group of Secular Franciscans from Ettenbeuren, Bavaria, who came to the United States at the invitation of Milwaukee Bishop John Martin Henni. Bishop Henni, like many bishops during that era, was eager to have missionaries come to serve the rapidly expanding German population within his jurisdiction. The aforementioned group from Ettenbeuren formed the basis for a congregation of brothers, which never grew beyond the original five founding members, and a congregation of sisters, which grew rapidly and evolved into the two congregations mentioned above.

But Milwaukee was only one of many dioceses in which German immigrants were in need of care. Just a year after the Ettenbeuren group arrived in Wisconsin, Franciscan Sister Theresa Hackelmeier left Austria to found a new congregation in Oldenburg, Indiana. Upon arrival, she was met by three local women who were ready to join her in the formation of the new congregation: the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg. And in 1855, in Philadelphia, Anna

Maria Bachmann, Barbara Boll, and Anna Dorn joined together to establish the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, a congregation which went on to become one of the largest and most influential Franciscan congregations in the United States.

Three additional congregations sprang up on American soil during this period to work, at least initially, with German immigrants. The Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Charity (Tiffin, 1869) were founded to care for orphans and elderly in the aftermath of the Civil War. The Sisters of St. Mary of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis (St. Louis, 1872) established hospitals and ministered to the sick in a variety of settings. The School Sisters of St. Francis (Milwaukee, 1874) worked primarily in the field of education.

During this same period, a number of congregations from Germany and one from Holland sent sisters or brothers to the United States to help with the needs of the German immigrants. Among them were the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor (from Germany to Cincinnati, 1858), the Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis (from Germany to Cincinnati, 1868), the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (from Germany to Wheaton, Illinois, 1872), the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity (from Holland to Stella Niagara, New York, 1874), the Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Family (from Germany to Dubuque, Iowa, 1875), the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration (from Germany to Mishawaka, Indiana, 1875), the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis (from Germany to Springfield, Illinois, 1875), and the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart (from Germany to Frankfort, Illinois, 1876). These congregations dealt with the advantages and disadvantages of having motherhouses in Europe, where conditions were very different from the rustic life of the American frontier. In Johnstown, Pennsylvania, for instance, one house of Millvale Franciscans dealt with the threat of burglars in the following manner:

When any unusual noise was heard at night, the Sisters had a kind of parade. First came the Superior with the revolver ready to shoot anyone that came in her way, then followed another Sister with an oil lamp . . . while the third remained on the second floor to guard their belongings.<sup>3</sup>

This period also saw a number of congregations form as offshoots of other congregations. Local bishops seem to have been the force behind most of these splits, and the separations were often painful. The Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis (Syracuse, 1860) were formed as an offshoot of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, as were the Sisters of St. Francis of the Third Order Regular of Buffalo (1863). The latter division separated blood sisters Mother Mary Francis Bachmann and Sister Mary Margaret Boll, two of the three foundresses of the Philadelphia congregation. The Sisters of St. Francis of

Millvale (Pittsburgh, 1871) were, in turn, an offshoot of the Buffalo congregation. The Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis (East Peoria, 1877) were an offshoot of the Dubuque Franciscans.

This period of time also saw a number of congregations arise whose ministry was not specifically among immigrants of German origin. The very first Franciscan Third Order Regular congregation to arrive in the United States came, not from Germany, but from Ireland. This group, which later evolved into the Sacred Heart Province of the TOR brothers, first arrived on American soil in 1846. Their initial venture, a school in Kentucky, lasted less than a year; but in 1847 they took on what proved to be their first successful American ministry, a parish school in Loretto, Pennsylvania. Eleven years later, more brothers came from Ireland and settled in Brooklyn, where they taught primarily Irish immigrant boys. This group became known as the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn. The Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, founded in 1859, ministered to both German and Irish immigrants, as did the Congregation of the Third Order of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate in Joliet, Illinois, founded in 1865.

The Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, Congregation of Our Lady of Lourdes (Rochester, Minnesota) was an offshoot of the Joliet congregation, through a separation called for in 1877 by Bishop Thomas Foley of Chicago. Other congregations which sprang up on American soil during this period to minister to various immigrant groups were the Sisters of St. Francis (Clinton, Iowa, 1868), the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity (Manitowoc, WI, 1869) and the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (Newton, MA, 1873).

The Franciscan Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, an international congregation from Italy, established a provincial house in Peekskill, New York, in 1869. With sisters fluent in French, Italian, German, and English, this congregation was able to serve a wide variety of immigrant communities.

## Later Waves Of Immigration

The establishment of Franciscan congregations in the United States in response to the continual flow of immigrants continued well into the twentieth century. Among the immigrants served by these congregations were Italians, Eastern Europeans, and French Canadians. Education and health care continued to be top priorities as the congregations founded during this period (roughly 1874-1931) responded to the immigrants' greatest needs. In addition, many congregations ministered among African Americans and Native Americans. A number of congregations established orphanages and homeless shelters. A growing number of seminaries also utilized the services of sisters to staff their domestic departments during this time.



The group with the greatest effect on the Franciscan picture in the United States during this period were the Poles. Seven major Franciscan congregations were founded or established in the United States in response to the needs of the Polish immigrant. These seven congregations, whose average membership just five years ago was 471 sisters, were among the largest congregations established during this period. The first of these, the Felicians, remains the largest Franciscan Third Order Regular congregation in the United States today. Founded in Poland in 1855, they expanded into the U.S. in 1874. The Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, founded in Poland in 1457, trace their roots to a group of Secular Franciscans founded by Blessed Angelina of Montegiove in the late fourteenth century. The Bernardines expanded into the United States in 1894. Also in 1894, the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago were founded by a Polish immigrant laywoman, Josephine Dudzik. A few years later, the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph were founded by a group of Charity Sisters who broke off from their motherhouse in Poland in 1897. Similarly, the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis were founded in 1901 when a group of sisters broke off from their parent congregation—the Milwaukee-based School Sisters of St. Francis—in order to minister among the Polish immigrants. (They took the name “Sisters of St. Joseph” at the insistence of their priest mentor, but the sisters made it clear that they wished to remain Franciscan!) Another congregation, the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, was founded in 1901 when a group of Joliet Franciscans broke off from their parent congregation to form a predominantly Polish congregation. Finally, the Sisters of St. Francis, Congregation of Our Lady of Lourdes, began as a Polish province of the Rochester Franciscans in 1916, becoming autonomous in 1930.

As the United States population became more and more diverse, the diversity of congregations also increased. It is impossible to tell the stories of them all in this space, but perhaps a list of the remaining 25 congregations founded during these later waves of immigration will suffice to give the reader an indication of the phenomenal growth of the Franciscan Third Order Regular during this time in our nation's history: Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross, Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore, Little Franciscans of Mary, Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Conception (Peoria), Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Eucharist, Sisters of St. Francis of the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, Sisters of St. Francis of Maryville, Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement, Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (Rock Island), Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, School Sisters of St. Francis of Christ the King, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady, Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, School Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis (Pittsburgh and Bethlehem, PA), Sisters of St. Francis of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, Franciscan

Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and St. Joseph for the Dying, Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, Third Order Regular of St. Francis (Immaculate Conception Province of male TOR's), Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Divine Child, Franciscan Sisters of Ringwood, and the Sisters of St. Elizabeth.

In looking at the initial fields of ministry of these congregations—the 25 listed above and the seven Polish congregations mentioned earlier—we find that the most common work they undertook was education. In fact, all but three of these congregations placed significant amounts of their personnel and resources into teaching. The demand for teaching sisters was immense. The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, convened in 1884, had decreed that every Catholic parish should have a parish school, and this within two years if at all possible! “In trying to meet the constant pressure for Sisters,” wrote one School Sister of St. Francis, “the newly received were sent out to teach almost immediately, and the year of novitiate training was postponed for six, sometimes more, years.”<sup>4</sup>

In addition to education, these congregations devoted their attention to a variety of pressing needs. Providing quality health care was a priority for many of them, as they established hospitals and homes for the aged, provided vital nursing care during epidemics, and established nursing schools. A number of congregations also became involved in ministry to specific groups, including African Americans, Native Americans, orphans, and the homeless. In addition, a number of seminaries engaged the services of sisters to do their domestic work during this time.

For many congregations, this was an era of extreme hardship. Often the sisters had to spend a significant portion of time in begging or fund-raising. Sisters could be found requesting donations at factory exits on paydays, soliciting funds in railroad camps, and even going door to door seeking financial assistance. The physical hardships and strenuous work took its toll physically. Many of the sisters died at young ages. Religious training also suffered; time in formation was often cut short because of the great need for sisters in their places of ministry. As if this were not enough, many congregations were also dealing with serious internal conflicts and conflicts with the church hierarchy. Ten new congregations were formed during this period when a sister or sisters separated from their parent congregation to begin a new group, most often because of ethnic tensions.

On the positive side, most of the congregations established in the United States during this period shared a strong sense of pride in their Franciscan roots. A number were founded by secular Franciscans, whose lives had already been touched by the life and spirit of Francis. The Franciscan charism is evident in the writings of many founders and foundresses of this period. To give just one example, the writings of Mother Augustine Giesen, first superior of

the Sisters of St. Francis of Maryville, contain numerous references to the life and spirit of Francis. "Simplicity is another mark of a true Franciscan," she wrote. "How the blessed Father, St. Francis, loved and practiced this holy virtue. Let therefore his daughters do the same."<sup>5</sup> And although many Franciscan congregations lost this emphasis on their Franciscan roots during the ensuing decades as canon law called for greater uniformity in religious life, most seem to have rediscovered it following the Second Vatican Council's call to return to the spirit of their founders.

## United States Provinces And Works of Congregations from Other Nations: 1919-1962

In the decades following World War I, a total of twenty-three Franciscan Third Order Regular congregations expanded into the United States, primarily from Europe. Although the large influx of immigrants had slowed substantially, other reasons for emigrating drew these congregations. Some saw the United States, not only as a field for ministry, but as a source of much-needed financial support, as they struggled with a lack of resources in their own countries following the war. Six of these congregations came from Germany; the remainder came from other countries in Europe, as well as Mexico, Brazil, and China. Most of them were relatively small, with nineteen of the twenty-three currently numbering less than fifty. Their ministries were varied. One of the most common works they undertook was domestic work in seminaries and friaries. Teaching was also a common ministry during this time. A number took on ministry to the Hispanic population. Other ministries included health care, care of children, and retreat work.

The largest of these congregations was the Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George, founded in Germany in 1869 by Mother Anselma Bopp. From the original group of four sisters, whose ministry began with caring for the sick and orphaned during a typhoid epidemic in Germany, the congregation grew into an international community, with foundations in the Netherlands, Japan, Sumatra, and Africa. In 1923, the congregation extended its ministry to the United States with the establishment of a hospital in Alton, Illinois.

Again, although space does not allow the story of each one to be told here, a list of these congregations will attest to the continued vitality and diversity of the Franciscan Third Order Regular in the United States during this period: Franciscan Sisters of St. Elizabeth, Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Sisters of St. Francis of Savannah, Franciscan Missionary Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Franciscan Sisters of St. Paul, Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George, Franciscan Brothers of the Holy Cross, Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (San Fernando), Franciscan Sisters of

the Immaculate Conception (Buffalo), Franciscan Servants of the Holy Child Jesus, School Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis (Panhandle), Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate, Eucharistic Franciscan Missionary Sisters, Daughters of St. Francis of Assisi, Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows, Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph, Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa, Franciscan Brothers of the Third Order Regular (Mountbellew), Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Franciscan Hospitaller Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi, Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Infant Jesus, and Franciscan Sisters/Daughters of Mercy.

## Recent Foundations

It was the task of congregations in the years following Vatican II to recapture the unique Franciscan spirit and to re-emphasize the special charism of each congregation. Responding to this challenge, already existing congregations began the process of reconnecting with the spirit of their founders, from Francis himself as the founder of the Third Order to the founders and foundresses of their own particular congregations. Those congregations founded after Vatican II, on the other hand, had the advantage of having their founding members still present among them. Congregations founded after 1982 had the added advantage of the availability of the new Third Order Regular Rule, composed almost entirely of the words of Francis.

Since Vatican II five new religious institutes have been founded which follow the Third Order Regular Rule: The Little Brothers of St. Francis (Mission Hill, MA), the Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (Channing, TX), the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist (Meriden, CT), the St. Francis Mission Community (Amarillo, TX), and the Franciscan Sisters of Peace (Haverstraw, NY). Each of these congregations has a marvelous and sometimes painful story which, unfortunately, cannot be told in this article. Meanwhile, the living Franciscan spirit continues to inspire women and men to form new groups into the present day. The Franciscan Brothers of Peace were founded in Minnesota in 1986 to work with the poor and with people with AIDS. The Franciscan Sisters of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother, founded in Steubenville, Ohio, in 1988, live a contemplative/active life in which the primary emphasis is on prayer. The sisters work part-time in order to support a simple and prayerful lifestyle. The Franciscan Sisters of Joy, an ecumenical foundation, were founded in 1996 to provide an alternative way of living Franciscan vowed life in the contemporary world. The sisters do not own property, either individually or communally, and do not accept tax exemption or any other financial privileges generally accorded to religious. The Sisters of St. Francis of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Mitchell, SD) and the Little Portion Franciscan Sisters

(Republic, MO) complete the picture of the Franciscan Third Order Regular in the U.S. today.

What all of these congregations share is a strong desire to live an authentic Franciscan life and to stay in touch with their Franciscan roots. Many congregations founded in earlier eras share this desire. The Franciscan charism, temporarily minimized or hidden during the decades when uniformity was the goal, has been rediscovered among us, and there is much vitality in its diversity. As they have always done, Third Order Regular Franciscans today are taking on new ministries as the needs arise, responding to the touch of God's love with works of charity. Inspired by the examples of Francis and his followers, they continue to live out the following lines from the Franciscan response to the *Lineamenta*:

The emphasis [of the Franciscan life] is on neither a common place centered on contemplation and the praise of God, nor on a common task centered on the concrete mission of service to the Church and world. It is rather a common heart: a prophetic witness to Christ and the whole of his gospel. . . . Francis's followers . . . insert themselves in the world, not having specific works, but ready for all kinds of service to promote the Gospel.<sup>6</sup>

So, diverse as we are, we truly are part of a whole. Each of us is as unique as the people, places, and circumstances that surrounded our founding. But we are still members of one family: the family of the Franciscan Third Order Regular, drawn together by our common roots in Francis and in those who have followed him down the centuries, even to the present day.

[Note: This article is based on the unpublished thesis, *The Franciscan Third Order Regular in the United States: Origins, Early Years, and Recent Developments*, by Margaret Slowick, OSF. For copies, contact mslowick@tiffinfranciscans.org.]

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Carol Christ, *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on the Spiritual Quest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980), 1.

<sup>2</sup>*Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis* (Franciscan Federation, 1982), 3.

<sup>3</sup>Sr. M. Clarissa Popp, *History of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 1868-1938* (Millvale, 1939), 34.

<sup>4</sup>Francis Borgia Rothluebber, *He Sent Two: The Story of the Beginning of the School Sisters of St. Francis* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1965) 165.

<sup>5</sup>Sr. Louise Hirner, *Called to be Faithful: A History of the Sisters of St. Francis of Maryville, Missouri* (Maryville: Sisters of St. Francis, 1984), 25.

<sup>6</sup>The Sisters and Brothers of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis. *Response to the Lineamenta in light of the 1994 Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life in the Church*.

## Sailing the Seven "C's" of Franciscan Spirituality

Jack Clark Robinson, OFM

A talk presented as part of the Bernardin Series for Priests  
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This talk is advertised as being about conversion in the life of Francis of Assisi as illustrated in his Testament, and then applicable, I hope, to our lives. But in order to get to conversion, I am going to first speak briefly of other aspects of Franciscan spirituality.

One way to sum up Franciscan spirituality, and especially the spirituality of Francis of Assisi himself, is to sail seven "C's," not the traditional seven seas, but instead: Creation, Crib, Cross, Communion, Contemplation, sCripture. (I had to cheat a little to get sCripture to fit in this mnemonic device, but I hope that you will forgive me) and Conversion.

### Creation

The association of Francis with nature is so well established, that I shall say nothing about it, but simply quote Francis himself in what many consider the very first Italian vernacular poem, the Canticle of the Creatures:

Most High, all powerful, good Lord,  
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing.  
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,  
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.  
Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,  
especially Sir Brother Sun,  
Who is the day and through whom You give us light.  
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;  
and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,

in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.  
 Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,  
 and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather  
 through which You give sustenance to Your creatures.  
 Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,  
 which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.  
 Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
 through whom You light the night  
 and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.  
 Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,  
 who sustains and governs us,  
 and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Praised 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, they shall be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,  
 from whom no living man can escape.  
 Woe to those who die in mortal sin.  
 Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,  
 for the second death shall do them no harm.  
 Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks  
 and serve Him with great humility.

## The Crib

Recognition of God's self-revelation and involvement with all of creation is something of the beginning of recognition of God's self-revelation and involvement to us and with us. God seeks to reveal God's very self to us. A Franciscan friend, who had lived the best of liberation theology, once explained to me—God has always sought out of love to communicate with us. When we did not “understand” creation, God called Abraham and the patriarchs to show us love in action. When we failed to see God's love in history, God sent us the prophets with their words. When we failed to listen to those words of revelation, God sent the Word, Jesus Christ. God's self-revelation became real, became concrete, in the most specific way possible for us as Christians in the Incarnation of Christ.

The story of Greccio, where Francis was the first to ever request that a manger with hay, an ox and an ass all be brought in for the celebration of Christmas midnight Mass, has forever identified Francis with our remembrance of the Incarnation. The early biographer Celano records the story the following way:

The saint of God was clothed with the vestments of the deacon, for he was a deacon, and he sang the holy Gospel in a melodious voice. And his voice was a strong voice, a clear voice, a musical voice, inviting all to the highest of rewards. Then he preached to the people standing about, and he poured forth words full of sweetness about the birth of the poor King and the tiny town of Bethlehem. Frequently too, when he wished to refer to Christ Jesus, he would call him simply the [Babe] of Bethlehem, afire with excess of love; and he utters the word Bethlehem in a way that sounds like the bleating of a sheep, filling his whole mouth with the word, but still more with tender affection. Likewise when he says Babe of Bethlehem or Jesus, his tongue licked his lips, as it were, relishing and savoring with pleased palate the sweetness of the words.

The gifts of the Omnipotent Lord were multiplied there, and a marvelous vision was seen by a certain virtuous man. He saw an infant lying in the manger, as if lifeless; the Saint of God came up to the child and awakened it, as though from a deep sleep. That vision was not inappropriate, since the Child Jesus was forgotten in the hearts of many, but He was awakened there by the working of His grace through His servant, Saint Francis, and was impressed on their memories in an unforgettable way. (I Cel 86)

If we grasp, as Francis did, the depth of meaning to be found in the Incarnation, how can we ever deny the value of any human being, for all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and God so respected, so loved, human beings, that God freely chose to become one of us. One of the points which later Franciscan theologians would develop, is that the love of God was such, that even without the sin of Adam and Eve, the Incarnation would still have been God's plan from God's own desire to be one of us.

In Francis, in reflection of Christ, there is a very fundamental option for the poor, but an option that excludes no one, for we remember how Francis visited bishops and cardinals, popes and sultans, intimidated by none of them,

but rather drawn to share the Gospel with them as well as with lepers and the poor. Francis saw Christ in everyone, and we are still called to have that same clarity of vision. Christian detachment flows from an appreciation of both the goodness of what it is to be of the earth, of creation, and a willingness to set that goodness aside because of something all the more good and fulfilling. It is not about discounting the worth of the things of the world around us, but rather of seeing the real source of their worth.

I once spent an academic year walking across the campus of the University of California in Berkeley and when the school year was done, I wrote:

If I so long  
to hug and hold, to contemplate and celebrate,  
with eyes and lips and fingertips,  
so many whom I no more than pass upon the street each day,  
starting first of course with the young and beautiful,  
but reaching on to others, older, younger, different,  
how much more must the One,  
who Made,  
who Came,  
who Stays within us,  
long to hug and hold,  
to love,  
me?

The first friar with whom I shared that piece told me that I had done something very Franciscan. I had tuned my lust into God's love. But the essence of the Incarnation is the recognition that our lust is nothing but the weakest imitation of God's longing, God's love, for us.

## Cross

The spiritual life of Francis in the Church appears to begin at San Damiano, the broken down Church which he repaired and where Jesus spoke to him from the Cross. Contemplating the image of Christ there, Francis prayed:

Most high,  
glorious God,  
enlighten the darkness of my heart  
and give me, Lord,  
a correct faith,  
a certain hope,  
a perfect charity,  
sense and knowledge,  
so that I may carry out Your holy and true command. (PrCruc)

The Cross, then for Francis is not only the sign of sacrifice on the part of Christ, but also the sign of obedience and trust. To come to the Cross is to enter into obedience, into a perfect hearing, a perfect listening to God. When we put aside the noise of our hearts to listen with abandon to God, we come to know that it is a loving God to whom we listen. God is the loving Creator of the universe who is in charge of all things, from the sparrows that fall to the fate of nations, and most certainly, God is in charge of our lives.

But we hold back, afraid of what might happen if we place our trust so radically, so completely in God. In our holding back, in our grasping to hold on to the things of this earth while God is trying to lift us up to Heaven, we create for ourselves the tension of the Cross. Finally, by embracing that Cross, by coming to know that we are caught between heaven and earth, in the same very real way that Christ bridged the gulf between Heaven and earth on his cross, we can come to know the Cross for what it is. The Cross is the Way to Heaven, there is no going around it, but only the invitation by Christ to take it up, to go through it.

Francis embraced the cross and was rewarded with the Stigmata. St. Bonaventure, in writing of the life of Francis, touches on the physical aspects of the Stigmata and at the same time almost rushes past the physical to get to the spiritual meaning of the Stigmata. Bonaventure begins his description of Francis receiving the Stigmata this way:

The angelic man Francis had made it his habit never to relax in his pursuit of the good. Rather, like the heavenly spirits on Jacob's ladder he either ascended to God or descended to his neighbor. . . . Therefore when in his compassion he had worked for the salvation of others, he would then leave behind the restlessness of the crowds and seek out hidden places of quiet and solitude, where he could spend his time more freely with the Lord and cleanse himself of any dust that might have adhered to him from his involvement with men. Two years before he gave his spirit back to heaven, after many and varied labors, he was led apart by divine providence to a high place which is called Mount La Verna. When according to his usual custom he had begun to fast there for forty days in honor of St. Michael the Archangel, he experienced more abundantly than usual an overflow of the sweetness of heavenly contemplation, he burned with a stronger flame of heavenly desires, and he began to experience more fully the gifts of heavenly grace. (LM 13:1)

The Cross for Francis is not simply suffering, but the sign of conforming ourselves to God's will in every way, just as Jesus had done. The Stigmata becomes the sign that Francis had accomplished in an extraordinary way what we are all called to do; he had conformed himself to Christ. Bonaventure goes on to sum up the meaning of the Stigmata and writes poetically as if speaking to Francis himself:

The Cross of Christ given to you and by you accepted at the beginning of your conversion and which from then on you carried continuously in the course of your most upright life, giving an example to others, shows that you have finally reached the summit of Gospel

perfection with such clear certitude that no truly devout person can reject this proof of Christian wisdom ploughed into the dust of your flesh. (LM 13:10)

Bonaventure saw the Stigmata as God's "seal of approval" on the life of Francis. For us, the Stigmata, just as the prayer before the Crucifix of San Damiano, is a call to realize that our salvation is to be found in embracing the Cross, rather than denying it. We embrace the Cross, not for the sake of suffering, but to completely enter into that tension of the already, but not yet, Reign of God which Jesus taught is the Good News.

## Communion

In his Letter to the Entire Franciscan Order, Francis arguably wrote the most beautiful tribute ever written to the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament:

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

There is another meaning of Communion which I believe was very important to Francis. This sort of communion had nothing to do with ritual meals, but everything to do with real meals of real food. This communion is the communion of compassion, of heart, and of harmony of life. We may think

of it as our Communion with the Pope, but it also has simpler expressions, as found in this story:

One night one of the sheep cried out while the rest were sleeping: "I am dying, brothers, I am dying of hunger." Immediately the good shepherd got up and hastened to give the ailing sheep the proper remedy. He commanded the table to be set, though it was filled with poor things, and, as is often the case, where wine was lacking water took its place. First (Francis) himself began to eat, and then he invited the rest of the brothers to share this duty of charity, lest that brother should waste away from shame. When they had eaten the food with fear of the Lord, the father wove a long parable for his sons about the virtue of discretion, lest something should be lacking in the offices of charity. He commanded them always to give to the Lord a sacrifice seasoned with salt, and carefully admonished each one to consider his own strength in the service of God. He said to deprive the body indiscreetly of what it needs was a sin just the same as it is a sin to give superfluous things at the prompting of gluttony. And he added: "Know, dearest brothers, that what I have done in eating, I have done by dispensation, not by desire, because fraternal charity commanded it. Let this charity be an example to you, not the food, for the latter ministers to gluttony, the former to the spirit." (2 Cel 22)

Communion, too, is the source and summit of our Christian life.

## Contemplation

Contemplation may be defined in a number of ways. Most commonly in the sources of his life, we hear of Francis spending hours, days, weeks or seasons such as Lent and Advent in prayer in lonely places. We do not really learn what Francis was doing in those moments as much by reading about them as we learn by experiencing them ourselves. Contemplation is a discipline and an experience, rather than a body of knowledge.

The fruit of contemplation is to see things as they are, rather than as they might appear. Our lives may not be filled with as much solitude and quiet prayer as we would like, but that does not mean that they cannot be filled with contemplation. With the discipline of continuing effort, we can all find our way of entering contemplative prayer, and through that prayer, of seeing the world more clearly.

I think that any mention of Franciscan contemplation is completely inadequate without talking about Clare of Assisi. Her struggles with her family, religious authorities and even the friars themselves, are the stuff of legend. But through all of those struggles, Clare's vision remained clear. Clare once wrote to Agnes of Prague these words on contemplation:

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

One of the things which Clare learned in her contemplation is that the more you know Christ, the more you know God, the more then you come to know yourself. Contemplation, which means to truly see, becomes an act of transformation. If we have really seen God, we are forever changed. Nothing can stop that change from happening. Literally, we cannot go back to the way we were "before." The fantastic truth of contemplation is that once it is begun, it can have no end. Once we are drawn onto the path which leads to God, we have already arrived – even when we have miles and miles to go.

Clare spent the last forty years of her life inside the walls of a cloister, but in her contemplation she knew creation, she knew the Incarnation, she was caught up in a communion and underwent a conversion as profound as anyone ever experienced as a pilgrim to the far ends of the earth. Listen to this passage from her last letter to Agnes for words of creation, Incarnation, and communion all of which permeate Clare:

As you contemplate further [Christ's] ineffable delights,  
 eternal riches and honors, and sigh for them in the great desire and  
 love of your heart, may you cry out:  
 Draw me after You!

We will run in the fragrance of Your perfumes,  
 O heavenly Spouse!  
 I will run and not tire,  
 until You bring me into the wine-cellar,  
 until Your left hand is under my head  
 and Your right hand will embrace me happily  
 and You will kiss me with the happiest kiss of Your mouth! (4LCL 28-32)

Contemplation is the doorway to so many levels of understanding and meaning, because it is a way to come to know God and ourselves.

## Scripture

In the living of our lives as Christians, sCripTure is like water for a swimmer; both the loving support for all we do and the great challenge to always go beyond where we are, to be what we have not yet become. And in both of these, the support and the challenge, sCripTure is the water where we must be, to be swimmers; sCripTure is the water we must drink to be living Christians.

St. Bonaventure quotes Francis as speaking specifically of the study of sCripTure in this way:

Once the friars asked him whether he was pleased that the learned men who had by that time been received into the Order should devote themselves to the study of Sacred Scripture. He replied: "I am indeed pleased, as long as they do not neglect application to prayer, after the example of Christ, of whom we read that he prayed more than he read, and as long as they study not only in order to know what they should say but in order to practice what they have heard and when they have put it into practice themselves to propose it to others likewise. I want my friars," he said, "to be disciples of the Gospel and to progress in knowledge of the truth in such a way as to increase in pure simplicity without separating the simplicity of the dove from the wisdom of the serpent which our eminent Teacher joined together in a statement from his own blessed lips." (LM 11:1)

## Conversion

I believe that there are five elements to Conversion in the life of Francis. All of these five elements reflect a way of going through the world with an openness to the working of the Spirit of God. The very same sorts of things could have happened, and in fact do happen, all of the time TO others, and they would not see in them the working of God at all, and I am certain that there were times when Francis did not see God at work in what was happening the first or second time either. There is hope for all of us, as God never gives up on us! No one is as persistent as God!

I would name these five elements to conversion in the life of Francis:

1. Being thrown off guard – I suppose that the psychological name for that is "liminal moment," but I like "being thrown off guard" better; it seems more concrete.

2. Connecting to God – Nothing says that our vulnerable moments have to end up with a connection with God, as a matter of fact this is probably the chanciest part of the whole process. How many people have we encountered who have turned to something besides God in a vulnerable moment? How many times have we done it ourselves?



3. Turning away from old authorities – The word authority comes from the same root as the word author, the one who creates, so in our lives, we need many authorities, but most of those authorities for most of us are only authorities for a season – whether the authority is Big Bird, or the principal of our elementary school, or Elvis – come on, I know that a few of you are that age! But at some point, we have to turn away from authorities which can only lead us so far, because those individual authorities only have so much life themselves.

4. Embracing new Authorities – Of course, when Elvis stopped being the authority in your lives, it was the Beatles! You get the idea, we go from one authority to another, and Francis did the same thing. Many, many people stop at this point, because they find some authority that is sufficient for the life they lead, be that authority *The National Catholic Reporter*, *The Wanderer*, *America* magazine, or Richard Rohr or the Cardinal or Pope John Paul II. I am not completely convinced that this is in any way a disaster, because I believe with all my heart that God will always find a way to continue to work in our lives, but I believe that Francis, and many other fully alive people do go a step further.

5. Transcending external Authority – This part is tricky, because I offer you a paradox. I believe that Francis of Assisi was one of the freest, most ego-enhanced people of all time, at the same time that he was one of the most humble and self-effacing. By the time that he came to the end of his life here on earth, he seemingly submitted to no external authority, at the same time that he was most obedient to God, Who truly dwelt within him. This is not apotheosis; he had not become God, nor was his turning away from external authority egotism, the triumph of his self-will, but rather, Francis grasped what God intends for all of us, an utter harmony with the Spirit of God dwelling within him.

I believe that all of these five elements of conversion can not only be found in the life of Francis, they can be illustrated from one remarkable document, his Testament.

Being thrown off guard:

These are the first three lines of the Testament:

The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body;—and afterward I lingered a little and left the world. (Test 1-3)

Actually, the lepers represent at least the third time that we know Francis was thrown off guard. The first time was his imprisonment in Perugia as a prisoner of war. The second was his protracted illness after being ransomed by his father from prison. But as I mentioned above, sometimes, probably most of the time, it takes more than one event to trigger the start of our conversion process. I have this fear that when I get to Heaven, what St. Peter is really going to have recorded in that book is a list of the 4762 times that God knocked on the door of my heart before I said, “Who’s there?”

Back to the lepers for a moment. Everybody from Francis’s first biographers to Franco Zeffirelli in his beautiful movie “Brother Sun, Sister Moon,” has romanticized the lepers. The going among the lepers has become in popular imagination an encounter with a single leper on the road whom Francis kissed and then the leper disappeared, but early biographers record that Francis worked among the lepers.

In the time of Francis, lepers actually often lived in little communities of their own a life very similar to a vowed religious life of penance. Leprosy was not well understood, but was universally thought to be a punishment for sin, whether the sin was known or not. Diagnosis with leprosy was more a social and moral decision than a medical one. In some places, once the diagnosis was made, what can only be called a funeral was held for the leper, with the leper in attendance, and then that unfortunate was conducted to the leper colony outside the walls of the city, and confined there for the rest of his or her life.

Leprosy was thought to be highly contagious, and lepers were thought to have a compulsion to want to cause others to become lepers, to join in their misery. Their little colony was usually a circle of huts, with a chapel, because they were expected to pray for the sins which had brought leprosy upon them. Money or food was left for them at the entrance to their compound, and usually they were provided for fairly well, otherwise, there was the threat that they would leave their enclosure and start coming into the nearby towns!

Poor people actually worked for them, being paid from the alms left for the lepers. Francis and the other brothers probably earned their food that way at least part of the time. We also now know that the virus that causes leprosy was probably not uncommon in the Middle Ages, even though it is not as contagious as it was thought to be, but the virus needs a certain level of cholesterol to develop sufficiently to erupt into skin lesions. So, ironically, the better off you were economically, the more likely you were to actually become a leper.

So here was Francis, the rich young man, who after he had been imprisoned and a long time sick himself, somehow led among the lepers by God’s design. It could have been that he had a friend or two who developed leprosy, but something led him among the lepers. Then he was caught off guard, maybe

with the thought, "This could be me." He was ready for the next step of his conversion.

### Connecting to God

To return to the next two lines of the Testament:

And the Lord gave me such faith in churches that I would simply pray and speak in this way: "We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Your churches throughout the world, and we bless You, for through Your holy cross You have redeemed the world." (Test 4-5)

The first time I went to the Southwest was part of my time as a novice, and I was fascinated by the Indian ruins. To this day, I have a collection of probably a hundred slides of Indian ruins. When I got back to the novitiate in Cincinnati, I wanted to share this fascination with my brothers. They promptly pronounced the slide show the dullerest thing that they had ever seen – "Nothing but broken rock walls." You have to be there, pictures won't do.

In Francis's case we know that he was there, that in the vicinity of Assisi were at least three abandoned Churches, San Damiano, St. Peter, and Our Lady of the Angels of the Little Portion. They were holy places, and I think that they retained that holiness, that it lingered about them, even though they had been abandoned. So Francis, in his solitude, in his loneliness was attracted to these Churches. There was also, I think, a certain security in their very "abandonedness." While Francis was making this initial connection to God, he didn't have to be afraid of too many people being around asking questions about what he was doing. He didn't have a lot of "noise." His life quieted down, and in that quiet, God spoke. That's what the prayer before the Crucifix is about, and then literally, that is what the words of Christ from the San Damiano Crucifix to Francis are about. God always is the One who reaches out first to connect our lives to Life, with a capital "L." In the moment that he was thrown off guard, at least this third time, Francis connected to God in a big way and that was to make all the difference in the world from that point on, in his life.

### Turning away from Old Authorities

I want to return to just a few words that we have already heard from the beginning of the Testament: "And afterward I lingered a little and left the world" (Test 3).

To "leave the world" had the technical meaning in Francis's day of entering religious life. It was "religious life," though, which did not necessarily have a technical meaning. But every definition of religious life then and now, meant a putting away of an old form of living, a turning away from old authorities.

The great dramatic gesture of Francis stripping off his clothes before his

father, Pietro Bernadone, and Bishop Guido of Assisi, is in a sense only one of the breaks that Francis made with his old life. It is, however, an unmistakable turning away unlike any other from old authority. It is a rejection not only of parental authority, but also of security and social convention. There was probably not a single person who witnessed the incident, or who heard about it, who did not think at least for a moment, that Francis had lost his mind. It was as if he turned away from society as well as his father.

Francis himself makes no mention whatsoever of his father Pietro in his writings, and the biographies make no mention of Pietro after this incident. I hope that there was some sort of reconciliation, but we have no way of knowing. This point of conversion, the turning away from one set of authorities, is by definition painful. Authorities, even ones that we must eventually outgrow and reject, would not be, could never have been, authorities, if they had not at some point been life-giving to us; so that turning away from them is painful. Conversion is not easy.

### Recognizing new Authority

Francis records that after he left the world and started hanging about those Churches, after he had turned away from old authorities, God really went to work in his life. First, it was the Gospel, priests and the Pope who became new authorities for him, as we hear in what amounts to about a third of the words of the Testament:

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. And if I possessed as much wisdom as Solomon had and I came upon pitiful priests of this world, I would not preach contrary to their will in the parishes in which they live. And I desire to fear, love and honor them and all others as my masters. And I do not wish to consider sin in them because I discern the Son of God in them and they are my masters. And I act in this way since I see nothing corporally of the Most High Son of God in this world except His Most holy Body and Blood which they receive and which they alone administer to others. And these most holy mysteries I wish to have honored above all things and to be revered and to have them reserved in precious places. Whenever I come upon His most holy written words in unbecoming places, I desire to gather them up and I ask that they be collected and placed in a suitable place. And we should honor and respect all theologians and those who minister the most holy divine words as those who minister spirit and life to us.

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. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me. (Test 6-15)

I believe that Francis chose the right new authorities. Priests, the Gospel and the Pope. I say that these are the right new authorities because they led him eventually to transcend themselves.

Why do we need spiritual authorities in our lives? Whether they be retreat leaders or the hierarchy or our own personal spiritual heroes? We need Francis, we need Clare, we need the saints, in the broadest sense of that word, because we need fingers to point us to the stars. The stars are always there, and maybe eventually we would stumble upon the right one to guide us, but it sure helps to have someone to point out that star. The challenge, is not to keep focusing on the fingertip, but to let our gaze move on to the star.

#### Transcending External Authority

I believe that there is ample evidence in the Testament that Francis eventually transcended all external, earthly authority. We need to remember that the Testament was literally written as Francis lay dying, probably sometime in the late summer or early fall of 1226 before his death on the night of October 3rd. It is then something of a summation of the twenty years from 1206, when his conversion is said by many to have begun, to his death bed, actually his death mat on the ground in this case. Francis, as we have heard, makes reference to writing the rule simply and in a few words and presenting it to the Pope. That was Pope Innocent III in 1209. We do not have anything that we can point to and with absolute certainty say that this was what those words were in 1209. But, we still have the rule in every detail as Francis saw it.

I am completely convinced that Francis never saw anything as his rule except the Gospel. Anything that was written down was nothing but a commentary on the Gospel, and the Gospel was always the real Rule and Life of the Friars Minor, and for that matter, the real Rule of anyone seeking to follow the inspiration of Francis of Assisi.

Since the Gospel was the real Rule, the words of commentary were always subject to change in Francis's mind, and we know that they did change. We know that there were changes made because of legislation of the Church, which is where the novitiate came from, and we know that there were changes made from the life experience of Francis and the friars, thus a provision about "going among the Saracens and other nonbelievers."

This continual change was all right for Francis, but it must have driven the canon lawyers in Rome, and not a few of the friars, nuts. So they sought to get something definitive, thus we have the written Rule, spelled out by Francis twice, once in 1221 and again in 1223.

By 1223, the Pope, at this time Pope Honorius III, had personally gotten in on the act to the extent that these words were attached to the beginning of the Papal bull proclaiming the Rule:

The Apostolic See is accustomed to accede to the pious requests and to be favorably disposed to grant the praiseworthy desires of its petitioners. Wherefore, beloved sons in the Lord, attentive to your pious prayers, We confirm for you with our apostolic authority, and by this document ratify the rule of your Order herein contained and approved by our predecessor, Pope Innocent of happy memory, which is as follows. . . .

What follows on the parchment, still there at the Sacro Convento in Assisi, is the document purported to be the Rule of the Friars Minor, and after the words which Francis had composed, comes this postscript:

No one, therefore, is in any way permitted to tamper with the decree of our confirmation or to oppose it rashly. If anyone, however, should presume to attempt this, let it be known that he shall incur the indignation of Almighty God and of His blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

Well, that ought to do it. No one, not even Francis, can change the Rule anymore.

But, here is another passage from the Testament that Francis wrote, again, three years after the approval of the Rule:

Let the brothers beware that they by no means receive churches or poor dwellings or anything which is built for them, unless it is in harmony with that holy poverty which we have promised in the Rule, and let them always be guests there as pilgrims and strangers. And I firmly command all of the brothers through obedience that, wherever they are, they should not be so bold as to seek any letter from the Roman Curia either personally or through an intermediary, neither for a church or for some other place or under the guise of preaching or even for the persecution of their bodies; (Test 24-25)

That sounds like legislation to me!

As if that were not enough, look at lines 31 through 33 where Francis legislates new procedural norms, to go with new positive law, too:

And [if] any are found who do not celebrate the Office according to the Rule and [who] wish to alter it in any way or [who] are not Catholics, let all the brothers be obliged through obedience that wherever they come upon [such a brother] they must bring him to the custo-

dian [who is] nearest to that place where they have found him. And the custodian is strictly bound through obedience to guard him strongly as a prisoner day and night, so that he cannot be snatched from his hands until he can personally deliver him into the hands of his minister. And the minister is strictly bound through obedience to send him with brothers who shall guard him as a prisoner day and night until they deliver him before the Lord of Ostia who is the master, protector, and corrector of the entire fraternity. (Test 31-33)

Francis even goes on to say that whenever the Rule is read, the Testament should be read too, all the while maintaining that it is not another Rule!

There were no outside authorities left in Francis's life which had not been transcended, not even the pope or the indignation of Almighty God. Which is not to say that he was no longer obedient in his person and in his body. We know that immediately before he died, he wanted the habit stripped from his body, so that he could, naked, embrace his naked Lord, after concluding his fight with the enemy, the devil, and so that at the end, he could say that he truly owned nothing. A compromise was reached. Francis, under obedience, wore a borrowed habit.

Conversion then continues, we know, until the very moment of death. What happens after we leave to God.

I pray to God that this Lent may truly be for you a time of conversion. When you are thrown off guard, may your landing be soft enough to let you get up, dust yourself off and see that God is there with you, embracing you, as you let go of the things which have held you back, so that you can embrace the authorities which will point you, guide you, lead you ever closer to the Love of the One Who has loved us all into being.

To that end, I have tried to sum up what I have shared with you this morning by means of questions for you to take with you. There are references included as well to the written works to which I have referred. Some of the questions may appeal to you now, and some may in the future, so I suggest that when you finish with it today, you simply stick the paper away and let it ripen. I hope that you find this material helpful, along with all that I have had to say.

## Reflection Questions

- 1) Creation - What does Creation speak to me of God?
- 2) Crib - How do I see God "made flesh" in other people?
- 3) Cross - What is the place where the tension between Heaven and earth is most apparent in my life?

4) Communion - Who is my neighbor, whom I am to love, and with whom I am called to Communion?

5) Contemplation - How do I come to see with contemplative eyes?

6) sCripture - What is the place of Divine Revelation in my life?

7) Conversion - Where, how, why am I called to conversion?

- A) What are things which throw me off guard in my life at the moment?
- B) How do I most ~~close~~ly connect with God?
- C) What are authorities in my life that I would do well to set aside?
- D) What are the authorities which I need to more closely embrace?
- E) What does it mean to me to be made completely free in the Spirit of God?

One question may appeal to you and another may repulse you. Five of the questions may leave you cold and unaffected. Choose one or two of the questions for your reflection now, and stick the others in your pocket until their time comes.

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## A Blue Sky, a Pot of Money, and the Right People on the Bus: Franciscan Dreams in Higher Education

Rosemary Stets, OSF

Franciscans have always cherished the gifts of imagination, spontaneity, and the freedom to dream. Francis was a dreamer, and his legacy to the order was to dream of a new world modeled on the gospels, a world where all live as brother and sister, where rich and poor are welcome at the banquet, where good is not overcome by evil and God is the center of all our life together.

When Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin hosted a symposium on Mission and Catholic Identity in Franciscan Higher Education in June, 2004, it was an opportunity for all seventeen Franciscan colleges and universities to gather for three days of input, discussion, and prayer on what we do as Franciscan educators, and how we make our dreams come true. Besides excellent presentations, stimulating break-outs, and genuine Franciscan hospitality, we were given a chance to dream. On Saturday morning, a panel of volunteer participants responded to the symposium question: *if you could imagine only "blue sky" opportunities, all the money you needed, and the total cooperation of your entire collegiate community, what would you do on your campus?* Following the dream, we were also asked to comment on *what we are already doing to make the dream a reality, and perhaps share the efforts and successes that are within our reach.*

Since I was a "volunteer," I spent a few hours on Friday evening brainstorming with my colleagues from Alvernia on our collective response to this question and cataloging the advances we have made to support the Franciscan mission and values at our institution. It was not a reach to find good evidence.

First, the dream. In my blue-sky world, everyone who works or studies at a Franciscan institution would be invited to participate in a Franciscan Pilgrimage to Assisi. Having made the pilgrimage in August, 2003, and having sent the first two students from Alvernia to Assisi in January, 2004, I can tell you that this is the foundation for understanding what it means to be Franciscan. It is a transformative experience that touches the heart as no book, film, lecture or story ever will. The experience of being in Assisi—the very town where Francis lived, where he heard Christ speak to him from the cross, where he

turned away from a life of wealth to embrace poverty and penance, and to visit the caves where he prayed—is to find the source and spring of the Franciscan calling. When our students returned from this pilgrimage they were ecstatic, and we spent hours sharing stories about the experience. When the spring semester began, they hosted an Assisi Party for their friends and showed photos, read from their journals, and recruited pilgrims for the January, 2005 trip. It would be my dream to grant everyone this glorious gift.

Another dream would be to provide all our college students with an experience of service to a developing country where they might work among the poor and recognize the disparity between these economic worlds. We currently offer this opportunity to a small group each year with a mission trip to the Dominican Republic. In January about twelve students, accompanied by several staff, spend ten days in Santo Domingo where they organize a camp for street children, take them to the beach, visit their families in the *barrio*, and work with the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters on projects that provide dignity and stability for the Dominican people. They always return home enlightened and appreciative, sometimes even transformed. But more importantly, we hope they understand through this experience their responsibility to work for change in the world, and learn what it would take to dismantle the systems that continue this oppression, how unjust they are, how they destroy human dignity and promote war, violence and greed.

I believe that the Christmas story needs to be celebrated with great imagination at Franciscan schools. Just as in Francis's day the townspeople of Greccio were ignited by his lively portrayal of Christmas, following him up the mountain with lighted torches to see the crèche that represented the birth of Christ, so, I believe, will our students leap to the excitement of creating a live nativity, with animals, Mary, Joseph and the baby, and a candlelight procession—letting the vibrant reality of signs and symbols speak to them of the authentic meaning of Christmas, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Every year at Alvernia, our campus hosts a huge party for needy children in the community. Organized by the Office of Residence Life and the Student Government Association, students, faculty and staff volunteer to plan the party, sponsor a child, bring a special toy, preparing activities and games and sharing food and refreshments in a festive event that brings joy to children during this season. This year, I would like to add a live nativity to the celebration, with the children following the campus procession to the manger, where they will see, in a tiny tableau, what Christmas means to humanity.

Live drama is integral to the arts at a university, and so I dream of generating great enthusiasm for theatrical events; these have always been a way to honor our traditions, telling the stories of Francis, Clare, and our founders in dramatic and compelling ways. The Transitus (a reverent and moving service on the eve of Francis's death celebrating his passage into eternal life), the story

of our founders, the story of the founding of our institutions, and the stories of courage, risk, and hope that mark our Franciscan history could all be made real through some type of dramatic retelling. Our students need to be challenged to see Franciscan simplicity in a new way, to discover spiritual values embedded in Franciscan history that contradict the values of their secular society, and we need to risk letting it happen.

I also dream that every Franciscan university will look for ways to help students experience solitude and prayer alone. At Alvernia, one of our core values is contemplation. We believe that honoring our Creator is integral to living a full life and becoming a fully developed person. We invite the community to cultivate a practice called the "mission moment," a simple moment of reflection or prayer at the beginning of any event on campus: class, meeting, meal, social activity, athletic event. I was surprised to learn that our students began their fall formal dinner-dance, led by the president of the Campus Activities Board, with a mission moment! We know they live a fast-paced, noisy, stressful life. By introducing them to the peace and deep interior joy of solitude and contemplative prayer, we can offer them a new way to live, a new freedom of spirit.

Our campus shares our motherhouse property, like so many other religiously-founded institutions. We are surrounded by beautiful mountains, spacious lawns, pathways through groves of trees, a replica of the grotto at Lourdes—all available to our students for prayer and reflection. There are several retreat houses in the area, also located among beautiful mountains with lakes and ponds, trails and campsites. Developmentally, young adults are typically turning inward, looking for times and places to think deep thoughts, share deep conversations, searching for the meaning and purpose of their life. Having a Peace Pole, a Peace Garden, or a labyrinth on the campus where students can gather to pray or spend quiet time in study, reflection or meditation is not a luxury but a necessity for our times. Our students need to balance their lives with the counter-cultural experience of solitude and quiet personal prayer. I believe that they need to find God in the secret room of their heart, to discover God in the beauty of creation, to find the hidden treasure of prayer that will anchor them in their faith and guide them throughout the course of their lives.

If the blue sky and the pot of gold hold out, it would be my dream to see a Portiuncola chapel at every Franciscan college and university. This is not unattainable, and many already have this jewel on their campus. Some institutions have modeled it on the Portiuncola in Assisi, and it has been made into a visitor's shrine for the sisters and guests of the motherhouse. Some have created a small chapel for private prayer or adoration of the Eucharist, or a small hermitage for private retreats. Knowing how students love to "hang out" in a special hideaway, a place to call their own, a place where they can meet, and

talk and pray in ways that are uniquely their own, I wonder if they would not rise to the challenge of discovering a practical way (perhaps as a service project) to create or build a Portiuncola on the campus, which would afford them the opportunity to gather, at least in spirit, at one of the holiest shrines in the world, certainly one of the holiest and most revered places in Franciscan history.

As I discovered at the symposium, many colleges and universities are developing creative pathways to being Franciscan, to keeping the tradition alive and using the Franciscan intellectual tradition to shed light on the issues and concerns of contemporary times. Faculty, academic deans, theologians and scholars have developed programs, institutes, social justice centers, courses of study, and conferences that provide a forum for discussion and learning that illuminate the teachings of Francis, Clare and their early followers with radical implications for our youth. There is a distinct parallel between our world and the world of medieval war, greed, and social injustice. In awareness of Francis's zeal to serve the poor, we recognize today's students who eagerly embrace service, who want to be part of a mission experience, who opt for service-learning experiences in their classes, or who may receive academic and service scholarships to college because of their outstanding personal commitment to community service in their high school career. Introducing students to the retired sisters in the motherhouse can be a natural connection between the students and the living historical memory of the institution founded on the service of these pioneers. Service reflections in this context are learning experiences that move students far beyond the textbook and the classroom.

At Alvernia, we have discovered that our students are very ecumenical in their religious beliefs, and like Francis, search for ways to be inclusive and open to other spiritual traditions. During the freshman orientation weekend we introduce the freshmen to our institutional mission and core values with a Mission Convocation, a celebration which seeks to validate the faiths of all religious traditions. Students give talks on moral leadership, the core values of our institution, and this year they will speak about the experience of the Assisi pilgrimage as a way of introducing the new class to the themes, heritage, and values of a Franciscan education. In addition to daily Mass, we offer services for students of other faiths on campus and frequently invite pastors of different religions to celebrate ecumenical services with our Catholic chaplain as a way of modeling Christian unity. The story of Francis and the sultan can be an illustration of this teaching and can open their eyes to the reality of religious pluralism that is respectful of diversity and truly inclusive. In gatherings and prayers that commemorate the tragedy of 9/11, the students have embraced a communal experience of faith in one loving God who forgives, heals and offers hope to a human race that universally longs for peace on this earth.

The Franciscan story is also kept alive by using names, symbols and icons to remember and relive the tradition in new ways. We have named our residence halls after saints and places in Franciscan history and have placed an icon of each saint and the San Damiano Crucifix in the lobby of each residence hall so that students will understand the meaning of these names. Roads, special rooms, and other buildings can be named in similar ways so that Franciscan iconography becomes a natural language on the campus. Most institutions introduce the mission and heritage to new faculty and staff through orientation programs which include formal presentations and abundant Franciscan fellowship. We have continued this conversation throughout the year by occasionally inviting small groups of new and returning faculty and staff to a Mission Breakfast, an opportunity to begin the day with prayer, conversation and sharing stories about Alvernia so we might develop a strong sense of community and common purpose at the institution. Other institutions use this model in various ways, such as a Mission Tea, a Franciscan Faculty Dinner, or social gatherings that precede or follow a special event.

I am reminded, as I review the good that we are doing, of Francis's admonition to his followers: "Brothers, let us begin again because up to now we have done nothing." What, we may ask, is within our reach but not yet being done, not yet fully realized? I continually ask myself what impact our Franciscan college has on the poor, the neglected, the multi-racial and ethnically diverse population of the city of Reading, just ten minutes from campus, rapidly deteriorating because of an endless cycle of crime, violence, drugs, poverty, and unemployment. In the fall of 2004, we will attempt to connect our service scholars with the Hispanic Center in the city as another opportunity for community service. More than 50% of Reading's population is Hispanic, with a limited or basic education. In the summer of 2004, we began a pilot program for inner-city high school students who are bused to campus for computer classes. The high school drop-out rate for these students is very high, and many in the community are concerned about the alarming number that are joining street gangs or becoming victims of violence. At the orientation program, we invited the students and their parents to campus. While the instructors met with the students and introduced them to the wonders of technology, college administrators met with the parents, and in Spanish, spoke about the opportunities available with a college education, and more importantly, how this is possible for their children. It is our hope that this positive experience will help them recognize that college is within their reach.

On a blue sky day in Wisconsin, the symposium participants at Cardinal Stritch University were given a chance to share big dreams, compare common goals, and rejoice in one another's efforts and successes. It was heartening to know that Franciscan higher education has this intentional stamp of Francis on so much of what we have accomplished, and what we hope and dream for the future. Our mission is to pass this legacy and heritage to the students who come to us seeking an education in the Franciscan tradition. The task might

seem daunting, but in the words of best-selling author Jim Collins who writes in his book *Good to Great* about institutions that make this transition, the "right people on the bus" can make it happen.

## About Our Contributors

**Ilia Delio, OSF**, serves as Director of the Franciscan Center and is an Associate Professor of Ecclesial History at Washington Theological Union. A prolific writer, Ilia is the author of several books and many articles, and is a well-known presenter in many venues.

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**Rosemary Stets, OSF**, is a Bernardine Franciscan Sister who serves at Alvernia College, Reading, PA as Vice-President for Mission and Ministry.

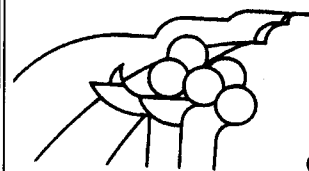
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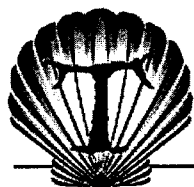
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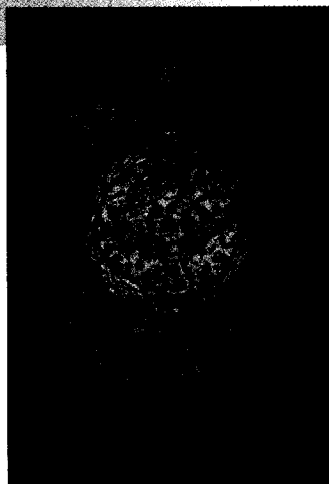
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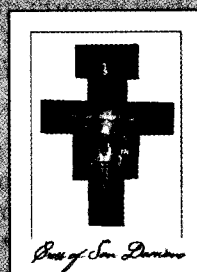
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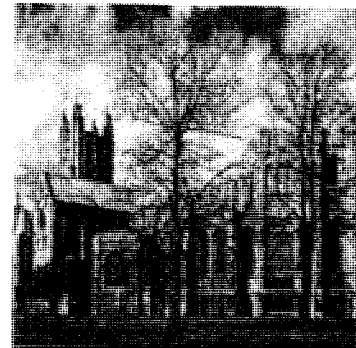
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   recent foundations, Nov/Dec, 298-300.  
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   Poem, Nov/Dec, 343.  
 Word from Bonaventure  
   Jan/Feb, back cover.  
   Mar/Apr, back cover.  
   May, June, back cover.  
   Sept/Oct, back cover.  
   Nov/Dec, back cover.



## WINTER

A TIME TO SAVOR-  
NOT TO PLANT, GROW OR HARVEST-  
TIME TO LIE FALLOW.

A SABBATH SEASON,  
SACRED REST IN GOD'S EMBRACE,  
GRACIOUS MYSTERY.

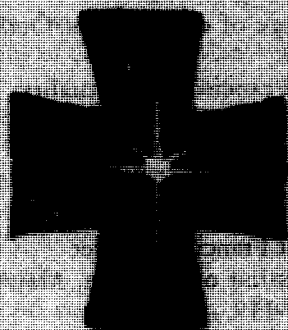
REMEMBER . . . PONDER . . .  
FAMILY . . . FRIENDS . . . ENEMIES . . .  
GIFTS OF CREATION.

STARK REALITY  
OF ELEGANT BLACK AND WHITE  
NIGHT BEAT OF STILLNESS.

BLESSINGS, RICHES, GRACE,  
ABUNDANT MERCY AND LOVE  
I GIVE THANKS AND PRAISE.

A LAST CUP OF TEA-  
DEATH HAS COME TO TAKE ME HOME-  
SAVOR LIFE, SAVOR. . .

DOROTHY FORMAN, OSF



## On the Franciscan Circuit Coming Events 2004-2005

**December 10-12, 2004. Friday 7:00 p.m.-Sunday 1:00 p.m.**

**Advent: Waiting in the Cave of the Heart.** With Michael Laratonda, FMS. An opportunity for exploring the concept of "waiting" in our day-to-day activities, who/what we wait for, and the "heart" as a way of waiting. Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. Ph: 610.558.6152. E-mail: fsc@osfphila.org.

**December 14, 2004. Tuesday, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

**Advent: Birthing Christ in Our World.** Elizabeth Sweeney, SSJ. Through story, ritual, Scripture, music, poetry, and contemplative practice, this retreat will explore how Mary's "Yes" to give birth to Christ reflects our own call. At The Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. Contact Helen Budzik, OSF 610-558-6152 or email: fsc@osfphila.org.

**December 31, 2004. Friday, 10:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m.**

**Journey Ending . . . Journey Beginning.** A time for prayer, personal reflection and quiet in a contemplative atmosphere. Give yourself a gift. Come for the day or any part of it. At the ONENESS IN PEACE CENTER, 49 Main St., Germantown, NY. Contact: 518-537-578.

**January 14-16, 2005. Friday evening-Sunday afternoon.**

**God's Favorite Daughter.** Women's Spirituality Retreat Weekend. Self-love is the foundation of our love for others. Many women struggle with self-image and self-esteem. God longs to heal us by showing us our intrinsic beauty and self-worth. Explore the dynamics and significance of healthy self-esteem in a prayerful setting. Team of leaders. At St. Francis Center for Renewal, Bethlehem, PA. Contact Sr. Donna Pusch, OSF at 610-867-8890 or email peace@enter.net.

**January 21-23, 2005. Friday 7:00 p.m.-Sunday 1:00 p.m.**

**Spirituality of the Twelve Steps.** Patricia Walsh, OP. This weekend offers a practical and realistic approach to life in season and out of season, when convenient and inconvenient. At The Franciscan Spiritual Center, Aston, PA. Contact Helen Budzik, OSF 610-558-6152 or email: fsc@osfphila.org.